Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts:
Strategies for Success

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts, from the perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher. Data was collected from interviews of superintendents, principals, and teachers, conducted in three remote rural school districts in the state of Alabama. Superintendents and principals noted two major challenges to recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts: geographical location and competition from larger school districts. Teachers who traveled over 40 minutes to get to work, tended to leave the remote rural school districts to find employment closer to where they lived. Larger school districts offered teachers higher salaries or signing bonuses to teach that the smaller, remote rural school districts could not afford to offer. The superintendents and principals reported that successful strategies in recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts included: active recruitment, hiring local teachers, incentives, teacher induction programs, mentors for support, and support from administrators. Although the geographic location was reported by superintendents and principals as a challenge to recruiting and retaining teachers, teachers reported geographical location as the top reason they continue to work in their current school districts. Teachers also noted to a lesser extent that administrative support and support from other teachers are reasons they stay in their current districts.

Acknowledgements

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning (Proverbs 9:9). I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Austin and Catherine Sumbry. Thank you for always being my number one fans.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

With almost 50% of the new teachers leaving the profession each year, school districts need to do something to retain the new teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) noted that the number of teacher induction programs began to rise in recent decades. Goldrick (2016) reported that 29 of the 50 United States mandated participation in some kind of mentoring or induction program for new teachers. Local school boards design and implement induction programs, so they vary in length and quality. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) stated, the purpose of induction programs is to support new teachers, to enhance classroom performance, and retain these teachers to increase student achievement.

For many years, researchers and reformers of education have placed a spotlight on the challenges new teachers experience in the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, traditionally, teaching has not had the type of induction programs common in other occupations. Other occupations that require the same level of training and skill as teaching, offer more support, guidance and orientation for new employees. Compared to other professions such as lawyers, engineers, pharmacists, architects, and nurses, teaching has a higher turnover rate, especially in the first three to five years. Teachers are leaving the profession in large numbers well before retirement. Lack of administrative support is the main reason given by those who leave the profession or change schools (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). DeAngelis and Presley (2011) noted that there are teacher and school or school district characteristics that account for the high teacher turnover. Young females and people who enter the profession at an

early age are more likely to leave the profession before retirement. Teachers who begin their careers in large urban areas will leave teaching before retirement in larger numbers. Teachers beginning their careers at schools with high rates of students of poverty or high minority and low performing populations, will leave the profession at higher rates (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Hirsch, 2006). According to Monk (2007), rural areas have high rates of poverty; therefore, school districts in rural areas tend to have high rates of teacher turnover.

There were 7,873 school districts classified as rural in the United States in 2003–2004 school years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). The southern region of the United States had more students enrolled in rural schools than any of the other regions. The 17 states that comprise the southern region had over 40% of their students enrolled in rural schools. Alabama has almost half, 46%, of its student population enrolled in rural schools; yet, it is one of four states least favorable for achievement in rural education (Lindahl, 2011). In 2013, 69 of Alabama's 135 school districts were classified as rural (Lindahl, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). That puts Alabama high on the list of states with the largest percentage of rural public schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) labeled eight of the school districts in Alabama as remote rural districts. They are more than 25 miles from urbanized area. Lindahl (2011) reported that over 60% of the students in Alabama's public schools qualify for free or reduced lunch. That puts Alabama's rural school districts at risk for high teacher turnover. The requirements of the highly qualified teacher from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 makes it more difficult for rural school districts to recruit and retain teachers in the state of Alabama (Arnold, 2004). This makes rural education in Alabama a topic worthy of research. Figure 1 is a map of the eight remote rural school districts.
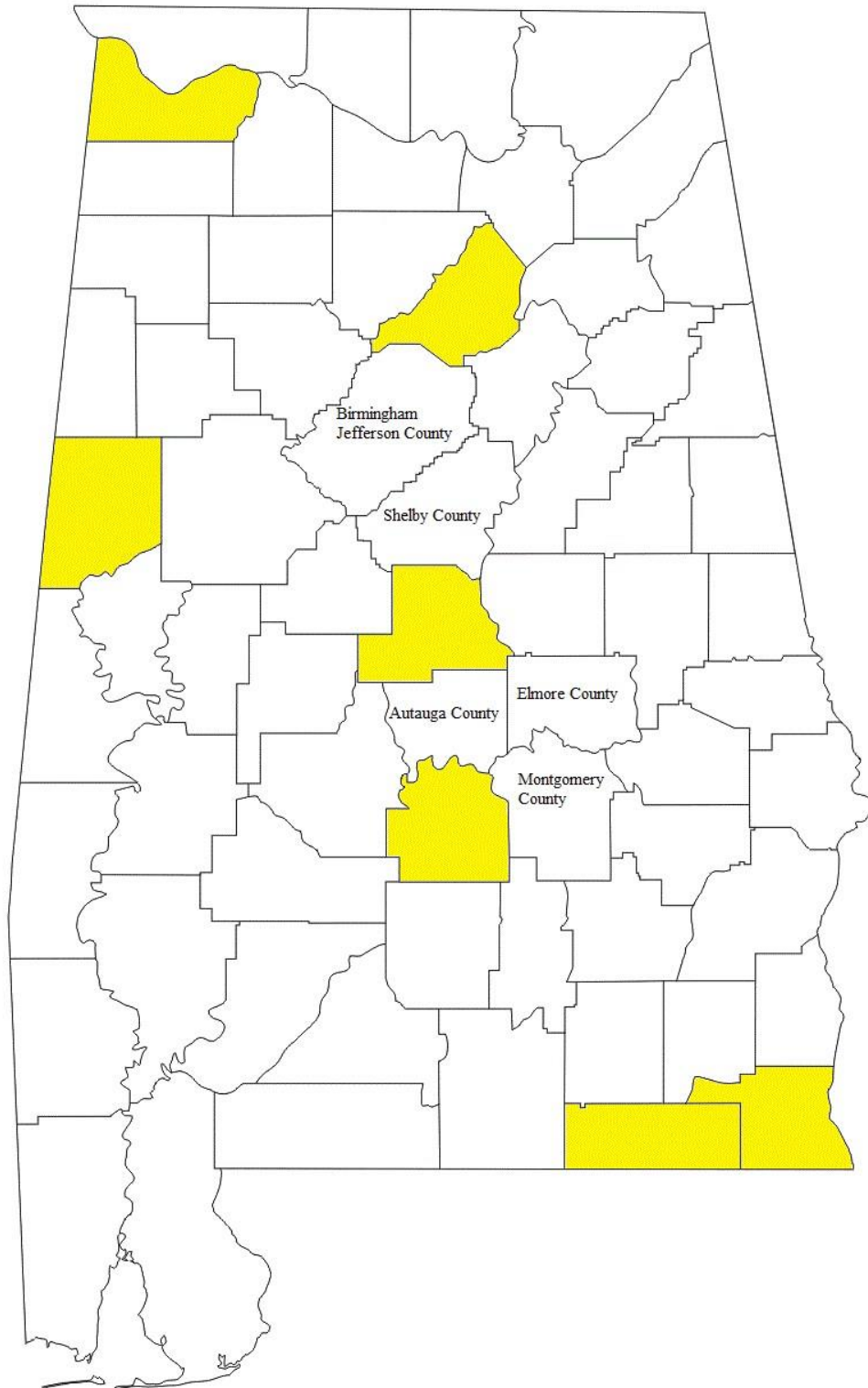
Figure   *1:*

Map of Remote Rural Counties in Alabama (Alabama, 2007–2016)

Conceptual Framework

Researchers have conducted studies that have identified common challenges to recruiting and retaining teachers in any school district. The abundance of research to determine why teachers leave the profession so early makes it necessary to categorize those challenges for discussion. The categories are insufficient support, poor working conditions, classroom management, insufficient training, unsatisfactory pay, lack of resources, and poor hiring procedures (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007; Coronado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flanagan & Fowler, Jr., 2010; Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009; Lynch, 2012). Challenges that are specific to the rural areas are: time, long distance travel for professional development, inappropriate workshop content for their teaching assignments, money for quality professional development, lower salaries, isolation, and having qualified substitutes in the smaller rural school districts (Harmon, Gordanier, Henry, & George, 2007; Sundeen & Wienk, 2009).

Researchers also have researched strategies that assist districts in recruiting and retaining new teachers. Strategies used by rural school districts are mentoring programs, community and school induction, quality staff development, offering incentives to teachers, providing housing for teachers, active recruitment of new teachers, encouraging locals to become teachers, helping with certification in multiple subjects, and giving student teaching assignments in rural schools (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Fry & Anderson, 2011; Lowe, 2006; McClure & Reeves, 2004). McClure and Reeves (2004) indicated that providing better building level support and more technology could improve teacher recruitment and retention.

The conceptual framework below depicts challenges and strategies for school districts in general. In this study, the researcher will explore whether or not these challenges in recruiting

and retaining teachers and strategies for recruiting them and retaining them are the same for

remote rural school districts as for school districts in general.

Challenges
Location
Poor working Conditions
Inexperienced teachers
Low salaries
Classroom Management
Student Discipline
Insufficient Training
Late Hiring
Fewer resources

Recruitment and Retention Rates

Strategies
Teacher Induction
Community/School Induction
Mentors
Recruit Locals
Administrative Support
Support from other Teachers
Classroom Management Training
Effective Teaching Strategies
Multi-year Induction
Training on Professional Standards
Workshops Before the Start of School
Sanctioned Time for Mentoring
Instructional Strategies
Extra Assistance in the Classroom
Restructuring Hiring Practices
Financial Incentives

Figure 2: Original Conceptual Framework

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies used to recruit and

retain teachers in remote rural school districts in Alabama, from the perspective of the

superintendent, the principal, and the teacher.

Research Questions

The central research question of this study was, What are the strategies used by remote

rural school district leaders in Alabama for retaining new teachers? There are six sub-questions.

Sub-Questions

1. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new

    teachers?

4. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6. What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

Significance of the Study

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers are a challenge for all school districts;

however, remote rural school districts are more disadvantaged in recruiting high quality teachers

due to their geographic location, fiscal issues, and the size of the districts and schools (Arnold,

2004; Lindahl, 2011). There is very minimal "high quality" (Arnold, 2004, p. 1) research

available on rural education. Arnold (2004) suggested exploration of three broad topics: (1)

recruiting and effectively inducting high quality teachers into rural areas; (2) providing

professional development aligned to school improvement goals and it is research-based; and (3)

retaining teachers in rural isolated areas. This study will explore recruiting and effectively inducting high quality teachers into rural areas.

Limitations

The study was conducted in the spring of 2016 in Alabama, in three remote rural school districts. The sampling purposely consisted of superintendents, principals, and teachers of remote rural school districts within the state.

Other limitations that may apply to this study:

1. The researcher only interviewed superintendents, principals, and teachers from remote rural schools in the state of Alabama.

2. The participants were limited to the three remote rural districts of Alabama who had the highest teacher retention rates.

3. The study was further limited by the researcher only interviewing two principals with the highest teacher retention rates in each district.

4. Only teachers with 5 years or less of teaching experience who had participated in some form of teacher induction.

Assumptions

1. Responses received from the interviews were honest reflections of the superintendents, principals, and teachers.

2. The researcher accurately portrayed the information shared by the participants to the best of her abilities.

Definitions of Terms

Distant Rural. Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 122).

Fringe Rural. Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 122).

Remote Rural. Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 122).

Teacher Induction. "A comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers" (Wong, 2005, p. 43).

Teacher Mentoring. "A trusting, supportive relationship between a more experienced member of an organization and a less experienced member of an organization" (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 59).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided the research problem, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, assumptions, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 contains the purpose of the study and a review of literature on the topics of challenges all new teachers face, rural school districts, new teacher induction, benefits of new teacher induction, induction strategies used to retain teachers, new teacher mentoring, recruitment and retention, improving

skills and knowledge, components, benefits, and exemplary mentoring program. Chapter 3

provides the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

Chapter 5 interprets the results and considers future implications.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The demand for new teachers is increasing due to the high rate of attrition, accelerated retirements, and the need to increase student achievement (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007). Goodwin (2012) claims that after the first year of teaching, 15% of the new teachers will leave the profession and another 14% will change schools. This means that every fall when students return to the classrooms, about 12% of the teachers do not return. Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) notes that around 157,000 teachers will not return to a specific school or to teaching each year. This does not include teachers who are retiring (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). What are the reasons that precipitate a large exodus from the teaching profession? Researchers have noted various challenges faced by new teachers that would cause early departures from teaching. Teachers leave due to a lack of resources, lack of principal support, lack of parent support, not enough planning time, and unclean and unsafe work environments (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007). What can school districts do to halt the exodus of new teachers early in their careers? Researchers such as Darling-Hammond (1996), Algozzine et al. (2007), Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012), Wong (2002), Feiman-Nemser (2003), and Huling, Resta, and Yeargain (2012) agree that new teacher induction programs, along with a structured new teacher mentoring program, help to halt the new teacher exodus from the teaching profession.

Researchers maintain that if school districts focus on training, supporting and retaining new teachers, we will be able to staff our classrooms with teachers who can be successful and

want to stay in the profession (Wong, 2002). Current studies discuss strategies used to help retain teachers in the classroom. The findings are limited for strategies that are specific to remote rural school districts in Alabama for maintaining low teacher attrition rates.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts, from the perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher.

This chapter will explore the literature to determine the top challenges that all new teachers face, but specifically the challenges faced by new teachers in remote rural school settings; it will also explore the challenges and benefits of new teacher induction and new teacher mentoring in the remote rural school districts.

Challenges All New Teachers Face

All new teachers face challenges once they enter the teaching profession; however, many of the teachers who are leaving or moving to other school districts are often leaving the poorer, lower performing schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Haynes (2014) reported that the "high-poverty, high-minority, urban and rural" (p. 3) schools will have the highest number of teachers leaving. The abundance of research to determine why teachers leave the profession so early makes it necessary to categorize those challenges for discussion. The categories are insufficient support, poor working conditions, classroom management, insufficient training, unsatisfactory pay, lack of resources, and poor hiring procedures (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007; Coronado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flanagan & Fowler, Jr., 2010; Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009; Lynch, 2012).

Insufficient Support

The predominate reason teachers cited for leaving the teaching profession is the lack of support. In literature reviewed for this study, authors cited lack of support as one challenge faced by new teachers that causes them to leave the profession early (see Table 1). Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) maintained that without proper supports in challenging situations, new teachers are at risk of leaving the profession after their first year of teaching. In their study of induction program experiences, Algozzine et al. (2007) reported that new teachers wanted very specific assistance for the first year, because that is an especially tough period. The supports desired by the new teachers were being hired earlier, assistance from veteran teachers for understanding school policies and procedures, locating resources for instruction, training on incorporating state standards into lessons, and using effective teaching methods (Algozzine et al. 2007).

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2007) reported that 42% of the teachers in their research cited lack of administrative support from the school district as a challenge that caused them to want to leave the profession. The teachers reported problems that warranted their desire to leave such as poor hiring procedures and inadequate professional development (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) described poor hiring practices as the practices of hiring late in the summer and assigning new teachers to the most challenging classes. Hiring new teachers late in the summer does not give them adequate time to prepare their classrooms or time to become familiar with the curriculum (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009).

Goodwin (2012) emphasized the lack of support for collaborative environments and a lack of meaningful feedback as reasons that new teachers leave the profession early. New

teachers claimed that they are not getting help from the mentoring teachers assigned to help them. There was a lack of feedback from administrators or colleagues that could help new teachers determine where improvements are needed (Goodwin, 2012). New teachers wanted guidance in planning lessons and wanted to learn where and how to obtain resources for the instruction (Goodwin, 2012). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) asserted that school districts need to provide an abundance of opportunities for professional development for new teachers. Darling-Hammond (2003) claimed that to lower new teacher attrition, school districts should offer new teachers more supportive environments. Providing less challenging teaching assignments to new teachers and time to plan with veteran teachers would give the new teachers some of the support they desired during the first year of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Poor Working Conditions

According to Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), poor working conditions play a major role in new teachers transfering to new schools or leaving the profession. Poor working conditions included working in schools with large class sizes, unkempt facilities, fewer resources and supplies and fewer administrative supports (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Over half of the teachers participating in the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2007) study cited poor working conditions as lack of planning time, too many interruptions to instruction, unnecessary meetings, excessive paper work and not enough teacher input for running the school's day to day operations.

Lynch (2012) cited the same issues as previous studies and added lack of teacher empowerment to the list of characteristics that describe poor working conditions. Greenlee and Brown, Jr. (2009) claimed changing leadership behaviors, and improving the structure of an

organization will improve the working conditions in that organization. Cochran-Smith (2006) confirmed other researcher conclusions in this area of research. She stated:

> In order to stay in teaching, today's (and tomorrow's) teachers' need: school conditions where they are successful and supported, opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than in isolation, differentiated leadership and advancement prospects over the of the career, and good pay for what they do. (p. 20)

Other researchers confirmed the notion that new teachers are: placed in inappropriate teaching assignments (Feiman-Nemser, 2003); assigned heavier workloads (Algozzine et al. 2007; Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009); and faced with larger class sizes and fewer resources (Carr, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Classroom Management

Classroom management was the biggest challenge that new teachers face (Goodwin, 2012). Classroom management was one of the two most often given reasons for leaving the teaching profession (Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009). Greenberg, Putman, and Walsh (2014) reported that teachers who have created classrooms where student behavior is less challenging will feel more successful and are more likely to stay in schools where they feel successful. To be able to teach more effectively and feel more successful, teachers have to create and implement classroom routines that decrease misbehavior of students and address the inevitable misbehavior that has yet to occur. Goodwin (2012) asserted that because of the challenges in classroom management, many new teachers will forgo the research-based instructional practices to give the students more lecture and textbook learning. Cuddapah and Burtin (2012) confirmed that new teachers need help with arranging the classroom, planning lessons, and establishing routines to facilitate smoother transitions in the classroom. This factor determines whether a new teacher

remains or leaves the profession. Managing student behavior is possibly the most difficult aspect

of teaching for new teachers (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). The more time a teacher spent correcting

misbehavior, the less time the teacher spent on instruction.

Student discipline. Researchers cited behavior issues as a main challenge in the

classroom for new teachers (Ulvik, Smith, & Helleve, 2009). When studying why teachers left

the profession, Ingersoll (2001**)** noted that teachers who reported they left due to job

dissatisfaction, often cited student discipline problems as one of the reasons they were

dissatisfied with their jobs. Hirsch (2006) completed a study of three school districts in Alabama

where he found that 72% of the teachers reported they were leaving the profession or changing

employment due to student discipline issues. Smeaton and Waters (2013) cited the need for

behavior interventions in new teacher classrooms. Quinn and Andrews (2004) claimed that new

teachers needed support for discipline issues from their principals. Participants in the Fantilli

and McDougall (2009) study claimed that training in dealing with student discipline would have

alleviated some of the challenges faced in their first year of teaching (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May,

2012).

Insufficient Training

Unproductive 'hit-and-run' workshops are the norm for schools who invest little time and

money on professional development. This lack of investment in the training causes new teachers

to leave after the first year in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Cuddapah and Burtin

(2012) declared in their research that new teachers need more training in teaching subject-

specific content, planning and implementing routines for the classroom, arranging the physical

aspects of the classroom and planning lessons. New teachers desired more training in areas such

as classroom management (Goodwin, 2012); communication with parents in parent conferences

(Fantilli & McDougall, 2009); and selecting resources for instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Training that is more applicable to new teachers is what Carr (2009) claimed is desired by new teachers. Easley (2000) contended that professional development is not a one time shot in the arm, but a continuous process that meets the learning needs of the teacher to assist with the improvement of student achievement.

Unsatisfactory Pay

New teachers believe they deserve a salary that is comparable to other professional salaries. In 2003, new teachers' salaries were approximately 20% below the salaries of professionals with equivilant education and training (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Low wages were cited as a reason for leaving the teaching profession by new teachers in studies by Ingersoll and Smith (2003), Fantilli and McDougall (2009), Algozzine et al. (2007), Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), and Lynch (2012). Cochran-Smith (2006) noted that teachers, "want to be compensated fairly for the hard work they do, and they want to have the means to buy homes, provide for families, and live reasonaly comfortable lives" (pp. 9-10). Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) reported the national average for teacher salaries is $57,791.00. The salaries range from $40,865 in Arkansas to $88,049 in New Jersey, with Alabama ranking as one of the states with the lowest rural salaries expenditures. Provasnik, et al. (2007) concluded that rural teachers, on average, earned less than their peers in towns, suburbs and cities. Rural teachers earned $43,000, while their peers in towns earned $45,900; their peers in suburbs earned $45,700; and their peers in cities earned $44,000.

Lack of Resources

Another challenge for new teachers was the lack of access to adequate resources (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Quinn and Andrews (2004) noted that new teachers need to know where instructional materials are located and how to order materials to support classroom

instruction. The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2007) concluded that 42% of their participants cited a lack of textbooks, insufficient technology, and a scarce amount of basic classroom supplies were reasons they left the teaching profession. Provasnik, et al. (2007) reported that across the country, rural schools with high poverty rates depended more on state funding than local funding. Due to the low property taxes, rural schools received about 23% of their funding from local sources, about 58% of their funding from state sources, and about 2% of their funding from federal Impact Aid. A more recent report from Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) confirmed that 44% of the funding for rural school districts comes from state funding.

Hiring Practices

Though cited by fewer researchers, hiring practices, lack of student motivation and lack of teacher input to help make decisions in the daily operations of the school were challenging enough to cause new teachers to leave the teaching profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). According to Darling-Hammond (1996) careless recruiting practices, especially in critical subjects, disorganized hiring practices with little attention to teacher qualifications cost school districts the better teacher candidates due to burdonsome paperwork, late hiring, and inefficient hiring practices. Monk (2007) noted that if teachers with high credentials leave a rural area, the school authorities may hire someone with ties to the area, who may stay longer, but they may not have the academic credentials necessary for teaching.

