The Lived Experiences of Veteran Elementary Urban School Teachers: Why and How They Stay

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF VETERAN ELEMENTARY URBAN SCHOOL TEACHERS: WHY AND HOW THEY STAY

by

Cynthia A. Anthony

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Educational Leadership, Research and Technology Western Michigan University December 2014

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF VETERAN ELEMENTARY URBAN SCHOOL
TEACHERS: WHY AND HOW THEY STAY

Cynthia A. Anthony, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 2014

Longevity in teaching careers depends on many things, including job satisfaction, the work environment, career stages, and strategies to manage stress and avoid burnout. Teachers who have high levels of job satisfaction are more likely to stay in the profession. Job satisfaction is dependent on the motivators in a job: administrative support, collegiality, recognition, advancement, and growth. The work environment, job demands, career development, empowerment, and bureaucracy, plays an important role in retaining teachers.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine factors that enabled and encouraged a sample of 12 veteran elementary school teachers in a small urban school district to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The participants’ reflections of their teaching careers, as defined by their lived experiences, were explored through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. These veteran teachers participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The interviews provided sufficient data to address the four research questions developed for the study.

The findings indicated that teachers stay in the teaching profession because they loved teaching and working with children. The teachers commented that teaching had lost
its luster and creativity because of federal and state requirements that included restricted curriculum and standardized testing. They avoided stress and burnout through the use of positive coping strategies that were individualistic. Some of the strategies ranged from deep breathing, spending time with family and friends, maintaining a sense of humor, and collaborating with colleagues. Further research should include expanding the study to include middle and high school teachers, increasing the sample size to include multiple and diverse school districts, and using a longitudinal study to follow teachers from their entry into the profession to becoming veteran teachers.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

To my mother, who is my best friend,

this dissertation is especially dedicated to you.

Thank you for all of your support past, present, future, and always.

I love you so very much.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

What a journey!

Through challenges, perseverance, and hard work I have finally reached my goal. I cannot and will not take full credit for achieving this incredible accomplishment.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, his son Jesus, and the angels who have surrounded me, watched over me, and guided me every step of the way. With God’s love and guidance, I was able to not only try to undertake this project, but actually complete it. With God, all things are truly possible and once again it has been supported in completing this dissertation.

I would like to acknowledge and to thank my parents Donald A. and Emma M. Anthony. A truly special thank you to my mother, who is my best friend, and who has been my greatest support throughout this journey that at times seemed completely unobtainable but I will always remember the sweet, thoughtful, and encouraging words that she said to me when I was about to give up, “If others can do it, so can you.” I love you so very much. To my Grandparents who were with me when I started this journey. I feel your smile and I know you are both watching over me. I will always love you.

I have been blessed with caring doctoral committee who helped me in preparing for my proposal and defense. To Dr. Sue Poppink, my committee chairperson, thank you for your careful attention to details and scholarly guidance throughout this process. Sincere appreciation is given to Dr. Walter Burt and Dr. Gary Marx. Thank you for agreeing to be on my committee. Each of you are an inspiration to me.
Acknowledgments - Continued

I would like to thank all of the building principals who with no hesitation said “sure”. But especially the superintendent. No names, but again thank you so much. I would like to give a special thank-you to all of the veteran teachers who shall remain nameless. I thank you for giving the “introvert of the school” your valuable time for the interviews. I could not have done it without you. Your commitment to education is an inspiration to all.

To all of my students, past and present, now I truly know what it means when I say never, ever, ever give up. To my 2013-2014 class, you were the “renewal” stage that I needed in my own career. Thank you.

To our service men and women. I know this project was hard, but I know what you do is even harder. Thank you for your service. To all of the veteran teachers who were the inspiration for this doctoral project, I say thank you with all my heart.

And my very special thank you to June Cline. Your wealth of knowledge amazes me to this day. I have learned so much from you. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. Read, reread, reread, and me holding Anastasia and Zoe, the cats, wow! Without your encouragement, support, and laughter I would not have been able to complete this project. Thank you for everything. Thanks to Janet Chambers for her help in transcribing the interviews.

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Cynthia A. Anthony
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is my profession. Teaching is an admirable profession, yet teachers are presented with many challenges. The teaching profession is not easy. Teaching is a profession that demands a collaboration of mind, heart, and spirit, “but teachers themselves need to be nurtured—to be reminded that they are the vital keys to our children’s success. They need to be told repeatedly that they matter, that they do make a difference” (Intrator as cited in “Courage to Teach,” p. 22).

Teaching is a profession in which rewards, recognition and acknowledgement of good or excellent work can be scarce. This profession can be time consuming and unnerving. A teacher never knows what the teaching day will offer, with parents, colleagues, custodians, or students providing the teacher with new challenges to overcome.

In a perfect world, veteran teachers would have students who are waiting eagerly to learn from an instructor who possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience. Teaching would be rewarding for both the teacher and the student. But this world is not perfect.

This chapter presents an introduction to an overview of the dissertation. The chapter begins with the background, the statement of the problem, purpose statement, and continues with research questions and sub-questions, followed by the conceptual framework, significance of the study and summary. The chapter concludes with the
organization of the remainder of the dissertation. In Chapter II, multiple theories that may influence why the veteran teacher stays in the teaching profession are reviewed.

**Background**

The experience of public school teaching—with its limited resources, multiple simultaneous responsibilities, and utter unpredictability—creates a sense of belonging to an embattled and besieged group. As the folklore has it, “only those who are or have been teachers can really understand teaching.” (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996, p. 32)

Many veteran elementary teachers face a number of challenges throughout their teaching careers, and some choose to retire in their 50s, with 25 or 30 years in the educational system, taking with them their balance, maturity, character, perspective, insight, understanding, and wisdom. Many believe that the benefits of their retirement packages outweigh the prestige and satisfaction that they would receive by remaining on the job (Alvy, 2005).

Teacher retention is a complicated issue that involves many factors and processes (Shen, 1997, p. 87). Several factors may be contributing to the longevity of teachers in the profession. Some reasons for their continued retention include: loving children, finding a purpose in which teachers can believe, believing that student achievement is possible, finding a school or community that has welcomed them, feeling a sense of belongingness, thinking they are making a difference, or being able to meet financial obligations (Shen, 1997). Just as many factors contribute to teachers’ decisions to leave the teaching profession, such as unreasonable expectations, workload too heavy, poor
working conditions, too much responsibility, accountability scores, to teaching no longer being seen as rewarding (Billingsly, 2004).

There are many reasons another profession may seem attractive. Some of those reasons may include: better hours, financial incentives, prestige, respect, and less stress. (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007) To choose the teaching profession is an admirable decision, and the decision to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years, with all of its challenges, deserves attention as a research study.

Many teachers leave the classroom within the first five years (Blank, & Kershaw, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Yet many teachers, with the same challenges and issues, return year after year and ultimately stay for 10 or more years. Veteran teachers have similar issues as all teachers: heavy workloads, demanding parents, workshops, interruptions throughout the day, lesson plans, conferences, and, at times, students who do not want to be in the classroom. Teachers, like other professionals, must balance their professional and personal lives, which can be a challenge. Veteran teachers may need to work through health problems and stress from their work that may influence their work performances.

Teaching is for many a rewarding career. However, teachers who burn out and leave the profession attract attention from the media. As greater challenges arise, more teachers seem to leave. Legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind requirement that all teachers must be highly qualified (NCLB 2002; Watkins, 2003), the need for schools to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP; Michigan Department of Education, 2011); and the state mandate for Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) of teachers,
(Michigan Department of Education, 2012), have made teaching more stressful and challenging.

Reasons why veteran teachers have remained in the profession have been the focus of limited research (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Williams, 2003; Williams & Keay, 2011). These teachers have the knowledge and experience that can make their contributions valuable to new teachers who are struggling to remain in the profession. Understanding the secret behind their longevity is important in retaining teachers in the profession. Ultimately, society celebrates youth, but the wealth of experience that comes with age also should be celebrated (Alvy, 2005).

**Statement of the Problem**

Teacher retention is a complicated issue that involves many factors and processes (Shen, 1997). A life in teaching is:

> a stitched-together affair, a crazy quilt of odd pieces and scrounged materials, equal parts invention and imposition. To make a life in teaching is largely to find your own way, to follow this or that thread, to work until your fingers ache, your mind feels as if it will unravel, and your eyes give out, and to make mistakes, and then rework large pieces. (Ayers, 2001, p. 1)

Shen’s (1997) study found that teachers who perceive the profession of teaching to have more advantages than disadvantages tend to stay. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), the advantages and disadvantages include four major factors that explain whether teachers stay in the profession or leave specific schools or the education profession entirely: salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support in the early years.
Bandura’s (1994) writings may provide support that teachers who possess a strong sense of efficacy and who believe that they can handle the most challenging situations are more likely to be motivated to stay in the teaching profession (p. 1).

Perhaps teachers continue to teach because of what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls “happiness.” According to Csikszentmihalyi, optimal experience is something people make happen. Happiness is not something that just happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. Money cannot buy happiness or command power. It does not depend on outside events, but rather on how these events are interpreted. Happiness is a condition that must be prepared, cultivated, and defended privately. In Csikzentimihalyi’s view, “Our perception about our lives are the outcomes of many forces that shape experience, each having an impact on whether we feel good or bad. Most of these forces are outside our control” (p. 2).

In the teaching community, teachers are constantly facing factors and situations that shape their experience and the way they choose to handle those situations may affect how they feel, and the likelihood of their returning to the classroom each day and each year.

Teaching can be difficult and stressful (Albert & Levine, 1988). One problem in schools today is teacher burnout (Corrigan, 1981). Burnout has become a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education (Brouwers & Tonic, 2000). Extensive research can be found on why many have burned out and chose to leave the teaching profession, yet little research provides answers to why many veteran teachers like myself, have chosen to stay for ten or more years.
This study was built on previous research about veteran teachers provided by researchers, such as Albert and Levine, 1988; Nieto, 2003; Steffey, 1989, to name a few, and add another element to the current body of knowledge by collecting information on urban veteran elementary teachers and what encourages and enables them to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. Furthermore, this research can move beyond the simple listing of factors that may have an impact on veteran teachers. The findings could help to understand how veteran teachers’ lived experiences from their (a) background, (b) work environment, (c) survival strategies, and (d) overall job satisfaction has encouraged and enabled them to transition through the years and remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years in spite of the challenging nature of their job.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of my phenomenological study was to understand (a) how veteran elementary teachers in a small urban school district experience job satisfaction; (b) what work environment factors enable them to stay; and (c) what survival strategies they employ. This qualitative study, using a combination of deductive and inductive analyses, included 12 participants who have stayed in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The participants’ reflections of their teaching careers, as defined by their lived experiences, were explored through open-ended interviews.

I narrowed the focus of my qualitative research study by examining the collected data while asking the following four sub questions:

1. What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types
of teacher certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and
time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

2. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their job satisfaction? By job
satisfaction, I mean the motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself,
responsibility and advancement) and hygiene factors (school and district
policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions)
as defined by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) that maintain their
willingness to remain in the teaching profession.

3. What work environment factors play a part in a veteran elementary teacher’s
decisions to remain in the classroom for ten or more years? By work
environment, I mean career development, administration, empowerment,
bureaucracy, relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and career
stages.

4. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their survival strategies? By
survival strategies, I mean external activities that help minimize the stress
resulting from being in the classroom and meeting the challenges that are
established by the school, school district, and the State of Michigan.

**Overview of Research Methods**

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological design to explore the
perspectives of 12 veteran elementary teachers in a small urban district located in the
Midwestern area of the United States concerning what they believed to have encouraged
or enabled them to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.
The small urban school district is located in a suburb adjacent to a large city and is located in the Midwest. The small school district has a student population of 4,181. The district has students from diverse backgrounds. According to the school district’s Pupil Accounting Office, the following ethnic groups are included in the 2011-2012 school population: African American (93.5%), Asian (.5%), Caucasian (4%), Hispanic (.5%), Middle Eastern (.8%), Multi Ethnic (.6%) and Native American (.1%). Based on the percentage of students (64.6%) who qualify for free or reduced lunch, the school qualifies for Title I funding. The average class size in the school district is 17.74 students. The results of the state’s testing program for academic year 2011-2012 found that 9.1% of the students in grades 3-8 were proficient in reading. Five of the seven schools in the school district failed to make annual yearly progress (AYP) in the school year –2011-2012. Only the high school has been identified for corrective action for the school year 2011-2012 (Michigan Department of Education, 2012).

Prior to beginning the data collection process, the study was approved by Western Michigan Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). The researcher met with the superintendent of schools of the small urban district to obtain permission to conduct the study in the district. A convenience sample of 12 veteran elementary teachers was used in the study. The researcher sent an email to all classroom elementary teachers in the district asking for volunteers to participate in the study. Volunteers were asked to email the researcher, indicating their willingness to participate in the study. If more than 12 teachers volunteered, a simple random sample was used to select 12 teachers. No attempts were made to balance the sample by gender, race, or grade level. The teachers were contacted to determine a mutually agreeable time to hold the interview. At the time
of the interview, the researchers had the teacher review the informed consent form and complete the demographic survey.

The participants’ reflections as defined by their lived experiences were explored through open-ended interviews. The intent of the phenomenological analysis was to determine if themes and patterns that emerged from the data could be added to the body of existing knowledge of what enables and encourages veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession. A complete description of the methods that were used to collect and analyze the data for this study is presented in Chapter 3.

**Speculation on the Themes**

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that encourage and enabled veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. This study builds on Nieto’s (2003) premise that teaching can be a very challenging job. If teaching is such a challenging profession, it is important to determine what specific factors encourage and enable veteran teachers to stay.

A conceptual framework identifies and organizes the themes or variables concerning a topic that are available in the literature, in addition to those that I speculated I would find in my research. Those themes that I expected to find in my research from the literature included the themes used in my research questions, including: (a) background, (b) job satisfaction, (c) work environment, and (d) survival strategies.

In this section, themes that I speculated that I might find are suggested. One reason teachers may stay is the reward of watching student growth. From my personal experience, teaching students and watching them grow is rewarding. With all the challenges facing teachers, thinking that students’ learning alone would be enough to
encourage or enable veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years was not reasonable.

Another reason teachers may stay was that they find solace in having someone or something to keep them going. Many teachers may say that their colleagues play a major role because they can relate to these people, sharing their challenges, frustrations, and successes.

An additional reason that teachers might stay is job security. Some teachers might indicate that job satisfaction has decreased over the past several years because of health care cuts, pay freezes, and overcrowded classrooms. They may admit that these changes have not encouraged them to stay, but because of concerns with unemployment and job insecurity, they simply are unwilling to give up their relatively steady “paying” job. Some veteran teachers truly enjoy working with the students.

Veteran teachers also are aware of the importance of using a variety of strategies to keep from internalizing stress related to teaching and other job challenges. To cope with these challenges and when teachers feel overwhelmed, they need access to someone outside of the workforce to be their sounding board (e.g., parents, friends, spouses, significant others). These individuals need to be available for advice, comfort, or to listen without judging.

As an additional way of coping with the stress of teaching, some teachers might seek activities outside of the workplace (e.g., friendship, meditation, or in some case medication or alternative methods to cope) when struggling with job stress. Again many veteran teachers find themselves in a very challenging profession, but truly enjoy what
they do. Being able to overcome many of their challenges could lead to a stronger sense of efficacy and a renewed enthusiasm towards their profession.

The stressful nature of teaching appears to build every year, with burnout seeming to be inevitable if teachers lack an outside release. I expect some teachers may say that their outside releases include spending quality time with spouses, significant others, family, and partaking in frequent spiritual gatherings. Other teachers may seek friendships that energize them; participate in clubs, yoga, deep breathing, meditation, exercise, and hobbies; as well as take vacations. Using these types of outlets tend to diminish effects of burnout that can lead veteran teachers to explain experiences and situations that have encouraged and enabled them to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

I expected my research to provide evidence that job satisfaction is linked to the work environment in which we find ourselves. Many teachers may feel that their colleagues encourage them by providing a well-needed type of camaraderie and outlet for their challenges; and sharing their similar experiences, so they understand the daily demands and stressors associated with being classroom teachers.

Some teachers may say that they enjoy teaching and daily unpredictable encounters with students. They might even say that they enjoy the challenges that arise daily and being able to meet those challenges leaves them feeling fulfilled. While teachers included in the study may describe characteristics and experiences related to various career stages, few may be aware of the various stages by name. Studying factors that encourage and enable veteran teachers to remain in education should add new knowledge to the already existing knowledge base.
Significance of Study

The findings of this study are important to educational stakeholders and provided insight to elementary educators, both beginning teachers, veteran teachers, teachers in between, teachers on the verge of burnout, educational administrators especially in our urban schools, policy makers, students, media, parents, university faculty, and educational researchers. Much emphasis has been placed on retaining new teachers, it may be helpful to look to veteran teachers who choose to stay for 10 or more years to support and retain future veteran teachers (Alvey, 2005). Tapping into the knowledge base of veteran teachers, and sharing their knowledge with incoming teachers, may cause fewer teachers to leave in the future.

Veteran teachers can serve as example to all teachers, as they have given their time, effort, commitment, and dedication to their teaching careers. Through their years of service, veteran teachers have acquired a cornucopia of ideas and resources. They have seen many changes in the educational process and have learned to cope with the changes and remain enthusiastic in their classrooms. Many teachers have been through challenging times, and have learned to cope constructively with demands from administrators and parents. The veteran teachers have learned ways to renew themselves, and are ready to return for another year and continue to return year after year.

Teaching is not an easy profession to which both the veteran and beginning teachers can attest, and at a time when burnout and attrition is becoming commonplace, (Haberman, 2004; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005), the veteran elementary teachers in my study can serve as an example to other teachers. Instead of leaving the profession, the
teachers participating in this study can provide insight regarding effective strategies that veteran teachers have used to help novice teachers become experts at their craft.

Many first year beginning elementary teachers expressed concern on how their course work in their undergraduate programs did not prepare them for the realities often found in the actual classroom that can lead them to not returning for another year. This phenomenological study may provide higher education professors in colleges and universities with an understanding to improve the curriculum design of their teacher education preparation programs and courses. If professors and administrators in teacher preparation at colleges and universities understand strategies that veteran teachers use to remain in the teaching profession, undergraduate curriculum can be enhanced to improve the probability that novice teachers would remain in the classroom, resulting in positive teaching experiences.

This study may provide evidence to college and university faculty as they prepare curricula for aspiring teachers who are preparing for the unknown, challenging world of teaching. For incoming students who may be apprehensive and think of leaving once they begin their teaching careers, this study can provide information regarding the lived experiences of veteran teachers. New teachers need to become aware that their experiences are not unique and that they can survive to become experienced teachers.

The findings may provide support and encouragement to novice teachers when reflecting on the experiences of the veteran teachers. Using this information, they can begin to understand that they are encountering many of the same problems, solutions, successes, and feelings that many teachers who had gone before them experienced.
The findings of this study also can be important to educational administrators and policymakers in school districts with high teacher turnover. Dialogue regarding reasons that novice teachers choose to leave can be studied by understanding why urban veteran teachers in my study chose to remain in their classrooms year after year. Being aware of factors associated with retention in the teaching profession could help school districts develop plans for professional development, school improvement plans, mentoring programs, and new teacher induction programs.

The study findings can help in development of educational policies and decision making at local, state, and federal levels. In an effort to create a better educational system, listening to why and how veteran teacher have successfully stayed in the teaching profession for 10 or more years could provide answers regarding why teachers persevere. Frequent concerns have been raised in the media and from educational stakeholders regarding problems in the educational system. The study findings indicated that while veteran teachers have the same complaints and concerns as novice teachers, they have found a way to endure and thrive in their positions.

The findings of this study also should be of interest to students, parents, and members of the school community. Nelson (2006) wrote that “the turn over kept the school’s staff in constant churn, left too many children learning from brand new teachers, and meant the schools had too few teachers with the wisdom gained from long experience” (p. 27). Ultimately, the community can benefit on many levels when teachers stay in the profession.

Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) asserted that students benefit when they have a veteran teacher in the classroom. The educational qualities that veteran teachers possess
with their many years of experience, knowledge, and stability have the potential to provide qualities that can help students in urban schools become productive citizens and make positive contributions to society.

By identifying what elementary teachers feel about their decisions to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years, can contribute new knowledge on teacher retention. Most previous studies on teacher retention have focused on reasons that teachers leave the profession (Anhorn, 2008; Kopkowski, 2013). Understanding why teachers at the elementary level stay can provide support for novice teachers who may be on the verge of leaving by giving them opportunities to collaborate with veteran teachers and learn what has encouraged and enabled these veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

School districts can encourage veteran teachers to pass their strategies to novice teachers who may be considering leaving the profession for good. Using this information can promote continuity and consistency in the teaching staff.

**Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter II consists of a review of the literature exploring the research on possible factors that are contributing to veteran teachers’ retention in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The literature review includes research from six areas: (a) job satisfaction (b) work environment (c) stress, (d) burnout, (e) resilience, and (f) career stages. Chapter III describes the methodology that was used to address the research questions. Included in this chapter are: a description of the research design, research questions, setting for the study, description of the population and sample, measures taken for ethical protection of participants, role of the researcher, instrumentation, data
collection procedures, and methods used to analyze the data in this qualitative, phenomenological study. Chapter IV presents the results of the qualitative analyses, with a summary and discussion of the study’s findings, relationship of results to existing studies, conclusion, recommendations for future research, and a reflection on the researcher’s experience presented in the fifth chapter.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in Chapter I, the purpose of my phenomenological study is to understand (a) how veteran teachers in a small urban school district experience job satisfaction; (b) what work environment factors enable them to stay, and (c) what survival strategies they employ. This qualitative study, using a combination of deductive and inductive analyses, included 12 participants who have stayed in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

Examining the literature and current research on factors that influence teachers to stay in the profession may provide insight and understanding regarding why they choose to remain. Investigating this literature may also confirm the current thinking on the factors that contribute to teacher retention.

This chapter will discuss the existing literature and research related to the following factors, and the ways in which existing research discuss how these factors are used to motivate veteran teachers and contribute to their decisions to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

- Job satisfaction in the workplace
- Work environment
- Work environment and career development
- Work environment and empowerment
- Work environment and bureaucracy
- Work environment and administration
- Work environment and colleagues
• Work environment and career stages:
  • Anticipatory stage
  • Expert Teacher
  • Renewal
  • Withdrawal
  • Exit
• Stress: Ways to Relieve Stress
• Burnout: Ways to Relieve Burnout
• Resilience

**Job Satisfaction in the Work Place**

As an area of study, research has focused on job satisfaction among workers in the workforce. A great deal of the research has centered on teachers and their satisfaction with their workplace: who experiences it, what constitutes job satisfaction, how does one obtain it, how does one maintain it? In this section, I begin by defining job satisfaction according to the current theory. The focus of the literature presents job satisfaction in a way that is not all inclusive of teachers, but is rather a definition for members of the workforce in general.

According to Herzberg (1959), job satisfaction consists of two separate independent constructs that can result in satisfaction (satisfiers or motivators) and or dissatisfaction (hygienes). The first construct is related to job satisfaction and the second construct is related dimensions to job dissatisfaction. The opposite of satisfaction on the job is not dissatisfaction but “no satisfaction,” and the opposite of dissatisfaction is “no dissatisfaction” rather than satisfaction. This information becomes the basis for
evaluating an individuals’ job and for making changes if needed to increase worker motivation.

Factors that result in job satisfaction are commonly known as satisfiers or motivators (Herzberg, 1959). Motivators are factors that are (essentially) linked to job content, making them intrinsic to the job itself, including: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Hygiene factors, conversely, are factors that are extrinsic to the job and can result in job dissatisfaction: company policies and administration; supervision; working conditions; interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates, and superiors; status; job security; salary; and personal life.

Many factors, including job satisfaction, contribute to motivating teachers to stay in the teaching profession. Herzberg (1996) identified factors that were purely job satisfiers as opposed to job motivators. According to Herzberg, salary was not a motivator, but a satisfier. Giving money to people does not necessarily mean they will be happy, it only means they will complain less about the lack of money. In addition, Karpinski (1985) noted that “compensation was a basic ingredient of job satisfaction; however, when a certain level of monetary reward was achieved, compensation no longer provided as great an incentive” (p.22). Most teachers are motivated by achievement, recognition, and visibility (Steffey, 1989, p.13).

Using research findings, I explored factors that are commonly cited as relevant in employee perceptions as to whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs and attempt to connect these factors to the teaching profession. Much of the literature focuses on current theory of commonly perceived intrinsic and extrinsic factors (e.g., stability, compensation, love of the job, love for the children) associated with job satisfaction that
are seen as an investment for the future. In addition, other factors that emerge from
discussions with veteran elementary teachers in my study may be important in
determining the extent to which these factors are contributing to job satisfaction. The
literature also shows what can be done to avoid burnout. The literature describes how job
satisfaction can be change throughout career stages that teachers go through, consciously
or unconsciously. Job satisfaction is a term that is used to describe how teachers feel
about their jobs at any given time.

Bromfield (2000) argued that many professions are considered difficult and
challenging; however, the teaching profession may be considered one of the most
difficult and challenging, considering what teachers do each day (e.g., welcoming pupils,
all who differ in ability, coping with different learning styles, motivation levels,
concentration, health, and self-esteem). To confound an already complicated situation
further; on any day and at any moment, children can vary in mood based on whether they
were sent to school well fed or hungry, rested or exhausted, encouraged with a tender hug
or belittled with harsh words and a good riddance. On occasion, one or more of these
children may be encountering a catastrophic situation, such as homelessness, loss of
family income, family illness, death, divorce, or abuse that can interfere with the teaching
learning dyad.

According to Nieto (2003), “Even under the best of circumstances, teaching is a
demanding job, and most teachers do not work under the best of circumstances” (p. 3).
To support Nieto’s statement, Bromfield (2000) provided several more examples of what
teachers might encounter in such a demanding job such as “teachers dealing with parents’
psyches, often facing worried angry, critical, threatening, or otherwise stressed and distressed mothers and fathers” (p. 108).

As Merrow (2000) pointed out, the world of teachers is one of small victories and dozens of routine indignities: constant interruptions from the public address system, hall patrol, lunchroom duty, and the impossibility of taking a bathroom break when nature calls. Although, some veteran teachers frequently are heard complaining, ventilating, and freely expressing their displeasure with the workplace; many of these veteran teachers stay. Albert and Levine (1988) found that, despite all of this, most teachers are satisfied with most aspects of the job; satisfied enough to stay. Even with all of these challenges, Bishay’s (1996) reflected that “teachers are arguably the most important group of professionals for our nation’s future” (p. 147). Yet, many teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs and feel underappreciated.

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) study on job satisfaction concluded that “dissatisfaction” is a relative term. One can love one’s job and still be displeased with some aspects of it, and try to improve what is not perfect.” (p. 160). This conclusion may speak to what veteran teachers feel. Teaching in schools is not the perfect, ideal situation and presents an array of challenges. Veteran teachers who have been on the job for 10 or more years have learned to adapt to those challenges, or as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) stated, have found a way to improve on what is not perfect. The way one sees the job and how others perceive the job all play a part in job satisfaction. Everyone has a different perspective on how satisfied or dissatisfied workers are with their job.

Much of the research has shown that job dissatisfaction, primarily due to poor salary, poor administrative support, and student discipline problems are among the most
frequent reasons teachers give for leaving the profession. (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005, p. 1108). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) conducted a study on the state of dissatisfaction among American workers. While he concluded that dissatisfaction is relative, he also asserted that individuals generally could be happy with their jobs, but be dissatisfied with specific aspects associated with their jobs. They can attempt to improve what is not perfect. In his study, American workers tended to mention three main complaints for dissatisfaction with their jobs. The first, and perhaps most important complaint, concerned the lack of “variety and challenge” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 161). The second has to do with conflicts with other people on the job, especially supervisors. The third complaint involves burnout, too much pressure, too much stress, too little time to think for oneself, and too little time to spend with the family.

These complaints may be true because they refer to objective conditions, yet they can be address by a subjective shift in one’s consciousness. For example, “variety and challenge are in one sense inherent characteristics of jobs, but they also depend on how one perceives opportunities” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 161). For teachers, a definite need exists to provide some sense of variety; and change things around. If not, the boredom could become too great. If one wanted to avoid being bored or leaving the teaching profession, variety and challenge, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggested, are the key. “Whether a job has a variety or not ultimately depends more on a person’s approach to it than on actual working conditions” (p. 161).

The second complaint was in reference to conflicts with other people on the job, especially supervisors. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted that “getting along with co-workers and supervisors might be difficult, but generally can be managed if one makes
the attempt” (p. 161). However, getting along might be more difficult than Csikszentmihalyi implied. The work environment is comprised of many different personality types that, at times make it difficult to control interactions with each person without offending anyone, especially if one is an introvert or a self-proclaimed loner. Trying to fit becomes a challenge, but is manageable. Veteran teachers finding ways to work cohesively with co-workers and supervisors in non-adversarial ways has added even more credibility to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) study.

The third complaint involved burnout, created by too much pressure, too much stress, too little time to think for oneself, and too little time to spend with one’s family. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) posited, “stress exists only if we experience it, it takes the most extreme objective conditions to cause it directly” (p. 161). These challenges are very subjective; no one size fits all. Similar levels of pressure that can cause difficult for one person can be a “welcome challenge to another” (p. 161). It is up to the individual to fill whatever void is missing. One is to form a balance in life, not to be dictated to by others. Each individual knows what feels right, what is right for him/her, and what is needed at any given time in his/her life. As Csikszentmihalyi (1990) added:

There are hundreds of ways to relieve stress, some based on better organization, delegation of responsibility, better communication with co-workers and supervisors, others are based on factors external to the job, such as improved home life, leisure patterns, or inner disciplines like transcendental meditation.” (p. 161)

Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) defined behavior that is intrinsically motivated as people’s immediate reaction to their experiences regarding
what happened when they were participating in an activity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) proposed that individuals reached a state of happiness and satisfaction when their involvement in an activity reached a level that was all encompassing and they enjoyed their experiences to the extent that they were willing to participate in the activity just for fun. He defined this experience as “flow,” which occurred when people perceived that being able to participate in an activity at the same level as their abilities enabled them to complete the tasks successfully. Csikszentmihalyi’s flow could be controlled, not left to chance, by setting challenges for oneself and selecting tasks that were neither too difficult; nor too simple.

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concluded:

that the more time a person spent in flow during the week, the better was the overall quality of his or her reported experience. People who were more often in flow were especially likely to feel “strong,” “active,” “creative,” “concentrated,” and motivated. (p.158)

Although Csikszentmihalyi’s study was concerned with general optimal job satisfaction for many professions, his study results are applicable to the teaching profession. To obtain general optimal job satisfaction, one must be willing to use a variety of strategies to meet challenges that may arise in the teaching profession. Veteran teachers have been in the teaching profession for 10 or more years and have remained because they adapt to changing situations, while other teachers fail to seek alternative strategies and may be reluctant to change. Many veteran teachers opt for different approaches, such as trying different strategies and constantly seeking to refine their skills. Veteran teachers are known for being resilient and resourceful. Veteran teachers have
stayed in the profession and used their resourcefulness to find a variety of strategies and methods to continue challenging themselves when boredom and routine occurs.

A final component of job satisfaction involves extrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated teachers may choose to participate in certain extracurricular school activities only if there is monetary gain or reward, such as a possible promotion of some sort. Whereas, others may see the value of giving back to the community or contributing to the young minds of the future as reward and recognition enough. Although job satisfaction plays a role in motivating teachers to remain in their position, pay incentives generally are unsuccessful in increasing that motivation. Teachers do not enter the profession for money (Steffey, 1989). Bobek (2002) wrote, “teacher satisfaction was contingent on levels of autonomy, perceived, and recognized accomplishments, and supportive collegial relationships” (p. 204).

According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), when individuals were intrinsically motivated, they engaged in activities because they were interested in and enjoyed their participation. When extrinsically motivated, individuals engaged in activities for instrumental or other reasons, such as receiving a reward. Although motivation can be linked to rewards that were either extrinsic or intrinsic, the rewards should be closely related to the event for which they are being given to be most effective. Administrators who held frank discussions with their staff benefited from knowing what was important, and therefore were able to offer meaningful rewards (Steffey, 1989). According to the American philosopher, James (as cited in Karpinski, 1985) “The deepest principle in human nature is craving to be appreciated” (p.22). Steffey (1989) pointed out that
teachers have a strong need to be recognized for their contributions. They need to know that the countless hours of dedicated service were noted and appreciated.

School administrators recognize how important it is to have high morale among their teachers and other staff. When these people know their efforts are appreciated, and that they are personally respected by those with whom they work, they are encouraged to give maximum service and a high degree of professionalism. (Karpinski, 1985, p. 22)

An association was found between job satisfaction and the levels of empowerment inherent in their jobs (Davis & Wilson, 2000). They suggested that teachers who have greater participation in decision making are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction. When people are satisfied in their choice of profession, they tend to want to continue in that line of work, which may be true for the teaching profession. When administrators, other teachers, and parents recognize a teacher’s successes, job satisfaction can increase. Bobek (2002) asserted that teachers are more motivated to remain in their classrooms when they are recognized for their work, despite encountering disappointing situations. Teachers who were congratulated and recognized were motivated to stay in the teaching profession despite possible discouraging experiences (Bobek, 2002). According to Karpinski (1985), results of surveys completed by teachers indicated that school personnel had a strong desire for positive recognition. Some suggestions for recognition included: plaques of commendation, recognition in staff notes, district newsletters, written praise with evaluation, verbal compliments, and teacher-of-the-month or teacher appreciation days. Karpinski also suggested that ways that principals also could reward their teachers by providing teachers with opportunities
to be involved in administrative decisions, developing a school environment that is both comfortable and positive, and encouraging teachers to assume responsibility for situations in which they can be successful. Maslow’s (1954) theory of self-actualization is a concept that was attributed to one of his mentors, Goldstein (1934/1995). According to Maslow (1954), self-actualization is the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their abilities and to strive to be the best they could and fulfill the need to maximize one’s potential. Self-actualization is the motivation that people have to work toward fulfilling their potential and become all that they are capable of becoming. Figure 1 presents Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](image)

*Figure 1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)*

Some teachers may find the profession quite fulfilling with daily events considered challenges that can be overcome. Other teachers may believe the challenges are too great and become disenchanted, dissatisfied, and become ready to withdraw. Veteran teachers often try to avoid burnout, and remain in the teaching profession for one more year and then one more year, until they reach retirement. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) found that burnout among teachers could be attributed to too much pressure, too much
stress, too little time for oneself, and too little time to spend with one’s family or friends outside of the job.

The ways that an individual views their job and how others perceive their job contribute to a person’s job satisfaction. The term occupational prestige emphasizes this point. Occupational prestige refers to the esteem in which an occupation is held by individuals or groups in a particular society. Some occupations are highly esteemed in the sense that people generally perceive them to be more important and desirable (Albert & Levine, 1988). According to Albert and Levine:

Occupations with high prestige tend to include those that are perceived as making a particularly valuable contribution to society and which require a high level of education or skill and little manual or physical labor. The job of elementary and secondary teachers has historically ranked relatively high on this aspect of social status. (p. 51)

The social statuses of people often are determined by their jobs, with status affected by supply and demand (Albert & Levine, 1988). When supply exceeds demand for a particular job, the status declines. This decline in status is particularly apparent in education.

Steffey’s (1989) research on career stages indicated that teacher reward could assume almost any form; and helps motivate expert/master teachers to try to reach self-actualization. “The possibilities for meaningful reward are limitless” (Steffey, 1989, p. 79.) Teachers feel the reward should benefit the receiver and be perceived as more positive than negative. The behavior for which the reward is awarded should be confirmable, with the reasons for the reward perceptible by peers and colleagues.
Identifying the rewards was not the most difficult challenge. The difficulty is in matching the right reward to the right expert/master teacher (Steffey, 1989).

**Work Environment**

Buckley, Schneider, and Shang (2005) claimed that “few would challenge the assertion that teacher attrition is a major component of the school staffing problem in the United States.” (p. 1107). Yet some teachers decide to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The role of the work environment needs to be explored in helping retain teachers.

The internal work environment may play a part in motivating veteran teachers to remain in the teaching profession. Determining the specific work environment conditions that contribute to veteran teachers’ decisions to stay in their profession needs to be studied. Research on this topic includes: (a) job demands, (b) career development (c) empowerment, and (d) bureaucracy.

**Job Demands**

In comparing schools of 20 years ago with those of today, major differences can be observed. One difference is the increased presence of standardized testing. Test results are publicly available and have become a prime focal point for public evaluation of the school and school district (Steffy, 1989) Some states have adopted test results to determine if school systems are in compliance with state curricular requirements, including the No Child Left Behind mandates. Steffey (1989) pointed out that curriculum laws in some states require that planned core courses are developed with performance or behavioral objectives for the course. Teachers must include designated evaluation techniques for each objective, as well as time delineations required for each activity.
Accountability has created a need for sharper, more detailed evaluation systems of teaching. Steffey (1989) suggested that the “various forms of accountability have permanently changed the infrastructure of schools, and the nature of teaching as it has been conceptualized for the past one hundred years or more” (p. 6). Steffey continued that schools have become systematized, with trends pointing to more system, not less. The major goal, according to Steffey, of such systems is predictability, which is achieved at the loss of spontaneity. In this sense, teaching is less fun today than perhaps 40 years ago. Through mandates, routines, and recordkeeping, teachers are constantly being monitored and evaluated on their performance.

**Career Development**

According to Walshe (1998), professional development is considered normal for professions such as engineering and medicine, but teachers are not afforded the same degree of professional development opportunities. Like other professions, career development allows the professional to stay up-to-date regarding current trends. As the world changes, so does the child and therefore teaching strategies also must evolve. Professional development must be available for teachers throughout their careers (Corrigan, 1981). Most administrators think that first year teachers need in-service training more than veteran teachers. However, veteran teachers also benefit from participation in professional development. Experienced teachers have seen new educational concepts and reforms come and go. Giving these teachers opportunities to remain current in their fields is important. In addition, encouraging them to collaborate with colleagues and minimize the isolation of the classroom can help decrease the probability of burnout. Corrigan (1981) argued: “in a world rocked with the explosion of
knowledge, the public and the teaching profession must begin to realize that the continually learning teacher is as important as the continually learning child.” (p. 31) Through ongoing professional development opportunities teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the content they teach, stay informed of the latest research, and ensure the skills they teach are aligned to the most current workplace standards. While everything old is not necessarily bad and needs to be thrown out, not everything new is necessarily the best. Teachers must be given opportunities to be exposed to various methods, allowed to weigh the pros and cons of each, and emerge with the most effective methods.

Steffey (1985) argued that teachers leave teaching because of low pay, as well as working conditions. Work environment and organizational working conditions are factors associated with teacher job satisfaction that needs to be considered to retain teachers. Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) suggested that if administrators can determine how the organizational work characteristics of schools are connected with the lack of teacher satisfaction, they can develop a plan to change the work environment. These changes can affect teacher’s career satisfaction. Teachers who are satisfied with their workplace tend to feel less of a need to leave those workplaces. When administrators match factors in the workplace to teachers’ intrinsic goals, job satisfaction is enhanced. This may be an important reason regarding why veteran teachers stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

**Empowerment**

According to Shen (1997), traditionally teachers are not encouraged to be part of the decision-making process. Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) discussed Hall’s
model of career development where Hall defined “organizational work conditions as the
critical factors in promoting a “cycle” of career success. Organizations that provide
professionals with a high level of autonomy are more likely to enhance the career
satisfaction of their employees” (p. 60).

The teaching profession requires its employees to stay current in their respective fields. A substantial body of research focused on teachers becoming experts in their fields. In the teaching profession, teachers attend workshops and seminars to increase their existing knowledge base. In addition, teachers are encouraged to further their education, attaining higher degrees. Some teachers increase their knowledge base to keep their professional teaching certificate current and ensure continuing employment, while others seek the intrinsic value of furthering their educational degrees beginning with their bachelors’ degree, moving to their master’s degree and finally achieving the doctoral degree. Veteran teachers have a sense of renewal as they participate in continuing education (Steffey, 1989), while adding to their professional knowledge. When teachers keep abreast of the current research, they feel empowered and welcome chances to participate in the decision-making process. Instead of being on the receiving end of a top-down environment with little say in the process, they want to feel as though they have an investment in school administrative concerns. They want to feel as though their input matters and administrators want teacher responses to be based on research not on whimsical thoughts. Teachers need to feel that they are a part of the vision and want to see it grow. When teachers feel important and realize that their opinion matters, their job satisfaction levels are improved and may add to their teaching career longevity.
Teachers deal with the needs of the students on a daily basis. This “‘hands on’ knowledge has not been utilized by most school sites as teachers have traditionally been excluded from decision making processes” (Davidson, 2002, p. 6). Veteran teachers, who have been working in the field for extended periods, should be a contributing part of the decision making process in their schools and school districts.

Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) agreed that expertise also influences teachers’ perceptions of their sense of professionalism. With that expertise, teachers need to have opportunities to participate in decision making. As Hill (1995) pointed out another strategy that allows teachers to feel a sense of power is to delegate (p. 34).

According to Conley et al. (1989), teachers need to see themselves as professionals who can work independently, but also collaboratively as well. Veteran teachers who have been in the profession for some time would probably agree with Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) that teachers are capable of exemplary professionalism. According to Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990), experienced teachers appear to be more concerned with their own personal discretion and autonomy. Conley et al. (1989) argued that “teachers expect to have a high level of work autonomy, to serve as their own judges, and to be highly involved in decision making” (p.60). Conley et al. further concluded that teachers often have feelings of job dissatisfaction because of their lack of autonomy and their inability to make decisions that affect their school or classrooms. When teachers perceive they are powerless and lack influence regarding decisions, they may begin to question their value and participation in the school and school district. When teachers have been in their positions for extended periods and have had responsibility for dealing with student problems and concerns, they may feel that their voices should be heard (Practitioner’s
Chat, 2007). From Merrow’s (2000) perspective, a school is a community and everybody has input into events that happen in a community. (p.50). Veteran teachers, because of their experiences, should be consulted and included in the decision making.

**Bureaucracy**

The bureaucratic nature of the teaching profession is a world of routines and administrative policies and procedures. Bureaucracy usually associated with low creativity and rigid rules. According to Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989), bureaucracy is a term that leaders of an organization attempt to create certainty and enhance predictability through such mechanisms as specifying rules, often through written procedures. In schools, bureaucracy may clarify expectations for teachers and provide direction for their work activities. (p. 61)

Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) also pointed out that a conflict may exist between the bureaucracy in schools and the autonomy that teachers seek as professionals. When a school’s bureaucracy has too many limitations and restraints, teacher academic freedom may be controlled. From the teachers’ perspective, this control can be construed as a limitation on their decision making and autonomy in the school organization. Along with the possible routine and mundane nature of work activities and teachers’ decreased autonomy may result in lack of challenge, alienation, and dissatisfaction. Lower levels of autonomy can lead to decreased job satisfaction. In Merrow’s (2000) view, most teachers want to be good at their jobs, but they are often working in systems that prevent that from happening (p. 50). As stated above, bureaucracy of an establishment lends itself to little creativity. Bureaucracies have fixed procedures that are defined by administration. Some
requirements are mandatory, yet these requirements can be accomplished in many ways. Veteran teachers have worked with this type of bureaucracy for many years. In many situations, teachers are given specific instructions regarding the scope and sequence of their classroom lessons. Veteran teachers have been working under this type of regimen and yet they continue to stay in the profession. Understanding how veteran teachers deal with the routine and mundane nature of which Conley et al. (1989) spoke is important. Veteran teachers have found ways to infuse their lessons with energy to minimize the routine nature of their work. Teachers need to be creative, because they are working within explicit limitations. Some alternative methods that they can use to remain motivated include: open communication with administration and working cooperatively with colleagues to develop various instructional strategies that can provide several outcomes to work toward and accomplish a common goal. Although there are limits, allowing teachers to be a part of the decision-making and providing a sense of autonomy can attribute to a less burdensome bureaucracy.

Classrooms present another element in the work environment and contribute to job satisfaction. Several components; such as class size, classroom layout, nature of students, physical environment (heat, light, etc.); can affect teachers’ ability to provide effective instruction. According to Conley et al. (1989), “the first and most obvious is class size” (p. 63). Class sizes of 30 or more students in an elementary setting present many challenges. Teachers often feel that large classes prevent them from performing as professionals. Although teaching can occur, the individual attention from which elementary students especially benefit becomes more limited. The layout of the classroom may make it necessary to vary strategies because of limited space. Another
component according to Conley et al. is the nature of students. Teachers may view students who have learning problems and or are unruly as obstacles rather than challenges to their professional goals. In these cases, teachers often indicate that they police rather than instruct students. Consequently, Conley, et al. (1989) concluded that manageable class size, absence of student learning problems, and the absence of discipline problems represent factors in the work environment that may positively affect the job satisfaction of teachers. In today’s schools, student learning problems and disciplinary problems exist, so these challenges may influence the extent to which teachers are satisfied with the job and may influence their decisions to remain in the job.