Later in the chapter, there will be a discussion of the strategies used to alleviate the

challenges encountered by new teachers. The next section reviews the literature of the

challenges that are unique to remote rural school districts that new teachers encounter. Table 1

summarizes the challenges faced by new teachers.

Table 1

Challenges Faced by All Teachers

CHALLENGES
Insufficient administrative support
Too much work; poor working conditions
Class assignments
• Inappropriate teaching assignment
• Heavy workload
• Larger classes
• Fewer resources
• Most difficult teaching assignments
Classroom management
Insufficient training
Student discipline
Unsatisfactory pay
Hiring practices
Lack of parental support

Rural School Districts

Characteristics of Rural Communities

There are various ways to define rural. The first definition is the formal definition used by the U.S. Department of Commerce:

> Territory, population, and housing units that the Census Bureau does not classify as urban are classified as rural. For instance, a rural place is any incorporated place or CDP with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants that is located outside of a UA. A place is either entirely urban or entirely rural, except for those designated as an extended city. (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1994, p. 12-1)

When defining rural, the U. S. Census bureau defines the word rural by what it is not. Therefore, rural would be any place that is not urban (Greenough & Nelson, 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) records three definitions for rural locales:

(a) Fringe Census–defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.

(b) Distant Census–defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.

(c) Remote Census–defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster. (p.122)

Monk (2007) characterizes rural communities as small, sparsely populated areas, with limited choices (for schools, and shopping for example), that are not close to large populated areas. The towns rely on agriculture and sometimes tourism. Monk (2007) states that rural areas

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are associated with high instances of poverty, an aging population, and high job loss. The

context for this study will be remote rural which is rural territory that is more than 25 miles from

an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2007, p.122).

Challenges in Rural School Districts

Harmon, Gordanier, Henry, and George (2007) assert that rural school districts have

challenges that are similar to urban and suburban school districts. Because they are smaller than

urban and suburban school districts, rural school districts' ability to find solutions to the

challenges is more limited (Stephens, 1998). Rural school districts are smaller than urban and

suburban school districts with less administrative controls. This means rural districts have less

money, fewer administrative support services available, lower salaries and less benefits. Rural

districts tend to have more teachers teaching out of their certification areas, fewer planning and

evaluation supports available and less specialized space and equipment available to them

(Stephens, 1998). Low student enrollment numbers mean that teachers may teach more than one

subject and they may sponsor extracurricular activities (Brownell, Bishop, & Sindelar, 2005).

Isolation is a major challenge for rural school districts. The isolation of rural school districts

decreases the availability of social and cultural activities found in the larger urban areas

(Brownell et al., 2005).

Harmon et al. (2007) and Sundeen and Wienk (2009) identified some major challenges

that teachers in rural areas face: time, long distance travel for professional development,

inappropriate workshop content for their teaching assignments, money for quality professional

development, lower salaries, isolation, and having qualified substitutes in the smaller rural

school districts.

Williams (2012) affirmed the challenges in rural districts as low pay, planning for multiple subjects, low fiscal funding from the community, and inadequate professional development. Added to this list of challenges was the challenge to learn about the culture and economic history of the area in which they teach. To work with the people and respect their culture is a challenge if new teachers do not learn about the community in which they work (Williams, 2012).

Lowe (2006) noted that a lack of adequate housing is a major reason there is a high turnover of teachers in rural areas. Teachers who drive long distances to work are more likely to leave their jobs for one that is closer to where they live.

Haynes (2014) explained that the performance of teachers in high-poverty, low performing schools, tend to plateau after a few years. This is due to a lack of opportunities to collaborate with excellent peers and mentors. These hard to staff schools become known as "places to leave, not places in which to stay" (p. 2).

Professional Development

Rural school districts have several challenges to overcome to prepare high quality teachers to work in their districts. One challenge discussed by Howley and Howley (2004) that would enhance the ability of rural teachers to improve the achievement of their students is professional development. According to Howley and Howley (2004), the structure, dynamics, cultural meaning of rural communities and financial limitations combine to limit the ability of rural school districts to offer high quality professional development to their teachers.

The rural school district's structure is such that the majority of the rural school districts personnel are local people who want to stay close to home. Attachment is an important rural value that will bolster administrator and teacher dedication to maintain excellence in education

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for their students (Howley & Howley, 2004). Howley and Howley (2004) contended that

current professional development does not capitalize on the attachment value to train the local

teachers. The rural teachers need professional development that is unique to their environments.

The researchers recommended Professional Learning Communities to address this challenge.

Local conditions usually determine the dynamics of rural school districts. Howley and

Howley (2004) examined two dynamics in their research, "professional isolation, and a culturally

instilled reluctance to criticize professional behaviors" (p. 4). Professional isolation is due to the

small size of the school district and remote location. With smaller enrollment numbers, there

may be one teacher per subject in a school, thus it will be difficult to collaborate with another

teacher who teaches the same subject. Teachers would need to network with teachers of the

same subject from other schools or other school districts (Howley & Howley, 2004). The

"culturally instilled reluctance to criticize professional behaviors" (p.4) is due to the social

interaction dynamics that are present in rural communities. Howley and Howley (2004)

explained that due to the informal nature of the interactions of the rural community, rural

administrators tend to avoid confrontation and are more tolerant of unprofessional behaviors.

They value tradition over change.

Williams (2012) contended that the cultural meanings in the rural community are relevant

to the development of rural teachers. However, since outsiders do not understand the cultural

meanings, the rural teachers are not likely to obtain professional development that is relevant to

their unique teaching situations. Table 2 summarizes the challenges rural school districts face.

Table 2

Challenges for Rural School Districts

Challenges for Rural Districts
• Teach multiple subjects
• Longer commutes
• Travel for professional development
• Lower salaries
• Time
• Isolation
• Inadequate professional development
• Smaller districts
• Teach out of certification
• Less equipment/ resources
• Low fiscal funding from community
• Lack of adequate housing

Conceptual Framework of the Research Study

This research will be framed by a summary of the literature for successful strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers in general. Wong (2002) maintained that if school districts focused on training, supporting, and retaining new teachers, they will be able to staff their classrooms with teachers who can be successful as teachers and want to stay in the profession. The next section will explore the strategies that have been successful for recruiting and retaining teachers.

Challenges

Location
Poor working Conditions
Inexperienced teachers
Low salaries
Classroom Management
Student Discipline
Insufficient Training
Late Hiring
Fewer resources

Recruitment and Retention Rates

Strategies

Teacher Induction
Community/School Induction
Mentors
Recruit Locals
Administrative Support
Teacher Support
Classroom Management Training
Effective Teaching Strategies
Multi-year Induction
Training on Professional Standards
Workshops Before the Start of School
Sanctioned Time for Mentoring

*Figure 3.*Original Conceptual Framework

New Teacher Induction

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, around 157,000 teachers will not return to a specific school or to teaching. This does not include teachers who are retiring (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). What are some strategies that could alleviate this situation in education? Wong (2002) maintained that if school districts focus on training, supporting, and retaining new teachers, we will be able to staff our classrooms with teachers who can be successful as teachers and want to stay in the profession. A structured induction program is one that starts before the students come to class, continues for two to three years, offers opportunities for new teachers to visit experienced teachers' classrooms, and includes mentoring as a component as Wong (2004) emphasized. New teacher induction programs and new teacher mentoring programs are two strategies researchers declared highly effective in decreasing the number of new teachers leaving the profession (Black, 2004; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Ellis, 2008; H. Wong, 2005).

Portner (2005) contended that new teacher induction and mentoring programs are proven ways to retain new teachers and cut the rising costs of retraining new teachers each year. Portner (2005) offered five reasons for supporting new teacher induction and mentoring programs: teaching and learning; teacher retention; money; climate and community; and it is the law in some places.

The first reason to support teacher induction and mentoring programs is teaching and learning. Each school district is to provide high quality teachers to improve student learning in their districts. Studies have shown that the best way to improve student learning is to improve teacher quality (Taranto, 2011; H. Wong, 2005; H. K. Wong, 2003). Data from school districts

that implemented new teacher induction and mentoring programs show increases in student achievement (Portner, 2005).

The second reason to support new teacher induction and mentoring programs is teacher retention. Portner (2005) argued that teachers are leaving the profession in large numbers before retirement. The main reason given for leaving the profession is the lack of support from administrators and other teachers. Teachers who feel supported will stay in the profession (Portner, 2005).

The third reason to support teacher induction and mentoring is the cost incurred by school districts that have to recruit and retrain for positions that they have to keep refilling (Portner, 2005). Portner (2005) contended that it is cheaper to invest in training to retain teachers than to have to recruit and retrain new teachers.

The fourth reason to support new teacher induction and mentoring programs is the improvement of the climate and community. Teachers who are satisfied with working conditions are more pleasant. Learning is more enjoyable for students when the teachers are more pleasant (Portner, 2005).

The fifth reason is that it is the law in 29 states. Goldrick (2016) reported that 16 states provide funding. Even though it is the law, Portner (2005) and Johnson, Goldrick, and Lasagna (2010) conceded that having it on a piece of paper does not mean that change is occurring. People are changing the culture of school districts with their actions, not their laws.

 The next section will discuss New Teacher Induction Programs. The researcher will define induction program, discuss the components of an effective induction program, specifically review the state of Alabama's policy for New Teacher Induction, and discuss the benefits of induction programs.

Definition of Teacher Induction

Induction is "a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers" (H. Wong, 2005, p. 43). Induction is a training program for new a teacher, structured to start before the first day of school and continue over two or more years (Breaux & Wong, 2003).

"The program has these basic purposes:

1. To provide instruction in classroom management and effective teaching techniques,

2. To reduce the difficulty of the transition into teaching,

3. To maximize the retention rate of highly qualified teachers." (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 5)

H. Wong (2005) advises that induction programs should cater to the school district's culture specific needs of that district. Several elements are indicative of successful teacher induction programs.

Components of Successful Induction Programs

Breaux and Wong (2003) cited seven components included in successful induction programs:

1) four or five days of induction before the start of school;

2) systematic training over a period of two years;

3) professional learning groups that will help build support and commitment;

4) support from administrators;

5) trained mentors;

6) provide modeling of effective teaching during in-service; and

7) visits to veteran teachers' classrooms that are effective.

Wong (2002) highlights three school districts that have improved teacher retention by implementing new teacher induction programs. The first school district, Flowing Wells School District in Tucson, Arizona, starts its induction program before the start of school with a bus tour of the school district with the superintendent as the tour guide. They set up demonstration classrooms with master teachers modeling the first day of school, a Special Professional Assistance Day so the new teachers can observe mentors and have lunch with them, and a graduation luncheon (Wong, 2002).

The second school district highlighted by Wong (2002) is the Lafourche Parish Public Schools in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Their motto is "If you dare to teach, you must never cease to learn" (Wong, 2002, p. 53). Lafourche Parish Public Schools' teacher induction begins with four days training before the start of school. The training is very organized, and continues for three years. This district offers training to all new teachers, principals, curriculum facilitators, and mentors. Demonstration classrooms are set up and there is a graduation ceremony for program completers.

The third school district highlighted by Wong (2002) is the Port Huron Area Schools in Port Huron, Michigan. This school district also starts with a four-day orientation before the beginning of the school year. Their program includes monthly seminars during the new teacher's first year and an assigned mentor for each new teacher.

The three districts reported positive impacts due to the induction programs. Overwhelming enthusiasm of the new teachers, board members, district administrators and the community; a change in the culture of the district; and a drop in teacher attrition rates are just a few of the benefits reported by the school districts (Wong, 2002).

Alabama's New Teacher Induction Policy

Sun (2012) reports 27 states mandate new teacher induction programs. More participation in new teacher induction programs does not equate to more teachers receiving quality training. Of the 27 states that mandate participation in a new teacher induction program, only 11 of those states require support for two or more years (Sun, 2012). Sun (2012) listed ten criteria for induction programs. The criterion discusses what each state policy should require of induction programs. The New Teacher Center (2011a) reviewed state policies, statutes, regulations, and induction program standards for each state and summarized them in the State Policy Review. There are ten components reviewed and summarized as follows:

1. Teachers Served: The New Teacher Center (2011a) noted that Alabama law does not require induction for new teachers; however, in 2007, Alabama started a two-year teacher induction program but has since scaled it to require only mentoring for first-year teachers. State policy should require all new teachers to receive induction during the first two years of teaching (New Teacher Center, 2011a).

2. Administrators Served: State policy should require all new school administrators to receive induction support for the first two years (New Teacher Center, 2011a). Since 2009, according to the New Teacher Center (2011a), Alabama Superintendents are required to participate in a Mentoring and Coaching Program that lasts for one year. Alabama started a New Principal Mentoring Program in 2010.

3. Program Standards: Alabama does not have formal teacher induction standards, as recommended by the New Teacher Center (2011a).

4. Mentor Selection: Alabama has a definition of mentor, but it does not indicate if the selection process is rigorous as recommended by the New Teacher Center (2011a).

5. Mentor Training: The New Teacher Center (2011a) advises that state policy should require ongoing professional development and basic training for mentors. Alabama requires each new teacher mentor to "successfully complete the Alabama Beginning Teacher Mentor Training" (p. 2) or some training developed locally but is equal to the training program developed by the state.

6. Mentor Assignment Caseload: As suggested by the New Teacher Center (2011a), Alabama state policy sets limits on the mentor to new teacher ratio. Active teachers may only mentor one to one in the same teaching area of their certification. Retired teachers can mentor no more than 15 new teachers.

7. Program Delivery: Alabama suggests 2.5 hours as the average amount of weekly contact between a mentor and mentee. Alabama does not specify the types of instructional support that mentors give to new teachers (New Teacher Center, 2011a).

8. Funding: The state should support induction programs with funding (New Teacher Center, 2011a). Alabama provided state funds in the initial year of the program, but has since ceased funding a stipend at $1000.00 per year per mentor.

9. Educator Accountability: The New Teacher Center (2011a) contends that the state should mandate participation in induction programs as a prerequisite to advance teacher licensure. Alabama does not require participation induction programs for full teacher licensure.

10. Program Accountability: As noted by the New Teacher Center (2011a), Alabama administered a new teacher survey in 2008 and 2009 to monitor the effectiveness of the Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program.

Benefits of New Teacher Induction Programs

The demand for new teachers is increasing due to the high rate of attrition, accelerated retirements, and the need to increase student achievement (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007). Goodwin (2012) claimed that after the first year of teaching, 15% of the new teachers will leave the profession and another 14% will change schools due to difficulties with classroom management, struggling to plan lessons, and lack of support. What can school districts do to decrease the attrition of new teachers? New teacher induction programs and new teacher mentoring programs are two strategies researchers declare highly effective in decreasing the number of new teachers leaving the profession (Black, 2004; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Ellis, 2008; H. Wong, 2005). Do these induction programs improve teacher retention rates? Researchers including Wong (2003), Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005), Wayne, Youngs, and Fleischman (2005), Fresko and Nasser-Abu Alhija (2009), Nasser-Abu Alhija (2010), and Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) have completed studies that show the benefits of teacher induction programs.

The first benefit of teacher induction is that it could save money (Wong, 2003). Wong (2003) noted the cost of the teacher induction in Lafourche Parish Public Schools is $50,000 dollars a year. This pays for equipment, stipends, supplies, and refreshments. This investment will pay for itself with the retention of only one teacher (Wong, 2003). Wong (2003) contended that when a teacher leaves a district during the first three years, it will cost the school district more than the initial teacher's salary. The indirect costs of extra work for the remaining teachers, decreased student achievement, and the reduced effectiveness of a new teacher are costlier than the teacher salary (Wong, 2003). Moir (2003) confirmed that the cost of teachers leaving is high, because the costs come from training, recruiting and hiring, and filling vacancies

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for a short time. According to Moir (2003), the final cost will depend on the characteristics of the schools. Wealthy schools will have higher teacher retention; therefore, the costs for replacing teachers will be small, as low as $850 per teacher. Schools with high poverty rates tend to have higher teacher attrition rates, so they will spend more money for recruiting and hiring, around $2500 per teacher (Moir, 2003). By training the teachers so they are retained, money will be saved in the future (Wong, 2003).

A second benefit of teacher induction is the improvement of the culture and climate of the school (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Portner, 2005). Moir (2009) explained that the climate of the school matters. If teachers do not feel valued or trusted, they do not stay in a school. Principals have to ensure that all teachers have the resources and professional development needed to improve student achievement in their school. Portner (2005) suggested that by implementing a teacher induction program, a district can enhance teacher confidence in the classroom. With improved confidence, teachers will find the work more enjoyable and this sets the tone for a more enjoyable learning experience for the students (Portner, 2005). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) suggested that having an environment where induction is supported by the administrators, the overall climate of the school is improved. This is because new teachers will feel as if they matter and they will have a sense of belonging to a school community that cares about their personal and professional needs. When teachers stay, teacher retention is improved (Ellis, 2008). A positive culture will help promote unity and teamwork in the school (Wong, 2002).

"A new teacher induction program can acculturate newcomers to the idea that professional learning must be a lifelong pursuit" (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005, p. 379). Teachers who continued to learn throughout their careers, became more effective teachers.

Effective teachers consistently produced high levels of student achievement. Wong et al. (2005) studied five countries that provided support for all beginning teachers that was well funded, lasted two years or more, included various forms of assistance, and did more than give new teachers "survival skills" (p. 379). Switzerland began with the idea that all educators are lifelong learners. They used practice groups to support all new teachers to help them become effective problem solvers. Shanghai, China incorporated collective lesson planning and groups that taught new teachers about researching. They included such learning opportunities as school-level welcoming ceremonies, teaching competitions organized by school districts, and public lessons with time for discussions about the lesson afterward (Wong et al., 2005). New Zealand offered an Advice and Guidance program, where all new teachers are provided 20% release time to participate. The Japanese viewed teaching as a noble profession, with a high status. Their new teachers received smaller teacher loads with a guiding teacher. In France, new teachers went through formation. Formation means molded, with the guidance of a pedagogical advisor (Wong et al., 2005). These five countries have induction programs that reach all new teachers. In America, more teachers are isolated with less collaboration with their peers. Wong (2005) noted that teachers do not become more effective in isolation.

Hoover (2012) suggested that competent and well-trained teachers will be a benefit of a well-planned teacher induction program. Investing in a strong new teacher induction program will produce competent teachers who will positively influence student learning (Hoover, 2012). Wayne, Youngs, and Fleischman (2005) claimed that teacher learning can be accelerated with comprehensive teacher induction programs. Typically, teacher instruction will improve over time, but we can decrease the time it takes to improve their learning and impact student learning sooner (Wayne et al.). Wong (2005) concluded that improved teaching and learning are

demonstrated when school districts have organized, coherent, and sustained teacher induction programs. "Student learning is directly linked to teacher effectiveness; the better the teacher is able to manage the classroom and deliver instruction, the more students will learn" (Wong, 2005, p. 52). Moir (2003) confirmed that you should have teachers who teach better because of the induction program.

Teacher socialization is important in helping new teachers to adjust to the culture of the school (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010). New teacher induction programs designed with a variety of activities planned for the needs of the new teachers will help acclimate the new teachers to the school's culture. Mentoring is a big component, but new teacher induction should include district and school orientation, workshops and classroom observations with feedback and a reduced workload (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010). When administrators socialize new teachers into the school culture, they stay longer. When teachers stay, the workforce quality improves because there are teachers who have improved their instructional strategies over time (Fresko & Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2009).

Another benefit of teacher induction is the evolvement of leadership (H. K. Wong, 2004). H. K. Wong (2004) concluded that teachers are more likely to stay in a district where collaboration with peers, involvement with decision making, and acknowledgment of their professionalism is nurtured. Moir (2009) confirmed that a path to leadership roles can be created with induction programs. Using the best teachers as mentors allows them to build leadership skills that they can use to move into other leadership positions in the district, or it will allow them to return to the classroom with more instructional strategies to use and share with other teachers (Moir, 2009).

Lastly, Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) reported various other benefits of well-planned induction programs. Reduced stress levels, improved sense of competence, and meets the personal and professional needs of the teachers are some of the other benefits (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Contact with mentors who spend time observing new teachers and giving them feedback as well as just being there to reaffirm the choice to teach are helpful in reducing stress for the new teachers. Professional development designed specifically to meet the professional needs of the new teacher will improve teacher competence (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) concluded that the participants in their study believed the induction program activities enhanced their development as teachers.

Moir (2009) concluded that when the outcomes of the program matter, the program would be more successful. Just meeting the requirement to have an induction program does not guarantee that the program is achieving the expected outcomes (Moir, 2003). To ensure a more effective induction program a commitment from the entire school district is required (Moir, 2003).

Induction Strategies Used to Retain Teachers

"There is truly no better experience for the heart than helping people. By helping new teachers to succeed, we help students to succeed" (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 27). According to Breaux and Wong (2003), school districts should train new teachers with an induction program. By creating a culture of continued learning, a school district can have effective teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2003). The way to produce effective teachers is to implement teacher induction programs that train, support, and retain new teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Breaux and Wong (2003) define induction as a training structured to start before the first day of school and continues over two or more years. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) endorsed the previous

definition with their statement that to meet the personal and professional needs of new teachers, effective induction must be a structured process ingrained in a healthy school climate. Watkins (2005) declared high attrition rates would negatively affect student achievement if there were not a strong learning community in the school to support new teachers. The following section will note strategies found to reduce teacher attrition.