The physical environment of the school can be an issue. Buckley, Schneider, and Shang (2005) noted that most, if not all, teaching occurs in a specific physical location (usually a school building) and the quality of that location can affect the ability of teachers to teach, teacher morale, and the health and safety of teachers. They also found that the research linking the effects of the quality of school’s physical environment to teacher retention has been limited. School buildings in the United States are, on average, over 40 years old, the age when rapid deterioration often begins. Buckley et al. (2005) suggested that the public should expect problems with school facilities to increase in the near future, as the aging of the building, along with toxins, asbestos, cancer-causing elements may be a concern.

Many factors play a role in teachers remaining in the teaching profession. Conley et al. (1989) agreed that the overall school organization, not simply the individual teacher, should be analyzed. Research has found that when schools do not provide
administrative support, reasonable class size, empowerment where employees have a say in decision making, the result can be low professional commitment (Conley et al., 1989).

**Administration**

Wimpelberg (1986) argued that positive links between administrators and teachers are important in creating a positive school climate (p. 16). When administrators match factors in the workplace to their teachers’ intrinsic goals, job satisfaction that appears to be key to why veteran teachers may stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years is improved. As Hill (1995) stated the principal or superintendent holds the key. Findings by Conley et al. (1989) also suggested, “that improving the design of teachers’ jobs and the administrative structures of schools are also critical in enhancing teacher motivation and retention” (p. 76). Steffey (1989) agreed that the relationship between teachers and their immediate superiors is important in keeping motivated expert/master teachers as confident and contributing members of the organization.

**Colleagues**

Clement (1999) viewed a support group as more than a circle of friends or a circle of colleagues. Clement stated that “a support group consists of colleagues and friends who meet specific needs, both professional and emotional” (p. 322). From Brown’s perspective, a support group shapes (2003) “the professional culture of schools [that] may well affect teacher retention over the long term” (p. 20).

**Career Stages**

According to Huberman (1993), teaching is far more than a profession. It is a way of life. Several researchers (Huberman, 1993; Steffey, 1989; Super, 1990) have developed theories regarding career stage, although they may be named stages, phases, or
Huberman’s professional life cycles. Most teachers go through these stages during their teaching careers.

Just as we go through many stages in life: birth, childhood, young adult, midlife, and death, so is true for teachers who also go through stages in their teaching profession referred to as career stages (Steffey, 1989). Career stages are phases with identifiable and changeable characteristics that educators go through during their teaching career. It is based on the idea that people basically are good, and are providing support for Maslow’s (1954) self-actualization theory. As teachers move through the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, they begin to fulfill their potential and become confident and contributing adults in the work environment (Steffey, 1989). The objective of the teaching stages is to provide a possible rationale regarding teachers’ feelings, actions, and reactions at different times throughout their teaching careers. The timing of the stages can vary depending on the support system and the extent to which reinforcement is available (Steffey, 1989).

According to Steffey (1989), the five-career stage model of classroom teaching include: 1-anticipatory stage, 2-expert/master stage, 3-renewal stage, 4-withdrawal stage, and 5-exit stage.

Specific characteristics often are equated with each stage, but can vary from person to person. Some teachers possess all of the characteristics of a particular stage; while others exhibit only a few. Although teachers go through these stages at varying times during their careers, most, if not all will move through all of the stages if they remain in the profession long enough. According to Steffey (1989), the various career stages provide a continuum for teachers from the start to retirement. For example, the beginning first year teacher starts his/her career with enthusiasm and excitement, not
knowing what is ahead of them in their new teaching adventure, with the final stages in a teacher’s career reflected in burnout and emotional exhaustion that provides the impetus for making a final decision to leave the teaching profession.

Steffey’s career stages provide a viable explanation why some teachers’ motivations are based on internal factors instead of focusing exclusively on external rewards. The stages that she describes may explain why teachers are more motivated at certain times during their teaching careers. The longer one stays in the teaching profession, the more likely veteran teachers can be expected to move through the stages and exhibit characteristics associated with that particular stage.

Veteran teachers are defined in this study as certified teachers who have taught in an educational setting for 10 or more years. Teachers who qualify under those terms progress through the stages that are explored throughout the literature. Steffey believed that:

as teachers work within their roles and within schools, their orientation toward work, their ideas of self, their vibrancy, and their enthusiasm undergo changes . . . . There appear to be some definite orientations towards work, which I have called “stages” that can identify teachers at a particular time in their careers. (p. x).

When teachers recognize their current stages, they can change their “orientations” regarding how they handle their jobs. Steffy (1989) asserted that teachers who have supportive colleagues and knowledgeable administrators recognize the different stages through which they are progressing and change their orientation to the job accordingly. According to Steffey (1989):
The career stages model . . . is based on the premise that what keeps the fire burning bright inside a teacher is internal. Therefore, important changes in what teachers perceive about their roles and what continues to keep them going are fundamentally anchored in their internal orientation. (p. 1).

Steffey (1989) continued that “a teacher’s internal orientation to teaching is not stable. Rather, it is fragile, permeable, regenerative, and expandable. Because teachers are human, their orientation to work is renewable” (p. xi).

**Anticipatory Stage**

Anticipatory teachers can be a first year teacher coming in on their first teaching job assignment since graduation or a teacher who has worked in another district. In either instance, it is seen as a new beginning. The recent graduate is an anticipatory teacher who is idealistic. They plan to become teachers, and in four years of the educational process, their goal has been realized. They enter the profession believing they can make a difference. They have had years of teacher preparatory courses. They have heard and read both positive and negative positions on the educational system, and feel that their fresh perspective allows them to implement their innovative and creative ideas. Teachers at this stage of their career are open to new ideas and are full of energy. They consider no teaching job too big or too small. Without complaint, they volunteer for committees, coaching assignments, and tutoring. They are often the first people in the school in the morning and the last ones to leave in the evening (Steffey, 1989).
Expert/Master Teacher Stage

The expert teacher is the second stage of the five-stage career model. Steffey asserted that “expert /master teachers come in all ages, sizes, and shapes. They represent all races and genders” (p. 66). They exemplify the helping role of the perceiver as created by Carkhuff’s model (as cited in Lloyd & Maas, 1993) that focused on empathy, respect, warmth, concreteness, genuineness, self-disclosure, confrontation, and immediacy.

According to Steffey (1989), the expert/master teacher enjoys learning and thrives on all types of professional development programs. The expert/master teacher is receptive to new ideas for teaching his/her students. Becoming an expert/master teacher is a pivotal factor in a teacher’s career. These teachers are acknowledged by their peers, the administration, the students, and parents as the best in their fields. Their characteristics, even their quirks, are part of the definition of the superb professional. They embrace Maslow’s self-actualization theory by actively seeking responsibility and working hard to achieve success (Steffey p.23) As Steffey noted:

   Nothing remains static . . . The expert/master teacher is continually evolving, getting better, but when the process stops, and the teacher begins to move in a different direction, he/she begins to slip into another career stage known as the renewal stage. (p. 24)

Renewal Stage

Over time when routines start to breed dullness and teachers feel that they have become jaded about teaching, they must take action to renew themselves (Steffey, 1989). The renewal stage is a form of rebirth and is a time of increased energy and maintaining a positive attitude. For veteran teachers, the renewal stage is a commitment to growth when
teachers become in harmony with one’s senses and are ready to assume more risk-taking behavior. According to Steffey (1989), “the renewal stage is not a state, it is a process. It is ‘becoming.’ . . . Renewal is the process of reaching, growing, trying, risking, thinking, and improving. . . . Renewal is transition” (p. 96). In the renewal stage, teachers become aware of new reasons for becoming excited about teaching. During this stage, they become more open to new ideas and questions. These teachers use a different perspective to confront unresolved issues and context from previous years. For this stage, teachers develop a fresh viewpoint and are willing to offer answers and solutions to unresolved issues. Steffey (1989) continued that teachers in the renewal stage are emotional. They are passionate about what drives them and what they believe as teachers. Teachers at this career stage believe that they can make a difference and believe in their influence as teachers. They are “capable of long periods of sustained high energy” (p. 84) and are always working. Their aspirations about what they can do and what their students can do are realistic. Unlike many of their colleagues, they believe that their hard work is actually able to make a difference in their students’ lives.

Steffey (1989) stated teachers in the renewal stage are “re-motivated and re-energized” (p. 31). The teacher in renewal is a source of motivation for other teachers. These teachers feel a new surge of professional energy, are curious, and become observers. Teachers at this career stage tend to view their profession from a positive perspective, gaining inspiration from their work and students. Steffey used the example that teachers in the renewal stage “are like farmers who find every spring filled with the same promise as the first one” (p. 86). Steffy continued that:
Teachers in renewal are zealous but not humorless. They aren’t so filled with their own importance that they can’t find perspective in their work. . . They have a sense of humor about themselves, about their own foibles, and about humanity. . . . They are patient with humanity, but impatient with the changing conditions that strangle humanity in prejudice, ignorance, and intolerance. (p.85)

Steffey asserted that “teachers in renewal are childlike for they shut out the world and teach. Teachers in renewal are the Peter Pan in our schools. Teachers in renewal never lose their wonder of the world. (p.86)

An important factor in the renewal stage is teachers’ perceptions of how the organization treats each person (Steffey, 1989). From Steffey’s perspective, “teachers in renewal are getting better, not worse, and are involved in some growth activity designed to lead them to the expert/master teacher stage” (p. 30). For renewal to occur, growth and development activities must be considered important for individual teachers. Teachers must be committed to and focused on the growth goal. “Renewal cannot be mandated. It requires the personal commitment of the teacher, the desire to explore, to seek out, to stretch, and to grow (p.88).

Veteran teachers who have experienced the renewal stage while teaching the same grade year after year, easily can become bored with the same routine. Breathing new life into old routines can help alleviate stress when burnout seems close.

Steffey continued to describe teachers in the renewal stage of career development as idealistic and energetic, as well as ready to learn and apply new concepts and knowledge. According to Steffey (1989), teachers entering this stage are frequently
moving from the early stages of withdrawal. Renewal is marked by an intensity of feelings, perceptions, and an internal awareness of the need for change. The first one to recognize if a teacher is moving toward withdrawal is the teacher. Some teachers can sense the beginning signs of burnout. They notice that their attitudes are different, their satisfaction with the job is decreasing, and they are feeling bored with the routine. While these teachers have thought of themselves as expert/master teachers, they are aware that their attitudes toward teaching are changing in subtle ways. Some teachers are able to put themselves into a state of renewal. Recognizing the early signs, they seek out ways to reanimate themselves by exploring new models of teaching, and choosing to take a college course, attend a conference, or join a professional organization. Teachers in renewal are learning to do things differently, expand their knowledge base and develop new areas of competence. These teachers are excited about the prospects of what they have decided to learn. Regardless of the path chosen by teachers in the renewal stage of their careers, they find ways to become re-motivated and re-energized. Their growth activity during this stage is designed to lead them back to the expert/master teacher stage. While every teacher may not return to or reach the expert/master teacher stage, they make an effort to make it through this career stage by using renewal strategies.

Steffey (1989) warned that efforts for renewal might not be supported by administrators. Administrators and the school system need to support their teachers while they are in the renewal stage, because one cynical word from administrators can result in all efforts toward renewal stopping.
Withdrawal Stage

The withdrawal career stage is the most neglected phase. Administrators need to be ready to intervene and assist teachers who are at this phase of career development. The three parts of this career stage are: initial withdrawal, persistent withdrawal, and deep withdrawal.

Teachers in the initial withdrawal usually are referred to as adequate and perform their jobs satisfactorily. They tend not to seek to improve themselves and have no desire to attend workshops or conferences. These teachers are predictable and dependable, but are considered dull, unimaginative, and steadfast in their beliefs (Steffey, 1989).

Teachers in the persistent withdrawal stage are most often associated with the burned-out teachers. They work hard to identify deficiencies in the system and seem to enjoy sharing those shortcomings with others who are willing to listen. They can be verbally critical of the school system including administration, parents, community, students, and at times, other teachers. They resist change and would rather critique and find fault rather than volunteer their service to help improve the system. According to Steffey (1989), teachers at this stage of career development stay in the profession long after they have ceased to be productive, contributing professionals.

The third stage of the withdrawal exit stage is deep withdrawal. These teachers appear completely inept and may never have possessed the skills of the expert/master teacher. At this stage, it may be virtually impossible to re-train them. Teachers at this stage may not recognize their faults; they certainly would not label themselves as incompetent, and blame is always placed on others, but never on themselves. From an administrative perspective, these may be the most difficult teachers with whom to work.
and early retirement, a career change, or a “buy out” are some of the most preferred options for removing these teachers from classrooms.

**Exit Stage**

Teachers in the exit stage are contemplating leaving the school system. They may leave for a myriad of reasons. Some teachers may be having second thoughts on selecting the teaching profession in the first place, with some feeling that it is time to start a second career (Steffey, 1989).

Of Steffey’s (1989) five-stage career model, the renewal stage may be the most influential for veteran teachers, as this stage appears to be a bridge from the excitement and confidence in one’s skill at the anticipatory and expert/master teacher stages to the withdrawal and exit stages that represent the possible downslide of teachers in the profession. Veteran teachers in the renewal stage need to realize if their motivation begins to decline, they must be willing to take necessary actions to renew themselves. Otherwise, as they begin to show signs of burnout, and move into the exit stage, leaving the school system becomes unavoidable.

**Veteran Teachers’ Rejuvenation and Survival Strategies**

According to Nieto (2003), even under the best of circumstances, teaching is a demanding job and most teachers do not work under the best circumstances (p. 3). Anderson and Iwanicki (1984) made the assertion that:

Teacher motivation is a crucial concern in education. Classroom teachers are faced with many problems, including an increase in the number and severity of discipline problems, an increase in community discontent with the operation of its schools, the threat of job security as student
population decrease, and an increase in vandalism and violence. Teachers are struggling to find satisfaction through fulfillment of their professional needs. (p. 109)

Most individuals in the teaching profession are aware of at least one teacher who comes to school with a cheerful disposition. With a smile, they always seem happy, and never seem to have a bad day. This description could fit many teachers, but when a veteran teacher who has been in the teaching profession for 10 or more years has the same temperament, it astonishes administrators and other teachers. After 10 or more years, veteran teachers are still faced with the same bureaucracy, and have the same issues with challenging parents and students who are even more challenging. After many years in the teaching profession, some veteran teachers continue to come to school with positive dispositions, while others with similar teaching backgrounds and experiences appear to have negative attitudes regarding their chosen careers. Questions need to be addressed regarding why some veteran teachers remain motivated, instead of discouraged. This type of veteran teacher has discovered survival strategies that work for them and therefore they are able to endure such a challenging work environment.

**Stress**

In this section, I discuss the current research that shows the strategies that veteran teachers implement in order to survive in the teaching profession. I intend to examine the research on stress, ways to relieve stress, burnout, ways to avoid burnout, and attrition. Research on how stress may lead to the decision to depart from the teaching profession and ways to become resilient in spite of the challenges that the teaching profession may present.
Teaching along with jobs in medicine, the social services, fire rescue, and law enforcement, have been rated as some of the most stressful jobs according to some studies (Schultz, 2008). Albert and Levine (1988) also recognized that “like other occupations, teaching has difficult and stressful moments, but over the past 30 years, researchers have shown more interest in examining stress in the teaching profession (p. 49). The teaching profession has and will most likely always involve some sort of stress. However the negative outcomes associated with stress are apparent when teachers become overwhelmed (Nagel & Brown, 2003, p. 257)

Clement (1999) made the assertion that:

. . . one of the most difficult, stressful occupations today must surely be that of the classroom teacher. Who else is charged with the awesome responsibility of preparing our children for the future? And who else is expected to fulfill this critical responsibility in the face of so many roadblocks? (p. 322)

According to Reglin and Reitzammer (1998), stress is defined as the reaction a person has when preparing or adapting to a situation that could be considered threatening. They asserted that individuals can experience health problems, be inefficient, and have feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. In addition, Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) stated that people in helping professions, especially teachers, are exposed to higher levels of stress than individuals in other professions. Teacher overload can contribute to stress. Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) defined “teacher overload is a teacher accepting too many tasks for the time allowed to accomplish the tasks. If left unchecked, overload leads to stress.” (p. 591)
Under certain circumstances, individuals in any profession can experience stress, with teachers not immune from these feelings. Kyriacou (1987) defined teacher stress as experiences associated with unpleasant emotions such as “tension, frustration, anxiety, anger, and depression, resulting from aspects of the work as a teacher” (p. 146). According to Kyriacou (1987), stress is subjective; one teacher may perceive an incident as stressful, use inappropriate coping mechanisms, and move closer to burnout. In contrast, another teacher may view the same situation as challenging, use appropriate coping mechanisms that can help minimize stress levels, and meet the challenges in the classroom effectively.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) agreed that stresses and pressures are the most subjective aspects of a job, and therefore the worker should be able to cope with the underlying causes of the stress or pressure. As I examined the research and literature regarding stress, a consensus had been reached by many researchers that stress existed only if a person has experienced it. Stress may be the result of extreme subjective experiences. For example, the similar pressures may cause one person to experience high levels of stress, while another may perceive the pressure as a welcome change. When stress becomes overwhelming, then negative outcomes of stress can become apparent, leading to teacher burnout and withdrawal (Steffey, 1989).

Schultz (2008) pointed out that although stress is usually considered unhealthy; stress is not always a bad thing. A healthy level of stress can be perceived as positive, but how the stress is managed and the strategies that are developed and employed are key to handling and relieving stress. When positive coping strategies have not been developed, chronic unrelieved stress can result.
Teacher stress is subjective. A large body of literature has been published on the challenges found in schools at the present time. The research seems to agree with Clement (1999):

Today’s teachers are subject to great levels of stress, which may be caused by a sense of work, overload, student problems, low achievement, lack of administrative and societal support for the profession, and a feeling of powerlessness to control classroom climate and decision making. (p. 322)

Kyriacou (1987) asserted that the cumulative effect of the day-to-day issues, such as students’ poor attitudes regarding assignments and heavy workloads, have been generally found to be the main sources of stress. Kyriacou (1987) continued that teacher stress emanates from a large number of sources including collegial relationships, factors associated with working conditions, pupil misbehavior, salary, status, and role conflict. As stress is subjective, sources and outcomes related to teacher stress vary among individual teachers or staff in all types of schools.

Based on the intensity of the stress, the coping mechanisms that a teacher chooses may be an important factor regarding how teachers manage the stress. Kyriacou (1987) offered two coping strategies that have been found useful in managing stress and burnout. The first coping strategy is direct action that involves dealing positively with a source of stress. For example, changing one’s routine to affect an outcome may decrease the stressful situation. When a teacher teaches reading in the morning every day, she may notice that her students are sluggish every day, disinterested, possibly leading to increased stress. Kyriacou (1987) suggested opting for the direct action method. The
teacher could change the subject time, which may lead to the students becoming more motivated and interested, resulting in a less stressful situation. Direct action is the more desired coping strategy if such action can be effective.

The second strategy is to use palliative techniques that accept the source of stress and attempt to relieve the emotional experiences that follows. Some teachers may react to potential stressful situations by putting things in perspective or laughing it off, while trying to see the humor, rationalizing the stress by possible comments like “this too will pass” or “change is good.” These remedies for stress fall into Kyriacou’s (1987) palliative strategies that include: mental techniques (for example putting things in perspective or trying to see the humor in the situation), weekly appointment at the gym or spa, membership in a support group, participating in yoga classes, or even making a stop at the local pub. Palliative techniques can be effective. If the source of the stress remains, then the teacher can expect to experience some stress, regardless of the strategies employed. Some teachers may seek support from colleagues within the school because this can be a positive way to cope with stress. However, as Kyriacou (1987) pointed out, the culture of the school and trust may inhibit one from readily admitting that they are having trouble because teachers do not want to lose face with colleagues. Teachers who are experiencing stress may not want to admit to their administrators that the pressures may be affecting their teaching. As a result, many teachers may not seek support from colleagues as an option to help cope with stress and instead use inappropriate coping techniques to manage the situation.

Dealing with stress when it occurs is important. Unaddressed stress eventually can be aggravating and frustrating, and become more problematic over time. Just like any
health concerns, teachers should be aware of stressful situations, addressing the problems as they arise. When effective coping strategies have not been developed, unrelieved stress can become chronic, and become an often overlooked and unhealthy risk factor for many diseases (Schultz, 2008). Nagel and Brown (2003) agreed with Schultz that stress may have some positive effects. When effective stress management strategies are in place, stress can present opportunities to explore innovative, creative instructional strategies to improve student motivation, as well as can provide teachers with time to reflect on their teaching (Nagel & Brown, 2003). Parents and administrators often wondered why veteran teachers do not succumb to the stressful situations encountered while teaching. The answer may very well lie in the strategies that they use to help them cope. Their coping strategies may range from Nagel and Brown’s (2003) breathing techniques or Kyriacou’s (1987) finding humor in each situation. If veteran teachers are still working in education, they have found a way to cope.

According to Nagel and Brown (2003), understanding how teachers handle and manage stress is important. Using Nagel and Brown’s (2003) ABCs of managing stress, the first step is “A” to acknowledge existence of stress and knowing what increases the stress level. During the school year, teachers encounter many different stressful situations including, but not limited to poor relationships with colleagues and principals, heavy workload, poor student behavior, adapting to change, and many more. Every teacher has his/her own interpretation of what is stressful to him/her and it is important for the teacher to determine factors that contribute to the most immediate stress and use creative coping strategies to resolve the underlying causes of the stressful situation.
Nagel and Brown’s (2003) discussed “B” for behavior modification that involves reaching a state of homeostasis to create an emotional balance using meditation and diaphragmatic breathing. I am interested in finding if any teachers in my study use yoga or some variation of meditation during their day to deal with the challenges of the teaching profession. Nagel and Brown (2003) asserted that using time management strategies to prioritize job responsibilities also is a strategy that can help avoid stress. Nagel and Brown described the five step process of creative problem solving: (a) describe and thoroughly analyze the problem; (b) generate answers by researching, asking colleagues for suggestions, and referring to personal experiences; (c) weigh solutions that seem most practical and advantageous for their particular situation; (d) implement the solution; and (e) analyze and assess the solution and its implementation to determine the likelihood of being used in the future.