Breaux and Wong (2003) highlighted exemplary induction programs that contain the three basic components required to create comprehensive induction programs. The programs highlighted all begin before the start of the school year, and offer professional development specifically designed to meet the needs of new teachers, over two or three years (Breaux & Wong, 2003). The programs offered some or all of the following strategies to indoctrinate new teachers: administrative support; welcome center for new teachers; script for the first day of school; four days of workshops before school starts; a district bus tour; demonstration classrooms; network of experienced and new teachers; trained mentors; formative assessment and a graduation ceremony (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Some common strategies implemented in each district highlighted by Breaux and Wong are:

- Classroom management procedures and routines that are effective;

- Instructional strategies that are proven to be effective;

- An awareness and understanding of the school and community culture;

- Professional growth and lifelong learning; and

- Teamwork and unity throughout the entire learning community

Breaux and Wong (2003) advised school districts to have district as well as school based administrators to help implement the teacher induction programs. District administrators can design the induction program, as well as mentor new teachers. They may also present the

training modules. The school-based administrators play a major role in creating a sustainable

new teacher induction program (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Thus, Breaux and Wong (2003) stated

that principals need to receive awareness training before the start of the induction program so

that there will be consistency between what district administrators endorse during the initial

induction program and what principals endorse in each school.

In their study, Kang and Berliner (2012) concluded that three activities reduced the

teacher turnover rates for new teachers. The first activity that produced the largest reduction in

teacher turnover was extra assistance in the classroom (Kang & Berliner, 2012). That could be a

classroom aide or instructional coach. According to Kang and Berliner (2012), the second

activity that reduced the chances of a new teacher moving was participation in a seminar or

classes conducted specifically for new teachers. The third activity that reduced the chances of a

move by a new teacher was having a common planning with teachers in the same subject area

(Kang & Berliner, 2012). Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) had similar findings in their study.

They advised that school districts structure induction programs, allow collaboration between

veteran and new teachers, and focus on professional development for the new teachers (Wong,

Britton, & Ganser, 2005). These three components will entice new teachers to remain in the

teaching profession because they will aid the professional growth of the new teachers (Kang &

Berliner, 2012).

Watkins (2005) endorsed an induction program that has a strong mentor who will grow

professionally as they are mentoring the new teacher; that uses active research to expand

innovative practices; and establishes study groups that hold rigorous and collegial discussions

centered on learning for new teacher, veteran teachers, and principals. The principal can support

mentoring by prioritizing training and building flexibility into the schedule to allow the mentors

time with their protégées (Watkins, 2005). The principal can show his support for study groups and action research by attending the professional development sessions and actively participate (Watkins, 2005). Watkins (2005) declared that utilizing the recommendations from the research is the most important thing a principal can do to ensure a strong induction program that will entice new teachers to remain in the school. According to Watkins (2005) when teachers continue to teach in one place, it will help to build a competent staff that can increase student achievement.

The New Teacher Center (2007) suggested mentoring practices to help education leaders to create an effective induction program:

> rigorous mentor selection; ongoing professional development; sanctioned time for
> mentor-teacher interactions; multi-year mentoring; intensive and specific guidance
> moving teaching forward; professional teaching standards and data driven conversations;
> ongoing new teacher professional development; clear roles and responsibilities for
> administrators; and collaboration with all stakeholders. (pp.1–2)

The New Teacher Center (2007) advocated that mentors possess certain qualities to be mentors rather than being randomly assigned or chosen based on availability. The New Teacher Center (2007) indicated that mentors needed ongoing professional development because teaching adults is not the same as teaching children. Meeting when time allows means that mentoring new teachers is a minor priority, according to the New Teacher Center (2007). Principals can set meeting times that are scheduled and adhered to, to make mentoring a priority. Multi-year mentoring will provide support for new teachers after the first year because that is when the deeper learning will occur (New Teacher Center, 2007). The New Teacher Center (2007) indicated that new teachers need concrete solutions to improve their instructional practices,

emotional support alone will not improve teaching practices. With trained mentors, new teachers will learn how to teach the content standards that will increase student achievement (New Teacher Center, 2007). Conversations based on classroom observations and student work gives the new teacher data driven instructions to improve teaching. Informal conversations will not provide the structure needed by new teachers to improve teaching practices (New Teacher Center, 2007). The New Teacher Center (2007) advocated for ongoing professional development that is guided by teacher standards because it will improve teacher practices more than one size fits all training that occurs most often in school districts. All administrators need a clear definition of their roles so that they can enforce the district's vision of induction and not accidently undermine it due to lack of communication about what is required of them (New Teacher Center, 2007). The last practice suggested by the New Teacher Center (2007) is collaboration among all stakeholders. Everyone who is involved in the implementation of the teacher program should work together to ensure success for new teachers (New Teacher Center, 2007). Moir (2003) admonished that all of the previous strategies are to be contained in a comprehensive plan for induction.

Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) gave a brief summary of five teacher induction programs from around the world so that leaders in the United States will be able to improve induction practices in their schools. The teacher induction programs in Switzerland, Shanghai, New Zealand, Japan, and France reach all new teachers. The programs last for two years or more and the governments fund the programs. The programs go beyond survival for new teachers; they help develop lifelong learners (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Switzerland's new teachers network in practice groups to learn how to problem solve effectively (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). In Shanghai, new teachers join teaching research groups that share

lesson preparations (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). New Zealand's new teachers participate in an Advice and Guidance program that lasts for two years (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Japan uses lesson study groups while France allows extra time for peer groups to discuss shared experiences, practices, tools and professional language (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005).

Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) reported that Switzerland considers new teachers as professionals from the beginning. Switzerland's teacher induction starts while teachers are in college in the student teaching phase (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) defined the practice groups as teachers from different schools in a structured network that supports new teachers while teaching them to become effective problem solvers. Switzerland offers counseling for all teachers, but new teachers use the services at a higher rate. In some areas, counseling for new teachers is required (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). According to Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) courses are available on a regular basis, from mandatory to courses created on short notice to meet specific needs.

In Shanghai, the research and collective planning culture is designed to bring new teachers into that culture (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). There is a long list of strategies used at the school and district levels in Shanghai. The list includes:

- school level welcoming ceremonies;

- workshops and course at the district level;

- teaching competitions organized at the district level;

- district provided mentors;

- a district hotline for new teachers that connects them with subject specialists;

- outstanding novice/mentor work awards from the district level;

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- half-day training sessions at colleges of education and in schools for most weeks of the year;

- in and out of school peer observation;

- debriefing and discussion of public lessons given after the lesson is presented;

- observations of new teachers with comments, criticisms and suggestions given;

- talk lessons where teachers talk through a lesson and justify the design, but does not teach the lesson;

- new teachers carry out action research and inquiry projects, with support from induction staff or teachers from the school;

- handbooks for new teachers and mentors from the district or school level; and

- end of the year celebrations. (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005, pp. 380–381)

In Shanghai, all share teaching; it becomes community property and all teachers share it (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005).

Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) reported that New Zealand offers a variety of induction activities that spreads the responsibility for inducting new teachers out to more than one person. In Japan, as in Shanghai, teaching is considered a public activity (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). It is also respected as a noble, high profile occupation (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). According to Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) new teachers in Japan teach two or more demonstration lessons in their first year of teaching. Administrators, other teachers, and the guiding teacher view the lessons and offer criticisms and suggestions for improving (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005).

Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005) indicated that to become a teacher in France, at the secondary level, persons must pass an oral and written exam that is highly competitive on the

national level. In France, new teachers are required to attend classes several days each week at the institution created specifically for teacher education (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). A new teacher's day may be similar to the following:

- preparing and teaching several lessons and grading student homework;

- small group tutoring;

- observing and discussing the lesson of an advisor teacher;

- visiting a teacher in the same town, but a different school and observing their lesson; and

- working on teaching pedagogy at the institute designed for that purpose. (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005)

Each new teacher in France must also write a professional memoir written on some detail of exploratory work related to academic issues (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005).

There are differences in the five teacher induction programs discussed by Wong, Britton, and Ganser (2005); however, there are three important similarities. The first similarity is that all five programs are structured, extensive, meticulous, and monitored heavily (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). The second similarity is the programs focus on professional growth and development for the new teachers. The last similarity is the collaboration fostered and accepted as part of the teaching culture in each of the programs (Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005).

In his report, Leithwood (2006) listed strategies that will offer some control over working conditions for teachers at the different levels in a school district. He has recommendations for teachers, policy makers, and administrators. Leithwood (2006) advocated for teachers "to build their own professional network of colleagues" (p. 74); be proactive about their professional development; expect effective leadership from administrators; and put realistic boundaries

around their volunteer work. He believes that policy makers should be more realistic about the demands for change they place on teachers and be strategic about the demands for change. Leithwood (2006) suggested three strategies for principals and administrators: develop positive working conditions for teachers, eliminate working conditions that threaten student learning, and build a research-based approach to leadership.

The adults in education work in isolation. Because of the isolation, Leithwood (2006) suggested that teachers build a support network with other teachers. Researchers have presented large amounts of evidence that show a collaborative culture in schools will have a more positive impact on student learning (Leithwood, 2006). According to Leithwood, a network formed with other teachers can improve pedagogical knowledge and help reduce stress from job related issues.

The second suggestion is for teachers to be proactive about professional development. Most professional development occurs outside of schools; but Leithwood (2006) suggested that teachers organize their own professional development. Evidence shows that the most powerful forms of professional development are often informal, teacher created and implemented on site. Teachers can organize a study group on campus, invite an experienced and effective colleague from another school to share their experience with your teachers, or subscribe to professional journals and read articles each week to discuss with a group of teachers (Leithwood, 2006).

The next suggestion is to expect effective leadership from administrators. Leithwood (2006) noted that it is to your advantage as well as the students to help your leaders to develop into effective administrators. Teachers should share their views and advice with the administrator in a way that is kind, but persistent (Leithwood, 2006). Teachers have the right to expect administrators who are "collaborative, supportive, consistent, friendly, informative,

instructionally expert, there when you need help, skilled in finding the resources you require, anxious to learn your views, reasonable in demands, concerned about your welfare and clear and explicit about priorities" (Leithwood, 2006, p. 76).

The last suggestion for teachers is to be realistic about volunteering. Teachers spending too much time volunteering to help students at extracurricular activities or getting involved in the teaching profession can cause high levels of stress according to Leithwood (2006). When teachers take on too much, they become less satisfied with their jobs and they want to leave the profession. That is the time to put limits on volunteering for extra activities.

Leithwood (2006) admonished policy makers to implement fewer changes in curricula, assessment practices, and organizational structure to decrease the overload of changes on teachers. Too many changes at once can cause burnout in teachers and does not help improve test scores for students (Leithwood, 2006). To improve student learning, implementing fewer changes that are more practical is the solution.

The three strategies suggested for principals and administrators are to develop positive working conditions for teachers, to eliminate working conditions that threaten student learning, and to build a research-based approach to leadership. Leithwood (2006) suggests that developing working conditions that are more positive will reduce the number of teachers moving and leaving the profession. For principals and administrators concerned about retaining teachers, Leithwood (2006) offers a list of the most adjustable strategies:

- give teachers a manageable total number of pupils

- assign teachers to the areas they are certified to teach

- provide teachers with autonomy over their instructional duties when possible

- provide the opportunity to engage in decision making at the school level

- create and maintain a positive school climate and

- train teachers to develop positive relationships with parents. (p. 85)

The next strategy extends the suggestion for policymakers because administrators have the ability to influence the teacher working conditions. Decreasing the demands for changes, decreasing the constraints, and increasing support are all strategies within the administrator's control (Leithwood, 2006). School and district administrators can filter the demands placed on their teachers by outside forces as well as control the duties and extracurricular activities that are required of teachers. Leithwood (2006) advised administrators to be more flexible with their rules and restrictions for teachers. Conditions that can cause stress for teachers: rules that are inflexible, structures of administration that are hierarchical, mandates that are prescriptive, and administration that is autocratic in nature. The last thing that teachers need from administrators is more support (Leithwood, 2006). When teachers need to know that they have done a good job, it will be necessary for administrators to encourage, counsel and cheer on their teachers. Being an instructional leader cannot offer this type of support.

The last strategy offered by Leithwood (2006) is to build leadership on a research-based approach. For this last strategy, Leithwood advises to narrow the focus on literature that is from the "robust empirical evidence" (p.88) genre. Narrowing your focus will help to avoid literature that does not focus on meaningful strategies that are backed by research.

Strategies Used in Rural Areas to Retain New Teachers

According to Harmon (2001), there is an immediate need to fill teacher vacancies in rural areas due to the large teacher shortage in the rural areas. McLaurin, Smith, and Smillie (2009) reported that district administrators and school boards have been trying to implement strategies to retain these teachers. Fry and Anderson (2011) noted that rural areas have higher teacher

attrition rates than other school districts. One reason that attrition rates are higher in rural areas is the experience of personal and professional isolation that new teachers experience in rural areas. Researchers (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Fry & Anderson, 2011; Lowe, 2006; McClure & Reeves, 2004) documented strategies that rural school districts use to recruit and retain new teachers that include strategies to alleviate the isolation they feel. Strategies used by rural school districts are mentoring programs, community and school induction, quality staff development, offering incentives to teachers, providing housing for teachers, active recruitment of new teachers, encouraging locals to become teachers, helping with certification in multiple subjects, and giving student teaching assignments in rural schools (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Fry & Anderson, 2011; Lowe, 2006; McClure & Reeves, 2004). McClure and Reeves (2004) indicated that providing better building level support and more technology could improve teacher recruitment and retention.

Wong (2005) suggested that all school districts implement a comprehensive new teacher induction program with a strong mentoring component with trained mentors. Fry and Anderson (2011) endorsed the use of mentors for new teachers in rural areas. Mentoring by veteran teachers can ease the transition of new teachers into rural districts by sharing how the school operates, how the community interacts with the school, and who the students are. This will be especially helpful for new teachers who have had no experience in a rural setting. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) stated that mentoring has been documented as a proven strategy to help new teachers remain in the teaching profession. Mentoring programs can help foster self-confidence in new teachers and expand their knowledge of content and teaching skills (Lowe, 2006). Lowe (2006) advocated mentoring start as soon as the new teacher is hired in the district, but it should continue for longer than one year (Wong, 2005).

A strategy specifically for new teachers in a rural setting is establishing an induction program for the school and the community (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Lowe, 2006). New teachers starting a career in a rural area may have a difficult time because they do not understand the culture or social practices of the community. They need to learn the "specific language and cultural knowledge and skills" (Fry & Anderson, 2011, p. 13) that help them to assimilate successfully into the rural community. School administrators can ease the transition for new teachers by explicitly teaching the "hidden social subtleties" (Fry & Anderson, 2011, p. 13) of the new school. If new teachers have not had a student teaching placement in a rural school district, the next best strategy for school districts would be to utilize workshops to focus on preparing new teachers for teaching in rural districts. Administrators should begin induction the moment the new teacher signs a contract for the district (Lowe, 2006). Districts that "take care" of their teachers do not wait until the first day of school to train teachers on the expectations of the school. They have welcome programs in place to help ease the new teacher into the school district.

The next strategy, ensuring quality staff development, is more difficult in small rural areas with little to no funding for professional development (Lowe, 2006). Some of the strategies suggested for improving staff development for teachers in rural areas are:

(a) commit more resources to staff development;

(b) create job-embedded training that extends across the school year,

(c) provide yearlong contracts for teachers to have extra time for planning, professional development, and collaboration,

(d) revise the scheduling to allow more uninterrupted time for planning,

(e) implement summer programs to help teachers to re-energize, and

(f) evaluate effectiveness of the program strategies to continually make improvements.

(Lowe, 2006, p. 29)

Offering incentives such as bonuses or pay increases are successful strategies used for recruiting new teachers (Lowe, 2006). Some places offer loan forgiveness or interest-free loans, scholarships, relocation allowances (Lowe, 2006; McClure & Reeves, 2004; McCullough & Johnson, 2007). Providing low cost housing is a financial incentive that could improve teacher retention. Teachers driving long distances are more likely to leave a rural district for a district closer to where they live (Lowe, 2006). One rural school district in Texas collaborated with a company to build apartments for teachers. Mississippi offered interest-free loans to certified teachers to buy homes in the areas of the state that had difficulty filling critical teaching areas (McClure & Reeves, 2004).

Rural school districts can implement recruiting strategies that promote the benefits of teaching in rural districts and they could encourage locals to become teachers. Malloy and Allen (2007) suggested that rural districts highlight benefits of teaching in rural districts. In rural school districts, teachers have smaller classes, teachers can develop personal relationships that are genuine, and teachers will have more involvement with decision-making. Lowe (2006) and McClure and Reeves (2004) agreed that recruitment should be strategic. Lowe suggested using a marketing strategy to highlight the positive aspects of the school district, the community, and surrounding locales. A website that is interactive, well-designed, and has the most up to date information can provide a view of the district like no other media. One-size fits all recruitment should be replaced with a focus on specific schools and the needs of those schools that are especially hard to staff (McClure & Reeves, 2004). "Grow-your-own" (p. 14) is a strategy McClure and Reeves (2004) claimed has high potential for success. This strategy has the district

to look at candidates who are familiar with the rural lifestyle and who are rooted in the community, who lives in the community, thus alleviating the isolation experienced by new teachers who live in other communities and commute to work. McCullough and Johnson (2007) suggested school districts recruit paraprofessionals who want to become certified teachers. Having active future teacher clubs in the schools is a strategy that will provide opportunities for students to live and work in their own community (Lowe, 2006).

Rural school districts have a difficult time recruiting and hiring highly qualified teachers. One reason for this is that in many small districts, teachers need certification in multiple areas (Barley & Brigham, 2008). The isolation of the rural areas, due to geography, makes it difficult for new teachers who require multiple certifications to obtain the needed certifications (Barley, 2009). Some strategies to help teachers to obtain multiple certifications include universities offering online courses for professional development, universities offering classes for teacher preparation on satellite campuses close to the rural school districts, universities offering programs that are compacted to make it easier to achieve a dual major, and the school district offering online training (Barley & Brigham, 2008). Placing preservice teachers in rural school districts for student teaching is a strategy that Barley and Brigham (2008) and Monk (2007) endorsed. This could be a required placement or an optional placement for preservice teachers who would like to teach in rural areas.

McClure and Reeves (2004) indicated that providing better building level support and implementing the use of more technology could improve teacher recruitment and retention. New teachers cited "lack of support" (p. 11) as a major reason for leaving the teaching profession. Better supports for new teachers included providing mentoring and induction and limiting the number of extra-curricular activities the new teachers sponsor (McCullough & Johnson, 2007).

McCullough and Johnson (2007) explained that technology can enhance recruitment and

retention by offering more resources to teachers in the rural areas. Technology can provide more

information for teachers and the community. It can provide professional development to

teachers in rural areas through distance learning classes and it can provide an added resource for

classroom instruction. Table 3 summarizes the strategies used to retain teachers.

Table 3

Strategies to Retain Teachers

Strategies to Retain Teachers
• Administrative support
• Welcome center/Welcome ceremony/Graduation ceremony
• End of year celebrations/rewards
• Scripted first day of school
• Workshops before the start of school
• District bus tour
• Demonstration classrooms
• Formative assessment
• Classroom management procedures and routines
• Network of experienced and new teachers
• Trained mentors
• Instructional strategies
• Awareness of the school and community culture
• Collaboration throughout learning community
• Extra assistance in the classroom
• Participation in a seminar or classes

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Strategies to Retain Teachers

- Ongoing professional development
- Common planning with teachers
- Shared lesson planning
- Structured Induction Program
- Active research to expand innovative practices
- Study Groups
- Flexible scheduling
- Training on Professional Teaching standards
- Sanctioned time for mentoring activities
- Clear roles and expectations
- Counseling services
- Teaching Competitions
- Peer observation
- District Hotline
- Handbooks
- Place realistic boundaries on volunteering
- Teach in areas of certification
- Opportunity to engage in decision making
- Multi- year support for teachers
- Expanding content knowledge
- Restructure hiring practices

Mentoring

Strong (2005) observed the need for new teachers has risen sharply in recent years. Two

factors that have increased the need for new teachers are demographic factors and legislative

policies. Lower salaries and less earning potential divert young graduates from the profession

(Strong, 2005). Unqualified teachers are hired to fill the vacancies. The most ill-equipped and inexperienced teachers are hired to teach the most difficult classes. They are usually concentrated in schools serving large numbers of poor students, minorities, English learners, special education students, and urban schools. Due to these factors, some educators suggested that we have teacher retention problems not teacher shortages (Strong, 2005).

Strong (2005) also reported that student achievement is negatively affected by high teacher attrition rates. The difficulty of recruiting and hiring new teachers in schools with high poverty rates and large minority populations intensifies the attrition rates. The extra cost is burdensome for school districts that have high teacher turnover rates.

Due to the growing student enrollment, increasing teacher retirements, and increasing popularity of class-size reduction, many school districts are facing the challenge of ensuring quality classroom instruction (National Foundation for the Improvement of Education [NFIE], 1999). A carefully designed, comprehensive mentoring program can help to meet the challenges faced by school districts. Strong (2005) affirmed that mentoring has become increasingly popular over the last twenty years because districts have tried to fill teacher vacancies by offering financial incentives or better induction programs to new teachers. The terms 'mentoring' and 'induction' are often used interchangeably, but they are not synonymous (Bullough, 2012). According to Bullough (2012), mentoring is a big part of the induction program, but it should not be the only part.

According to the NFIE (1999) mentoring has been around for approximately 30 years. Currently, more than half of the United States mandates a mentoring program for new teachers. The NFIE (1999) defined mentoring as a "process that opens the doors to the school community and helps new faculty find the wisdom of all the teachers in the building" (p. 2). Breaux and

Wong (2003) defined teacher mentoring as "A trusting, supportive relationship between a more experienced member of an organization and a less experienced member of an organization" (p. 59).