According to Nagel and Brown (2003), the “C” stands for communication that provides a way for teachers to prevent or minimize stress arising from teaching. Nagel and Brown (2003) asserted that stress is inherent in teaching, and stress associated with teaching may lead to teacher burnout and withdrawal. However, experiencing stress does not have to be necessarily negative. Stress can help teachers adopt creative strategies and take time to reflect on their teaching. Although veteran teachers experience stress like others in the teaching profession, they are able to employ positive coping techniques to manage the stressful situations they often encounter. Veteran teachers have found strategies to help them cope. From Bobek’s (2002) perspective, throughout their careers, teachers encounter many situations that result in conflict and stress. In spite of these situations, veteran teachers continue to return to their jobs at the beginning of the school
Veteran teachers use innovative strategies to keep themselves rejuvenated enough to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. Although job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout can be reasons for leaving the teaching profession, many veteran teachers decide to stay in the profession. Many teachers employ a variety of strategies to help cope with stressful situations found in the work environment of the teaching profession.

I expect that my study could provide support that most veteran teachers experience at least one of Nagel and Brown’s (2003) ABC components (i.e., acknowledge, behavior modification, and communication) sometime during their teaching career. The veteran teachers in the present study will share the strategies that they have found effective when coping with stressful situations found in the teaching profession.

**Ways to Relieve Stress**

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), there are hundreds of ways to relieve stress, some are based on better organizational skills, delegation of responsibility, improved communication with co-workers and supervisors, while other methods to relieve stress use factors external to the job, such as improved home life, leisure patterns, or internal discipline like yoga or transcendental meditation. Schultz (2008) concurred by adding strategies that relieve stress, including “peer support, exercise, healthy nutrition, compassion, spirituality, and laughter” (p. 10). In the process of learning how to relieve one’s own personal stress, one can also discover who they really are.

Lamb (1995) suggested that if individuals wanted to minimize stress that could lead to burnout, they must first take care of themselves. Lamb further noted 10 strategies that can help avoid stress that may lead to burnout:
1 – Don’t take so much work home. 2 – Don’t bite off more than you can chew. 3 – Accept what you can change and what you can’t. 4 – Leave on time and don’t come in too early. 5 – Don’t volunteer for every committee. 6 – Make a change. 7 – Do something for you. 8 – Get out and exercise. 9 – Set aside time each day for you. 10 – Get some rest. (p. 24-25)

Teachers’ feelings about their work environment can influence their perceptions regarding their teaching experiences (Bromfield, 2000). Nagy (2006) challenged teachers to consider that “Whether one is a veteran or just beginning, a pattern of decreasing interest, irritability, or avoidance of problems could be a signal that a change is necessary” (p.2).

Repetition also can be a key to becoming bored on the job. For veteran teachers who have been on the job for extended periods, the repetitious nature of the job becomes less challenging and less energy may be expended to complete their responsibilities. The thrill and the excitement associated with teaching begin to diminish. Enthusiasm may start to weaken. When the job is the same from one year to another, the job can become boring and stale. The interest leaves and becomes robotic (i.e., go to school, teach, go home). When teachers fail to seek professional renewal in some way or pursue some type of change, they can become a shell of their former self. As indicated in the literature, conditions that initially reinforced teacher motivation on the job no longer are in place or fail to elicit the same responses or effect that they had originally (Steffey, 1989). One study showed that teachers can identify their problems and work to improve their teaching by finding their specific ways to manage stress. Some teachers keep journals
that reflect on the joys of teaching instead of focusing on the frustration and fears encountered on the job (Clement, 1999).

Sylvester (2008) agreed with Nagel and Brown’s (2003) breathing stage when she described techniques that worked for her when coping with a stressful day. According to Sylvester (2008), having students in one’s room all day long does not feel healthy. She suggested that teachers should recharge during the day by finding time without students, closing their eyes, and going inward and breathing. Sometimes finding downtime alone can help to reflect and recharge as a way to diminish stress.

As Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) suggested concerning teacher overload, teachers who have established priorities and organized their professional lives are able to function more effectively, even under strenuous circumstances. When veteran teachers have not implemented strategies to avoid stress, Reglin and Reitzammer (1998) made the point that teachers become vulnerable because of the bad habits that have formed, with the stress worsening and resulting in eventual burnout. In the next section, I examine burnout and ways that teachers can cope with burnout.

**Burnout**

According to Corrigan (1981) “the principal problem in school today is teacher burnout.” (p.26). Burnout always has been a concern for employees in all professions to some degree. Ashton (1985) stated “little research exists that gives insight into the factors that may account for the negative relationship between years of experience and teacher motivation” (p. 147). Friedman (1991) pointed out that “teacher stress and burnout and how it relates to teachers and the teaching profession have become topics of extensive discussion and research” (p. 325). Defined first by Freudenberger (as cited in Friedman,
burnout is represented by feelings of failure and being worn out and drained. From Freudenberg’s perspective, burnout can result from an overload of claims on energy and personal resources, as well as the spiritual strength of the worker. Friedman (1991) continued that previous research has defined “burnout as a worker’s loss of interest in the people with whom they work and as psychological distancing from work” (p. 325).

From Brouwers and Tomic’s (2000) perspective, burnout is a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Many researchers have provided definitions of burnout. Albert and Levine (1998) viewed burnout as synonymous with “physical, emotional, attitudinal exhaustion” (p. 49). In Beer and Beer’s (1992) view, staff burnout appears to be an adverse work stress reaction with psychological, psycho-physiological, and behavioral components. According to Kyriacou (1987), “teacher burnout may be defined as the syndrome resulting from prolonged teacher stress, primarily characterized by physical, emotional, and attitudinal exhaustion” (p. 146). “Burnout can reduce the teaching quality and contribute to job turnover, absenteeism, low morale, increase use of alcohol and drugs, and marital and family problems” (Ransdell, Grosshans, & Trunnell, 2004, p. 207). Nagy (2006) added to the list by outlining the following as possible signs of burnout:

- irritability with students, avoiding responsibility (paperwork, meetings)
- working harder and getting less done, feeling discouraged and indifferent,
- showing resistance to change, feeling a sense of failure when everything is fine, avoiding discussions, postponing meetings, higher than normal absenteeism, inability to concentrate, and apathy. (p. 3)
New insights on teacher burnout allow administrators to plan strategies for dealing with the continuing burnout syndrome in today’s schools (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984, p. 130). Friedman (1991) added that evidence of teacher burnout also could include “intense reactions of anger, anxiety, restlessness, depression, tiredness, boredom, cynicism, guilt feelings, psychosomatic symptoms, and in extreme cases, nervous breakdowns” (p. 325). Teaching experiences can be affected by the way that teachers feel about their jobs (Bromfield, 2000). Friedman (1991) supported Bromfield’s exertion, stating that burned-out teachers tend to put less effort in preparing for their classes. They exhibit little flexibility in dealing with their students. They lack tolerances for classroom challenges, feel emotionally and physically drained, and show low commitment to teaching and topics related to students. According to Friedman (1991), burnout incorporates two central elements. The first element is the personality perspective that is related to the issue of workers with higher tendencies to burn out. This aspect also is related to worker’s personality and background variables that may explain an inclination toward burnout. For example, teachers with higher levels of education reported higher levels of burnout. Burnout increases with teachers’ age and years of service. Male teachers reported higher levels of burnout than female teachers (Friedman, 1991).

Although Kyriacou (1987) stated that “biographical characteristics such as sex, age, length of teaching experience, and post held in the school overall do not appear to be related to stress and burnout in a consistent manner” (p.148)

Friedman (1991) continued that the second element of burnout is the organizational factor that relates to the organization’s climate, culture, social, and professional support in the workplace. Beer and Beer (1992) suggested that “burnout is
an occupational hazard for teachers and is a response to chronic stress associated with factors in the educational organization and the teaching environment. According to Clement (1999) “burnout refers to the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and sense of failure that results from the stress of teaching” (p.322). Depersonalization is referred to as a cynical, cold, and distant attitude towards work and the people in the job environment (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 249). Brouwers and Tomic viewed burnout as a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Maslach and Jackson (1981) viewed burnout as a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Clement (1999) “burnout refers to the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and sense of failure that results from the stress of teaching” (p.322). Depersonalization is referred to as a cynical, cold, and distant attitude towards work and the people in the job environment (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 249). Brouwers and Tomic viewed burnout as a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Maslach and Jackson (1981) viewed burnout as a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Clement (1999) “burnout refers to the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and sense of failure that results from the stress of teaching” (p.322). Depersonalization is referred to as a cynical, cold, and distant attitude towards work and the people in the job environment (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 249). Brouwers and Tomic viewed burnout as a phenomenon of dramatic importance in education. Maslach and Jackson (1981) challenged teachers to consider three aspects of burnout. First, workers who are affected by burnout develop increased emotional disconnect and fatigue. As emotional resources are depleted, teachers feel they no longer are able to give as they did in the past. The second aspect of burnout becomes apparent as teachers develop negative, cynical attitudes toward their clients (i.e., students). A term that Maslach and Jackson (1981) use to describe this aspect of burnout is dehumanization or depersonalization. The third aspect of burnout is the “tendency” of teachers to evaluate themselves negatively, particularly their clients. Workers who go through this third stage are not happy with their jobs or themselves. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), this stage is described as a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment. When applied to the teaching profession, Maslach and Jackson (1981) asserted that burnout is the perceived state of emotional exhaustion as well as negative, cynical attitudes and feelings toward students that can develop in teachers. Burnout is seen as a tendency of teachers to assess themselves negatively in regards to their work and students.

According to Nagy (2006), all teachers may experience burnout at some time during their teaching career. Some teachers simply leave the profession (Merrow, 2000).
In contrast, veteran teachers have found ways to avoid burnout; they have found a way to endure.

Kyriacou (1987) proposed three reasons why teacher stress and teacher burnout has become such an universal concern:

1. the mounting evidence that prolonged occupational stress can lead to both mental and physical ill-health, 2. a general concern to improve the quality of teachers’ working lives, and 3. a concern that stress and burnout may significantly impair the working relationship a teacher has with his pupils and the quality of teaching and commitment he is able to display. (p. 147)

Previous research has presented opportunities to understand teacher stress and burnout better (Kyriacou, 1987, p. 150). New insights on teacher burnout allow administrators as they continue to plan strategies for dealing with the continuing burnout syndrome in today’s schools (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984). The main concern is to examine what changes can be implemented in the school culture from managerial and organizational practices including possible changes that can help reduce levels of stress often found in our schools. These changes could include:

- giving teachers more preparation time during each school day, reducing the size of classes, better organization and communication within the school, an improved climate of social support, more effective programs of staff induction and professional development, more recognition of teachers’ efforts and a clearer description of job tasks and expectations (Kyriacou, 1987, p. 150).
Kyriacou (1987) admitted that a number of unanswered questions remain concerning the nature and causes of teacher stress. Anderson and Iwanicki (1984) also agreed, pointing out that “writings on teacher burnout contain many arguments regarding the correlates and causes of it [burnout], arguments that need to be validated through future systematic studies” (p. 130).

**Ways to Avoid Burnout**

Routman (as cited in Clement, 1999) suggested that practicing teachers need to assume responsibility for their own professional development. They need to make time for professional reading and reflection, as well as being more collegial, sharing knowledge and materials, and collaborating through support groups.

According to Bobek (2002), humor is essential to strengthening a teacher’s resilience. Teachers who develop a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at their own mistakes have an excellent outlet for releasing frustrations. Humor also provides a means of escape from the monotony of their daily regimens. Although researchers’ strategies for relieving stress and avoiding burnout are good strategies and resources; one size does not fit all. Teachers have to find what works for each of them.

According to Albert and Levine (1988), research on stress and burnout among teachers indicated that much of the problems associated with burnout involves perceptions that time pressures, interruptions, administrative regulations, and other organization conditions are interfering with the effectiveness of instruction. Although stress can be equated with one becoming burned out, Albert and Levine (1988) noted “it should not be inferred that stress is necessarily a negative job characteristic” (p.49). Albert and Levine (1988) asserted that challenging jobs involve a significant amount of
stress. Many people perceived that challenge is desirable as long as the stress is manageable. Albert and Levine (1988) added that specialists on teacher stress and burnout also concurred that some educators view stressful conditions as a challenge and in doing so apparently are better to cope with stress they experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) asserted that stresses and pressures are clearly the most subjective aspects of a job, and therefore should be most amenable to the control of consciousness.

**Resilience**

Understanding how veteran teachers become resilient in spite of the many adversities found in public schools today is important. According to Bobek (2002) resilient individuals must learn to look to their resources to help adjust to negative conditions. Their resources can provide the perspective and decision making skills needed to help teachers become resilient. Learning from past experiences can increase available resources and can improve one’s resilience regarding handling future circumstances. Resilient teachers’ abilities are enhanced when they are able to assess difficult situations, recognize options to cope, and arrive at appropriate resolutions. When faced with adversity, a resilient veteran teacher exhibits an ability to be flexible, think outside the box, and adjust to challenging situations, thus increasing the likelihood that the veteran teacher will return to the classroom year after year. Veteran teachers do not just succumb to the stressful situations they often encounter. They have found strategies to help cope.
Summary

In this chapter, many factors have been presented that may enable and encourage veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession. From the existing literature, the effects of job satisfaction, work environment, career development, empowerment, bureaucracy, colleagues, career stages, ways to relieve stress, burnout, promote resilience were discussed. Understanding how each of these factors interacts may help both veteran and novice teachers remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter presents the study design and methodology that were used in this study. This chapter begins with the research questions to be investigated, followed by the research design, description of the study’s participants, a presentation of data collection procedures and data analysis strategies, a discussion of the study’s delimitations, and concludes with a discussion of the researcher’s role.

Research Questions

I narrowed the focus of my qualitative research study by examining the collected data while asking the following four research questions:

1. What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types of teacher certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

2. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their job satisfaction? By job satisfaction, I mean the motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement) and hygiene factors (school and district policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions) as defined by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) that maintain their willingness to remain in the teaching profession.
3. What work environment factors play a part in a veteran elementary teacher’s decisions to remain in the classroom for ten or more years? By work environment, I mean career development, administration, empowerment, bureaucracy, relationships with colleagues, students, and parents, and career stages.

4. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their survival strategies? By survival strategies, I mean external activities that help minimize the stress resulting from being in the classroom and meeting the challenges that are established by the school, school district, and state of Michigan.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research is referred to as naturalistic research because the researchers enter the world of the participant(s) to gather information on the research topic (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1978). According to Moustakas (as cited in Creswell, 2003):

Phenomenological research, in which the researcher identifies the “essence” of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study. . . . The procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (p. 15).

Creswell (2013) defined phenomenological research as inquiry into a phenomenon (e.g., remaining in the teaching profession for 10 or more years) by studying a group of individuals who have lived this experience. This type of research design focuses on common experiences with the phenomenon. Individual
experiences with the phenomenon are reduced to a description of a collective
standard.

Therefore, a phenomenological research design was used to collect data and
address the research questions developed for this study. The interview portion consists of
10 semi-structured interview questions.

Participants

Following approval from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board (HSIRB), the researcher interviewed 12 purposefully selected
veteran elementary teachers from a small urban school district outside Detroit, Michigan.
Part of this study’s purposeful sampling technique involved recruiting veteran elementary
teachers (including both general education and special education) who had been
employed in the district for 10 or more years to participate in the study. Since it is
essential that all participants experience the phenomenon being studied, criterion
sampling should work well to show that all individuals in my study had experienced the
same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Twelve veteran elementary teachers were
interviewed separately by the researcher. All participants were veteran elementary
teachers, who had spent 10 or more years in the classroom. If more than 12 teachers
volunteered, a simple random sample was made to select 12 teachers. No attempts were
made to balance the sample by gender, race, or grade level.

The elementary teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were selected
based on three factors:

1. I sought a diverse group that was comprised of male, female, African
   American, and Caucasian elementary teachers. The teachers represented
general education and lower and upper elementary grades. I also interviewed a 
“specials” teacher (e.g., art, music, etc.) who had been in the teaching 
profession for at least 10 years.

2. I confirmed that the veteran elementary teachers had been in the teaching 
profession for at least 10 years. Not all of their experiences had to be at their 
current school or in their current school district.

3. Their inclusion in the study was based on their willingness to be interviewed. 
Participants were selected by the researcher and asked for their voluntary 
participation. Prior to beginning the formal interview process, the researcher asked the 
potential participants how many years they had worked in the district to determine if they 
met the qualifications to participate in this study.

Data Collection

In all forms of qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for 
data collection and analysis (Meriam, 1998). Qualitative interviewing is based on the 
assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made 
explicit (Patton, 1990). This study used qualitative research methods that included 
qualitative interviewing techniques with semi-structured interviews. The study focused 
on the lived experience of veteran elementary classroom teachers who had worked in the 
district for 10 or more years.

Participants “fitting” the definition of a veteran elementary teacher were contacted 
by the researcher and invited to participate in the study. Prior to beginning the interview 
process, the researcher had the teachers read and sign the informed consent form, as well 
as complete a short demographic survey (See Appendix A for a copy of the informed
consent form and the demographic survey). The demographic survey was used to obtain personal and professional characteristics of the sample. The data obtained on the demographic survey were used to provide a descriptive profile of the participants. Once teachers had consented and the demographic survey returned, the researcher conducted personal interviews with the participants using an audio tape-recording device. The interviews were conducted at a mutually agreeable site to both the interviewee and the researcher. Each interview was expected to last from 30 to 45 minutes. According to vanManen (1990), the interview should “be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon” (p. 66). To develop descriptions of the lived experiences, vanManen (1990) provided six elements that should be considered:

1. The experience should be described as the participant lived it, and exclude causal explanations and interpretations.
2. The description of the experience should include the state of mind of the teacher, such as feelings, mood, and emotions.
3. The teacher in describing a particular incident should be asked to provide specific accounts of the event.
4. The teacher should describe components of the experience that are particularly intense or outstanding.
5. The interviewer should include in the field notes indications of how the teacher sounded or body language that was particularly meaningful.
6. The researcher should avoid using terminology that is misrepresentative of the teacher (flowery or fancy words).
The researcher transcribed the interviews. After transcribing all of the interviews, the researcher had each participant review his/her transcript for accuracy. This process was called member checking and provides assurances of the reliability of the interviews. The teachers were allowed to add additional information to the transcript or correct any erroneous notes. They were asked to return the corrected transcribed interviews to the researcher within five working days. If any interviews were not received after this time period, the researcher assumed that the transcription was an accurate reflection of the comments made by the teacher in the interview.

During the study, the researcher maintained a journal for field notes. Following completion of the interview, she recorded any incidents that occurred during the interviews (e.g., body language, asides, or other situations that can provide additional depth to the research) on the interview tape. All data collection was completed when the 10 interviews had been member checked.

**Analysis of the Data**

According to Patton (2002), phenomenological analysis “seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experiences of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (p. 482). Creswell (2003) asserted that “the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data” (p. 190). The main focus of data analysis was to identify what motivated these veteran elementary teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The researcher recognized that the process involves many components, including preparing the data, conducting the analysis, becoming immersed in the data, understanding the outcomes, and interpreting the results to address the research
questions. After the data from the interviews were collected from the participants, transcribed, and verified through member checking, the data analysis began following the generic steps suggested by Creswell (2003):

- Organize and prepare the data for analysis
- Read and reread through all of the data
- Begin coding process
- Conduct a detailed analysis to find patterns in the data
- Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as determine categories or themes within the data
- Describe the themes that are represented in the qualitative narrative
- Make an interpretation or meaning of the data.

Maxwell (2013) suggested using a matrix to develop categories in the data. By categorizing the data in a matrix, the patterns emerge in a clear, organized fashion. The matrix started with predetermined categories (reasons for remaining in teaching; stress producing experiences; strategies for reducing stress; etc.) and then allowed additional categories to emerge through reading and rereading the data.

Following Maxwell’s (2013) suggestions, I analyzed the teachers’ transcriptions using thematic analysis. First, I summarized the responses for each research question across all participants. Using a matrix, the summaries then were examined closely to determine patterns, themes, and commonalities that emerged from the interview questions. The research questions were addressed based on the thematic analysis, with field notes included where appropriate. Table 1 presents the research questions and associated interview questions that were analyzed in this study.
### Table 1

*Research Questions and Associated Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the background characteristics of the teachers interviewed?</td>
<td>Responses from the demographic survey were used to answer this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do veteran teachers describe staying in the profession for 10 or more years?</td>
<td>2.1. What has led you to stay in the profession of teaching for more than 10 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2. How did you experience the profession in your early years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3. How do you experience the profession now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4. Have you ever thought about leaving? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do teachers who have stayed in the profession for 10 or more years describe their job satisfaction?</td>
<td>3.1. What do you consider the benefits of the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2. What do you consider to be the challenges of the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3. What key individuals support or supported you when you were met with challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do teachers who have taught for ten or more years describe survival strategies?</td>
<td>4.1. How do you manage stress that can be inherent in the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2. What are the survival strategies or resources that have helped you stay in the profession?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations, according to Creswell (2003), are controllable boundaries placed on the study by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to examine what factors motivate veteran elementary teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The delimitations of this study included: (a) the study specifically investigated currently employed veteran elementary teachers who had worked in the school district for 10 or more years, and (b) only certified elementary teachers in the district were interviewed.
Limitations are inherent weaknesses in the design of a study (Creswell, 2003). The sample size is a limitation in most qualitative research. However, the purpose of this type of research is not to obtain superficial data from many participants, but to obtain in-depth information regarding a specific theme from participants who have knowledge and experience in the topic being studied. In the present study, 10 elementary teachers who had at least 10 years of experience as a teacher participated in the study. While results of this study may not be transferable to all veteran teachers, the findings may be interesting and useful for school administrators who are trying to retain their experienced teachers.

The Role of the Researcher

As a veteran elementary school teacher in a small urban school district, I, as the researcher have personal knowledge that teaching is very challenging and seems to be more so as the years go by. However, inexplicably I, like countless others, have faced the challenges for more than 10 years.

As a veteran teacher with 19 years of experience I have had an inside view of the challenges and issues frequently encountered in the teaching profession. I have dealt with many work environment issues including colleagues, administrators, overcrowded classrooms, job satisfaction or lack of, disrespectful students, and other challenges. I have survival strategies that I implement on almost a daily basis, yet I keep coming back year after year. I constantly ask myself, "Why am I still here? What motivates me to stay in the teaching profession for more than 10 years? I have taught through both good and bad times; and continue to persist in my job. So I bring my own thoughts and ideas on the subject. However, I attempted to conduct the study objectively by performing semi-structured interviews with the participants, and use member checking procedures to
minimize any bias I may have regarding the participants’ responses. Although many challenges found in the teaching profession are supported in the literature, the role of this researcher was to understand how the participants and their experiences as veteran classroom teachers have influenced their decisions to remain as educators. I used their words to develop themes and patterns that could add to the body of existing knowledge regarding factors that motivate veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession.

**Reflexivity**

I have my own thoughts and ideas on the subject of why veteran teachers stay in education. Teaching can be a challenge. As a teacher who has been in the profession for 19 years, I have experienced firsthand many challenges that the teaching profession has to offer, including challenging students, irate and non-supportive parents, never ending paperwork and documentation, demanding administrators, accountability for all students even those who may be disinterested in learning. We play many roles, such as nurse, confidant, punching bag, counselor, substitute parent, mediator, and finally teacher.

With all of the daily challenges, I often find myself asking what motivates me to stay in the teaching profession. Knowing that nothing remains the same, perhaps understanding that passing through the different career stages can make the job enjoyable or difficult. Half of my professional career has been in the teaching profession. Starting over at this point in my life seems to be pointless. The security of knowing I have a paycheck seems to be decreasing every year because of the lack of stability in the teaching profession. The love of children is a major reason that most teachers, including me, stay. I have stayed in the teaching profession because I find that change provides learning experiences that are invaluable in how I do my job and reasons why I stay.
Themes that I expect to find in my research from the literature include the themes used in my research questions, including: (a) background, (b) job satisfaction, (c) work environment, and (d) survival strategies.

Teachers may stay in the profession because of the reward of watching student growth. From my personal experience, teaching students and watching them grow is rewarding. With all the challenges facing teachers, thinking that students’ learning alone would be sufficient to encourage or enable veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years is not reasonable.

Another reason teachers may stay is that they find solace in having someone or something to keep them going. Many teachers may say that their colleagues play a major role because they can relate to these people, sharing their challenges, frustrations, and successes.

I think that teachers may stay in the teaching profession because of perceived job security. While some teachers may indicate that job satisfaction has decreased over the past several years because of health care cuts, pay freezes, and overcrowded classrooms, they may admit that concerns about unemployment and job insecurity, they simply are unwilling to give up their relatively steady “paying” job. Some veteran teachers truly enjoy working with the students.

Veteran teachers also are aware of the importance of using a variety of strategies to keep from internalizing stress related to teaching and other job challenges. To cope with these challenges and when teachers feel overwhelmed, they need access to someone outside of the workforce to be their sounding board (e.g., parents, friends, spouses,
significant others). These individuals need to be available for advice, comfort, or to listen without judging.

As an additional way of coping with the stress of teaching, some teachers may seek activities outside of the workplace (e.g., friendship, meditation, or in some case medication or alternative methods to cope) when struggling with job stress. Again, many veteran teachers find themselves in a very challenging profession, but truly enjoy what they do. Being able to overcome many of their challenges may lead to a stronger sense of efficacy and a renewed enthusiasm towards their profession.

The stressful nature of teaching appears to increase every year, with burnout seeming to be inevitable if teachers lack an outside release. I expect some teachers may say that their outside releases include spending quality time with spouses, significant others, family, and partaking in frequent spiritual gatherings. Other teachers may seek friendships that energize them; participate in clubs, yoga, deep breathing, meditation, exercise, and hobbies; as well as take vacations. I think that veteran elementary teachers who use these types of outlets tend to diminish effects of burnout that can lead them to explain experiences and situations that have encouraged and enabled them to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

I expect my research to provide evidence that job satisfaction is linked to the work environment in which we find ourselves. Many teachers feel that their colleagues encourage them by providing a well-needed type of camaraderie and outlet for their challenges; and sharing their similar experiences, so they understand the daily demands and stressors associated with being classroom teachers.
Some teachers may say that they enjoy teaching and daily unpredictable encounters with students. They may even say that they enjoy the challenges that arise daily and being able to meet those challenges leaves them feeling fulfilled. While teachers included in the study may describe characteristics and experiences related to various career stages, few may be aware of the various stages by name. Studying factors that encourage and enable veteran teachers to remain in education should add new knowledge to the already existing knowledge base.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents results of the content analyses of the interviews with elementary teachers in a single district. The interviews with the 12 teachers were transcribed. After reading and re-reading the transcripts, themes began to emerge that could be used to explain reasons why the teachers remained in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

The purpose of my phenomenological study was to understand (a) how veteran elementary teachers in a small urban school district experience job satisfaction; (b) what work environment factors enable them to stay; and (c) what survival strategies they employ. This qualitative study, using both deductive and inductive analyses, included 12 elementary teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. The deductive analyses provided a summary of the interview questions that were used to address each research question. After completing the summaries, inductive reasoning was used to determine themes that emerged across all of the research questions. The participants’ reflections of their teaching careers, as defined by their lived experiences, were explored through open-ended interviews.

The focus of my qualitative research study was narrowed by examining the collected data to obtain responses to address the following four sub questions:

1. What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types
of teacher certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

2. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their job satisfaction? By job satisfaction, I mean the motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement) and hygiene factors (school and district policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions) as defined by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) that maintain their willingness to remain in the teaching profession.

3. What work environment factors play a part in a veteran elementary teacher’s decisions to remain in the classroom for ten or more years? By work environment, I mean career development, administration, empowerment, bureaucracy, relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and career stages.

4. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their survival strategies? By survival strategies, I mean external activities that help minimize the stress resulting from being in the classroom and meeting the challenges that are established by the school, school district, and state of Michigan.

**Data Analysis**

**Research question 1:**

What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types of teacher
certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

The teachers provided information on their personal and professional backgrounds during the interview. Their responses were summarized for presentation in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher*</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Balteese</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Baxter</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Borders</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Echoes</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Goldberg</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hall</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ingler</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lawson</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Regal</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sanders</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Stein</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Stevens</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonyms

The teachers’ ranged in age from 31 to more than 50 years of age. The majority of the teachers (n = 9, 75.0%) were female, with 3 (25.0%) male teachers participating in the interviews. Nine (75%) teachers were Caucasian, with 3 (25%) indicating their ethnicity as African American. Most of the teachers were married (n = 10, 76.9%), with 2 (23.1%) reporting their marital status as divorced. Ten (76.9%) teachers had dependent
children, with the number of children ranging from 1 to 4. Two teachers (23.1%) reported having no dependent children.

The professional characteristics of the teachers included their educational levels, years of professional experiences, teacher certification, and participation in professional development. These data were summarized for presentation in Table 3.

Table 3

*Professional Characteristics of the Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher*</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Years in District</th>
<th>Grade Taught Currently</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Participation in Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Balteese</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>Secondary 7-8 all subjects Social Science (CX) 6-12 Art Education (LX) K-12</td>
<td>CHAMPS, All District PDs, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Baxter</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects (K-8 All Subjects Self Contained Classroom) Social Science (CX) 6-8 Science (DX) 6-8</td>
<td>Technology, Readers Workshop, Writers Workshop, Math Workshop, Reading First, DIBELS, MLPP, Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Echoes</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Elementary K-8 All Subjects Social Science (CX) 6-8 Science (DX) 6-8</td>
<td>Building Healthy Communities, Readers Workshop, Writers Workshop, Exploring Mathematical Connection Across Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher*</td>
<td>Highest Level of Education</td>
<td>Years Teaching</td>
<td>Years in District</td>
<td>Grade Taught Currently</td>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>Participation in Professional Development</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Goldberg</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects (K-8 All Subjects Self Contained Classroom)</td>
<td>CHAMPS, Reader’s Workshop, EDM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hall</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects (K-8 All Subjects Self Contained Classroom English (BA)6-8 Early Childhood Education Pre K-K (ZA)</td>
<td>CHAMPS training, Reader’s Workshop, Common Core State Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ingler</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Elementary K-8 All Subjects Social Science (CX)9 Language Arts (BX) 9 Mathematics (EX)9 Early Childhood Education Pre K-K (ZA)</td>
<td>Reader’s Workshop, Classroom Management, Head Start Conferences, Arts Across the Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Lawson</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects (K-8 All Subjects Self Contained Classroom), Social Science (CX)6-8 Science(DX) 6-8 Reading Specialist (BR) K-12</td>
<td>MiBlisi-School Improvement (Data Review), Writer’s Workshop, CHAMPS, Reader’s Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Regal</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects self-contained classroom</td>
<td>CHAMPS, EDM, DIBELS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher*</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Years Teaching in District</th>
<th>Years in District</th>
<th>Grade Taught Currently</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Participation in Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sanders</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>Elementary K-5 all subjects (K-8), All Subjects Self Contained Classroom</td>
<td>Math Workshop, Reading Workshop, Anti-Bullying, &amp; Common Core Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Stein</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4th Grade</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education Pre K-K (ZA), Language Arts (BX) 6-8</td>
<td>Lucy Culkins Writing Workshop, Motivating the Unmotivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Stevens</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education Pre K-K (ZA), Cognitive Impairment (SA) K-12</td>
<td>Pilot and Review for Mathematics for CCSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonym

All of the teachers had completed master’s degrees as their highest degree. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 12 to 30 years. The years teaching in the school district was more variable, with the number of years ranging from 2 to 30 years. Five teachers had spent their entire professional teaching careers in the same district.

2.1 How do veteran teachers describe staying in the profession for 10 or more years?

Love of teaching, students, and subject matter

The teachers were asked to indicate reasons why they have been able to remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. Their responses were varied, with 9 of the 12 teachers indicating they remained in the profession because they loved teaching, their jobs, working with the children, and the subject matter they taught. For example, Hall
said “the love of teaching the kids.” Borders said the kids need good teachers. She continued stating “I know they need good teachers, [because] we have students with so much potential; I like developing that [their potential].” Lawson concurred with the other teachers indicating she thought her love for teaching was what kept her in the teaching profession. She stated, “My passion for students, children; watching children succeed and getting to see them grow through the years. I mean I love my job so that makes it easier to do what you love longer.” Echoes loved watching the children grow and develop, and the changes that take place from the minute that they walk into my room to the minute that they walk out of my room. Balteese was vocal in indicating the extent to which he loved the subject (art) he was teaching. He stated “I love the Arts and I want to impart that knowledge to the students.” According to Goldberg, “I enjoy seeing those eyes just perk up when they get an answer right or when they are getting information. So that is why I am still teaching.” Ingler indicated that she loved teaching, enjoyed working with the families, touching lives, as well as the joy of the children and the anticipation of learning that they bring to the classroom. Sanders explained why she remained in the teaching profession when she stated “just a love of it [teaching], because I do not feel that you can really do this job effectively if you do not love what you do.” Regal indicated she liked educating the students. These teachers provided support that teaching is more than a job; their responses to this question provided support that their love of teaching, working with the students, and the subject matter they taught were important reasons why they remained in their profession for more than 10 years.
Making a difference

Two teachers indicated they remained in the teaching profession because they felt they were making a difference. According to Hall, reaching out to the students and making a difference in their lives was important in deciding to remain in the teaching profession. Regal indicated that:

I guess educating the students. There are many challenges that we face as educators, but when you know that you can actually make a difference in a child’s learning, that you are affecting a life. It makes me feel good to know that I helped them.

Developing students’ potential

Six teachers remained in the teaching profession because they enjoyed developing the potential of the students. Borders indicated she has stayed in the profession for more than 10 years because of the kids. She stated “Particularly in this district, I am drawn to the fact that our kids need good teachers, and so I stay because I know we have students with so much potential I like developing that [their potential].” Lawson stayed in the profession because of her passion for students. She indicated that:

. . . watching children succeed and seeing them grow through the year. I think the excitement of when students learn and they finally get that AHA moment. That is very reassuring and it is fulfilling so I think it makes you just want to do more; reach more kids every year, to reach a couple, then the next year, you try a couple more to see what you can do.

Echoes loved watching the children grow and develop throughout the school year and seeing them change from the time when they entered the classroom until they walked out
at the end of the year. Ingler enjoyed working with the families, touching her students’ lives, seeing the joy of the children and their anticipation of learning that they bring to her classroom. Stevens responded that “Smiles on their faces when they finally get something. Like just recently multiplication (one of the last things that we covered with the kids). They finally got it, so it was really good to see and then they were helping others learn multiplication.” Regal indicated that she liked educating the students. She continued:

I have been a classroom teacher and an intervention teacher and I really saw it in my intervention group, so I do pull a lot of those strategies into what I am doing now. So, when I am teaching math in fifth grade, difficult concepts and they go, oh, fractions I hate them, but then once we get done with the lesson they go, oh, that is easy. It makes me feel good to know that I helped them.

Dedication

One teacher, Sanders, indicated that she was dedicated to the profession. She continued that “because I think that this job has progressively gotten more difficult as the years go on, so I think that you definitely need a dedication to your profession to be able to withstand some of the changes we have seen in education recently. She also concurred with the other teachers who indicated they stayed for the love of the teaching profession. She stated that “I don’t feel that you can really do this job effectively if you don’t love what you do. It would be these two things.”
Benefits

The financial and incentives benefits associated with working in the teaching profession were mentioned as reasons for remaining in the teaching profession. Hall indicated that the paycheck did not hurt, indicating that after teaching for intrinsic reasons, getting a paycheck was a benefit. According to Baxter, probably having my summer off, because I have three kids was a reason for remaining in the teaching profession. Baxter also indicated that the retirement benefits were a reason for staying in the profession. Stein remarked that the benefits of retirement and a pension in 30 years was the reason she was staying. She indicated that without this benefit, she probably would have left to do something less stressful.

Summary

The teachers’ responses regarding their reflection on why they stay in the teaching profession included mostly intrinsic rewards such as love of teaching, students, and subject matter, making a difference, developing students’ potential, and dedication. Some of the teachers mentioned they remained in the teaching profession because of the extrinsic rewards: paycheck, summers off, and retirement benefits. Table 4 summarizes their responses for the major areas that emerged from the interview on this question.
Table 4

*Why Veteran Teachers Remain in Profession for More than 10 Years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Love of teaching, students, and subject matter | • Love of teaching kids (Hall, Sanders, Lawson)  
• I love my job so that makes it easier to do what you love longer (Lawson)  
• Love of watching the children grow and develop…(Borders, Echoes, Lawson)  
• Love the subject (art) he was teaching. I love the Arts (Balteese) |
| Making a difference           | • Reaching out to the students and making a difference (Hall)  
• Know that you can actually make a difference in a child’s learning that you are affecting a life. It makes me feel good to know that I helped them. (Regal) |
| Developing students’ potential | • Particularly in this district, I am drawn to the fact that our kids need good teachers, and so I stay because I know we have students with so much potential I like developing that (their potential). (Borders)  
• Watching children succeed and seeing them grow through the year. I think the excitement of when students learn and they finally get that AHA moment. That is very reassuring and it is fulfilling so I think it makes you just want to do more. (Lawson)  
• Watch them grow and develop throughout the school year and seeing them change from the time when they entered the classroom until they walked out at the end of the year. (Echoes)  
• Touch students’ lives. (Ingler)  
• Help students with new and difficult concepts (Stevens, Regal) |
| Dedication                    | • …because I think this job has progressively gotten more difficult as the years go on, so I think that you definitely need a dedication to your profession to be able to withstand some of the changes we have seen in education recently. (Sanders)  
• I don’t feel that you can really do this job effectively if you don’t love what you do. (Sanders) |
| Benefits                      | • Paycheck (Hall)  
• Summers off (Stein, Baxter)  
• Retirement benefits (Stein, Baxter) |

2.2. How did you experience the profession in your early years?

Different from what you expected

Two teachers indicated that teaching was different from what they expected.

According to Hall, teaching had a big learning curve in regard to what was needed to be done in the classroom. Developing lesson plans, gathering materials, keeping records were different from what was presented in college. According to Lawson, she was not
aware of all of the work that was required besides teaching. The paperwork, including taking attendance and managing behavior, is busy work. She had to complete a lot of forms on the computer and on paper (e.g., attendance, *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* [DIBELS] reports, conference logs, daily behavior on students, track academic behavior, progress monitor). She did not think she was prepared for handling behavior problems. Although she thought she was self-disciplined and had dealt with a lot of kids, she was not ready for managing an entire class. She then indicated that she should not have said she was not ready, she meant it as different from what she had expected. She thought she would go into the classroom, present her lessons, and all the students were going to learn. However, she found it difficult to reach all of the different students. She felt that parents and students did not respect her and their priorities were not the same as hers. To make sure she reached all of the students, she indicated that she had to be more creative and do things differently.

Very Excited

Four teachers indicated that they were very excited about starting in the teaching profession. Borders, who indicated she entered the profession later in life, said that she really wanted to teach. Balteese was excited, wanted to do big projects, and change the world. He wanted to have the kids do the kind of things that they had never done. As the art teacher, he wanted to do big projects, such as murals, that the kids would remember. Sanders indicated that she was excited to find and discover what the children were capable of doing. She said that they (the children) rise to the teachers’ expectations. She also indicated that she was more motivated to be a great teacher and inspire her students. She continues to be excited in August and September in anticipation of the new school
year when she has a new “crop of students to inspire and educate and push to reach their potential.” According to Goldberg, during the first five years of teaching, he was very energetic, coming in early and staying late. He was excited to work on weekends and on extra assignments outside of the school for the principal and he always wanted to do “more, more, and more.”

Enjoyable

Two teachers indicated that teaching in the beginning was enjoyable. Stein asserted that she loved grading papers at home and thought it was the best thing. Now she remarked that she can’t stand grading papers. She said that in the beginning of her career, she spent all night long doing schoolwork, she worked all summer doing things for school and planning activities. She stated that she “does not do that so much anymore.” Now she limits her work to weekends and keeps the summer completely hers. Baxter asserted that she liked teaching quite a bit in the early years. She said that some days were challenging, but she learned as she stayed in the profession. She thought teaching was a pretty good job to have, but she inferred that as the years have passed, teaching has become more difficult, with only a few things keeping her in the profession (e.g., summers off and retirement benefits).

Demanding

Two teachers, Lawson and Echoes, reported that teaching in the early years was demanding. They felt that their teacher education programs had not prepared them for the work that was involved in being an elementary teacher. Lawson stated that she did not realize how much work went into being a teacher besides teaching. She commented that the paperwork and a lot of busy work were unexpected. She indicated that while she
thought she was self-disciplined and was able to deal with kids, she was not ready to deal with a whole class. In correcting herself, she explained that it was different from what she expected. She thought she could stand in front of the class and teach, with all of the students learning what she had been teaching. She also found that parents and students had little respect for teachers and had different priorities. To make sure she was reaching all of the students, she had to be more creative and do things differently.

Echoes had taught preschool for more than two years before starting at her present school. She also indicated that she had lots of exposure to kids through babysitting. She also was a substitute teacher in the district for five years before becoming a full-time teacher. Her first experience was in kindergarten with 32 students, 8 of whom were pre-primary impaired students. While this experience was difficult, it did not scare her away. During most of her years as a kindergarten teacher, she had 32 students, with no aide. She thought it was a positive experience when she watched some of her students begin to read early.

Not Prepared

According to Hall, he did not feel prepared when he began his teaching career. He indicated that teaching was a big learning curve regarding what needed to be done in the classroom. He did not feel prepared to complete lesson plans, gathering materials, keeping records, etc. While you are exposed to these things in college, they are different once you are in a classroom.

Classroom Management

Regal reported that she had done well in her student teaching assignment where she worked as a first grade teacher. During her first year of teaching full-time, she was
assigned to a sixth grade classroom where she encountered difficulty with classroom management. While she indicated that she had good ideas and a lot of fun things for the class, she had a lot to learn, especially about classroom management. She indicated that she was not much older than her sixth grade students and in their eyes she looked young, the students felt they could talk to her in any way. She stated that she had to learn to be a professional and a teacher. While she never said anything inappropriate to the students, she had difficulty with handling the discipline. She was inconsistent, even when talking with the parents. According to Regal, she developed headaches when driving to school and it was not until the end of that school year that she decided she did not have to feel this way and be anxious about going to school. She indicated that she was reassigned to a third grade class in her second year of teaching and she was much better. She also indicated that the sixth grade experience was good for her because she learned what to do and what not to do.

Summary

The teachers’ responses regarding their initial experiences in the teaching profession indicated differences in their initial expectations. Teaching was more difficult and had additional responsibilities beyond providing instruction, although they still considered their jobs initially exciting and enjoyable. Table 5 summarizes their responses for the major areas that emerged from the interviews on this question.
### Table 5

**How Veteran Teachers Experienced the Profession in their Early Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Different from what they expected | • Developing lesson plans, gathering materials, keeping records were different from what was presented in college. (Hall)  
• Was not aware of all of the work that was required besides teaching. The paperwork, including taking attendance and managing behavior is busy work. She thought she would go into the classroom, present her lessons, and all the students were going to learn. (Lawson) |
| Very excited | • Entered later in life and really wanted to teach. (Borders)  
• Excited, wanted to do big projects, and change the world. (Balteese)  
• Excited to find and discover what the children were capable of doing. (Sanders)  
• During the first five years of teaching, he was very energetic, coming in early and staying late. He was excited to work on weekends and on extra assignments outside of the school for the principal and he always wanted to do more, more, and more. (Goldberg) |
| Enjoyable | • It was enjoyable. I loved grading papers at home. It was the best thing ever. (Stein)  
• In the early years I liked it quite a bit. (Baxter) |
| Demanding | • Didn’t realize how much work went into teaching. She was not ready to deal with a whole class. (Lawson)  
• Her first experience was as a kindergarten teacher, she had 32 students with no aide. (Echoes) |
| Not Prepared | • It was a big learning curve over what needed to be done in the classroom. (Hall)  
• You learn everything in college, but once you’re—it’s different once you’re in the classroom. (Hall) |
| Classroom management | • Had a lot to learn, especially with classroom management. She was not much older than her sixth grade students and in their eyes she looked young, the students felt they could talk to her in any way. …She had difficulty with handling the discipline. She learned what to do and what not to do. (Regal) |

### 2.3 How do you Experience the Profession Now?

The teachers were asked to provide information on their perceptions of their current experiences in the teaching profession. Their responses were analyzed with specific topics emerging from their comments.
Realistic View of Teaching

Four teachers’ responses reflected a realistic view of teaching through the eyes of a veteran with more than 10 years of experience. Sanders indicated that she was still excited about teaching. She indicated that she has to look beyond how the media presents education and focus on her classroom. She stated that “the bottom line is that you are there to teach these students and if [she] can, on her best days, she has to look past that [attacks on education by the media] and know what her job is.”