Recruitment and Retention

Mentoring can be used in three ways: to recruit new teachers; to improve teacher retention; and to improve the skills and knowledge of new and experienced teachers (NFIE, 1999). NFIE (1999) reported that anecdotal observations suggested that mentoring may be used by school districts to attract the very best candidates. One school district leader reported that newly graduated teachers were asking how the school district could support them. Mentoring can be the tool to support these new teachers.

Haynes (2014) reported that about 13% of the 3.4 million public school teachers in America, either moves or leaves the profession each year. This rate is about 20% per calendar year for high poverty schools. Mentoring is one way to keep the most talented teachers employed in the schools after their first year. Strong (2005) noted that past research suggests that teacher retention may be correlated to mentoring. School districts may be able to utilize funds in other much-needed areas if teacher attrition is decreased.

Improving Skills and Knowledge

NFIE (1999) noted that there is strong evidence that mentoring will improve the quality of teaching for new teachers as well as improve the teaching practices of veteran teachers. However, mentoring will not help all areas of teaching required for success on the job. For example, if a teacher cannot grasp the concepts of the content area assigned, mentoring cannot help that teacher to overcome that shortfall (NFIE, 1999).

Grossman and Davis (2012) advised schools to provide mentoring that is a good fit to support the needs of each new teacher. The mentoring should fit the new teacher's background,

needs and school context. This type of support will keep them in the teaching profession and enhance their teaching effectiveness (Grossman & Davis, 2012).

Just as other professionals learn on the job, so do teachers (Grossman & Davis, 2012). The preservice training received at the beginning of a school year is not enough to teach everything that a new teacher will need to know throughout the school year. To enhance their skills and knowledge of teaching, new teachers would benefit from highly structured training. Grossman and Davis (2012) declared mentoring has become the main way for new teachers to receive that highly structured training.

Components of Mentoring

To make mentoring more effective, there are three components that are required, (Grossman & Davis, 2012). The three components for mentoring are having highly trained mentors, focusing on content and allocating time for mentoring. These components will interact with the new teacher's background, strengths, needs, and school context to become most effective.

The first component, having highly trained mentors, is important because the teachers who are typically chosen as mentors work well with students (Grossman & Davis, 2012). Grossman and Davis (2012) and Bullough (2012) advised that they should be trained to meet the needs of adult learners to be more effective. The mentors need to be able to determine the strengths and needs of the new teachers and help them to set meaningful goals. They should also be able to provide meaningful feedback on instruction. Moir (2009) indicated that pairing new teachers with highly trained mentors, increases their pace for learning. Hoover (2012) emphasized that mentor training includes: adult learning theory, and train mentors how to coach as a mentor, how to observe and conference a mentee, how to use embedded professional

development strategies, and how to help new teachers with reflection and goal setting. Coronado (2009) added that mentors continue to receive support throughout the mentoring process.

The second component is focusing on content. Grossman and Davis (2012) contended that to focus on content, new teachers should be matched with mentors who teach the same subject as the new teacher. If a mentor has not taught a subject, the mentor will not be able to provide resources or strategies for that subject area. They will be able to provide emotional support and classroom management strategies but not help with content knowledge (Grossman & Davis, 2012). NFIE (1999) advised that the new teachers be carefully matched to mentors.

The third component is allocating time for mentoring. Rockoff (2008) stated that new teacher satisfaction with mentoring increases when they have more time with their mentors. NFIE (1999) contended "Second-generation" (p. 4) mentoring programs are more likely to provide time for mentors to meet with new teachers. The mentoring selection process has become more rigorous in some school districts. One school district has a panel that invites teachers with three or more years of teaching experience to apply. The teachers have to complete three questions pertaining to their skills and knowledge of mentoring, they have to submit three letters of recommendation, they have to attend an interview session, and analyze a 20-minute video of a teacher in the classroom (NFIE, 1999). According to Grossman and Davis (2012), wise school leaders will structure induction programs to include mentoring to help support and retain new teachers. They will schedule time for new teachers and mentors to meet frequently during the week and provide time for planning and collaboration between new teachers and their mentors.

NFIE (1999) noted mentoring programs have become more formal and more structured over the past 30 years. This "second-generation" (p. 4) of mentoring has changed from the

"first-generation" mentoring programs. The "second-generation" programs are more likely to mandate participation of new teachers, continue for more than one year, match new teachers with more than one mentor for support in various areas, and have a clear, written agreement by which they abide.

Benefits

Researchers, including Fantilli and McDougall (2009), Bickmore and Bickmore (2010), Hobson, Maxwell, Stevens, Doyle, and Malderez (2015), Coronado (2009), and Andrews and Quinn (2005), reported that there are benefits received from mentoring. Mentoring can: improve teacher retention rates, decrease isolation and lack of support felt by new teachers, stimulate growth in the mentors, help reduce stress in new teachers, increase positive attitudes, and help improve reflection and problem solving in new teachers.

Rockoff (2008) concluded that mentoring positively impacts teacher retention and student achievement. The most consistent finding was that teachers, whose mentoring teacher previously taught in the same school, were more likely to return to that school the following year. That finding affirmed the findings of Smith and Ingersoll (2004). Rockoff also found that student achievment in math and reading improved when instructed by new teachers who had more hours of mentoring.

Hobson et al. (2015) cited other benefits of mentoring:

1. New teachers can talk about their experiences with mentors.

2. Mentoring supports the emotional well-being of new teachers.

3. Mentoring helps new teachers develop assessment strategies and pedagogical techniques.

4. New teachers develop critical reflection skills.

5. Mentoring helps new teachers develop subject pedagogy.

6. Mentors provide access to resources and equipment.

7. Mentors help new teachers develop skills for lesson planning.

8. Mentoring aided teachers with socialization and acculturation into the school.

9. Mentoring aided new teachers in being accepted so they would avoid feeling isolated.

10. Mentoring helped them to want to continue in the education profession. (pp. 48–50)

Bozack and Salvaggio (2016) affirmed that mentoring develops new learning for new teachers, improves teaching practices for new teachers as well as the mentors. Students in the classrooms of mentoring teachers benefit indirectly from mentoring. The growth experienced by mentoring teachers result in a shift of the way the teachers think.

Exemplary Mentoring Programs

There are induction and mentoring programs that some researchers labeled as exemplary. These programs utilized mentoring as one component of the total induction program, and they have shown an increase in teacher retention in the school districts. Coronado (2009) and Breaux and Wong (2003) cited Lafourche Parish Schools in Thibodaux, Louisiana as an exemplary program. Their new teacher attrition rate dropped from 50% to 12%. H. Wong (2005) listed other school districts with exemplary mentoring and induction programs:

1. Flowing Wells School District of Tucson, Arizona has a structured eight-year process;

2. Forsyth County Schools of Georgia has an Induction Academy;

3. Carlsbad School District in New Mexico focuses on teaching teachers how to teach the standards;

4. Homewood-Flossmoor High School District in Flossmoor, Illinois has Homewood-Flossmoor University for lifelong professional development;

5. Dallas Public Schools in Texas has a comprehensive new teacher initiative; and

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6. Connecticut, California, and South Carolina have structured, multi-year induction

   programs. (p. 42)

H. Wong (2004) listed the following schools with their improved retention rates after

implementing a teacher induction program with mentoring for the 2001–2002 school year:

- Lafourche Parish Schools in Louisiana lost 1 teacher out of 46 hired

- Islip Public Schools in New York lost 3 teachers out of 68 hired

- Leyden High School District in Illinois lost 4 teachers out of 90 hired

- Geneva Community Schools in New York lost 5 teachers out of 67 hired

- Newport-Mesa School District in California lost 5 teachers out of 148 hired.

Reciprocal Mentoring Model

Dennis and Parker (2016) discussed another example of an exemplary mentoring

program called reciprocal mentoring. With reciprocal mentoring, there was a triad of partners

who collaborated to mentor each other. According to Dennis and Parker (2016) the triad

consisted of preservice teachers, university supervisors, and collaborating teachers. The

mentoring was structured as job-embedded professional development that was consistent and

held over a period of time. The program was structured to meet the needs of the three groups in

the triad so that each group could mentor and be mentored in return. This form of mentoring is

possible, but only when all stakeholders help to create space for it.

Statewide Comprehensive Teacher Induction Program

Bozack and Salvaggio (2016) focused on a comprehensive teacher induction program

with a mentoring component within the program. The Teacher Education and Mentoring

(TEAM) program was fully funded by the state of Connecticut in 2010. It was a two year,

structured program that focuses on the developmental, process-oriented activities that promoted

reflective practice in teaching. It was not formally evaluated and was not used to determine contract renewal for new teachers. Bozack and Salvaggio (2016) emphasized that the program was structured to provide training and support for mentors, administrators, and reflection for reviewers. It was designed to be implemented at the district level. The districts were tasked with the responsibility to create implementation timelines for the program, as well as identify the mentors and the reviewers who were to be trained for the implementation of the program (Bozack & Salvaggio, 2016).

Implications from Bozack and Salvaggio (2016) included: mentoring matters to both the mentors and the new teachers; teaching observations of veteran teachers are very helpful to new teachers; reflecting with mentors is valued by new teachers and mentors; mentoring improves the teaching practices of the mentors.

Professional Practice Partners Model

Doone, Colucci, Von Staden, and Thompson (2016) endorsed the Professional Practices Partner Model as one that empowered mentor teachers and strengthened the mentoring process. This model used classroom teachers and university supervisors for teacher candidates and site-based mentoring teachers. This model gave mentoring teachers more decision-making power when it came to evaluating and placing teachers in the schools for practice teaching. Doone et al. (2016) listed the qualifications for this position as a minimum of three years of exemplary classroom experience, some mentoring experience, a desire to help guide the growth of new teacher candidates, and a principal's recommendation. Once chosen, the mentor had to take a graduate level course for training teachers to be mentors. The training and structure provided to mentors for this program shifted their thinking from training an intern to molding a colleague.

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This program model helped to increase teacher professionalism in the mentors, and increased teacher satisfaction in the classroom (Doone et al. 2016).

Summary

"Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions" (Leithwood & McAdie, 2010). When working conditions do not meet the needs of the teachers, they leave the school or leave the profession (see Table 1). This causes high attrition rates in the teaching profession. Working conditions are influenced by the strategies used to recruit and retain new teachers. With 50% of the new teachers leaving the profession in their first five years, school districts need to implement strategies that will increase retention (Perry & Hayes, 2011). Some school districts use several of the strategies discussed in the literature review to recruit and retain teachers in their district (see Table 2); however, systemic integration into a comprehensive plan does not exist in every rural school district, thus making it difficult to have continuous and long term success with improvements in that area (Malloy & Allen, 2007). To retain quality teachers, school districts, more specifically, rural school districts need to move beyond offering signing bonuses to attract new teachers to creating better working conditions for all teachers (see Table 3). A combined and well-planned effort by the school and community is needed to retain teachers in rural school districts (Harmon, 2001). Perry and Hayes (2011) claimed the growing use of technology in recruiting and offering professional development can help with teacher retention. Presenting the realities of the rural school and rural community to new teachers will increase the chances of the teacher remaining in the position beyond the first five years of teaching. Perry and Hayes (2011) reported better retention rates for teachers who have support from the principal and other teachers in the building. Rural school district leaders can

collaborate with community organizations, community leaders, and parent groups to address the issue of teacher retention for their areas.

Strong (2005) noted that the need for new teachers has increased drastically in recent years. One of the tools used to train new teachers has been around for more than 30 years (NFIE 1999). Mentoring new teachers in the teaching profession can enhance their teaching effectiveness (Grossman & Davis, 2012). Grossman and Davis (2012) touted three components as requirements for mentoring programs: having highly trained mentors, focusing on content and allocating time for mentoring. The most often cited benefit of mentoring from the literature for this study is increased teacher retention (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Coronado, 2009; Doone et al., 2016; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Hobson et al., 2015). Other benefits included the improvement of new teachers' well-being, developing critical reflection skills and helping to improve teaching pedagogical practices. Exemplary induction and mentoring programs from across the United States, were listed to show how programs are tailored to the needs of the school districts (Bozack & Salvaggio, 2016; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Coronado, 2009; Dennis & Parker, 2016; Doone, Colucci, Von Staden, & Thompson, 2016; H. Wong, 2004, 2005).

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts in Alabama, from the perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher. The central research question of this study was: What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers. The six sub-questions were:

1. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

4. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6. What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

Qualitative Research

The researcher utilized the qualitative research approach with the intentions of exploring which strategies were used to improve teacher retention in remote rural school districts. Qualitative methodology was appropriate to use for this study because the researcher sought to determine if there are specific strategies used by remote rural school district administrators that they perceive to be effective to increase new teacher retention, as well as to investigate from the teachers' point of view, why they have remained teaching in remote rural school districts.

Qualitative research is used "because a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured or hear silenced voices" (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Thus, the qualitative research approach was employed for this study.

The researcher chose the case study method from the various available research methods. "As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (Yin, 2014, p. 4). This study was a multiple case study because it explored the phenomenon of recruiting and retaining new teachers in three rural-remote school districts from three different perspectives. The study examined what district-level administrators who recruit and retain new teachers did to retain the new teachers in their school districts; what principals did at the school level to recruit and retain new teachers; and what teachers acknowledge keeps them in remote rural schools. Using a cross-case synthesis, the researcher established patterns and looked for similarities between the three districts (Yin, 2014). Saldana (2013) recommends using a technique such as a matrix to analyze data. The researcher used a 3 by 3 matrix to analyze the data.

The researcher sought to explore the various strategies used by remote rural school districts to retain new teachers in their districts. The researcher assessed the teacher retention rates through a survey of the school districts that are designated as remote rural school districts in the state of Alabama, and then conducted face-to-face interviews of the selected superintendents, principals, and teachers of the remote rural school districts.

Creswell (2013) defined a case study as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contempory bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection" (p. 97).

Participants

After receiving approval from the Auburn Institutional Review Board, solicitation of participants began. Emails were sent to superintendents of school districts in the state of Alabama that are classified as rural-remote school districts. The email contained questions that would allow the researcher to assess the teacher retention rates of the school district over the last three years. After superintendents returned the query, the researcher calculated and compared the teacher retention rates from the data requested from the superintendents and determined which school districts had the three highest teacher retention rates. The district superintendents were contacted by phone or email to ask if they would be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. After the interviews at the district level, the researcher interviewed two principals from each district, who were nominated by the superintendents. During the principal interviews, the principals were asked to nominate two teachers on staff who had gone through induction at their schools and had been at the school between three and five years. The researcher used purposeful sampling by asking for teachers who stayed when they had the option to go elsewhere. All participants were presented with an informed consent form. The study was bounded by place and time. Only remote rural school districts were used to gather data. The time period was over the last three academic years.

Stake (2006) stated the cases in multi-case research should be similar in some way. The researcher chose three school districts labeled by the United States Department of Education as a remote rural school districts with the locale number of eight (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). The researcher looked at successful strategies within each case as well as successful strategies across the three cases. Yin (2014) listed six common sources of evidence compiled when conducting case study research: "documentation, archival records, interviews, direct

observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 105). To strengthen the quality of the case study, Yin (2014) suggests using more than one source of evidence from the six common sources listed. The researcher used interviews, observation, and physical artifacts to determine which strategies the school districts used in retaining new teachers. To protect the identity of the school districts and participants, pseudonyms were used to designate the school districts as District 1, District 2, and District 3. The superintendents will be designated as superintendent 1, superintendent 2, and superintendent 3. The principals will be designated as principal 1 through principal 6. The teachers will be designated as teacher 1 through teacher 11for this study.

The researcher sought to explore the various strategies used by remote rural school districts to retain new teachers in their districts. By conducting interviews, observations, and collecting physical artifacts the researcher utilized the authentic data to determine what remote rural school districts do to retain new teachers in their districts.

Components of Research Designs

There are five research components that Yin (2014) determined are important to the case study design:

1.   study's questions;

2.   its propositions;

3.   its unit of analysis;

4.   the logic linking data to the propositions; and

5.   the criteria for interpreting the findings. (p. 29)

The researcher asked the following questions in a query email sent to remote rural school district superintendents:

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1. How many new teachers did you hire in your district from 2012–13 school year?

2. How many of those teachers left the school district at the end of the year?

3. How many new teachers did you hire in your district from 2013–14 school year?

4. How many of those teachers left the school district at the end of the year?

5. How many new teachers did have you hire in your district from 2014–15 school year?

6. How many of those teachers left the school district at the end of the year?

7. Would you be interested in participating in an interview with the researcher? If so, please provide contact information.

These questions were based on the literature that indicated that roughly 15% of the teachers in high-poverty schools will leave the profession each year. Rural school districts have a larger number of high poverty schools. The retention rates for each responding school district were hand calculated by the researcher to determine which school districts had the highest new teacher retention rates. The three districts with the highest retention rates for school districts labeled as 'remote rural remote' were chosen to participate in interviews, if it was indicated that they would participate in the study.

A study proposition establishes what the researcher is studying in a case study. The propositions used in this multiple case study were district-wide induction programs, district-wide mentoring programs, and school-based mentoring programs positively impacting teacher retention rates in remote rural districts. Case studies are usually cases of individuals, but can involve small groups, communities, programs, decisions, or organizational change (Yin, 2014). The units of analysis for this case study were the remote rural school districts' superintendents, the principals, and the teachers.

The data in this study was logically linked to the propositions. The researcher concedes that three remote rural school districts are a small sample, but there is no conclusive evidence that a larger sampling would produce different results.

Instrumentation

Interview questions were based on the literature review from chapter two of this study. There are interview questions for the superintendents, principals, and teachers based on the literature indicating that there are various strategies that can be used at the district level and the building level to retain new teachers. The researcher chose the following questions:

Superintendents:

1. What are the challenges you face in recruiting new teachers?

2. What are the challenges you face in retaining new teachers?

3. What does your district do to meet those challenges?

4. Can you describe in more detail those strategies you employ to recruit new teachers?

5. How do you retain new teachers in your school district?

6. What seems to be the most successful thing you do to recruit and retain new teachers in your school district?

Principals:

1. Describe some of the challenges that you face when trying to recruit new teachers to your school.

2. Describe some of the challenges that you face when trying to retain new teachers in your school.

3. Describe the tools or mechanisms you use for recruiting new teachers.

4. Describe the tools or mechanisms you use for retaining new teachers.

5. Which of those tools have been the most successful?

Teachers:

1. What attracted you to this school district?

2. Does the district have a program for new teachers? If so, describe the program.

3. Describe the mechanisms of support for you that your principal had in place at your school level.

4. Describe the ones you found most beneficial to you in your first year of teaching.

5. What reasons would you give for deciding to continue teaching in this district?

Prior to the interviews taking place, these questions were field-tested on one participant from each group from a local school district. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to check the clarity of each question, practice conducting face-to-face interviews, and to consider more probing questions that would arise during an interview. Based on the feedback of the field test, no revisions were necessary.

Data Analysis

The researcher obtained permission to record the interviews at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Member checking was used to determine if the researcher's findings were credible. All participants received an emailed copy of the transcribed interview and were provided with an opportunity to pose concerns or questions to the researcher. Creswell (2013) endorses member checking as a validation strategy when conducting interviews.

The interviews were sent to rev.com for transcription. The researcher emailed each of the transcribed interviews to the participants for member checking. Once the participants emailed the researcher that the interview transcription captured what they intended, the researcher began to

code the data. According to Saldana (2013), "a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes" (p. 4). Saldana (2013) suggested that the researcher utilize a provisional list of codes. The researcher began with a list of codes that were determined beforehand to harmonize with the study's conceptual framework and enabled an analysis that directly answered the research questions (Saldana, 2013). The researcher began with sub question one, and looked for evidence in the interviews for each case, that addressed that question. The researcher repeated this process until all research sub questions were answered (Yin, 2014). The researcher created charts using provisional codes from the literature and in vivo coding to code the evidence for each case. The researcher read the interviews again to compare the interviews to the codes.

The researcher then color coded the charts to check for themes for each case. The researcher examined the charts and synthesized the labels to create themes for each case. The researcher constructed a matrix for each case. Using the matrix for each case, the researcher then compared the themes for each case to generate the cross case themes for the cross case analysis.

Yin (2014) defines triangulation as the merging of data collected from different sources, to determine how consistent a finding is. The researcher triangulated the interview data with physical artifacts representing training tools and strategies used for new teachers, and the observation information. Artifacts included copies of agendas for new teacher training, a schedule of training dates for the new teacher induction period, and information packets that are given out to the new teachers.

Role of the Researcher

The emic, or insider's perspective is how the researcher wants to understand the situation being investigated in qualitative research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Researchers who study a group to which they belong will have a greater understanding of the culture and will have a deeper understanding of how things work in that culture. This knowledge will assist the researchers with how to best approach the participants in the study (Unluer, 2012). The researcher found a personal connection to this study in her job. As the Federal Programs Director for a rural school district, the researcher is allowed access to the recruiting practices of the school district. Being a central office administrator, the researcher has a level of connectedness that outsiders may not have to other district administrators. This allowed the participants the freedom to feel comfortable enough to speak freely during the interview; therefore, allowing for the collection of thick, rich data for analysis.

Summary

The researcher queried rural-remote school district superintendents from the state of Alabama about the teacher retention rates in their districts. The researcher calculated the rates from the respondents and chose three school districts with the highest teacher retention rates from the school districts classified as remote rural by the U. S. Department of Education (2014). The researcher conducted interviews with the superintendent, two principals, and two teachers from each district. The researcher conducted observations at the building level and triangulated the data with physical artifacts representing training tools and strategies used for new teachers and the interview datum. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama to recruit and retain new teachers and help them to be successful in the classroom. The researcher conducted a multiple case study in which the cases analyzed were the superintendents, principals, and teachers in selected remote rural districts in Alabama. The researcher utilized interviews to determine the challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers and the successful strategies used to retain teachers in the remote rural school districts.