Regal indicated that she no longer looks at the teaching profession with rose-colored glasses. While she indicated that she has been a teacher for a long time, she still gets excited and tries to plan things for her students. She stated that “there are certain battles you just don’t try to fight. You choose your battles, but you also have to be firm.” She tries to keep school as fun as possible because it is her way to keep the students engaged. She approaches problems that arise during the school day differently than when she began teaching. She tries to stay level-headed, relaxed, and calm.

According to Lawson, there is more paperwork and she is now required to be more than a teacher. She indicated that she has to be a social worker and a counselor in addition to being a teacher. “Every day, I have to put on a lot more hats.” She continued that the teaching profession has greater expectations in different areas.

Hall discussed the reality of teaching by indicating he looked forward to working with a team. He also stated that he had better classroom management control, recordkeeping, etc. As he asserted that he had these things under control, he was better able to focus on the kids and develop relationships with them.
Focus on the students and develop relationships with the students

Two teachers indicated that they now focused on the students and developed relationships with the students. Sanders was still excited about teaching, although she has been teaching for a long time. She indicated that she had to focus on her classroom and not on what she had been hearing about public education in the media. She recognized that regardless of what was being said about education or what was happening in her building, she had to rise above it and teach the children.

Regal indicated that she still gets excited. She tries to plan things, but with experience, teachers realize that there are certain battles that should not be fought. Teachers should choose their battles, but remain firm. She indicated she was handling behavior problems better. She indicated that she plans and introduces lessons trying to keep learning as fun as possible because it is her way of engaging students in different ways by using a variety of methods. She indicated that she tries to remain level-headed, relaxed, and calm so a problem student would have a better chance of behaving well in class.

Not as creative; Less creative

Two teachers indicated that due to changing educational demands that being creative has become more of a challenge. According to Balteese, the teaching profession is changing as are the students. Attitudes and society are changing the way we think. Society as a whole has become more self-centered. In the 30 years that he has been in the community, the people in the school do not seem as united as they did before. The staff seems to be more about themselves and that does not always lend itself to being the best. He indicated that he can no longer do as exciting projects as he did when first beginning
in the teaching profession. He indicated that he has to do more individualized things (e.g., differentiated teaching).

Stevens indicated that she wished that they could spend more time on some of the topics, going deeper into context, instead of rushing through to maintain the pacing. She acknowledged that in her first years of teaching, she could do big projects and was not tied to the need for pacing instruction.

Respect for teachers has diminished

According to Borders, respect for teachers has diminished. She indicated that teaching is difficult. When she began her career, teachers were more respected than they are now.

Not as dedicated; motivation and feelings have changed

One teacher, Stein indicated that she was not as dedicated as she was when she initially began teaching. She loved grading papers at home and on weekends when she first started in the classroom. She does not do that much anymore and then does not work in the summers at all.

Changing times, kids not where they should be, teaching has changed

Four teachers reported that teaching, society, parents, children have changed. Echoes asserted that teaching has changed a great deal. She thought that the students have totally changed. She indicated that many of the parents are not active in their children’s lives and as a result, there are more behavior problems, more children on medication for attention deficit disorder or intense deficit hyperactivity disorder. She was of the mindset that teaching is much more difficult now than when she started her career.
Ingler agreed with Echoes, indicating that the teaching profession has changed. She contended that the families are much different now, with different dynamics. Parent involvement has decreased, parents are younger, and there are more dysfunctional families than previously. Teachers do not have the same support from home than from earlier in her career.

Goldberg asserted that teaching has become more difficult because of the outside demands on teachers, especially political. Data is being used to show when students are excelling and when they are failing. He felt overwhelmed because of all of the outside influences (e.g., community, political, parents, and students). He wants all of the stakeholders to work together toward a common goal. He further stated that things in the schools are out of control and beyond the classroom.

According to Baxter, she liked teaching in the early years. She said the profession was challenging and you learned as you went along. She thought it was a good job to have. As the years have passed, teaching has become more difficult and there are only a few things that keep her in the profession, such as retirement, pension, and summers off.

**Summary**

The teachers’ responses regarding how they experienced the teaching profession now versus when they first began had changed. Over the years with more experience they were able to become more realistic regarding the demands of the teaching profession, focus more on the students and develop relationships with the students. They were not able to be as creative due to changing curriculum demands. They felt that respect for teachers had changed. Some indicated that they were not as dedicated. Motivations and feelings have changed. Changing times, kids not where they should be, teaching has
changed were repeated throughout the interviews. Table 6 summarizes their responses for the major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.

Table 6
*How Do Teachers Experience the Profession Now*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic View of Teaching</td>
<td>• I seem to now have to put outside influences aside and just focus on my classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some days it is easier than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The bottom line is that you are there to teach these students and if I can, on my best days, I just look past that and I know what my job is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I know what I have to do and I do it. (Sanders)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Now, I am not looking at the profession like with rose colored glasses, saying oh, that teacher she’s just like this because you know she has been in too long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I still get excited. I still try to plan things, but with the experience there are certain things that you know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There are certain battles you just don’t try to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I really still try to keep it as fun as possible because that is my way of engaging the students, different ways, different methods or whatever, but it is just that I approach problems differently. (Regal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Now, there’s more, even more paperwork (laughs) and it’s more I think now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I love teaching but I think I’m a lot more than just a teacher. I’m a social worker. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I have classroom management much better under control, record keeping, everything. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I try to focus more on the kids and develop relationships with them. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the students and develop relationships with the students</td>
<td>• There’s still some excitement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is different in that I guess I am better with the behaviors now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I really still try to keep it as fun as possible because that is my way of engaging the students, different ways, different methods or whatever, but it is just that I approach problems differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I try to stay level headed and that is one thing that people say, you are kind of relaxed and calm so this student would be good with you. (Regal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not as creative; less creative</td>
<td>• You can’t do as exciting projects as I used to be able to do. I think it’s now more individualized things that we have to do. (Balteese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I wish some of the things we could go and spend a lot of time on deep—getting deeper into things instead of just rushing through to make sure you’ve got your pacing down. (Stevens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for teachers has diminished</td>
<td>• Often I feel like there is a problem with the perception of teaching as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In the beginning, I thought that teachers were so much more respected even in this short period of time but the respect for teachers has diminished. (Borders)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not as dedicated</td>
<td>• I loved grading papers at home. It was the best thing ever. Now, I can't stand grading papers. (Stein)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Changing times, kids not where they should be, teaching has changed | • I think our students that we have, have totally changed.  
• I think that a lot of our parents are not active in the students’ lives.  
• I think there are way more, behavior problems, way more children that are on medication for attention deficit disorder or intense deficit hyperactivity. (Echoes)  
• Now, I think it’s much different. The families are much different now. The whole dynamics are different. There’s not as much parent involvement. There’s younger parents. There’s more dysfunctional families now than there used to be. There’s not the support from home that we used to have. (Ingler)  
• It is more extremist, like political reasons.  
• Certain data shows where children are excelling or they’re not excelling  
• It’s overwhelming from all of the outside resources, such as political, community, parents, and students.  
• I think there needs to be changes um with everyone---with the system, parents, teachers, politics, everything needs to be changed so we’re all working together, to, for, that common goal. (Goldberg)  
• In the early years I liked it (teaching) quite a bit. There were challenging days, but (you know) learn as you go along and I thought it was pretty good.  
• It seems as the years have gone on, teaching has become more difficult. (Baxter) |

2.4 Have you ever thought about leaving? Why or why not?

When asked if they had ever thought about leaving the profession, 3 (25.0%) teachers indicated no, with 9 (75.0%) teachers reporting that they had thought about leaving. The reasons for staying and leaving depended on the teacher.

Enjoying the profession.

Goldberg had not thought about leaving the teaching profession because he enjoyed teaching. He indicated that he would probably teach in some capacity, continuing that he liked where he was in elementary education. Ingler agreed that she had not thought about leaving the profession because she really enjoyed what she was doing most days. Hall indicated that he liked what he did and “there is really nothing else for [him] to fall back on.”
Reasons for thinking about leaving.

Borders indicated that she had thought about leaving during the previous year. She wanted to find out if there was something else that she wanted to do more, but she did not find anything else. As a result, she decided to remain in teaching because she loved it. She indicated that thinking about leaving had nothing to do with the kids, instead, it was that she was teaching to the curriculum and not the students. She stated “We have to be able to individualize instruction and do those things that we know work for students. You can’t script that.” She decided that she could work within the system to teach the kids and work to improve the system instead of leaving it.

Stein had thought about leaving. She indicated that she had a really difficult class and could have left at any point during the year. She stayed because of the job and benefits; “otherwise I would have left and found something else.” Other than that year, she had not thought about leaving. According to Stein, teaching has become more difficult with the kids and parents as the years have passed. She stated, “I hear other teachers saying the same thing.”

Baxter indicated she had thought about leaving because of the difficult climate in the school. She also indicated that the hour drive to and from work each day has become a lot. But despite these reasons, other things were keeping her in the teaching profession.

Sanders had considered leaving because she was having a bad year and family responsibilities were growing, causing her to become more stressed. Between the students in her class and her children’s needs, she seriously was thinking about leaving at the end of the school year. After discussing her concerns with her husband, she decided
to stay and the next year had a better class, resulting in her being satisfied with her
decision to stay in the profession.

Baltese discussed the stress of being a teacher when he suggested that he had
thought about leaving. He indicated that he did not feel appreciated and thought he lacked
support in the school. He also indicated that the lack of backing with either funds or other
resources sometimes gets him down.

Frustration, especially related to the lack of professionalism in the school district
operations, was a possible reason that Lawson listed when asked if she had considered
leaving the district. However, she indicated that she would never think about leaving
because she loves what she does and money is not everything. The school district does
not have money. She thought that she would definitely finish her teaching career at this
school district.

According to Echoes, the only reason that she would consider leaving would be
because of health reasons. She had thought that she would retire when she had taught for
30 years. Now the 30 years is up and she is not ready to go because she enjoys teaching
and the changes that she can make in the kids.

Regal indicated that while she has considered leaving teaching, she wants to
continue in education, but as a counselor or psychologist. She is available to the students
before and after school or at lunchtime to discuss their problems. She wants to go back to
school to get the appropriate education to become a counselor and advise the students and
not “just off my gut as a teacher and mother.”
Goldberg indicated that he had never thought about leaving the teaching profession. He said that he liked teaching in elementary education and that is why he chooses to stay.

While Stevens has not considered leaving the teaching profession, she has thought about going to another school district. When asked why, she explained that the drive to and from work was long and she was considering looking for employment in a district closer to home.

Summary

The teachers’ response regarding have you ever thought about leaving and explaining why or why not indicated that several teachers enjoyed the teaching profession. Reasons for thinking about leaving the profession included seeing if there was anything else that they would rather pursue. Several had difficult classes. Others had quite a distance to drive. One teacher said that growing family responsibilities had also played a part in her thoughts about leaving. Two mentioned that the stress of teaching, frustration, and the lack of appreciation had entered their reasoning for wanting to leave the profession. Table 7 summarizes their responses for the two major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.
### Table 7
**Thought About Leaving**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Enjoying the profession | • …he would probably teach in some capacity continuing that he liked where he is in elementary education (Gatewood)  
• …had not thought about leaving the profession because she really enjoyed what she was doing most days. (Ingler)  
• …indicated that he likes what he does and “there is really nothing else for (him) to fall back on.” (Hall) |
| Reasons for thinking about leaving | • …wanted to find out if there was something else that she wanted to do more, but she did not find anything else. She decided to remain in teaching because she loved it. (Borders)  
• She indicated that she had a really difficult class and could have left at any point during the year. (Stein)  
• …She had thought about leaving because of the difficult climate in the school. (Baxter)  
• …had considered leaving because she was having a bad year and family responsibilities were growing, causing her to become more stressed. (Sanders)  
• …the stress of being a teacher. He indicated that he did not feel appreciated and thought he lacked support in the school. (Balteese)  
• Frustration, especially related to the lack of professionalism in the school district operations, was a possible reason.(Lawson)  
• …because of health reasons (Echoes)  
• …has considered leaving teaching, she wants to continue in education, but as a counselor or psychologist. (Regal)  
• …has never thought about leaving the teaching profession. (Goldberg)  
• …she thought the school to which she was assigned had a difficult climate in which she worked and also indicated that the hour drive to school each way was a lot. (Baxter)  
• …the drive to and from work was long and she was considering looking for employment in a district closer to home.(Steven) |

3. How do teachers who have stayed in the profession for 10 or more years describe their job satisfaction.

3.1. What do you consider the benefits of the teaching profession?

According to Hall, the benefits of being in the teaching profession are relationships with the students and their families, as well as the relationships with his co-workers and team teaching. Ingler added that she thought that watching the growth in a family starting with working with one student and then getting additional siblings over
time. She would have opportunities to see the students change especially if they stayed in the same school. She also thought that being able to help families when they experienced crises was a benefit of the teaching profession.

Both Borders and Baxter agreed that the benefit of staying in the teaching profession was working with students. Borders indicated that a lot of students did not think they could learn mathematics and she acknowledged that the test scores were not the best, but she believed that all students could learn and be successful. She wanted to help them succeed in math. She continued that she was talking about African American students in this district. The majority of the students in her classes qualified for free or reduced lunch and some people have a tendency to believe that they do not have great potential.

Baxter liked working with the students and being able to watch them grow and achieve. She thought that she sometimes feels “sour” about the teaching profession because she was seeing less growth among students in the school and believed that the kids did not seem to have as much desire to learn as in previous years.

When asked about the benefits of the teaching profession, Stein asserted that hearing from previous students and seeing them graduate was exciting. Hearing from them on Facebook indicating they have done well in school and are attending college is a benefit of the teaching profession that keeps a teacher going. She continued that knowing a teacher has made a difference in a student’s life is something a teacher cannot know immediately, but is delayed gratification.

According to Sanders, being acknowledged as making a difference in students is a benefit of being in the teaching profession. She indicated that watching the students
change from the beginning to the end of the school year. She cited an example of children starting school at different levels (some not knowing the letters, others not knowing sounds) and finishing the year reading, believing this growth provided a sense of accomplishment. She concluded saying that she did not take it on herself, because the students work hard, but at the same time, she indicated it was a good feeling of accomplishment.

Lawson thought that seeing the students grow over the year was a benefit of remaining in the teaching profession. She said that the students who do not think that they can succeed and then realize that they can if someone is providing positive reinforcement and is encouraging them to accomplish their goals.

Goldberg perceived that the benefit of remaining in the teaching profession was seeing students succeed. He indicated that when former students return and tell him that they are graduating from high school, attending college, or doing other things (i.e., working), is satisfying. According to Stevens, watching students “get it” and then help others to “get it” was a benefit of remaining in education for more than 10 years.

Non-educational Benefits

Echoes discussed the financial benefits of remaining in the teaching profession (i.e., pension). However, she also indicated that watching students develop and grow was the biggest reason that she enjoyed being an educator.

Regal indicated that having summers off was a benefit of being in the teaching profession. She also mentioned the breaks during the school year were a benefit. She continued that she uses that time to recuperate and to get geared up for the next year. She indicated that she re-evaluated herself and thought she did okay in reading. According to
Regal, the kids were making progress and she did really good in this area. However, she thought she really needed to improve for the next year so that all of her students would be achieving where they need to be. She reiterated that time off was a benefit because most people do not work at jobs that allow them to recharge like teachers. Balteese agreed with Regal, indicating that it was helpful that teachers have a lot more time off than other professions. This time allows teachers to re-energize and re-invigorate themselves so that they start every year with a better attitude.

Summary

The teachers’ responses regarding what do you consider the benefits of the teaching profession included relationships with the students and families, relationships with co-workers, working with students and helping them meet their potential, watching the students grow, succeed, and making a difference. Several teachers mentioned financial benefits (i.e., pension), summers off, and breaks as their benefits of the teaching profession. Table 8 summarizes their responses for the four major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.
Table 8

Benefits of the Teaching Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Relationships with the students and their families | • Relationships with the kids and their families. (Hall)  
• ...help out the families too if they’re having crisis so that’s some of the benefits. (Ingler) |
| Relationship with co-workers | • also the relationships with my co-workers and team teaching (Hall) |
| Working with students and helping them meet their potential, grow, succeed, making a difference | • Hearing from previous students, seeing previous students graduate is exciting. (Stein)  
• I will start working with a family and then years down the road I get all of their siblings and I get an opportunity to see them change…(Ingler)  
• There really aren’t benefits any more, with the exception of working with students. (Borders)  
• Well being able to work with kids is nice and being able to see their growth and achievement. (Baxter)  
• It’s really exciting to see when the students get it and then when they get it-they want to help others. (Stevens)  
• Just the acknowledgement that you are making a difference. (Sanders)  
• I’d say self-fulfilling you know you can see the growth of students. (Lawson)  
• Basically just watching students develop and grow. (Echoes) |
| Financial benefits (i.e. pension) | • Insurance – having a pension eventually. (Echoes)  
• Summers…Of course, the perks of the breaks that we get. (Regal)  
• Definitely the fact that you have a lot more time off than any other tech profession is helpful (Balteese) |

3.2 What do you consider the challenges of the teaching profession?

Lack of Support

According to Hall and Stein, lack of parent involvement was a challenge of the teaching profession. In addition, Stein also discussed the lack of leadership support. She indicated that when students who need to be suspended are sent to the office, they should be suspended and forced to stay home regardless of parent complaints. She also indicated that parent complaints are often for “silly, stupid stuff.” Parents complain if their kids do not get homework every night, although they do get math and reading. She also indicated that while her students are given multiple chances to do their homework, parents are not
making sure that the child does the homework and turns it in. She again reiterated that teachers need more time to get their “stuff” done and not spend time at home doing schoolwork that should be done at school.

According to Sanders, parents are not as involved. They send their children to school, but there is no follow-through at home. She indicated that she did not expect parents to spend two hours a night doing homework with their children, but she wanted them to read the newsletter. She indicated that parent involvement appeared to be declining each year and that it remained the biggest challenge. She stated, “I am not talking about field trips, I am talking about reading the newsletter, opening the book bag, and asking your child what they are doing in school. Those kind of real, what I consider real basic parenting things.”

Stevens indicated that a challenge to remaining in teaching was lacking the supplies needed to teach. She cited an example of math. She said that she wanted everything in math to be hands-on, but only if there were enough supplies for all of the students. Because she lacked sufficient supplies, she went to a workshop model so the kids could rotate on the lessons.

Getting Services

Hall indicated that getting services for students can be frustrating. Borders added that many students need to receive services. She continued that when students are integrated into general education population, they require more and the teacher has to deal with those needs in the classroom. Balteese also indicated that having new categories of students with special needs can create problems in the classroom, although we as teachers have to deal with them. As a “specials” teacher, he did not have to see the
students every day, but he has to be aware of their problems so that he can tailor work with their situations. These conditions make teaching more complicated, referring back to a time when you taught a lesson and the kids grasped it and moved on to the next lesson. Now, teachers are dealing with more behavioral problems.

Class Size

Borders discussed class size as a challenge to teaching. She indicate that large class sizes (30 to 32 students) need to be reduced. Balteese agreed, indicating that the fact that we teach a lot of kids is a challenge. He stated that sometimes teachers have classes that are so large with many students with special needs included can be challenging. He offered that he likes the kids as individuals, but taken collectively can be difficult. Regal discussed the overcrowding in the classrooms and having students with many needs that are not being met was challenging.

Expectations

Lawson indicated that one of the challenges to teaching is that students are expected to know more than in prior years. She said that kids are expected to come into the classroom knowing more than they do and then the teachers are expected to teach at the expected level and not at the actual level of the students. She thought that expectations for teachers are higher and teachers are expected to do more than previously. Parents also expect teachers to do it all at school and they should not be expected to do anything at home, however, both parents and teachers have to work together to ensure student success. She stated that “Parents have no accountability. Students lack respect and responsibility.”
Baxter stated that she enjoyed being able to work with kids and being able to see their growth and achievement. However, the challenge is that lately she feels sour about teaching because there is less and less growth and the kids do not seem to have a desire to learn.

New Evaluation Process

According to Echoes, the change in the evaluation process will be difficult for all teachers who will now be rated as either highly effective or effective. This new method is controversial in all districts, with some districts planning on giving merit pay. The teachers are in a hold at the present time, with the new evaluation system beginning in 2016. Teachers do not understand the new evaluation system, which creates an obstacle. She indicated that more training is needed regarding what is expected with the new evaluation system.

Regal agreed with Echoes, adding that more relevant professional development is needed. She also indicated the professional development should be individualized, stating “one size does not fit all.”

Behavior Problems

Goldberg indicated that challenges differ every year. He indicated that he would have a good year at managing students and then have a year where he has difficulty in getting through to the children. He indicated that when he has to reteach a lesson or modify it to meet the needs of the students and they still are not getting it, he questions his ability. He will seek out a colleague to find out what he could do to make sure the students are learning. He continued that it is a challenge when he has a difficult class with students who need to participate, pay attention, do their classwork, and are defiant. He
stated that he used all of his resources to manage the students, but they remained defiant and that is where he gets concerned.

Outsiders

Regal discussed how people outside of education are making decisions for education was a major challenge to remaining in the teaching profession. Ingler added to this discussion by indicating that governmental administration making decisions that are not research-based and have nothing to do with what is best for children and teachers is a challenge. She continued that having to perform to certain standards when it is not possible is challenging.

Summary

The teachers’ responses regarding what they considered to be challenges of the teaching profession revealed seven major categories: lack of support from both administration and parents, obtaining services for many students who are in need, large class sizes, expectations from both administration and parents, new evaluation process, behavior problems, and outsiders that included people outside of the education field determining how teachers should teach. Table 9 summarizes their responses for the seven major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.
Table 9

**Challenges of the Teaching Profession**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lack of support    | • Parent involvement (pauses), parental involvement (Hall)  
• Leadership not supporting you. When you send students to the office that need to be suspended, they should be suspended and be forced to stay home regardless of parent complaint. (Stein)  
• When you don’t have enough supplies to teach whatever you need to teach. (Stevens)  
• So that to me right now is my biggest challenge that I just can’t get the involvement. (Sanders) |
| Obtaining services | • I believe that getting services is a bit of a frustration as well. (Hall)  
• …there are a lot of kids that need to receive services (Borders)  
• I feel that we have all of these new categories ADD, ADHD-all these different things that – (tries to find the words) make our students have these problems and we have to deal with them and as a “specials” teacher I don’t see them every day so I’m kind of like oh I have to and oh he has this problem and he has this problem and I have to see if I can make these work with this situation. (Balteese) |
| Class Size         | • Large class sizes 30-31-32 and up so those would be the things that I would say really needs to improve. (Borders)  
• …the fact that we teach a lot of kids sometimes we have classes that are so large…(Balteese)  
• Overcrowding in the classroom (Regal) |
| Expectations       | • …we’re expected to do a lot more than we used to do (Lawson)  
• As far as parents I think sometimes expect us to do it all at school; they shouldn’t do anything at home and now there is so much that it has to be both. (Lawson)  
• Well being able to work with kids is nice and being able to see their growth and achievement. I think the problem with it lately why sometimes I feel sour about it, is because you see that less and less here, not everywhere, but here and kids don’t seem to have much of a desire to learn as they once did. (Baxter) |
| New Evaluation     | • I think our new evaluation process is making it very difficult for all teachers and being rated highly effective versus effective is a big controversy going on in all districts. (Echoes)  
• More training needed; more relevant professional developments; not one size fits all. (Regal) |
| Process            | • It’s a challenge when I have a difficult class with students who need to participate, pay attention, do the classwork, and when they are defiant, I’ll use all my resources. If they are still defiant, that is where I get concerned. (Goldberg) |
Table 9 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Outsiders | • …a major challenge that I do see is outsiders outside of education making decisions for educators. (Regal)  
• …they put a lot of demands on teachers and say that you have to do this this way and like but this just doesn’t work for every student or this doesn’t work in this situation or this doesn’t work for our school. So that’s a couple. There’s a lot. (Regal)  
• Another challenge that I think is really critical to address is administration; government, governmental administration making decision that are not research based, that have nothing to do with what’s best for children and teachers and having to perform to certain standards when it’s not possible. (Ingler) |

3.3 What key individuals support or supported you when you were met with challenges?

Peers

All but one of the participants reported their peers provided support when they were met with challenges. According to Hall, his co-workers provided support. Stein indicated that teachers who she worked with for eight years in another school district provided support when she felt desperation. She asserted that in the present school year, she and her mentor teacher along with others have become close, discuss things, and share resources.

Lawson concurred, that colleagues in and out of the district have provided support when she faced challenges. She stated that one her best friends is a teacher in another district and teaches high school. Although they teach at different levels, the challenges that they face are similar. When she goes to meetings at the intermediate school district (ISD), she has a bond with other teachers whether she knows them or not. They provide help with what works and what does not.

Echoes, in agreement with the other participants, indicated that the greatest support came from her colleagues. According to Goldberg, he turns to his colleagues at
grade level for support and help. Baxter concurred indicating that when there are a lot of issues in the building, teachers rally together and provide support. Sanders also indicated that she had a colleague who was super positive and when she feels frustrated or “whatever,” this colleague will pick her up. This teacher is always able to put a “positive spin” on most situations and give her the confidence needed to do the right thing.

Stevens indicated that her teaching partner bounce ideas off one another to provide support. Ingler asserted that when working with troubled students, she gets support from the social workers, the principal, and other teachers in the building. Balteese indicated that he got more support from peers than from principals, although some principals were supportive. Regal indicated that she found peers to be supportive when she needed help.

Administration

Echoes indicated that she talked to the principal a lot. As she was a union rep, she also talked to the uniserve director and the union president. Goldberg also talked to the principal and Title 1 teacher who were willing to help him when he felt challenged. Balteese indicated that he had worked for principals who were very supportive and helped him with scheduling and other situations. Goldberg and Ingler both indicated that they spoke to the principal to obtain support when working with troubled students.

Family

Lawson also asserted that she gets support from her husband. Although he might not understand all of her challenges, he is supportive. She stated that her brother and niece came to help and allowed her to vent and discuss what happened. They tell her what they think about the situation. She discussed her brother who was in the restaurant
business. This brother would help by telling her how he motivated his employees and got them to work. They would talk about motivation to get people to do what you want them to do. So she concluded that support from family was important.

Echoes also indicated that her family, husband and kids, provided support. She indicated that she talked to her kids because they had been in school and done that. Balteese also indicated he gets support from home by talking to his family who help him to see that he was not the only one who has issues. He stated that understanding others also have similar problems helps him realize that he is not alone. Borders also indicated that she talked to her husband who also is a teacher.

Research

Lawson indicated that for the past five years, she has been reading Scholastic blogs that present people’s stories of what they have done and what they have not done. She also reads MEA magazines and gets a lot more information from the articles. Regal searched the internet for research articles and websites that provide support. She seeks help from research written by people in the profession, especially one who writes for Scholastics to see how she handles different situations. Borders seeks help from support centers in and around education, even if they are not in the district.

Summary

The teachers’ response to what key individuals support or supported you when you were met with challenges revealed four major categories: Peers, administration, family, and research. Peers and colleagues were most mentioned as a means for support; others spoke of their principal. Many teachers look to spouses and children for support. Many teachers engaged in research and data to offer needed support when times were
challenging. Table 10 summarizes their responses for the four major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.

Table 10

*Key Individuals who Support or Supported Teachers when They were Met with Challenges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers – Colleagues</td>
<td>• My co-workers. Sometimes my family. Mostly my co-workers. (Hall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I think the greatest of support is my colleagues. (Echoes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colleagues first… (Regal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More to my peers than, than to the principals. (Balteese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’ve turned to my colleagues, my team colleagues at my grade level (Goldberg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I would say colleagues, peers. (Baxter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• …with other teachers in the building. (Ingler)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I have a few colleagues, one is super positive (Sanders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• My partner, teaching partner. (Stevens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>• …and with the principal…. (Ingler)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I talk to my principal a lot. (Echoes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• … but I’ve had some principals that were very supportive I must admit and they were very good…(Balteese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• …also I spoke to my principal (Goldberg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family – Friends</td>
<td>• I also …yeah my husband is a teacher. So I also talk to him. (Borders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colleagues definitely in the district and out. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uh my husband is pretty supportive. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I talk to my husband a lot (laughs). … I talk to my kids… (Echoes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>• The Scholastic website is just phenomenal for levels of activities, resources and ideas. (Stein)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• …with Scholastics they have some blogs that you know you can hear people’s stories of what they’ve done and what they haven’t done and even the magazines MEA. (Lawson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colleagues first and then I do a lot of research myself. (Regal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• … literature, data. (Borders)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How do teachers who have taught for 10 or more years describe survival strategies?

4.1 How do you manage stress that can be inherent in the teaching profession?

The teachers each had strategies that they used to manage stress that can be inherent in the teaching profession. Hall indicated that he did not take home stress from
the job because he had four kids at home. He also indicated that he discussed his stress or frustration with his job with his coworkers. Echoes indicated that she gets stressed during the day, but when the day is over, she tries to release the anger and frustrations. She indicated that each day starts anew and hopes the new day will be better. According to Stevens, she thinks that assisting other teachers help relieve stress. She explained that when a student in her class is having a bad day, another teacher could take the student for 10 or 15 minutes to give her a breather. She indicated that the teachers help each other out to help relieve stress. Baxter indicated that she does not handle stress well. She said that she sometimes has to take a lot of deep breaths. She stated that “Sometimes I do [handle stress well], but then I think I let it mount up and then it becomes a big issue so it is something that I need to work on.”

Borders indicated that she exercises and goes out with friends. Because she lives an hour away from the school, she uses that time to decompress by listening to music or screaming in the car. She continued that by the time she gets home, she is decompressed and can function. She uses the morning drive to school to relieve her stress. Sanders asserted that she was aware that she did not handle stress well and had not found anything that works, although she also had a long drive home. During this alone time, she does not listen to music or the radio. During this time, she was able to be alone with her thoughts and thought through her stress, which she found helpful.

Sanders also indicated that she also writes things down when she feels stressed. She keeps a notepad by her bed. She explained that after she writes down what is bothering her and reads it back, she finds it was not such a big deal. She indicated that she can look at the stressful event from a different perspective if she sees it in writing.
After reading, she is able to prioritize the stressful event with the importance that it requires, finding that it really is not that important most of the time.

Stein indicated that she did not manage stress well. She has high blood pressure and cholesterol issues. She comes in early and tries to be prepared for the day as best she can. She tries to communicate with parents frequently and keep them up-to-date on what is happening with their kids. She says that this keeps the parents from causing stress because she gets upset when parents come to school to chew her out about something their kids have done. When asked if she did anything like yoga or deep breathing to reduce her stress, she indicated no. She further stated that “it’s embarrassing all I do is work and then go home and do housework and go to bed. I don’t have much of anything.”

According to Regal, she changes teaching strategies when she gets stressed. She indicated that when she has a student who is trying to be disruptive so he/she can get in trouble to get what he/she wants, she will pair him/her with another student who is very studious. She thinks this strategy works, but it depends on the situation. Sometimes she changes the activity or changes what the class is doing. She provided an example if the class was doing work with paper and pencil and it was becoming stressful she might then make the work more hands on and vice versa. She thinks this changes the setting. When she is at home, she will play with her son because he is happy to see her and she is happy to see him when she walks in the door. She indicated that she just kind of dives into that life.

Some of the teachers indicated that they relax and spend time with their families to relieve stress of teaching. According to Ingler, vacation is what helps relieve the stress
of teaching. Balteese indicated that he was not sure of what he did to relieve stress. Sometimes he gets involved in his family, goes bowling with his son, and participates with the band. Balteese stated that he has three kids so there was always something going on in which he can be involved. He also indicated that his wife was good about setting up vacations and they did things (e.g., eating out) that took his mind off teaching. These activities helped reduce his stress.

Goldberg asserted that he had both good days and bad days. He continued that luckily he had a family, wife and children that he enjoyed. He indicated that teaching does not stop in the classroom and when he is with his children he is teaching them different experiences. He can talk to his wife and she consoles him. Although his wife is not an educator, he relies on her to sit and listen to help relieve the stress that he feels.

Summary

The teachers’ responses to “how do you manage stress that can be inherent in the teaching profession” revealed three areas: school-related, personal, and other. Many teachers managed their stress through interactions with peers, talking to spouses and family members. Other responses ranged from exercise, decompress during their long drive home, try to be prepared, change teaching strategies when needed, write their thoughts down, vacation to simply starting each day with a fresh new start. Table 11 summarizes their responses for the two major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.
Table 11

*Teachers’ Management of Stress Inherent in Teaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survival Strategy</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-related</td>
<td>• I just verbally discuss with my coworkers any stress that I am feeling or any frustration that I am feeling. (Hall)  &lt;br&gt; • Communicates with parents (Stein)  &lt;br&gt; • I guess coming in early, trying to be as best prepared for my day as possible. (Stein)  &lt;br&gt; • Once the day is over, I give my kids [students] a high five and pretend the days over and start all over the next day (Echoes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>• …meditate (Balteese)  &lt;br&gt; • Sculpt (Balteese)  &lt;br&gt; • I listen to music—I scream in my car…(Borders)  &lt;br&gt; • I tell my wife a lot of things and she consoles me. (Goldberg)  &lt;br&gt; • You know I really have to take a lot of deep breaths. (Baxter)  &lt;br&gt; • … I read. (Balteese)  &lt;br&gt; • Vacation. (Ingler)  &lt;br&gt; • At home, I really relax. (Regal)  &lt;br&gt; • I get in to what’s going on in the family (Balteese)  &lt;br&gt; • I do have a long drive home, so often you will find my car silent, no music, no radio, no anything, just me alone, like with my thoughts (laughs) and that seems to work for whatever reason. (Sanders)  &lt;br&gt; • Helping each other out. (Stevens)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 What are the survival strategies or resources that have helped you stay in the profession?

**Colleagues**

The teachers’ survival strategies vary with some teachers indicating a sense of humor, relationships with co-workers and principals, as well as family were helpful in remaining in education for more than 10 years. For example, Hall indicated he used all three strategies to remain in the profession. Sanders asserted that having a colleague or friend which whom she was able to bounce ideas on was a strategy she used. She also indicated that trying to stay current because the classroom and the children are different now from when she started in teaching. She likes to develop a community in her
classroom because the children are more likely to feel part of the class. Sanders also participated in yoga and meditation that she does with her daughter at home as an outlet to reduce stress. Sanders also indicated that she limits doing school work at home to three days a week and would discuss her day with her children to get their perspective on how she handled certain situations at school. Sanders used the internet to keep things moving.

Ingler participates in peer support groups and socializes with people who understand the teaching profession as a strategy to survive. Goldberg counts on colleagues and the principal for support. Goldberg and Stevens indicated that changing grade levels helped them maintain focus. Baxter participates in family activities with her children outside of school as a strategy to relieve stress and remain in the teaching profession. Echoes indicated that using family to discuss concerns was a survival strategy. Having a good rapport with administrators also was a survival strategy that Echoes thought was helpful in remaining in the teaching profession. Borders discussed the importance of colleagues who were helpful and supported her as a survival strategy. Being told that she is good at teaching was important to her. Her family also provided support.

Some of the survival strategies that Balteese used included hobbies, reading, doing art projects including completing big sculptures (lion, elephant, giraffe), changing schools, searching the internet for curriculum, singing in church choir, participating in groups outside of school (Knights of Columbus).

Stein mentioned that Scholastic website for teacher resources was phenomenal for providing levels of activities, resources, and ideas for working with her students. A
Mailbox subscription also was helpful. She was determined to continue in the teaching profession until she had her 30 years and qualified for a pension.

Regal indicated that the internet had a lot of strategies, resources, and interventions that were helpful in her classroom. She tried to find things that appealed to more than one level of students and address the needs of the students. If she finds things that are effective with her students, she stays with it, if not effective, she goes on to something else. Stevens found that attending workshops and changing grade levels were strategies she used to survive in teaching.

Summary

The teachers’ responses to what are the survival strategies or resources that have helped them stay in the profession revealed that the teachers had a variety of survival strategies that fell into three categories: peers, family, and other. The “other” responses included: humor, people around who help support, websites, intrinsic rewards, variety of strategies, resources, interventions, and workshops. Table 12 summarizes their responses for the three major areas that emerged from the interview responses on this question.
### Table 12

**Survival Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Peers  | • I have a great deal of teacher friends both in the building that I’m in now and people that I’ve worked with in the past. And we’re a support group for each other. (Ingler)  
• One would be to have that colleague…(Sanders) |
| Family | • I think my family. (Echoes)  
• They keep me busy—my family throughout. (Baxter) |
| Other  | • Sense of humor—survival strategy. (Hall)  
• Just the people around that do help—friends and people, who are actually helpful and understand, continue to support me. (Borders)  
• The Scholastic website is just phenomenal for levels of activities, resources, and ideas. (Stein)  
• Intrinsic rewards…I was at the breaking point where I was frustrated and then I just kind of revived. This is why I do what I do. (Lawson)  
• There are a lot of strategies and resources, interventions that are usable. (Regal)  
• Websites and stuff. (Balteese)  
• There’s always workshops. (Goldberg)  
• A lot of the workshops at Oakland Schools…(Stevens) |

### Themes

Teaching is a multi-faceted profession that requires teachers to assume all types of roles, especially in an elementary school. For example, teachers in a typical day provide instruction, help students who are experiencing difficulty in mastering a task, act as an arbitrator between students who are having difficulty being cooperative, providing social support to a parent who has problems that affect his/her child’s ability to learn, and then grade papers and do the necessary clerical work. All this in a day’s work. Four themes emerged from the interviews with the teachers regarding reasons why they remained in the teaching profession for 10 or more years. These themes included:

1. Love of the teaching profession
2. Job expectations
3. Support from administrators, colleagues, and family

4. Different coping mechanisms and strategies to manage stress.

Theme 1: Love of the teaching profession.

All of the teachers indicated that they loved some form of the teaching profession. While the teachers indicated they loved teaching, their responses could be further divided into two subthemes: working with the kids and teaching.

Many teachers enjoyed working with the children and watching them grow and develop their potential. Hall indicated that he liked working with the children, while Borders mentioned that she thought the kids needed good teachers and she liked working with the students to develop their potential. Echoes loved watching the children grow and seeing the changes that occur from the moment they walked through the door until they left her room at the end of the school year. Lawson indicated that her love of teaching that kept her in the teaching profession resulted from her passion for children, seeing them succeed and grow through the years. She stated that she loved her job so that makes it easier to do what you love longer. Goldberg loved watching the kids perk up when they got an answer right or when they were getting information. Ingler loved working with the families, touching lives, as well as the joy of the children and the anticipation of learning that they bring to the classroom. Sanders explained that she remained in the teaching profession just because she loved it. Sanders continued that a teacher cannot do this job if she/he does not love what they do.

The teachers indicated that they remained in the teaching profession because they thought they were making a difference when they reached out to students. According to both Hall and Regal, knowing that you can actually make a difference in a child’s
learning and that you are affecting a life. It made them feel good to know that they had helped their students.

Developing the students’ potential was a major reason that the teachers loved their work. Lawson stated that watching children succeed and seeing them grow through the year. I think the excitement of when students learn and they finally get that “aha” moment. That is very reassuring and it is fulfilling so I think it makes a teacher just want to do more. Ingler indicated that touching students’ lives was a reason for staying in the profession, while both Stevens and Regal mentioned helping students with new and difficult concepts.

Some teachers love their subject matter and want to extend their love of the topic to their students. For example, Balteese indicated that he loved the arts and wanted his students to learn to appreciate the arts as well. While the other teachers were generalists and taught all subjects, they were interested in making sure their students understood the subject matter being taught and were able to grow from the beginning to the end of the school year.

Sanders indicated she had to be dedicated to remain in the profession. She thought that the job had gotten progressively more difficult as the years go on, so she thought that teachers definitely need a dedication to the profession to be able to withstand some of the changes that have occurred in education recently. She also indicated that she did not feel that a teacher could really do the job effectively if she/he did not love what they did.
Theme 2: Job Expectations

The teachers indicated that their expectations had changed over the years that they had been teaching. When they started, they were fresh and excited. However, they indicated that they were generally unprepared by their programs for classroom management and paperwork that often took more time than teaching. For example, Goldberg stated that during the first 5 years of teaching, he was very energetic, coming in early and staying late. Two teachers indicated that teaching in the beginning was enjoyable. Another teacher said she loved grading papers at home and thought it was the best thing. Several teachers indicated that teaching in the early years was demanding and their teacher education programs had not prepared them. However as time passed, the job had changed. The teachers indicated the work was less creative, children had become more challenging, and parents were not as supportive as they had been in the early years. Some teachers stated that being creative has become a challenge. For example, Balteese said that he can no longer do as exciting projects as he did when he first began in the teaching profession. Some had mentioned that respect for teachers has diminished. Borders indicated that when she began her career, teachers were respected more than they are now. Echoes commented that many parents were not active in their children’s lives and as a result, more children are behavior problems, on medication for attention deficit disorder, or have other problems that impede learning. Parent involvement has decreased, parents are younger, and more families are dysfunctional. Teachers do not have the same support from home than earlier in her career.
Theme 3: Support from Administrators, Colleagues, and Families

All of the teachers indicated that at times while teaching they reached out for support when stress associated with teaching became difficult. They each had specific ways to manage stress that involved either discussing problems with their administrators, colleagues, or families. Talking through difficult situations with others who may have encountered the same problems could be helpful. Several teachers mentioned that they turn to administration for support when they were met with challenges. For example, Echoes indicated that she talked to the principal a lot. Goldberg and Ingler also mentioned that they spoke to the principal to obtain support when working with troubled students. Most of the teachers indicated that their peers provided support when they met with challenges. Echoes said that the greatest support came from her colleagues. According to Goldberg, he turns to his colleagues at grade level for support and help. On occasion, some teachers discussed their classroom challenges with teachers who were from other school districts. They were able to see how the concerns were addressed in other settings and found the results were similar, regardless of the environment. In addition to seeking advice and support from their colleagues, several teachers indicated that their families were supportive. For example, Echoes indicated that her family, husband, and kids provided support. Balteese also indicated he gets support from home by talking to his family who help him to see that he was not the only one who has issues.

Theme 4: Different coping mechanisms and strategies to manage stress.

The teachers each used different strategies to manage stress and challenges that were inherent in the teaching profession. The teachers’ strategies were categorized into two categories, school-related or personal. For example, school-related responses were
Stein communicates with parents. According to Hall, he verbally discussed any stress or frustration that he was feeling with his co-workers. Personal responses ranged from Sanders’ response that she wrote when she was stressed. Borders indicated that she exercised and used the long drive home to help manage the stress inherent in her job.

The teachers’ survival strategies varied and could be categorized in three groups, peers, family, and other. According to Hall, a sense of humor, relationships with co-workers, principals, and family members were helpful in surviving in the teaching profession from year to year. Ingler said that participating in peer support groups and socializing with people who understand the teaching profession was a strategy she used to survive. Baxter participated in family activities, Stein mentioned that Scholastic website for teacher resources was phenomenal for providing levels of activities, resources, and ideas for working with her students. Teachers who were not using survival strategies could become overwhelmed by the work and frustrations, burning out, and eventually leaving the profession.

Summary

The reasons that teachers remain in the teaching profession for more than 10 years were insightful, providing evidence that the love of teaching was the over-arching reason for their longevity. While most of the teachers reported they loved working with the children and watching them grow and develop were the primary reasons for their love of the profession, they also acknowledged that the profession had changed over the years. They indicated that creativity had decreased, challenges with students and parents, and outside influences had diminished some of their enthusiasm for education. Few teachers mentioned extrinsic benefits (pay, time off, retirement) as incentives for remaining in the
profession. The teachers indicated that support from their administrators, colleagues, and families were important in managing the stress and frustration that was inherent in their jobs. They also detailed some of the strategies and survival techniques they used to reduce stress arising in their day-to-day work. A discussion of the findings and recommendations for further research can be found in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand (a) how veteran elementary teachers in a small urban school district experience job satisfaction; (b) what work environment factors enable them to stay; and (c) what survival strategies they employ. Using a combination of deductive and inductive analyses, this qualitative study reflected on the lived experiences of teachers who have stayed in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

This study added to the current body of literature on veteran teachers by building on previous research (e.g., Albert & Levine, 1988; Nieto, 2003; Steffey, 1989). The findings of the present study add another dimension regarding what encourages, motivates, and enables urban elementary teachers to remain in their positions for 10 or more years. Understanding how veteran teachers’ lived experiences from their (a) background, (b) work environment, (c) survival strategies, and (d) overall job satisfaction has enabled and encouraged them to transition through the years and remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years in spite of the challenging nature of their job is important. This phenomenological research study focused on the following four sub questions:

1. What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types
of teacher certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

2. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their job satisfaction? By job satisfaction, I mean the motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement) and hygiene factors (school and district policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions) as defined by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) that maintain their willingness to remain in the teaching profession.