The central research question that guided this study was, "What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers?" To best answer this question, the researcher focused on collecting data to answer six sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

4. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6. What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

Data Collection Methods and Setting

The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling method to select participants from specific locations because they "purposely inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The school districts were selected because they are labeled as remote rural school districts by the U.S. Department of Education (2013, 2014). Remote rural is a census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 122).

Emails were sent to the superintendents of the eight school districts in the state of Alabama that were classified as remote rural school districts. The email included a query about the number of new teachers hired in a specified three-year period along with a permission to participate form. After superintendents returned the query, the researcher calculated and compared the teacher retention rates from the data requested and determined which school districts had the three highest teacher retention rates. The district superintendents were contacted by phone or email to ask if they would be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. Once the three superintendents agreed to participate, the researcher set up interviews and asked them to refer two principals from their district who had good teacher retention rates at their schools. The principals were asked to refer two teachers who had less than five years of teaching experience. The researcher interviewed three superintendents, six principals, eleven teachers and three central office administrators.

The researcher chose interviews, observations and artifacts to gather the data for this study. Before beginning the study, the researcher field-tested the interview protocols. The superintendent, a principal, and a teacher from the researcher's school district agreed to

participate in the field test of the interview protocol, in order to ensure the interview questions were clearly understood and related to the research problem. Based on their feedback, no revisions were necessary. See Appendix 1 for the Interview Protocol.

The researcher will now give an overview of the three participating districts. The researcher will profile the districts, the schools, and the participants in each district. Pseudonyms have been used for the districts and numbers for the participants.

District 1 Profile

Littletown School District (pseudonym) is a remote rural school district, located in the south-central portion of the state, in the Black Belt Region. The school district has a student enrollment of 1,667, and employs 97 teachers district-wide. The student population is spread over seven schools in this district. According to Alabama State Department of Education (2015), 100% of its students are Black with 96% of those students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. This school district was awarded a Teacher Incentive Fund Grant in 2010 to help with the recruiting and retention of highly qualified teachers. Beginning Teachers Apprentice Program (BTAP) is the pre-scripted professional development program designed specifically to train new teachers. There is not a formal mentoring program in place in this school district.

School #1

Littletown Elementary School is a K–5 school with 276 students and 18 classroom teachers (Alabama State Department of Education, 2015). The free and reduced lunch rate for this school is 97%. The student population consists of 97 % Black, 2% White and 1% Other.

School #2

Littletown Middle School is a middle school for grades 6–8. There are 171 students with 9.5 teachers in this school; 99% of the student body is classified as Black and 1% is White. The free and reduced lunch rate is 98%.

District 2 Profile

Centerville is a remote rural school districted located in the central part of Alabama on I-65 between two large urban school districts. The total population for the county is 42,272. The minority population is 10 % Black, 5% Hispanic and less than 1% Asian. The school district has a student enrollment of 7,545 and employs 428 teachers, distributed among eleven schools, one academy, and one career tech center. The free and reduced lunch rate in this district is 67%. Centerville does not have an induction program or a formal mentoring program for new teachers.

School #3

Centerville Primary School is a pre-kindergarten through second grade school. The school has an annual enrollment of 746 students with about 59 teachers. The student demographics consist of 66% White students, 17% Black students and 17% other. The free and reduced lunch rate is 66%.

School #4

Centerville Intermediate School is a grade 3–5 school. The school's enrollment is 687 students with 41 teachers. The demographics include 72 % White, 18% Black, and 10% Other. The free and reduced lunch rate for this school is 65%.

District 3 Profile

Upper School District lies in the northeastern section of the state, generally known as the mineral region. This district serves 8,074 students with 466 teachers and about 400 support

workers distributed among 17 school sites. There are six high schools, eight elementary/middle schools, one career tech center, one alternative school, and one multi-needs school. The free and reduced rate in this district is 55%. The minority population for this district includes 1% African American and 14% Hispanic. The school district is the leading employer in the county. Upper School District has a formal Teacher Induction Program that was started 10 years ago.

School #5

Premier High School serves grades 8–12 in the Upper School District. They are one of six high schools in this district. The school has an enrollment of 949 students with 65 teachers. The student population consists of 97% Whites, 1% Black, and 2% Other. The free and reduced lunch rate for this school is 35%.

School #6

Preparatory Middle School serves 551 students in grades 5–7 and has 29 teachers. It is the only middle school in this school district. Student demographics consist of 97% White, and 3% other. The free and reduced lunch rates for Preparatory Middle is 43%. Table 4 summarizes the school district profiles.

Table 4

School District Profiles

District	Student Population	White	Black	Hispanics	Other	Free/Reduced Lunch Rate	Teachers
District # 1	*1667*	0%	100%	0%	0%	96%	97
District # 2	*7545*	74%	12%	12%	2%	67%	428
District# 3	*8074*	84%	1%	14%	1%	55%	466

Description of Cases

Superintendents

Superintendent #1 at Littletown School District is a Black male with a doctoral degree.

Superintendent #2 at Centerville School District is an elected first year superintendent. He is a white male with 20 years of experience in education, six of them as an administrator.

Superintendent #3 at Upper School District is an elected superintendent in his first year. He is a white male with a total of 28 years' experience in education. He has 12 years of experience as an assistant superintendent, 2 years as a principal, 4 years as an assistant principal, and 9 years as a classroom teacher.

Principals

Principal #1 is a female with 19 years in public education at the classroom level, with two years of administrative experience. She is the principal of Littletown Elementary K–5 School in Littletown School District.

Principal #2 is the principal of Littletown Middle School. The principal is a male with 16 years in public education as a teacher, an instructional coach, and Instructional Assistant. Eight of those years of experience are as a school principal.

Principal #3 is the principal of Centerville Primary School. The principal is a female with 35 years of experience in education, with the last 13 as principal of the Centerville Primary School. According to the principal, 95% of her teachers are local. They grew up in this area and wanted to teach in this district.

Principal #4 is the Principal of Centerville Intermediate School in Centerville School District. The principal is a first year principal who was non-renewed. Non-renewed means the principal was terminated and the district does not have to give him a reason for not keeping him.

This school district has a policy of terminating all new hires each year. The assistant principal has 18 years of experience in the school district. For 11 of the 18 years, he has been an assistant principal. He has also served as an interim principal over the summer until a principal was named. This school has a very low teacher attrition rate.

Principal #5 is the principal of Premier High School in the Upper School District. The principal is a white male who has been a principal for 14 years at the same school.

Principal #6 is the Principal of Preparatory Middle School in the Upper School District. The principal for this school is a white male with 22 years of experience in education. He has been a principal at Preparatory Middle School for the 13 years.

Teachers

Teacher # 1 is a teacher at Littletown Elementary School in Littletown School District. The teacher is a black female who has taught at the high school level and moved to an elementary and middle school position as a counselor. She has been in this school district for two years. She enjoys teaching in a rural school district because she grew up in a rural area. She drives 45 minutes to work.

Teacher #2 is a teacher at Littletown Elementary School in Littletown School District. The teacher is a white female who has ten years of teaching experience in another state. She is a brand new teacher in the state of Alabama and in this school district. She drives 55 minutes to work.

Teacher # 3 is a teacher a black female teacher at Littletown Middle School. She has five years of teaching experience. She went through a district program for beginning teachers when she began working in the district. This teacher grew up in this area and wants to make an impact on the students.

Teacher #4 is a white female teacher at Centerville Primary School, who has a total of 20 years in education. She has been in this district for 16 years. She was a mentor teacher for a new teacher, but she did not have a formal mentor when she began teaching in this district.

Teacher #5 is a white female teacher at Centerville Primary School, with 5 years of teaching experience at this school. This teacher lives about 20 miles away from her school. She wanted to teach in a small, rural school.

Teacher #6 is a white female who teaches at Centerville Intermediate School. This teacher has 5 years of teaching experience in Centerville School District. This teacher is a product of the Centerville School District. She knew before going to college that she wanted to come back to this district to teach. She attended a one-day teacher orientation in this school district before beginning her teaching career, but she states that there is no formal mentoring program in the district.

Teacher #7 is a white female teacher with 1 year of teaching experience at Centerville Intermediate School. This teacher has lived in the Centerville School District all of her life. This is where she wanted to teach. She states that there is an instructional coach that helps new teachers who have less than 5 years of teaching experience. There is not a formal mentoring program in this district or school. This teacher lives about 20 miles away from her school. She wanted to teach in a small, rural school.

Teacher #8 is a white female who teachers in the Upper School District at Premier High School. This her fourth year teaching in this district, but she has a total of 15 years in education. She did not have to complete the whole Teacher Induction Program because she had 11 years of experience coming to this district. She did have to attend the last day of the Teacher Induction Program. She came to this district because it was closer to where she lived. She did not have a

mentor assigned to her; but she emphasized that she never felt like she was "thrown to the wolves."

Teacher #9 is a white female teacher in the Upper School District, teaching at Premier High School. This teacher chose to teach at this school because of the location. It is close to where she lives. She attended a three-day Teacher Induction Program as a new teacher to this district. She has 3 years of teaching experience. Her principal assigned a mentor teacher to her for help throughout the year.

Teacher # 10 is a white female teacher who teaches in the Upper School District at Preparatory Middle School. This teacher grew up in this community and wanted to stay here to teach. She completed the Teacher Induction Program and 3 years of teaching in the Upper School District. Her principal assigned all new teachers a mentor.

Teacher #11 is a white female teacher with 3 years of teaching experience in the Upper School District at Preparatory Middle School. She is a product of this school system and wanted to stay here and teach. She was assigned a mentor teacher for support throughout the year.

The Upper School District allowed the researcher the opportunity to interview three district administrators about their Teacher Induction Program. The Human Resource Coordinator, the Elementary Curriculum Director and the Secondary Curriculum Director all participated in the interview to provide information about the Teacher Induction Program that was started in the Upper School District 10 years ago. The program was developed in response to the teachers who did not have a good grasp on classroom management. Table 5 summarizes the participant profiles.

Table 5

Participants' Profiles

Participant	Gender	Race	Educational Experience
Superintendent #1	Male	Black	unknown
Superintendent #2	Male	White	20
Superintendent #3	Male	White	28
Principal #1	Female	Black	19
Principal #2	Male	Black	16
Principal #3	Female	White	35
Principal#4	Male	White	18
Principal #5	Male	White	14
Principal #6	Male	White	22
Teacher #1	Female	Black	2
Teacher #2	Female	White	1
Teacher #3	Female	Black	5
Teacher #4	Female	White	21
Teacher #5	Female	White	5
Teacher #6	Female	White	5
Teacher #7	Female	White	1
Teacher #8	Female	White	4
Teacher #9	Female	White	3
Teacher #10	Female	White	3
Teacher #11	Female	White	3
Administrator #1	Male	White	Unknown
Administrator #2	Female	White	Unknown
Administrator #3	Male	White	Unknown

Data Analysis

A multiple case study was designed in order to answer the following sub-questions:

1.   What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2.   What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3.   What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

4.   What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5.   Which strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6.   What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

The three cases in this study were superintendents, principals, and teachers. After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed audio recordings precisely, and analyzed the data by utilizing a method known as coding. The process included breaking the data into manageable segments to identify and appropriately label those segments (Schwandt, 2007). The researcher analyzed the themes within each case and compared and analyzed across cases for a cross-case analysis.

When hand-coding the data, the researcher utilized the method suggested by Yin (2014). The method started with questions in the study. The researcher started with a sub-question, identified the evidence that addressed the question, then drew a tentative conclusion based on the evidence. Repeat the procedure until you have addressed all of your research questions (Yin, 2014). First, the researcher thoroughly read each transcribed interview twice, then established themes and patterns. According to Creswell (2013), themes are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea. The researcher used codes from the literature review to guide initial coding of the transcripts. Next, the researcher charted the

interview responses according to similarities and tagged the most significant information, then developed a master coding list of the responses. The researcher finalized the coding by reviewing all transcripts and documented repeated references. Using the sub questions from the research, the researcher identified evidence that addressed each question. Finally, based on the evidence, the researcher gave each group of codes a theme, and drew tentative conclusions.

The researcher reported the findings by case, answering each research question, explaining how each case responded to the research questions. The researcher provided a rich description of the findings by presenting the themes of each research question with supporting quotes. This improves the credibility of the study. Finally, the researcher analyzed the results across cases to answer each research question and compared the results, then presented the results in summary matrices for each research question.

Findings by Case

The findings are presented for each case, and organized by the research question. The cases under each research question are presented in the following order: superintendents, principals, and teachers.

Analysis of Case #1: Superintendents

Research Question #1: Challenges of Recruiting Teachers in Rural Remote Districts

The first case is the three superintendents. Six themes emerged from the superintendents' responses to research question pertaining to the challenges of recruiting teachers in their school districts. The superintendents noted their locations, competition with other districts, recruiting inexperienced teachers, lack of teachers in the critical needs areas, and low teacher salaries along with not having incentives for hiring, and enough education graduates as challenges to recruiting

teachers to their school districts. Each of these themes will now be described, with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Location. Two of the superintendents stated that their geographic locations were challenges in recruiting new teachers because the teachers are driving great distances to get to their jobs. With the school districts being located in remote rural areas, with larger urban areas 30 to 40 minutes away, the superintendents explained that teachers are living in the more urban areas and traveling to the rural areas to teach.

Superintendent #1 stated, "Most of our teachers, approximately 75% of our teachers, live in Montgomery." Superintendent #3 added his perspective, "We're about 50 miles in either direction from major universities and major healthcare outlets, entertainment, and other things that attract young people." Geographic location is noted as a major challenge when trying to recruit teachers in remote rural school districts.

Competing with larger districts. Larger school districts can offer more to the new teachers than remote rural school districts when recruiting. They can utilize recruiting methods that the smaller, remote rural school districts cannot.

Superintendent # 1 explicitly stated the following in a continued response to the research question about challenges faced when recruiting teachers to his district. He stated:

> The challenge that we face is the fact that we're competing mainly with Montgomery... It can be difficult at times, but you have to try to sell the fact that if you're paying just as much as Montgomery, you have to sell something to them.

Superintendent # 2 lamented that the larger school districts used methods he could not, as he explained, "Being a rural district, there's a lot of districts out there that are using recruiting methods. Now we're having to look at some possibilities of being able to compete with that."

The superintendent did not elaborate on what those methods were. Competition from larger districts is the second major challenge for two of the superintendents.

Inexperienced teachers. Superintendents discussed the challenge of recruiting teachers with classroom experience. Due to their remote rural locations, teachers with experience will not relocate to these areas. They admit that it is easier to recruit teachers with no classroom experience to remote rural areas.

Superintendent #1 illustrated the challenges faced when recruiting teachers to his district by declaring the following:

> Initially, a lot of times, it's easier for us to recruit them because they're unseasoned. They're new and so forth. There are other school districts such as Montgomery, Elmore County, Autauga County; they prefer seasoned, top notch people, so someone who's not seasoned.

Superintendent #2 continued, noting the difficulty of hiring teachers with experience in the classroom with the following statement, "Secondary challenge to that is getting teachers that have some experience. We get a lot of new teachers coming in who have completed their degrees but don't have a lot of on-the-job experience, I guess."

Superintendent #3 affirmed that his district was faced with the challenge of hiring teachers with experience with the following note: "We can get a young teacher in here for a few years, train them." All three superintendents have a challenge when hiring inexperienced teachers. The larger districts prefer the teachers with more experience.

Critical needs areas. School districts have difficulty recruiting in some areas that are considered as critical needs teaching areas. Two of the superintendents had similar critical needs areas. The third had needs in a different area that became a critical needs area due to changes in the curriculum at the college level for particular major.

Superintendent #1 stated, "It's difficult to get teachers in critical needs areas such as math, science, special needs. Foreign language is also a big issue for us."

Superintendent #2 had critical needs due to changes in curriculum for agri-science. He commented, "…we've had a good example is an agri-science, areas of agri-science, we've had some positions where we've only had one or two applicants so we contacted Auburn University, found out there's some big changes in that area…"

Superintendent #3 had difficulty recruiting in the same areas as superintendent #1; math, science, special education and foreign language. He noted:

> It's really the more difficult areas of staffing, such as the math, science, special
>
> education, foreign language, that we have the most difficulty in recruiting. It's because
>
> of the competition and when they go off to Auburn or Alabama or wherever, and they
>
> come out with a math degree or a science degree, many times they're offered four or five
>
> jobs at recruitment day, and signing bonuses in Georgia, and other states are there, and
>
> they're recruiting these people, but also industry is recruiting these people.

Two superintendents had a challenge hiring in the following critical needs areas: math, science and special needs. One superintendent had a challenge hiring in agri-science for its career technical program due to changes in the university agri-science program.

No incentives/low salaries. Superintendents agreed that incentives would be helpful when recruiting teachers to their school districts due to the low teacher salaries. One superintendent had a grant from the federal government that allowed him to offer incentives to his teachers. Two superintendents noted that teacher salaries in their district were at the minimum state salary scale. They conceded that larger school districts may be able to recruit teachers easier because they can offer higher salaries.

Superintendent #2 who paid teacher salaries at the base pay required by the state affirmed, "Of course, incentives. We pay basically off the state salary matrix."

Superintendent #3 also discussed no incentives as a challenge:

So there's a challenge, we cannot offer the higher pay and the incentives that a lot of the city school districts can, that are more wealthy, have a higher millage on their property tax, things of that nature. And we can't offer the competitive salaries that your big companies can offer.

Superintendents #2 and #3 discussed the low salaries in conjunction with no incentives. Superintendent #2 suggested:

Some of the districts pay more... Again, a lot of your rural districts just meet that minimum salary schedule, and a lot of your bigger districts are now offering a little bit bigger piece of the pie to get them.

Superintendent #3 explained his challenge with teacher pay as follows:

So teacher pay is a challenge, and not as a public school district with limited funds, rural funds, and our district is one of the lowest local funded school districts in the whole state. I believe Upper County schools and the City, right down the street from us, are 135 and 136 respectively in local school funding.

Due to low funding for the remote rural school districts, superintendents #2 and #3 only offered the minimum, base teacher pay in their districts. Low salaries without incentives made it more difficult to hire new teachers in District #2 and District #3. District #3 is ranked in the bottom three, out of 137 school districts, when school districts are rank ordered according to funding received from the state.

Not enough education graduates. Two superintendents agreed that there are fewer students graduating with degrees in Education. Superintendent #2 and Superintendent #3 noted this as a challenge in their respective districts. Superintendent #2 noted this challenge first and stated it was his district's biggest challenge. He stated, "There's a lot of challenges, because in this day and time, we're not seeing as many people get into education. I guess that would be our biggest challenge."

Superintendent #3 noted this as a trend. He predicted:

But here's the dynamic that I know that you are seeing as working on this, is over the last several years, enrollment in colleges of education, by some reports, is down 30 to 35 percent. So teachers, young people going into the profession, that's down in all teaching subject areas. And so even though English language arts and history and some of those have been easier to staff in times past, that's becoming a challenge. Because the higher quality young people do not see the incentive to go into education. The pay, the retirement, and the health care benefits, some of the things that they've been motivated by, by being able to retire with 25 years or 30 years, that's been removed. You know, they're going to have to wait until they're at least 62 to retire. The legislature has made some changes there that indirectly and directly are partly responsible for that number coming down in those colleges of education.

Superintendent #2 and #3 noted that for various reasons, the number of students who entered the education field had decreased.

Late hiring. One superintendent noted this challenge, so it was not included in the summary matrix. At the conclusion of his interview, Superintendent #1 asked the researcher to specifically note, "Early hires are better. The later hires are usually the ones who have to be non-renewed the following year." When teachers resigned late in the summer, the school district had a more difficult time trying to fill those vacancies. Table 6 is a chart summarizing the themes for research question one.

Table 6

Summary of Themes for Research Question #1

Themes	Superintendent #1	Superintendent #2	Superintendent #3
Location	Most of our teachers, approximately 75% of our teachers live in Montgomery.		We're about 50 miles in either direction from major universities and major healthcare outlets…
Competing with other districts	The challenge that we face is the fact that we're competing mainly with Montgomery.	Now we're having to look at some possibilities of being able to compete with that.	
Recruiting inexperienced teachers	Initially, a lot of times, it's easier for us to recruit them because they're unseasoned. They're new and so forth.	We get a lot of new teachers coming in who have completed their degrees but don't have a lot of on-the-job experience, I guess.	We can get a young teacher in here for a few years, train them…
Critical needs areas	It's difficult to get teachers in critical needs areas such as math, science, special needs. Foreign language is also a big issue for us.	…we've had some positions where we've only had one or two applicants…	It's really the more difficult areas of staffing, such as the math, science, special education, foreign language,
Low Salaries/No incentives		Of course, incentives. We pay basically off the state salary matrix. a lot of your rural districts just meet that minimum salary schedule…	So teacher pay is a challenge, and our district is one of the lowest local funded school districts in the whole state.

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Themes	Superintendent #1	Superintendent #2	Superintendent #3
			So there's a challenge, we cannot offer the higher pay and the incentives that a lot of the city school districts can…
Not enough education graduates		There's a lot of challenges, because in this day and time, we're not seeing as many people get into education.	Enrollment in colleges of education, by some reports, is down 30 to 35 percent.

Research Question #2: Challenges for Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts

Research question #2 was: What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools? Three themes emerged from the superintendents' responses to this questions. The themes were location, they leave for better pay, and they leave after getting experience.