3. What work environment factors play a part in a veteran elementary teacher’s decisions to remain in the classroom for ten or more years? By work environment, I mean career development, administration, empowerment, bureaucracy, relationships with colleagues, students, and parents, and career stages.

4. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their survival strategies? By survival strategies, I mean external activities that help minimize the stress resulting from being in the classroom and meeting the challenges that are established by the school, school district, and state of Michigan.

**Methods**

The teachers participated in face-to-face interviews with the researcher. The interview questions were intended to obtain information to address the research questions. The interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The teachers were asked to review their interviews and make any changes necessary as a measure of the validity of the data collection.
Interpretation of the Findings

Five primary themes emerged from the interviews. These themes included:

1. Experiences related to the teaching experiences.
2. Benefits of teaching
3. Challenges of teaching
4. Support from others
5. Strategies to manage stress from teaching.

Research question 1. What are the background characteristics of veteran elementary teachers working in an urban elementary school district? By background, I mean age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, educational level, types of teacher certification, years of teaching experience, grade levels taught, and time spent in professional development inside and outside of school.

A total of 12 elementary teachers in three elementary schools located in a small suburb adjacent to a large urban city participated in the study. These teachers met the criterion of having a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience in an elementary school. The teachers ranged in age from 31 to more than 50 years of age and all but two had children living in their homes. Ten teachers were married, with two indicating their marital status was divorced. All teachers had completed master degrees, were certified, and had met the state requirements for highly qualified teachers. The teaching experiences of the teachers ranged from 12 to 30 years. All grade levels from kindergarten through sixth grade were represented in the study. The teachers all had records of participation in professional development.
Research question 2. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their job satisfaction? By job satisfaction, I mean the motivators (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility and advancement) and hygiene factors (school and district policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions) as defined by Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) that maintain their willingness to remain in the teaching profession.

The first major theme, experiences related to teaching emerged from the responses to the interview questions that were developed to answer the research questions. The teachers’ experiences included why they remained in teaching, experiences associated with teaching in the early years and presently, and thoughts about leaving.

All teachers indicated they had remained in teaching because of the children and their love of teaching. Their responses reflected that they enjoyed working with their students, watching them grow and develop over the school year, making a difference in their lives, and enjoying the subject matter they taught. The teachers also liked working with the families and touching their lives. They found that anticipation of learning that their students brought to the classroom also added to their love of teaching. These comments were echoed by most of the teachers. They also liked having a new group of students each year that enabled them to start anew at the beginning of the school year.

Most of the teachers found that teaching in the early years differed from their expectations and what they had been taught in their teacher preparation programs. They were not prepared for classroom management or the discipline that would be required in their classrooms. However, they were excited about teaching and being creative in
planning and presenting their lessons. They were motivated and enthusiastic at the beginning. These descriptions of teaching in the early years differed from what they were experiencing in their classrooms presently. They indicated that the children and their families had changed over the years. The respect for teachers had declined in recent years. The teachers indicated that the students were not as interested in learning, were less creative, and as a result, one teacher stated that she/he was not as dedicated. In addition, the parents appeared to be less involved in school than during their early years. The curriculum had become more focused, allowing for less creativity in designing and presenting instruction. Some of the teachers also mentioned the criticism regarding education that was external to the school, especially from the government or the media. They tended to block the challenges and demands of the teaching professions, focusing instead on the needs of their students and helping them be successful.

The teachers discussed their thoughts about leaving. They indicated they enjoyed teaching, and generally had no thoughts about leaving. One teacher said that if he/she was not working in the school district, he/she probably would be teaching somewhere else in some capacity. The teachers who had thought about leaving listed various reasons why they might want to try another profession, but since they loved teaching, they stayed. One teacher said that when she had a difficult class, she/he could have left at any time during the year. Some teachers indicated they stayed although the difficult climate and lack of support in the school were reasons they thought about leaving. Although the job was stressful and they often did not feel appreciated, they remained in the profession. The teachers also indicated that they stayed for extrinsic reasons. They cited the summers off,
the pay and benefits, as well as their retirement programs were reasons they stayed in the teaching profession.

While job satisfaction was not mentioned directly by the teachers, their responses reflected motivator and hygiene factors that were influencing their remaining in the teaching profession. They talked about loving the children, enjoying watching the children grow and develop under their supervision. Working with the families brought the teachers satisfaction. They also indicated that they did not feel appreciated, which could contribute to dissatisfaction, although the teachers thought the support they received from their peers and administrators was good. Some teachers indicated that they remained in teaching because of the pay and benefits, as well as summers off. These hygiene factors could not increase their job satisfaction, but did not add to job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Generally, it appeared that most teachers’ job satisfaction with teaching was high.

3. What work environment factors play a part in a veteran elementary teacher’s decisions to remain in the classroom for ten or more years? By work environment, I mean career development, administration, empowerment, bureaucracy, relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and career stages.

The second major theme, experiences related to teaching emerged from the responses to the interview questions that were developed to answer the research question on work environment. The teachers’ experiences included identifying benefits and challenges associated with the teaching profession. Most teachers found that one benefit of being in the teaching profession was working with students. To see students succeed, see them develop over the school year, and see their students’ accomplishments, and
know that they (the teachers) had made a difference was an added benefit mentioned by several teachers. Several teachers discussed the non-educational benefits of remaining in the teacher profession: financial benefits and having summers off as a time to recharge was an added benefit.

The teachers discussed the challenges found in the work environment. Many teachers indicated that a lack of parent involvement, leadership support, and supplies made teaching more challenging. They indicated that obtaining services and working with students with special needs was difficult and made things more complicated. Some teachers mentioned that student behavior issues played a role in making the teaching profession more challenging. The teachers indicated that changing expectations, new evaluation process, and people outside of the education making decision for teachers has increasingly made the teaching profession much more demanding.

When asked who provided support and help when challenges arose in teaching, most of the teachers reported their peers. They indicated they could go to their peers for advice, discuss problems with students, and develop strategies to reduce the stress associated with teaching. Administrators also were listed as individuals who provided support for teachers. In addition, external sources of support often came from family and friends outside of the teaching profession. Family members were able to provide distractions and help the teachers focus on matters unrelated to their students and classrooms. Their own children and spouses often acted as sounding boards if a particular problem needed to be discussed. Friends, both those in teaching, at their own schools and other schools, or those not in teaching, also provided support, especially during times of stress. When a difficult problem associated with either teaching or students arose, some
teachers sought assistance from research, reading articles in teaching journals, or searching the internet.

4. How do veteran elementary teachers describe their survival strategies? By survival strategies. I mean external activities that help minimize the stress resulting from being in the classroom and meeting the challenges that are established by the school, and district, and state of Michigan.

The teachers provided strategies that they used when challenges and demands were present in their schools or classrooms when providing answers for this research question. Some of the strategies they listed included:

- Talking with co-workers
- Starting each day anew and hoped the next day would be better
- Helping other teachers assisted in relieving their stress
- Taking a lot of deep breaths
- Exercising and going out with friends
- Decompressing by listening to music on drive home
- Spending quiet time, thinking about her day during drive home
- Writing things down
- Communicating with parents
- Changing teaching strategies
- Spending time with families and spouses
- Vacationing
- Maintaining a sense of humor
- Talking to the principal
• Developing a community of learners in his/her classroom
• Participating in yoga and meditation
• Putting a time limit on school work at home
• Changing grade levels for a new school year
• Working on a hobby
• Researching using the Scholastic website
• Using the internet to find new teaching strategies, resources, and interventions
• Attending workshops.

These strategies provided support that teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for 10 or more years are finding ways to diffuse the stress associated with meeting demands of the profession. They are avoiding burnout by remaining current in their skills; working on themselves by exercising, doing yoga, and meditating; and have a social life beyond the school. These teachers are typical of others who have remained in their jobs for extended periods. New teachers could begin to apply some of these strategies to offset the demands and challenges in the classroom. Table 13 presents a comparison of the themes to previous literature.
Table 13

Comparison of Themes with Previous Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Summary between Anthony (2014) and Previous Research</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for Staying in Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of teaching</td>
<td>Affirms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Way of life (Huberman, 1993); Gain inspiration from work and students (Steffey, 1989); teaching experiences can be affected by way they feel about their jobs (Bromfield, 2000); happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); intrinsically motivated (Eccles &amp; Wigfield, 2002); Teaching can be difficult and stressful; although, most teachers are satisfied with most aspects (Albert &amp; Levine, 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of dedication (Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer, 1989); No longer rewarding (Billingsley, 2004); All teachers may experience burn out at some time, (Nagy 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adds to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Stage (Steffey, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Expectations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Affirms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not enter profession for money (Steffey, 1989); Early retirement (Alvy, 2005); Motivators (Herzberg, 1959)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adds to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summers off; work environment reasons for staying (Steffey, 1989); basic ingredient of job satisfaction, however…(1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low pay (Steffey, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affirms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1959); one of the most challenging professions (Bromfield, 2000); Very challenging (Nieto, 2003); small victories (Merrow, 2000); oversize classes, other factors (Conley, et al., 1989; Steffey, 1989); source of stress (Kyriacou, 1987); burnout is a major challenge (Corrigan, 1981)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 13 – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Summary between Anthony (2014) and Previous Research</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disputes: Stress not necessarily a negative job characteristic (Albert &amp; Levine, 1998); Manageable class size, absence of student learning problems, and the absence of discipline problems can have positive effects (Conley et al. 1989)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support from administrators, colleagues, and family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Affirms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting from administrators, colleagues, and family</td>
<td>Creating a positive school climate (Wimpelberg, 1986); principal or superintendent holds the key (Hill, 1995); administrative structures of schools (Conley et al., 1989); relationship between teachers and their immediate superiors is important (Steffey, 1989); support group (Clement, 1999; Brown, 2003); home life, co-workers, supervisors (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); Schultz (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different coping mechanisms and strategies to manage stress</td>
<td><strong>Affirms:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different coping mechanisms and strategies to manage stress</td>
<td>Subjective (Kyriacou, 1987); coping mechanisms (Kyriacou, 1987); positive effects (Nagel &amp; Brown, 2003); humor (Kyriacou, 1987); ABCs of managing stress (Nagel &amp; Brown 2003); ways to relieve stress (Csikszentmihalyi 1990); (Schultz, 2008; Lamb, 1995); breathing techniques (Nagel &amp; Brown, 2003; Sylvester 2008); priorities and organization (Reglin &amp; Reitzammer, 1998)</td>
</tr>
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### Implications for Teachers and Administrators

Findings from this study indicated that veteran teachers love teaching and love the students in spite of all of the demanding challenges, such as lack of support, supplies, bureaucracy, etc. In spite of the challenges, veteran teachers have encountered many of these challenges before and have shown that they employ many strategies and resources
to get through the demands of the teaching profession. Through their love, efforts, and commitment to the students they are able to stay in the teaching profession.

Teachers are expected to meet certain standards when providing instruction to children. The state has mandated that students be assessed in core subject areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, writing, and social studies) at different times starting with the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) tests in third grade. In addition, teachers are being assessed on the extent to which their students grow through the school year, as well as on their students’ test scores. In addition to these demands, parents are being less supportive and more contentious with teachers, challenging them regarding discipline, academic achievement, and attendance. Without support, many teachers give up and leave during their early years because they have not learned strategies that can help them alleviate stress and control possible burnout.

This study revealed that teachers are not necessarily motivated by Herzberg’s hygiene factors (e.g., school and district policies, supervision, salary, and working conditions). However, interpersonal relations, achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement were motivators, with colleagues and administrators playing major roles in teaching job satisfaction.

This study found that looking at veteran teachers and their lived experiences is important to understand what motivates them to stay in the teaching profession. These veteran teachers had been through challenging times, learned to cope with the challenges and changes in education, and have remained in the classroom. This study indicated that although the teaching profession can be demanding, various ways exist to survive and
thrive. The study findings could help novice teachers recognize that the challenges they may be experiencing are not unique, and that they are not alone in their experiences.

The administrators in elementary schools, particularly principals and assistant principals, should consider the findings of this study when working with both novice and experienced teachers. They should provide support in and out of the classroom, be available to discuss problems and challenges that occur with students and parents, and provide professional development that is relevant to the teachers. Principals are the instructional leaders in the school and ultimately responsible for student progress. Working together as a collaborative team with teachers can produce a school climate that endorses positive student outcomes and can have a secondary outcome of improving job satisfaction among teachers.

According to Nieto (2003), the teaching profession can be very demanding. Finding strategies to balance the challenges is important to maintaining a veteran teaching staff. Professors and instructors in teacher education programs need to open a dialogue of what actually happens in the classroom, the challenges of working with parents, and changes that are most likely to occur. Preservice teachers should be required to volunteer in classrooms, observe teachers in action, and talk to principals about the realities of the teaching profession. Building on the lived experiences of the veteran teachers in this study, professors may be able to improve or redesign the undergraduate curriculum to be more realistic of what actually occurs once you walk into the classroom.

Teachers often turn to colleagues and family members as support when workplace stress becomes problematic. Colleagues who are in education, but in different school districts can act as a sounding board and give advice on handling difficulty situations.
Family members can be supportive and provide a distraction from the workplace stressors. Both groups are important in helping novice and experienced teachers control stress that arises as a natural consequence of working with parents, students, and external constituencies, as workplace conditions were found to be a major factor in what motivates veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

**Limitations of the Study**

The small sample size could be considered a limitation of the study. As a phenomenological research design was used in this study, the results cannot be generalized beyond the 12 teachers. However, the findings may be helpful to teachers who are beginning their careers and need to know that remaining in teaching can be rewarding over the long term. Another limitation was restricting the study to elementary teachers in one district. Teachers in other districts or at the middle and high school levels may have different demands and challenges relative to the students and parents with whom they work.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The following recommendations should be considered in extending this study:

1. Replicate the study using a larger sample from more than one school district.

This replication could provide support for the responses of the teachers in the present study. While different school districts have a variety of challenges that may or may not be similar to the ones in the district in the present study, the reasons that teachers remain in their classrooms for more than 10 years may be comparable to the ones raised in this study.
2. Use a quantitative approach to determine what factors are contributing to elementary teachers remaining in their classrooms for more than 10 years. An original questionnaire could be developed based on the responses from the teachers in the present study. The questionnaire could be distributed to teachers in multiple school districts. The analysis would provide support for reasons that teachers stay in their classrooms for more than 10 years.

3. Conduct a study to determine why high school teachers remain in their positions for more than 10 years. High school teachers face different challenges than elementary school teachers (e.g., more students, repetitive lesson planning, older students, etc.). Understanding why these teachers remain in their positions could help preservice and novice teachers to be aware of some of the challenges prior to beginning their jobs.

4. Using the career stages delineated by Steffey (1985), conduct a longitudinal study to follow novice teachers at various times in their careers to determine when the career stages are encountered and how the teachers cope with the stages. Determining how they manage their careers to avoid stress and burnout, while maintaining their enthusiasm in the classroom is important for retaining teachers in the profession.

What I Learned from this Study

Although the literature did not directly address the love of teaching and the love of the students, through the interviews the veteran teachers in my study appeared to have a love of teaching and enjoyed working with the students. According to Nieto (2003), even under the best circumstances, teaching is a demanding profession and many teachers
work under less than ideal circumstances. Although the teachers in my study would agree that teaching can be demanding, the stress and demands have not lead them to a point where they feel burned out and are considering leaving the profession. The opposite seems to have occurred. Although the teachers in my study would agree that the teaching profession can be challenging and stressful, they found ways to cope and remain in the teaching profession for 10 or more years.

Steffey (1989) cited anticipatory, expert, renewal, withdrawal, and exit as stages in a teacher’s career. Based on my study, I did not find that the teachers in my study had gone through all five stages, although the scope of the study did not allow for teachers to have experienced all of the expected stages. Some of Steffey’s (1989) career stages were yet to be encountered or the teachers had already gone through some of those stages. For example, Steffey’s anticipatory stage, the stage that is for the fresh, new, and excited teacher with the newest and most creative of ideas was experienced by all of the teachers when they entered the profession. The withdrawal and exit stages were not demonstrated by the teachers in this study. Although some teachers had difficult starts and challenges throughout their tenures, they managed to stay in the teaching profession for ten or more years.

In the literature review, Herzberg’s (1959) motivators and hygiene factors extrinsic to the job, such as interpersonal relations with peers, were factors in remaining in the profession. The veteran teachers in this study relied on their relationships with their colleagues to manage stress. According to Clement (1999), a support group is more than a circle of friends or colleagues. It can be a sounding board, a way to discuss common problems, and a coping mechanism. The findings in my study support that the collegiality
among teachers is important, especially to veteran teachers. In my study, the need for colleagues and the camaraderie that comes along with those types of relationships seemed to be an important factor for the teachers in the study. Herzberg’s (1959) other motivators, such as recognition, achievement, and advancement, were not as prevalent with the veteran teachers in the study.

Steffey (1989) mentioned that teachers do not enter the profession for money. However in the present study, my findings showed that few teachers mentioned extrinsic benefits as a priority for remaining in the profession. Researchers (Albert & Levine, 1988; Clement, 1999; Kyriacou, 1987; Schultz, 2008) discussed factors and bureaucracies that contributed to stress in teaching. While these external factors were present in the current study, they did not contribute to veteran teachers’ stress to a point where they felt the need to leave. Veteran teachers in the study admitted that they experienced stress, but surprisingly the stress had not led to burnout. Most of the teachers had developed coping mechanisms that worked for them, so that the stress that they have experienced was manageable.
REFERENCES


http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0883-0355(89)90033-5


Management Administration and Leadership, 33, 355-369. doi:
10.1177/1741143205054014


Appendix A

Informed Consent Form and Demographic Survey

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sue Poppink
Student Investigator: Cynthia A. Anthony
Title of Study: Veteran Elementary Teachers’ Motivations to Stay in the Teaching Profession for Ten Years or More

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Veteran Elementary Teachers’ Motivations to Stay in the Teaching Profession for Ten Years or More." This project will serve as Cynthia A. Anthony’s dissertation for the requirements of the Doctor of Education degree. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of my study is to understand (a) how veteran elementary teachers in a small urban school district experience job satisfaction; (b) what work environment factors enable them to stay; and (c) what survival strategies they employ.

Who can participate in this study?
The participants in this study will be veteran elementary teachers with at least 10 years of experience. There are no other inclusionary requirements for participation in the study.

Where will this study take place?
The interviews will be conducted at a place that is agreeable to the teacher being interviewed. For example, the interview can be conducted in their classrooms after school, a library, or coffee shop.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The interviews are expected to last from 30 to 45 minutes. The interview is a one-time only, but the teachers will also be expected to review their individual transcripts and make changes as they feel are necessary.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
The volunteers will be asked to read this consent form and then participate in the interview. The interviews will be audiotaped. After the interview is transcribed, the researcher will send it to the participant via email. The teacher will be asked to read the interview transcript and make any changes that are relevant. If no changes are needed, no action is necessary.
What information is being measured during the study?
The teachers will be asked to discuss their experiences and strategies that have helped them remain current in their professions. Nothing is being measured or evaluated.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no known risks to participating in the study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There is no known benefit to participating in the study for the volunteer teachers. However, the results of the study may be useful in determining reasons why teachers remain in the profession. Future elementary teachers may benefit by being aware of the reasons and strategies that veteran elementary teachers use to reduce stress and burnout.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no known costs associated with participating in the study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The only people who will have access to the information collected during this study are the researcher, her dissertation committee, and the HSIRB at Western Michigan University.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You may choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Cynthia A. Anthony at 248-219-9850 or anthony762@att.net. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

By participating in the interviews with Cynthia A. Anthony, I am giving consent to participate in this study.
Demographic Survey

Please answer the following questions as they apply to you. There are no right or wrong answers and all information will be confidential. No individual teacher will be identifiable in the final report.

Age  Gender  Educational Level
☑ Under 30  ☑ Male  ☑ Bachelor’s degree
☑ 31 to 35  ☑ Female  ☑ Master’s degree
☑ 36 to 40  ☑  Education specialist
☑ 41 to 45  ☑  EdD or PhD
☑ 46 to 50  ☑  Other
☑ Over 50

Marital Status  Number of Dependent Children
☑ Single, Never married  ☑  None
☑ Married  ☑ One
☑ Divorced  ☑ Two
☑ Separated  ☑ Three
☑ Widowed  ☑ Four or more
☑ Other __________________

Total years of experience as a teacher  ___________ years

Years in this school district  ___________ years
### Appendix B

**Interview Questions**

**Anthony’s Data Collection**

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<td><strong>1.</strong></td>
<td>What are the background characteristics of the teachers interviewed?</td>
<td>These must be included in anything you send to the HSIRB.</td>
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<td><strong>2.</strong></td>
<td>How do veteran teachers describe staying in the profession for 10 or more years?</td>
<td>2.1. What has led you to stay in the profession of teaching for more than 10 years?</td>
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<td>2.2. How did you experience the profession in your early years?</td>
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<td>2.3. How do you experience the profession now?</td>
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<td>2.4. Have you ever thought about leaving? Why or why not?</td>
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<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td>How do teachers who have stayed in the profession for 10 or more years describe their job satisfaction?</td>
<td>3.1. What do you consider the benefits of the teaching profession?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2. What do you consider to be the challenges of the teaching profession?</td>
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<td>3.3. To where have you turned for support when you encounter professional challenges?</td>
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<td><strong>4.</strong></td>
<td>How do teachers who have taught for ten or more years describe survival strategies?</td>
<td>4.1. How do you manage stress that can be inherent in the teaching profession?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.2. What are the survival strategies or resources that have helped you stay in the profession?</td>
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Appendix C

HSIRB Approval Letter

Date: May 29, 2013

To: Sue Poppink, Principal Investigator
   Cynthia Anthony, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 13-05-22

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Veteran Teachers’ Motivation to stay in the Teaching Profession for Ten Years or More” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 29, 2014