Location. The first theme to emerge for challenges for retention of teachers in rural remote areas was the location of the school districts. The teachers leave after one or two years to get closer to home or to get into a bigger school district. The researcher asked Superintendent #1 what challenges he faced in his district when trying to retain teachers. He responded with the following:

Well, that's the problem also. Once we get them in to try to keep them. It's sometimes a hard sell to sell to someone that "I know you're driving 30–40 minutes a day one way, so roundtrip it's anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half.

Superintendent #3 reported his location was a challenge as well. He explained, "For your rural districts, your people that are not, that grew up here, they tend to seem to want to go back home." School districts lose teachers due to their locations and new teachers wanting to live closer to home.

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Leave for better pay. The second theme to emerge was that once teachers get the experience, they leave the remote rural school districts to go to better paying districts. Superintendent #1 continued his list of challenges for retaining teachers by stating the following, "After a teacher gains tenure, gets two or three years of experience, they are far more marketable at that point.… There are other school districts such as Montgomery, Elmore County, Autauga County, they prefer seasoned, top notch people…" Superintendent #2 indicated that teachers leave his district for higher pay by stating, "Some of the districts pay more."

Superintendent #3 noted that higher pay was a challenge to retaining teachers once they gain experience. "If they can move on to another district that's paying more, or another state that's paying more, and has all these other amenities, it's very difficult to keep those kind of teachers."

They leave after getting experience. The third theme to emerge for the research question pertaining to retaining teachers was that they leave after getting experience because other districts want teachers with experience. Superintendent #1 continued his list of challenges for retaining teachers with this statement, "Once they get some experience and they become pretty good at their craft, then they'll look at other places such as Montgomery, Elmore, Autauga Counties to work."

Superintendent #2 also added this statement to his list of challenges. He noted, "I think the biggest thing in retaining our teachers is other districts looking for highly qualified teachers. You get a really, really good teacher and you promote that teacher… I think the really, really good teachers are constantly being recruited into other districts."

Superintendent #3 suggested that new teachers want to move close to home. He emphasized that with the following statement:

For your rural districts, your people that are not, that grew up here, they tend to seem to want to go back home. They have a tendency to want to stay near college or university to work on their advanced degrees, or be centered in a location close to a metropolitan area where their spouse, if they're married or they're about to be married, has promotion opportunities and that type of thing. That's the real challenge.

The three themes to emerge for challenges in retaining teachers were location, teachers leaving for better pay and teachers leaving after they gain experience. One superintendent noted that the challenges for recruiting and retaining teachers were the same. Superintendent #3 stated, "I think a lot of those challenges are the same as the recruiting factors." Table 7 summarizes the findings from Research Question #2.

Table 7

Summary of Themes for Research Question #2

Themes	Superintendent #1	Superintendent #2	Superintendent #3
Location	It's sometimes a hard sell to sell to someone that "I know you're driving 30–40 minutes a day one way, so round-trip it's anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half.		We're about 50 miles in either direction from major universities and major healthcare outlets, entertainment, and other things that attract young people.
Leave for better pay	After a teacher gains tenure, gets two or three years of experience, they are far more marketable at that point.	Some of the districts pay more.	If they can move on to another district that's paying more, or another state that's paying more, and has all these other amenities, it's very difficult to keep those kind of teachers.
Leave after getting experience	Once they get some experience and they become pretty good at their craft, then they'll look at other places.	I think the biggest thing in retaining our teachers is other districts looking for highly qualified teachers.	For your rural districts, your people that are not, that grew up here, they tend to seem to want to go back home.

Research Question #3: Strategies Used by Remote Rural Superintendents to Recruit and Retain New Teachers

Two themes emerged from the responses that superintendents presented to answer research question #3: What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers? The two themes were: active recruitment, and a Teacher Induction Program.

Active recruitment. The first theme to emerge was the active recruitment used in two of the three school districts. Both school districts attend college recruitment fairs. One school district has a Human Resource coordinator who coordinates recruitment efforts for the district.

The researcher probed Superintendent #2 with the question: Do you go out to college fairs or anything to do recruiting for teachers? The superintendent announced:

"Yeah…. Part of that has been that we have recruited with some of the colleges. This year we're doing something for the first time. This will be our first annual job fair. We're sending someone out all over the state, and then we're going to have all of our schools set up here at the college, and then we're going to have teachers come in, or administrators, anybody who is interested in a job in Chilton county."

Superintendent #3 revealed their strategies for recruitment with the following statement:

We attend several major recruitments of all the ones in our proximity of the major colleges of education. We have materials printed. We have folders. We have information about our district, DVDs, things like that that we give out at these recruitments. We, of course we are on TEACH in Alabama like everybody else in the state, and as far as the, each principal in our district does quite a bit of recruiting, in terms

of they are responsible for making the recommendations to our office. And then we finish the background, references, and all, and we board approve.

So, besides Mr. H., our human resources coordinator, doing those recruitments, we also have principals that work at it all the time. How do they work at it? Phone calls, emails, personal contacts, going themselves to job fairs and recruitment activities, word of mouth, working with their teachers who have friends and acquaintances that, you know, that's probably as effective a strategy in a rural place as you can find. And you know, they work at it with their students. They meet with their students, they talk with their students about going into education, and sometimes you can mentor and lead some of those people into the profession. So a good principal working on this 24/7 is really what it takes in a rural system to be successful with personnel. I really believe that, because if you don't have them on the ground, really the grassroots, knowing what's going on in personnel, it's very hard for us to do that all from this office.

Teacher induction. Superintendent #1 and Superintendent #3 added that to retain teachers in their districts, they have a teacher induction program. Superintendent #1 used the Teacher Incentive Fund Grant to establish his induction program. Superintendent #3 mentioned his induction program, but referred the researcher to the coordinators of that program to get more information.

Superintendent #1 described his teacher induction program as follows:

One of the programs that we have is the BTAP. It's an acronym for Beginning Teachers Apprentice Program. The BTAP will meet with the teachers every 9 weeks and we have pre-scripted professional development where we go over classroom management topics.

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We go over how to maintain order in the classroom. We talk about methodology and how to convey how to have a good flow of operations for that.

We use different programs such as the Lee and Marlene Cantor Assertive Discipline Model. We use the Discipline with Dignity Program. We also use Harry Wong's First Day of Schools for the elementary teachers. We use all these different things during this particular training. We share a lot of information.… I head up that training there, but also the co-trainer is the Director of Curriculum Instruction.

Superintendent #3 mentioned his teacher induction program when probed by the researcher with the question: Any other things, ideas that you thought would help with recruiting teachers? He responded:

Well, we have a teacher induction program in our district, and you'll hear a lot about that from the other colleagues that you'll talk to, but I do think that that's made a tremendous impact, and we really solved that in our statistical data. We were retaining about 70 percent of our teachers through more years up until things started changing, around '06, '07, '08.

The researcher was granted the opportunity to interview with three central office administrators, from District #3 about details of their teacher induction program. The Teacher Induction Program, or TIP as the participants in District #3 referred to it, is a three-year program that all teachers, with less than five years of teaching experience are required to attend. The TIP program began because District #3 administrators noticed that many of their teachers had trouble with classroom management. Administrator #2 explained:

One of the first things that we found is, we were getting teachers that did not have a good handle on classroom management. That's how it began, to try to help our teachers

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develop management plans for their classroom. We ask each one to write one to have the rule, the consequences, and the rewards that they would use in their classroom. We found that they were being more and more successful if they had a good management plan in place. It has grown from that to go into content related sessions.

Administrator #1 added, "I think a lot of it came out of teachers saying, 'I wish someone had told me this when I started,' or, 'Wish I'd known this.'"

The TIP program has been implemented in District #3 for 10 years. Over that time, the program has changed. Administrator #3 explained, "In the beginning it was five days and then it went to three days with a lot of changes, and now this year we're doing something else."

Administrator #1 added:

We've tried to be responsive to what our teachers have told us. We've given them surveys, we've gathered feedback from past participants and people that did the program ten years ago that are still with us in the classroom. We've really tried to listen to them and adapt our program to the changes that we we're seeing in education and the changes that we're seeing in our students. We've worked really well together over the past few years, to really make those changes and it still came down to effective teaching and classroom management. Those were our two biggies and that's really still where we're going to be: climate, management, culture, and educator effectiveness.

The Teacher Induction Program in District #3 is currently a three-day program that is built around the Alabama Quality Teaching Standards. Administrator #1 explained, "We took the quality teaching standards and we built sessions around 'here's how you're going to be observed and evaluated so here's what you need to know and how we can support you in that.'" The final day is the day that all new teachers to the district attend. They are provided training on

how to complete operational tasks that are used throughout the school year. Administrator #1 expounded:

Our final day, the last day, the Friday is an orientation for every new employee and we go over all the legal requirements, retirement, those things that teachers need to know now to cover legal, professional responsibilities. We spend a day going over board policy, anything that we think we can go over with them to get them off to a good start and keep them out of trouble.

The researcher inquired, "How do you fund it?" Administrative Team #1 responded:

It was funded initially with joint efforts with federal program money but that's been one of the issues, but we've never had the funds to pay our participants and that's been a question. It's been an expectation that if you come to work for us, we have this induction program and mentoring program and it's just been an expectation from the beginning. I know there's been discussion in different systems about that, but that was one thing that luckily, our employees were willing to do as a condition of their new employment."

Administrator #2 added, "That's something that we let them know upfront. When they do their orientation, when they come through to do their paperwork, we tell them then about the induction program so they know before they're hired."

The researcher continued probing, "Do you train throughout the year or is it just before they start working for that current school year?"

Administrator #1 responded:

Initially, we had a couple of days throughout the year. Feedback from teachers was that that was really difficult for new teachers to be out of the classroom. We began front-

loading and then we had a mentor in place at the school after that to help them and we

have additional trainings that they need, but it may not be just for TIP.

The researcher probed, "You have official, trained mentors?" Administrator #2 replied:

In the past, they have had some intensive training for them but again, funding has cut that

out. We haven't been able to do as much of that but they do have a mentor. We try to do

it through grade level, content-specific, that's a side-by-side with them.

The themes were superintendents used active recruitment by attending recruiting fairs

and teacher training through teacher induction programs. The superintendents had central office

administrators who attended recruiting fairs throughout the year or as one superintendent decided

to hold a district recruiting fair to have applicants come to his district. Once the teachers were

hired, training them before the start of school, was a strategy used by two districts that utilized

teacher induction programs. Table 8 summarizes strategies superintendents report using to

recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts.

Table 8

Summary of Strategies Superintendents Report Using to Recruit and Retain Teachers in Remote

Rural School Districts

Themes	Superintendent #1	Superintendent #2	Superintendent #3
Active recruitment	Principals recruit for their schools	"Part of that has been that we have recruited with some of the colleges. This year we're doing something for the first time. This will be our first annual job fair."	"We attend several major recruitments of all the ones in our proximity of the major colleges of education.
Teacher Induction Program	"One of the programs that we have is the BTAP. It's an acronym for Beginning Teachers Apprentice Program."		"Well, we have a teacher induction program in our district, and you'll hear a lot about that from the other colleagues that you'll talk to…"

Research Question #5: The Most Successful Strategy for Recruiting and Retaining

Teachers

Research question #4 will be analyzed with the principals for Case 2. One theme emerged from superintendents' responses to research question #5: What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers? That theme is that teacher induction programs from two districts have been the most successful strategy for recruiting and retaining teachers in those districts. In one district, the teacher induction program was established using the Teacher Incentive Fund Grant. The other district did not have special funding to implement its teacher induction program.

Superintendent #1 stated:

"It's really hard to say because there's so many things that we're doing. I do know at one time we had a teacher incentive fund grant. We received a grant and it had been real, real successful. We were able to use that to recruit and keep our teachers."

Superintendent #2 noted that he could not tell which strategy had been most successful because he had not held the district recruiting fair at that time.

For retaining teachers in his district, Superintendent #3 explained how he helped his district to retain teachers:

But I think our teacher induction program did help us for a long time, but we have solved, we have seen that retention data decline. We have a teacher induction program which, that gets them ready and they don't just walk in there and get a role book and a set of keys anymore. That just doesn't happen in any, most school districts, that doesn't happen in our district.

Table 9 summarizes the most successful strategies used by superintendents to recruit and retain teachers.

Table 9

Summary of Strategies That Have Been the Most Successful in Recruiting and Retaining

Teachers

Themes	**Superintendent #1**	**Superintendent #2**	**Superintendent #3**
Teacher Incentive Fund	It's really hard to say because there's so many things that we're doing. I do know at one time we had a teacher incentive fund grant.		
Recruitment Strategies		Part of that has been that we have recruited with some of the colleges.	We attend several major recruitments of all the ones in our proximity of the major colleges of education.
Teacher Induction Program	One of the programs that we have is the BTAP. It's an acronym for Beginning Teachers Apprentice Program.		We have a teacher induction program which, that gets them ready and they don't just walk in there and get a role book and a set of keys anymore. That just doesn't happen in any, most school districts, that doesn't happen in our district.

Analysis of Case #2: Principals

Case #2 was composed of the principals interviewed. The researcher asked the principals

the following research questions:

1)   What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2)   What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3)   What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain

      new teachers?

4)   What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5)   What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

Question #3 pertains to the Superintendents, so that question was not analyzed in this case. It was analyzed with case 1, superintendents.

Research Question #1: Challenges of Recruiting Teachers in Rural Remote Districts

In response to research question #1 – What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers to remote rural schools? – two themes emerged. The two themes extracted from the data and mentioned by at least three principals were location, and competition from larger districts. Location was identified as a challenge for recruiting by all six principals. Each of the themes will now be reported with illustrative quotes from the principals.

Location. The location of the schools or school districts was noted as a limitation by four of the six principals. Principal #5 noted that his location may be to his advantage, while principal #6, consider how far a person lived from the school when hiring for a position in his building.

Principal #1 explained why location was a challenge for her in the following statement. She said, "Since I've been principal here I've noticed that location is one of the biggest factors with recruiting teachers. Once they find out where the school is they hesitate about coming on the interview."

Principal #2 stated the following concerning location. He stated, "Well, one of the main challenges would be the distance from a city. Most people that are employed here are driving approximately 40 miles to work, so that's a big challenge."

Principal #3 presented the following response to research question #1:

"I guess we do have the challenge in a sense, because as far as recruitment, we are more limited in the pool somewhat because of where we're located. We are kind of in the

center of Birmingham and Montgomery, so we definitely have a lot of larger systems

pulling from the pool, same pool we are more than likely."

Principal # 4 responded, "In the rural area it's more like a stepping stone for some of

them. If they're not from that area or close by it's just a stepping stone."

Principal #6 explains what he looks for when recruiting a teacher to his school as it

pertains to location. He stated:

> That's another thing, I probably shouldn't but one of the first things I look at when I'm
>
> looking at somebody that I don't know is I look at their address, because odds are if I hire
>
> somebody that's driving anything over about 45 minutes to get to work, as soon as
>
> something comes up close to home, they're going to take it, and so I just try to avoid that
>
> if I can and just, I try to look and see if they are from this county. That is not a
>
> requirement for me, but 30 to 45-minute drive maximum, probably 30 ... I try to really
>
> keep it around 30, a 30-minute drive from the school… I look at that, because there's less
>
> chance of them being hired away.

Competition from larger districts. The second challenge, mentioned by three of the six

principals, is the competition from the larger school districts that are close to these districts.

Principal #2, principal #3, and principal #4 further explained their challenges with recruiting

with the following statements:

Principal #2 stated, "With all the districts that are competing for these teachers. We have

other, larger districts are competing, and most people are not going to relocated to a rural area."

Principal #3 responded, "…We are kind of in the center of Birmingham and

> Montgomery, so we definitely have a lot of larger systems pulling from the pool, same
>
> pool we are more than likely."

Principal #4 answered:

We see a lot of them come out of Montgomery and Jefferson County because of the

recent cuts in the past year really floods our database, and we do pull those from that list

to interview. However, we do have times that we are going to recommend them, and

they get something closer to home.

Principals believe that location of their schools and competition from larger districts are

challenges to recruiting in remote rural schools. Table 10 summarizes the themes.

Table 10

Themes from Case 2: Research Question #1

Themes	Principal #1	Principal #2	Principal #3	Principal #4	Principal #6
Location	Since I've been principal here I've noticed that location is one of the biggest factors with recruiting teachers.	Well, one of the main challenges would be the distance from a city.	As far as recruitment, we are more limited in the pool somewhat because of where we're located.	In the rural area it's more like a stepping stone for some of them. If they're not from that area or close by it's just a stepping stone.	That's another thing, I probably shouldn't but one of the first things I look at when I'm looking at somebody that I don't know is I look at their address
Competition from larger districts		We have other, larger districts are competing, and most people are not going to relocated to a rural area.	We definitely have a lot of larger systems pulling from the pool, same pool we are more than likely.	We see a lot of them come out of Montgomery and Jefferson County because of the recent cuts in the past year really floods our database	

Research Question #2: Challenges for Retaining Teachers in Rural Remote School Districts

The researcher asked the principals research question #2: What are the challenges in

retaining new teachers in remote rural schools? Four of the six principals responded with

challenges of their geographic location and being forced to hire inexperienced teachers who did

not end up staying. Principals #5 and #6 did not have the challenge of retaining teachers in their schools.

Location. Principals named their remote geographic location as a challenge for retaining teachers for various reasons. Their explanations centered on teachers' desire of working closer to where they live.

Principal #1 explained, "The drive, location is a factor, especially if there's no one to carpool with."

Principal #2 reiterated location as a challenge with this statement. "Basically, there's nothing here, especially if they're married."

Principal #3 stated, "Some of the challenges we face in trying to retain the teachers would be if they drive to us from a distance and they can get a job closer to their home, they tend to do that."

Principal #4 noted that first year teachers will take a job anywhere at first. He stated, "I have found that just to get your foot in the door to get the experience to have that on your resume to move on to something that's closer to maybe their location, their home."

Recruiting inexperienced teachers. The next theme to emerge from the four principals pertaining to the challenge of retaining teachers was hiring inexperienced teachers who left when they got experience.

Principal #1 noted that new teachers seemed unprepared to work in rural schools. They appear to have unrealistic expectations when they get to the classroom. She noted, "Then just I guess being prepared. It's, 'I didn't know it would be like this once I left school. They didn't prepare me for this. This is totally different from what I was taught on campus.'"

Principal #2 noted, "…so one of the biggest challenges is that we tend to get the teachers that other people did not want."

Principal #3 and principal #4 noted that after getting experience, the teachers will leave their schools. Principal #3 stated:

If I pull somebody from one of those areas like Jergenson, they may work here a year until they can get a job in Jergenson. That type of thing would be where our retention issues would come in more. It would be moving closer to where they live.

Principal #4 affirmed, "…when you're fresh out of college you're just looking for an opportunity to get in and so forth. It doesn't matter where a lot of times."

As the principals noted in this theme, the challenge in retaining teachers in rural remote school districts in Alabama center on being able to draw teachers to the area where they do not live or where they have to commute, teachers being unprepared for the challenges of teaching, as well as teachers leaving the district after they get their initial experience. Table 11 summarizes the themes for research question #2 for the challenges principals face for retaining teachers in remote rural districts.

Table 11

Themes from Case #2: Research Question #2

Themes	Principal #1	Principal #2	Principal #3	Principal #4
Location	"the drive, location is a factor, especially if there's no one to carpool with."	"Basically, there's nothing here, especially if they're married."	"Some of the challenges we face in trying to retain the teachers would be if they drive to us from a distance and they can get a job closer to their home, they tend to do that."	"I have found that just to get your foot in the door to get the experience to have that on your resume to move on to something that's closer to maybe their location, their home."
Recruiting inexperienced teachers	I didn't know it would be like this once I left school. They didn't prepare me for this. This is totally different from what I was taught on campus	"…so one of the biggest challenges is that we tend to get the teachers that other people did not want."	"…they may work here a year until they can get a job in Jergenson."	"…when you're fresh out of college you're just looking for an opportunity to get in and so forth. It doesn't matter where a lot of times."

Research Question #3: Strategies Used by Remote Rural Superintendents to Recruit and Retain New Teachers?

Research Question #3 was analyzed with case #1 the superintendents. Research question #4 pertained to principals. Research Question #4 will now be analyzed with case #2 the principals.

Research Question #4: Strategies for Retaining Teachers in Rural Remote Districts

Research question #4 for the principals was: What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers? One theme emerged from the principals' responses to this question. That theme was that the principals offered support to their teachers. Four of the six principals presented answers that supported this theme.

Principal #2 responded:

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"They know I have their backs, so I don't have a lot of problems with teachers leaving."

Principal #3 stated:

> I think as far as retaining the teacher here, I would it's the level of support we try to give them. While we don't have a formal program, we certainly have a lot of in-grade level support. They work in partners with a new teacher. I have a faculty that is typically very supportive of new teachers. We don't have a faculty that is of the mind that this is my idea, and I'm not going to share it with anybody. They are pretty collaborative in their efforts.

Principal #5 described how he supported his teachers with the following:

> I tell them, 'If your child is in a program at the elementary school I want you to go. We'll cover for you while you go.' I consider that a perk. I can't raise their pay scale, but I can help them out with things like that. If they're happy in that family setting like that then they're going to be a happy employee.

Principal #6 wants to put his teachers at ease. He states:

> I have an open door. People can just walk in any time, and one of the biggest things is I let them know they're appreciated, and we have fun together. We joke and we cut up, and we cut each other down, and I don't take it personally.

The responses for research question #4 centered around administrative support as the strategy used by principals to retain teachers in their buildings in the remote rural school districts in Alabama. Table 12 summarizes strategies used by principals for retaining teachers.

Table 12

Theme from Case #2: Research Question #4

Theme	Principal #2	Principal #3	Principal #5	Principal #6
Administrative Support	"They know I have their backs, so I don't have a lot of problems with teachers leaving."	"I think as far as retaining the teacher here, I would it's the level of support we try to give them."	"I tell them, 'If your child is in a program at the elementary school I want you to go. We'll cover for you while you go.' I consider that a perk."	"I have an open door. People can just walk in any time, and one of the biggest things is I let them know they're appreciated, and we have fun together."

Research Question #5: What Strategies Have Been Most Successful in Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

The responses for research question #5 did not result in a single theme. Each principal had a different answer for what they thought was most successful in his or her building.

Principal #1 responded with the following statement:

The one that works best. Giving them more leadership roles. Teachers like that, they like to know that they are valued, that the principal thinks that they are capable of getting a job done and they're the one that can get it done.

Principal #2 responded about what he thought worked best for him. He declared, "I think one of the main things is ... I don't want to sound like I'm trying to ingratiate myself or make myself sound good, but I'm really fair with people, and I think that helps."

Principal #3 reiterated at the end of her interview what her best strategy was. She commented, "I would say my faculty is probably the greatest tool for retaining my teachers."

Principal #4 tried to make improvements to help new teachers. He stated, "That was something that as a principal and assistant principal, we reflect on how we can restructure for our new teachers; when we interview as well as their teaching experience."

Principal #5 reemphasized two themes. He claimed, "Administrator support and the caliber of kids that we have. They're, for the most part, just really good kids. We don't have a lot of the high end trouble makers that you have at a lot of places."

Principal #6 tried to create a collegial atmosphere. He explained:

As far as recruiting, and then as far as keeping them here, I try not to be their boss. I try for everybody to do the right thing, not because they're being made to do the right thing, but because they're motivated to do the right thing, and so I try to create the conditions where that motivation exists, where they do the right thing because they want to, not because they're being made to, and it's a very collegial atmosphere.

Research question #5 responses did not yield a category of themes. Each principal implemented strategies that included giving teachers leadership roles, being fair, making improvements in processes, and not being their boss. Table 13 summarizes the most successful strategies used by principals.

Table 13

Theme from Case #2: Research Question #5

	Principal #1	Principal #2	Principal #3	Principal #4	Principal #5	Principal #6
Most Successful Strategy	The one that works best. Giving them more leadership roles.	I think one of the main things is ... I don't want to sound like I'm trying to ingratiate myself or make myself sound good, but I'm really fair with people, and I think that helps.	I would say my faculty is probably the greatest tool for retaining my teachers.	That was something that as a principal and assistant principal, we reflect on how we can restructure for our new teachers as well as when we interview too, their experience and so forth.	Administrator support and the caliber of kids that we have. They're, for the most part, just really good kids. We don't have a lot of the high end trouble makers that you have at a lot of places.	"As far as recruiting, and then as far as keeping them here, I try not to be their boss.

Analysis of Case# 3: Teachers

The researcher interviewed teachers to discover their response to research question #6: What do teachers say keeps them in remote rural school districts? The researcher interviewed the teachers with the following five questions:

1)   What attracted you to this school district?

2)   Does the district have a program for new teachers? If so, describe the program.

3)   Describe the mechanisms of support for you, that your principal had in place at your school level.

4)   Describe the ones you found most beneficial to you in your first year of teaching.

5)   What reasons would you give for deciding to continue teaching in this district?

The researcher will now analyze each interview question separately.

What attracted you to this district? The researcher asked all 11 participating teachers: what attracted you to this district? All 11 participants responded with location or distance as part of the attraction to the districts or schools where they were employed. Five teachers reported they were attracted to the district or school because they grew up in the area.

Teacher #1 had two reasons that she was attracted to her school. She responded:

There were two things that attracted me actually. One, I used to work with a co-worker in my previous school, and she used to work in this district. She talked very highly of it, and how nice people were, and how helpful they were in the community together. Also, secondly, it was the fact that it was a rural area. I actually grew up in a rural area that was not too far from a major city. Those were two major things that attracted me here.

Teacher #2 responded with candor. She explained, "The honest answer is this is where I was offered the job."

Teacher #3 responded:

What attracted me to this school district first is that I'm actually from this school district. I know a lot, you know, the parents. I grew up in this area, so I'm familiar a little bit with the struggle. I wanted to actually be an impact on the students or on this community with the students that come from this community. That's what attracted me.

Teacher #4 made the following statement:

Well, I grew up in this district. I moved here from Montgomery County my second grade year. Then I graduated from here. It's the hometown, small-town atmosphere where you know a lot of the families, you know a lot of the students. I'm now seeing students that I teach.

Teacher #5 presented her attraction to the school district with the following response. She

responded, "I liked the fact that it is a smaller school or a smaller county. The school is a lot

bigger than I thought it was once I started working here, but the children from rural districts, I

like that."

Teacher #6 responded to the question with:

I live here locally, so I grew up here. I went to the Centerville school systems and I went

to the University of Montevallo, lived very close to home, and then just wanted to come

back.

Teacher #7 responded, "Well, first of all I live here in this county. I'm from here. I've

lived here my whole life, so it wasn't really an option. This is where I wanted to teach at."

Teacher #8 wanted employment closer to home. She responded:

I was looking for a school district that was closer to my home, where I was teaching

previously was. From my drive way to the school was 52 miles, so I decided I had to

find something closer because I was in the car an hour, well two hours a day, going back

and forth to school.

Teacher # 9 had two reasons for being attracted to the school where she teaches. She replied:

The very first thing, to be honest, would have to be location. I live in Arab, Alabama.

I've been applying for teaching jobs. I looked anywhere within a forty-five to hour

driving distance. Initially, that's what brought me here. I did know two teachers that had

worked at Premier, specifically before, and they told me what a great place it was.

Teacher #10 grew up in her district. Her reply to the question was as follows:

Well, I went to school in Locust Fork, which is like 10 minutes down the road. My

husband went to school at Cleveland, and so we've just stayed around Upper County.

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Want to spend our lives here, and have our family here, so when Premier had a job open,

I was like, 'Okay, let's do this.'

Teacher #11 grew up in Premier as well. She stated, "I live here and I graduated from

Premier, so I knew everybody in the community."

The teacher responses to interview question #1 centered around geographic location as

what attracted them to the districts in which they are employed. Almost half of the teachers lived

in the areas where they were employed or from are from other rural areas. Table 14 summarized

the responses.

Table 14

Themes from Case #3, Interview Question #1

Themes	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6
Location	…secondly, it was the fact that it was a rural area.	The honest answer is this is where I was offered the job.	What attracted me to this school district first is that I'm actually from this school district.	Well, I grew up in this district.	I liked the fact that it is a smaller school or a smaller county.	I live here locally, so I grew up here

Themes	Teacher #7	Teacher #8	Teacher #9	Teacher #10	Teacher #11
Location	Well, first of all I live here in this county. I'm from here.	I was looking for a school district that was closer to my home.	The very first thing, to be honest, would have to be location.	I live here and I graduated from Premier, so I knew everybody in the community.	Well I went to school in Locust Fork, which is like 10 minutes down the road.

New teacher training/induction. The researcher asked all participating teachers if there was a program for new teachers in their district. Seven of the 11 teachers had knowledge of some form of orientation for new teachers to their district.

Teacher #1 taught in another district before coming to District #1. She responded:

I wouldn't say a complete program, but they have something that's kind of set up, and you, kind of figure your way out with it. You start with a new person orientation. From there, basically with your school, you're teamed up with almost like a mentor.

Teacher #3 was a brand new teacher when she was hired in District #1. She responded:

Yes. New teachers, when you first start here, there's a process where the central office meets with new teachers twice every semester for professional development, different things that new teachers may face, such as classroom management. It helps new teachers to get acquainted, to try to show new teachers some of the things that veteran teachers may face or just things that they could possibly face. Sometimes you don't, as a new teacher, sometimes you don't feel very comfortable telling people what problems you have or asking questions. This is one of those sessions where you can ask questions, you can talk to other teachers and see what problems they're having.

Teacher #5 responded with a yes, there was an informal mentor pairing. She stated, "They have an introduction at the board to make them familiar with all the legal issues in schools and stuff."

Teacher #6 added:

We did have an orientation at the beginning of the year that gave you like, 'Okay, this is your role, this is everything you'll get along with that, these are the guidelines that you need to go by.' Yes, we got that.

The four teachers from District 3 were aware of the Teacher Induction Program available in their district.

Teacher #8 was familiar with the Teacher Induction Program. She responded:

The district has a program they call it T.I.P. Teacher something. I didn't have to go through the intense of all of everything. I just had to do the one day of the T.I.P program, where we did all of the nitty-gritty the 'Here's the forms you have to fill out' and that kind of thing.

Teacher # 9 responded with the following details:

Our county has a program called, 'TIP.' It's what we call it. It's teacher induction program. Every summer, the new hires go to a three-day workshop, at least when I went it was three days, it may be less now. They go over anything from grading to how to use our computer programs that we use now as our grading system, to classroom management and discipline. Go over basically the common sense stuff that they might not always tell you in your education classes in college. That was three days. Actually, the program goes on for two more years after that. For the next two summers you have to do a certain number of hours of professional development.

Teacher #10 explained the Teacher Induction Program as follows:

We have the TIP program before we come in, where they have us come in for 3 days, and they go over rules and regulations, and what we can expect, and if we need any help, they give us their information. They just kind of walk us through what's expected, how to handle situations. That's really helpful for us, especially for me, because I'd been out of college for a year, so it was really good for me to have that refresher as to what they expected.

Teacher #11 responded:

It's the TIP program, Teacher Induction Program. It's a three-year program. We start

out during the summer of our first year. We go for like a week and we learn about the

procedures of whatever is in the manual. We learn all the ethics. The grading policy and

all the policies and procedures, that first year. Then the next two years we attend

professional developments that correlate with what we teach to help.

The researcher inquired, "How many days during the summer for the second and third

year do you attend workshops?"

The teacher answered, "It goes by hours and it's roughly 12 hours ... about three classes,

depending on how long they are. Some are six hours and some are three hours or four

hours."

The responses for interview question #2 described the programs that were in place for

new teachers in District #1 and District #3. Teachers described teacher induction programs that

were specifically implemented for new teachers to the profession. Table 15 summarizes

strategies teachers report their districts have in place for support.

Table 15

Themes from Case #3 - Interview Question #2

Themes	Teacher #1	Teacher #3	Teacher #5	Teacher #8
Training Program	I wouldn't say a complete program, but they have something that's kind of set up, and you, kind of figure your way out with it. You start with a new person orientation.	New teachers, when you first start here, there's a process where the central office meets with new teachers twice every semester for professional development.	They have an introduction at the board to make them familiar with all the legal issues in schools and stuff.	The district has a program they call it T.I.P…I didn't have to go through the intense of all of everything.

Themes	Teacher #9	Teacher #10	Teacher #11
Training Program	Our county has a program called, 'TIP.' It's what we call it. It's teacher induction program	It's the TIP program, Teacher Induction Program. It's a three-year program. We start out during the summer of our first year.	We have the TIP program before we come in, where they have us come in for 3 days, and they go over rules and regulations, and what we can expect.

Support from principals. **Data yielded two themes from teachers for interview** question #3: Describe the mechanisms of support for you, that your principal had in place at your school level. First, 7 of the 11 teachers reported that they have been assigned a mentor by their principals. Second, all of the teachers reported having administrative support from their principals as a strategy. The researcher illustrated the two strategies below with descriptive quotes.

Mentors. Eight of the eleven teachers reported that they were assigned mentors by their principals. Teacher #3 responded from her experience:

> You are assigned a mentor, a teacher who has maybe been here a couple years or a teacher that he sees is best fit to help you. We meet with, you know, get acquainted with them, any questions that they may have, go in and sit in on a class, not as a scare tactic, but just as someone who can actually help the teachers who are new and to get acquainted with different things. Just someone you can walk side by side with.

Teacher #7 was directed by her principal to follow what a teacher across the hall from her did. She explained:

> The teacher across the hall from me has been there throughout the whole year. I was told when I was hired to follow what she does. To me, that's been beneficial, I think being able to just pretty much take the same steps as another teacher, especially if you were told that by your principal. Obviously that teacher knows what they're doing. That's a good sign for that teacher.

Teacher #8 with 11 years of experience stated that she didn't really need the help. She responded:

> I was able just to talk to those around me and say, 'Hey how do you do this here?' and figure out all of the things and how stuff is different from where I have been previously. But I do know that they have mentor teachers that they use for the brand new teachers coming in.

Teacher #9 reported that her informal mentors were more helpful than her assigned mentor. She described her experience below:

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Specifically, here at Premier, he will assign a new teacher a mentor teacher. But all of

my neighbors were really all mentor teachers to me. They did a wonderful job kind of

taking me under their wings and showing me the ropes.

Teacher # 10 noted that they had mentor teachers in her building. She stated:

We have mentor teachers… My mentor teacher is the other 5th grade math teacher,

because I teach 5th grade math as well, and so she was just there, kind of, to guide me,

and help, and if I needed help with lesson plans, or if I needed help with an idea for a

lesson, or even just how do I post my grades to INOW, she was there. She was who I

went to.

Teacher #11 described what her principal did to support the new teachers in his

building. She replied:

We're all assigned when we first start, a shadow teacher, a teacher that has been teaching

here a while ... so any questions that we have as far as putting grades in or STI we just go

that mentor person and they help us figure out what we need to figure out.

Administrative. The second theme to emerge from the teacher interview question #2

concerning what strategies the principal had in place to support new teachers was other

administrative supports, that include professional development and instructional support from

instructional coaches. The principal brought someone in or sent the teachers to professional

development that would be beneficial to the teacher.

Teacher #1 who worked at school #1 and school #2 explained how both principals

supported her. She stated:

They're very supportive about if you want to go and get PLP's, any kind of professional

development, that you're able to do that. They're very open, if you find something and

you want to share, she's very open of having you come here as well.

Teacher #2 described her experience with the following statement:

When I have looked to seek out new knowledge anytime there has been anything, any

workshop, anything I was interested in and I approached her and said, 'I want to go learn

about this. This will help.' She has always been very supportive about that.

Teacher # 3 includes the support of her instructional coach in her response to the

question. She claims, "Just the level of support from the principal himself and the instructional

assistant coming in, observing, effective feedback, immediate feedback to help you to know what

it is you need to do to recognize your strengths and weaknesses."

Teacher # 4 adds reading and instructional coaches to her support team. She states:

They're very good about helping if you have instructional, any kind of problems, but then

we also have two reading coaches who come in and will help if you need something....

We have grade level meetings and sometimes are able to collaborate amongst grade

levels.

Teacher #5 has an approachable principal. She said, "The principal, she's very open and

very approachable, so if you have a question you can go to her."

Teacher #7 has instructional coaches in her building that support her as well as a

technology coordinator. She describes how the technology coordinator supports the new

teachers. She reports: "As far as helping, we have a technology coordinator that helps us get our

room started and up as far as setting up our computers, making sure everything technology-wise

is working."

Teacher #8 likes the way the teachers are treated by her principal. She explains it with the following statement:

We are not micromanaged. We are given the tools to do our job and you know I don't know how to describe it other than that… I guess what I am trying to say is we're treated as professionals and we have our job, we have our assignment and we are expected to do our job and to do what we are assigned to do.

Teacher #9 reports how supportive her principal is. She explains:

Our principal is so supportive and I never had a problem with a parent or student that somebody didn't have my back in supporting me and standing up for me. There was so many things I never even knew about because he handled them for me. The administration's great.

Teacher #10 reports that she likes the support of her building. She declares, "the administration, not every school can say they have a great administration that helps them, and encourages them, and we have a great one here."

Teacher #11 stated that her principal lays out professional development based on what the teachers teach. She describes her principal's support with the following statement:

He lays out professional development according to what things we teach. For instance, this year was my first year to take in an intervention class. Before I took in that intervention class, I attended special training.

The responses to interview question #3 yielded the theme of support. Teachers felt that support in the forms of mentoring, instructional coaches or professional development. Teachers stated that principals had been sent them to training, supported them when parents were overly aggressive, or had encouraged them. Table 16 summarizes the two themes.

Table 16

Themes from Case #3, Interview Question #3

Theme 1	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Teacher #7
Mentor	You are assigned a mentor, a teacher who has maybe been here a couple years or a teacher that he sees is best fit to help you.	We don't have the formal program now but do you still do some type of informal mentoring.	A mentor from your principal.	I can count on any of the other teachers. I can collaborate. I can work with them.	The teacher across the hall from me has been there throughout the whole year. I was told when I was hired to follow what she does.

Theme 1	Teacher #8	Teacher #9	Teacher #10	Teacher #11
Mentor	Now I do know that they assign mentor teachers to brand new teachers and that kind of thing.	Specifically, here at Premier he will assign a new teacher a mentor teacher.	We're all assigned when we first start a shadow teacher that if we have questions ... a teacher that has been teaching here a while ...	We have mentor teachers.

Theme 2	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5
Administrative support	They're very supportive	She has always been very supportive about sending me to training.	Just the level of support from the principal himself and the instructional assistant coming in.	They're very good about helping if you have instructional, any kind of problems.	The principal, she's very open and very approachable, so if you have a question you can go to her

Theme 2	Teacher #7	Teacher #8	Teacher #9	Teacher #10	Teacher# 11
Administrative support	As far as helping, we have a technology coordinator that helps us get our room started and up	We're treated as professionals	Our principal is so supportive and I never had a problem with a parent or student that somebody didn't have my back	not every school can say they have a great administration that helps them, and encourages them	He lays out PD according to what things we teach.

Most beneficial strategy for retaining teachers: Teacher perspectives. The researcher asked the teachers interview question #4: Describe the strategies that have been the most helpful to you in your first year. The major theme that emerged from the data again was the support that new teachers receive. Five of the 11 teachers identified mentoring as being the most beneficial strategy. Four teachers identified other support such as collaborative meetings, and professional development as being the most beneficial strategy.

Support/mentoring. The theme that emerged from this interview question #4 was support. The teachers received support from mentors, principals and instructional coaches. Teacher #3 responded, "Most beneficial to me, I think, was the mentoring."

Teacher #4 declared, "The collaboration meetings are probably the most beneficial."

Teacher #5 had a response that was identical to teacher #3. She responded, "Most beneficial to me, I think, was the mentoring."

Teacher #6 reported, "I can count on any of the other teachers. I can collaborate. I can work with them. I get along very well on my hall with different teachers, so that's the way I've approached it."

Teacher #7 responded, "... That's one of the instructional coach ... I loved her coming into my room, her helping. I love advice. Yes. I'm very open to that."

Teacher #8 answered very quickly, "I would just say all of it."

Teacher # 9 described her most beneficial strategy with the following statement: "The support of my neighbors as I call them. The ones on my hallway and the ones that taught the same grades that I do."

Teacher #10 explained why having her mentor was better the second year of her teaching career. She explained, "She's right next door to me… That was great. Last year we were on

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other ends of the square, and then this year we were able to move right beside each other…

Which has been phenomenal."

Teacher #11 responded: "I really found the PD to be very beneficial, because it was

specialized to what I was teaching."

The response to interview question #4 – describe the most beneficial strategies to you in

your first year of teaching – was centered around support. The teachers in this research study

received support in the form of mentoring, encouragement from principals, and support of the

instructional coaches. Table 17 summarizes the theme.

Table 17

Themes for Case #3: Interview Question #4

Themes	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Teacher #7
Support/ Mentoring	Most beneficial to me, I think, was the mentoring.	The collaboration meetings are probably the most beneficial	Most beneficial to me, I think, was the mentoring.	I just found people that I knew I could rely on, on my hall, and I would go and ask them	... That's one of the instructional coach ... I loved her coming into my room, her helping.

Themes	Teacher #8	Teacher #9	Teacher #10	Teacher #11
Support/ Mentoring	I would just say all of it.	The support of my neighbors as I call them.	That was great. Last year we were on other ends of the square, and then this year we were able to move right beside each other.	I really found the PD to be very beneficial, because it was specialized to what I was teaching.

Why teachers stay. The researcher asked the teachers interview question #5: What

reason would you give for deciding to continue teaching in this district? The three themes that

emerged were: location, principal/administrators, and the support.

Location. Six teachers identified location as the reason they would continue teaching in their current school districts.

Teacher #4 responded with, "Well, I live here. Of course, convenience and my children have all gone through this school." Teacher #7 stated, "First of all, once again, living here is, obviously, a big priority. The fact that I do live here. I do enjoy, honestly, just being at Centerville Intermediate."

Teacher #8 reported, "It's close to home and I have made a place for myself." Teacher #9 answered, "The district isn't exactly my reason for staying. Specifically, it would be Premier High School. Premier High School is a wonderful place to work."

Teacher #10 responded with, "I grew up in Upper County, my family has always been here, and so if I ever needed anything, I know there's a lot of people in here that I could count on." Teacher #11stated, "Like I said, I know the people here. I'm comfortable with them. Nobody's said or done anything to ruffle my feathers."

Principals/administrators. The second theme to emerge from the data was teachers would stay because of their principal or administrators. Two teachers responded with this theme.

Teacher #2 stated and explained:

My principal is probably the number one. If she leaves, depending on where I am, if there is another position open in a county closer to home, then I would seek that out. She's my number one reason and the staff. I like the staff. I like working here but it's the principal. It's what's keeping me here.

Teacher #9 specified that she was staying because of her principals at the high school where she worked. She explained, "Specifically, it would be Premier High School. Premier High School is a wonderful place to work. Our administrators have all been so wonderful my three years."

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Support. The third theme to emerge from the data was support. Two teachers claimed the support they received was the reason they would stay in their current school district.

Teacher # 3 explains why she would continue to teach in her current district with the following statement:

> I would continue teaching in this district because of the support that I receive, as a teacher, not only to be successful in my current state but pushing me past the classroom and just being really encouraging about the things that you do. That's what really helps me. That's why I will stay here.

Teacher #5 responded, "I would say that the co-workers, I love who I work with and I think that we're moving forward instead of staying stuck in the same, over and over again, doing the same stuff."

Teacher #1was the only teacher who claimed she would stay for the enjoyment. She responded, "I enjoy it. That's the bottom line, if you enjoy what you do, and everything that you do with it, then that should be the reason why you're there."

Teachers' responses to the interview question – What reason would you give for deciding to continue teaching in this district or school? – was centered on location as the major reason. The teachers lived in the areas, grew up in the areas or in a rural area. The reason teachers give for remaining in the schools or school districts are similar to what attracted them to the schools. Table 18 summarizes why teachers stay with their current districts.

Table 18

Themes for Case #3: Interview Question #5

Theme 1	Teacher #4	Teacher #7	Teacher #8	Teacher #10	Teacher #11
Location	Well, I live here. Of course, convenience and my children have all gone through this school.	First of all, once again, living here is, obviously, a big priority.	Well one of the things is: it-s close to home and I have made a place for myself.	…I grew up in Blount County, my family has always been here…	Like I said, I know the people here. I'm comfortable with them.

Theme 2	Teacher # 2	Teacher # 9
Principal	My principal is probably the number one.	Specifically, it would be Premier High School.

Theme 3	Teacher # 3	Teacher # 5
Support	I would continue teaching in this district because of the support …	"…co-workers, I love who I work with and I think that we're moving forward…

Cross-Case Analysis

The previous within-case analyses described the strategies used by remote rural schools from the perspectives of the superintendent, principals, and teachers for each research question. In addition, the responses of each case to the questions pertaining to the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers were analyzed. The researcher returned to the research questions to take the broad view of the cases in comparison across each of the research questions.

Central Question

What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers?

Sub-Questions

1. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

4. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6. What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

The two themes that emerged from the three cases about the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers were location and competing with larger districts. The superintendents and principals were asked to identify the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers to their districts and schools. The two themes are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19

Challenges for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: Cross-Case Analysis

Themes	Research Questions 1–2
Theme 1	Location of the school or school district as well as distance traveling to and from schools
Theme 2	Competing with larger school districts to recruit from the same pool of teachers

Description of Theme 1: Location

The superintendents and the principals identified location as a challenge to recruiting and retaining teachers. The superintendents in districts one and two noted that the proximity of their districts to larger school districts caused a challenge for their districts because as superintendent #1 explained:

> Most of our teachers, approximately 75% of our teachers, live in Montgomery. In order to recruit individuals who live in Montgomery, it can be difficult at times, but you have to try to sell the fact that if you're paying just as much as Montgomery, you have to sell something to them.

Superintendent #2 discussed his districts location between two larger school districts being a challenge to recruiting. Superintendent #3 is challenged with recruiting from major universities because of his district's distance from major universities.

Four principals cited location as a challenge because of the distance of their schools from cities, teachers commuting more than 40 miles to work, and teachers with no experience will work anywhere to get the experience they need to move to another district which could be closer to their homes. Two principals try to look at the distance that applicants may be commuting when they are researching applicants to interview for open positions in their schools. Principal #6 described why he checks addresses. He stated:

> When I'm looking at somebody that I don't know is I look at their address, because odds are if I hire somebody that's driving anything over about 45 minutes to get to work, as soon as something comes up close to home, they're going to take it, and so I just try to avoid that if I can.

In contrasting statements, the teachers declared that location is what attracted them to the districts. Teacher #1 responded, "It was a rural area. I actually grew up in a rural area that was not too far from a major city."

Teacher #3 responded, "What attracted me to this school district first is that I'm actually from this school district."

Teacher #4 responded, "Well, I grew up in this district."

Teacher #5 presented her attraction to the school district with the following response. She responded, "I liked the fact that it is a smaller school or a smaller county."

Teacher #6 responded to the question with, "I live here locally, so I grew up here."

Teacher #7 responded, "Well, first of all I live here in this county. I'm from here. I've lived here my whole life, so it wasn't really an option. This is where I wanted to teach."

Teacher #8 wanted employment closer to home. She responded, "I was looking for a school district that was closer to my home."

Teacher # 9 replied, "The very first thing, to be honest, would have to be location."

Teacher #10 grew up in her district. She stated, "Well I went to school in Locust Fork, which is like 10 minutes down the road."

Teacher #11 grew up in Premier as well. She stated, "I live here and I graduated from Premier, so I knew everybody in the community."

Description of Theme 2: Competition with Larger School Districts

The second theme to emerge from the cross-case analysis with regards to the challenges of recruiting in rural remote districts was the competition from larger school districts. All three superintendents named competing with larger districts as a challenge to recruiting and retaining teachers in their school districts. Four of the six principals identified competing with larger

school districts as a challenge to recruiting and retaining teachers. The researcher did not pose this question to the teachers. Superintendents and principals stated that because of their proximity to the larger school districts, they get the inexperienced teachers that the larger districts do not want. Once the teachers have been trained and have that teaching experience, Superintendent #1 claims, "…they are far more marketable at that point." Table 20 illustrates the cross case analyses and summarizes the theme across two cases.

Table 20

Cross-Case Themes: Challenges for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Rural Remote

Districts

Theme 1	Superintendents	Principals
Location of the school or school district as well as distance traveling to and from schools	Most of our teachers, approximately 75% of our teachers live in Montgomery.	Since I've been principal here I've noticed that location is one of the biggest factors with recruiting teachers.
		Well, one of the main challenges would be the distance from a city.
	With us being centrally located in the state, we're real convenient here between Montgomery and Birmingham being, so I think the really, really good teachers are constantly being recruited into other districts.	As far as recruitment, we are more limited in the pool somewhat because of where we're located.
		I have found that just to get your foot in the door to get the experience to have that on your resume to move on to something that's closer to maybe their location…
	…we're quite a distance from major universities. We're surrounded by UAB and Jacksonville State, Athens State.	When I'm looking at somebody that I don't know, I look at their address.

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Theme 2	Superintendents	Principals
Competing with larger school districts to recruit from the same pool of teachers	Once they get some experience and they become pretty good at their craft, then they'll look at other places such as Montgomery, Elmore, Autauga Counties to work.	I didn't know it would be like this once I left school. "…so one of the biggest challenges is that we tend to get the teachers that other people did not want."
	I think the biggest thing in retaining our teachers is other districts looking for highly qualified teachers.	They may work here a year until they can get a job in Jergenson."
	I think a lot of those challenges are the same as the recruiting factor, but for your rural districts, your people that are not, that grew up here, they tend to seem to want to go back home.	When you're fresh out of college you're just looking for an opportunity to get in and so forth.

Cross-Case Analysis from Research Questions #3, #4, and #5: Strategies/Most Successful

The researcher utilized a cross-case analysis to describe the strategies used by school districts to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts in Alabama.

Two of the three superintendents, four of the six principals, and ten of the eleven teachers reported administrative support as a strategy used in recruiting and retaining teachers in their school districts. Administrative support included various strategies such as attending college recruiting fairs, implementing teacher induction programs, and other forms of administrator support.

Recruiting fairs. Superintendent #2 and superintendent #3 send central office administrators from their districts to college recruiting fairs. Superintendent #2 had sent people to recruiting fairs in the past. He decided to hold a recruiting fair for his school district this year.

Superintendent #3 offered a description of what his district hands out at the recruiting fair. He stated, "We have materials printed. We have folders. We have information about our districts, DVDs, things like that that we give out at these recruitments."

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Teacher induction programs. Two of the three superintendents and five of the eleven

teachers reported that they have a teacher induction program to offer support for new teachers

once they are hired. Superintendent #1 described his teacher induction program as BTAP in the

section "Strategies Used by Remote Rural Superintendents to Recruit and Retain Teachers."

Superintendent #3 called his teacher induction program TIP, for Teacher Induction Program.

Both programs are described in the section titled "Strategies Used by Remote Rural

Superintendents" near the beginning of this chapter. Teachers offered descriptions of the

training and teacher induction programs for their districts in Teacher Training and Induction

section of this chapter. Table 21 is a summary of their descriptions.

Table 21

Cross-Case Analysis from Research Questions #3, #4, and #5: Strategies/Most Successful

Theme	Superintendents	Principals	Teachers
Various Administrative Supports	Recruiting Fairs	Support: Fairness, Accessible, Encouraging	Mentors
	Teacher Induction Program		Teacher Induction Program

Summary

Chapter 4 developed a detailed report of the findings of this study. Each case was

described in thick detail, including school district demographics, school profiles, and participant

profiles. After the within case analysis, a cross-case analysis was presented with the four cross-

case themes which summarized the strategies used in remote rural school districts to recruit and retain teachers.

Chapter 5 discusses the results and their implications related to strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts from the perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher. Additionally, future research is discussed to improve the field of school leadership.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama to retain new teachers and help them to be successful in the classroom. The central research question of this study was: What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers?

The six sub-questions were:

7. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

8. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

9. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

10. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

11. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

12. What do teachers say keep them in remote rural school districts?

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to determine the challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers and the successful strategies used to retain teachers in the remote rural school districts.

Qualitative research was the appropriate method of inquiry for this study. This multiple case study was conducted to explore the various strategies used by remote rural school district superintendents and principals to retain new teachers in their districts, as well as to find out from teachers what kept them in those districts. The findings of this study were reported in Chapter 4.

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Chapter 5 will include: a brief review of the literature as it relates to recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts; a review of the research design, data collection, and data analysis; the study's findings as reported by themes; the interpretation of the findings; limitations; implications and recommendations and recommendations for practice; the overall significance; recommendations for future research; the researcher's positionality; and the conclusion.

Literature Review

Due to high rates of attrition, the need to increase student achievement, and accelerated retirements, the demand for teachers is increasing (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007). Researchers have noted that new teachers are departing the teaching field early, due to the many challenges they face in the classrooms. Some of the challenges faced by new teachers include: issues with classroom management, insufficient support, poor working conditions, insufficient training, unsatisfactory pay, and poor hiring procedures (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007; Coronado, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flanagan & Fowler, Jr., 2010; Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009; Lynch, 2012).

Rural school districts face the same challenges as urban school districts, but, according to Stephens (1998), their small size limits the solutions that they can apply to eliminate those challenges. Rural districts have less money, fewer administrative support services available, lower salaries and less benefits. Due to the high rates of students of poverty or high minority and low performing populations, teachers will leave the profession in rural areas at higher rates (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

Lindahl (2011) reported that 46%, almost half of Alabama's student population, is enrolled in rural schools. The rural schools in Alabama are classified as fringe rural, distant

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rural, and remote rural school districts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), Alabama has 69 school

districts classified as rural districts; 8 of those districts are labeled as remote rural school

districts. This means it is rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is

also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007,

p. 122).

  For this study, the researcher focused on the 8 remote rural school districts in the State of

Alabama and the strategies used by administrators in those districts to recruit and retain teachers.

The literature reviewed above provided the framework for the study that was conducted in this

dissertation.

  The conceptual framework for this study was based on a summary of the literature for

successful strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers in general. This research study will be

compared to the literature. Figure 3 is the original conceptual framework. This study explored

the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts, from the

perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher.

Challenges

Location

Poor working Conditions

Inexperienced teachers

Low salaries

Classroom Management

Student Discipline

Insufficient Training

Late Hiring

Fewer resources

Recruitment and Retention Rates

Strategies

Teacher Induction

Community/School Induction

Mentors

Recruit Locals

Administrative Support

Support from other Teachers

Classroom Management Training

Effective Teaching Strategies

Multi-year Induction

Training on Professional Standards

Workshops Before the Start of School

Sanctioned Time for Mentoring

Instructional Strategies

Extra Assistance in the Classroom

Restructuring Hiring Practices

Financial Incentives

Figure 3. Original Conceptual Framework

Research Design, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

A multiple case study approach was employed to conduct this research. The three cases were the superintendents, principals, and teachers who were interviewed to determine the challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers and the successful strategies used to retain teachers in the remote rural school districts. The researcher sent emails to the superintendents of the eight school districts labeled as remote rural school districts to request their participation in the study. A total of four superintendents responded. One superintendent sent regrets that the district could not participate. The superintendents who accepted the invitation to participate completed a query to ascertain improvement in teacher retention rates over a three-year period. The three districts with the highest teacher retention rates were asked to participate in the interviews. A total of 20 interviews were conducted: 3 superintendents, 6 principals, and 11 teachers. Interviews were conducted in the participants' school districts. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were audiotaped and professionally transcribed by Rev.com.

After reviewing transcriptions of the interviews, the researcher sent copies to each participant for the purpose of member checking (Creswell, 2013), a way to validate the data. The researcher then utilized a method called coding, to analyze the similarities of the information from the interviews and to categorize themes within each case to answer the sub questions (Saldana, 2013). In the final step, the researcher reviewd all transcripts to ensure that the data obtained from the interviews verified the primary themes and patterns.

The researcher compared interviews in each case, then compared them across cases to look for similarities and differences. The researcher identified common across the cases. The researcher will now discuss the findings and interpretation of the findings.

Discussion of the Findings

In this section, the findings from the central research question and the sub questions will be discussed. The central research question of this study was: What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers? The six sub-questions were:

1. What are the challenges in recruiting new teachers in remote rural schools?

2. What are the challenges in retaining new teachers in remote rural schools?

3. What strategies do remote rural superintendents say they use to recruit and retain new teachers?

4. What strategies do remote rural principals say they use to retain new teachers?

5. What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers?

6. What do teachers say keeps them in remote rural school districts?

The findings for sub-questions one and two are the themes for the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts, comparing the superintendents with the principals. Sub-question six – What do teachers say keeps them in remote rural school districts? – will be combined with sub-questions one and two as well as the teachers' responses to the interview question, "What attracted you to the district?" Their responses were combined with the superintendents' and principals' responses for the themes to sub-questions one and two. Those themes will be discussed first. Secondly, sub-questions three, four, and five will answer the central question: "What are the strategies used by remote rural school district leaders in Alabama for recruiting and retaining new teachers?" Those sub-questions will be discussed together.

Challenges in Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts

Sub-questions one and two were directed to the superintendents and principals, inquiring of the challenges experienced in their districts or schools, when recruiting and retaining teachers. The teachers were asked what attracted them to the school district. The cross-case findings for these questions were treated as one unit. The analysis resulted in the following themes: Location of the school district or school and the competition from larger school districts were challenges when superintendents and principals tried to recruit teachers their school districts and once they hired them, trying to keep them in their districts. Ten teachers reported that the location of the school districts or schools were what attracted them to those areas, while five teachers reported location as the reason they would continue to teach in the schools where they were currently employed.

Location. Participants in this study stated that location was a challenge for recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts. Superintendent #1 noted that his teachers are "driving 30–40 minutes a day one way, so, roundtrip, it's anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half." Principal #2 noted, "Well, one of the main challenges would be the distance from a city." Principal #4 lamented that new teachers with no experience will come into his district, "just to get a foot in the door to get the experience … then move on to something that's closer to their location, their home." However, although the superintendents and principals stated that location was a challenge, teachers stated that location was what attracted them. Teacher #3 stated, "What attracted me to this school district first is that I'm actually from this school district." Teacher #7 responded, "Well, first of all I live here in this county." Teacher #9 also noted that location was what attracted her to the district where she was employed. She stated, "The very first thing, to be honest, would have to be location."

Lowe (2006) noted that a lack of adequate housing is a major reason there is a high turnover of teachers in rural areas; so, teachers who drive long distances to work are more likely to leave their jobs for one that is closer to where they live. The isolation of rural school districts decreases the availability of social and cultural activities found in the larger urban areas (Brownell et al., 2005). Teachers seeking their first job prefer to stay close to home (LaPlante, 2005). The findings of this study refuted the literature that reported that location is a challenge for remote rural school when it pertains to recruiting and retaining teachers.

The findings that the superintendents and principals saw location as a challenge while teachers chose to teach in the areas because of the locations were unexpected by the researcher. The researcher expected that the majority of the teachers in districts two and three were from the surrounding rural areas. Research indicates that teachers want to live close to where they grew up (Collins, 1999; Howley & Howley, 2004; LaPlante, 2005).

Competition from larger districts. Superintendents and principals also agreed that having to compete with larger school districts with a larger tax base and with more jobs available makes it difficult to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts. Superintendent #2 claimed, "Being a rural district, there's a lot of districts out there that are using recruiting methods. Now we're having to look at some possibilities of being able to compete with that." Superintendent # 3 mentioned the low tax base of his district. He stated, "Small school districts like ours that have low local funding, have low, low property taxes and because of that, we're just not able to attract and compete with the larger school districts." Principal #2 specifically noted, "We have other, larger districts we are competing with." This confirmed what Harmon (2001) emphasized, that rural school districts are not as wealthy as some of the larger districts and cannot "buy" the best teachers. They should emphasize the strengths of their districts when

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they are recruiting teachers who are not from their areas. The findings in this study are consistent with the findings from other researchers who confirm that smaller, rural school districts have a difficult time funding higher salaries for teachers (Howley & Howley, 2004; Sundeen & Wienk, 2009; Williams, 2012).

This finding was consistent with the researcher's own experience in rural school districts with a larger school district that was in close proximity to the rural district. The rural school district would lose teachers to the larger districts because of the better salaries offered in the larger districts. Table 22 is a summary of the challenges to recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts.

Table 22

Cross-Case Theme: Challenges for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Rural Remote Districts

	Superintendents	**Principals**
Theme 1		
Location of the school or school district as well as distance traveling to and from schools	Most of our teachers, approximately 75% of our teachers live in Montgomery.	Since I've been principal here I've noticed that location is one of the biggest factors with recruiting teachers.
		Well, one of the main challenges would be the distance from a city.
	With us being centrally located in the state, we're real convenient to be here as Montgomery and Birmingham being, so I think the really, really good teachers are constantly being recruited into other districts.	As far as recruitment, we are more limited in the pool somewhat because of where we're located.
		I have found that just to get your foot in the door to get the experience to have that on your resume to move on to something that's closer to maybe their location…
	…we're quite a distance from major universities. We're surrounded by UAB and Jacksonville State, Athens State.	That's another thing, I probably shouldn't but one of the first things I look at when I'm looking at somebody that I don't know is I look at their address…

(table continues)

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Table 22 (continued)

	Superintendents	Principals
Theme 2		
Competing with larger school districts to recruit from the same pool of teachers	Once they get some experience and they become pretty good at their craft, then they'll look at other places such as Montgomery, Elmore, Autauga Counties to work	I didn't know it would be like this once I left school. "…so one of the biggest challenges is that we tend to get the teachers that other people did not want."
	I think the biggest thing in retaining our teachers is other districts looking for highly qualified teachers.	"They may work here a year until they can get a job in Jergenson."
	I think a lot of those challenges are the same as the recruiting factor, but for your rural districts, your people that are not, that grew up here, they tend to seem to want to go back home.	When you're fresh out of college you're just looking for an opportunity to get in and so forth.

Strategies Utilized for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

Findings for research question #3 and #4 were combined: What are the strategies used by remote rural superintendents and principals to recruit and retain teachers? One theme emerged from the cross-case analysis. This study revealed that administrative support was the one strategy that was mentioned more than any other strategy. Administrative support took different forms for the different cases. The top three forms of support discussed were: central office administrators attending recruiting fairs, offering extra help to new teachers with instructional coaches and mentors, and Teacher Induction Programs.

For recruiting, all three districts use TeachInAlabama as a recruiting mechanism. In two districts, central office personnel attended college recruiting fairs and provided names to the principals after initial screenings. College fairs are a way to recruit teachers who are not originally from the rural area and to provide a way to emphasize the benefits of working in rural

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areas. Superintendent #3 explained what his district implemented to showcase their district at college recruiting fairs. He explained, "We attend several major recruitments of all the ones in our proximity of the major colleges of education. We have materials printed. We have folders." This finding was consistent with advice in the literature that school districts should budget for recruiting teachers (Lowe, 2006). They should also emphasize the benefits of teaching in rural areas with recruiting materials (Malloy & Allen, 2007).

It was noteworthy that District #3 put so much time and effort into recruiting. The superintendent mentioned that his principals recruit all year and they also try to talk to local students about returning to them to teach. Their teacher retention rates indicate that the effort is producing the desired outcomes for District # 3.

Support for new teachers occurred at the building level and aided in teacher retention. Principals supported their teachers with instructional coaches in the classroom to provide extra help. Instructional coaches go into classrooms to observe teachers and offer them help in areas of weakness. Principal #5 stated, "We have an instructional coach. They are assigned to those new teachers to go in to monitor, to help, to demonstrate…" Teachers report that principals support them by assigning instructional coaches and mentors to help them with the day to day tasks that are required of teachers. Teacher #3 stated, "You are assigned a mentor, a teacher who has maybe been here a couple years or a teacher that he sees is best fit to help you." Teacher #7 was told by her principal, "…to follow what she does," when he introduced her to her mentor. This finding is consistent with literature that giving teachers support from instructional coaches to learn the instructional strategies for improved teaching would be beneficial for retaining more teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). This finding is also consistent with literature that reports mentoring as strategy to meet the challenges of teacher

retention by providing new teachers with one on one support when it is needed (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Bullough, 2012; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1999; Strong, 2005).

This was an anticipated finding. The researcher approached the data collection phase with the notion that mentoring and other forms of support from classroom teachers would likely be found to be beneficial to teachers. Also, the researcher had experienced the effects of mentoring on new teachers because she had mentored new teachers in her position as a teacher.

The last way that districts supported teachers was providing Teacher Induction Programs before the beginning of the school year. District #1 and District #3 provided teacher induction programs professional development on classroom management techniques, instructional strategies, and quality teaching standards for teachers. Superintendent #1 called his teacher induction program BTAP. He described what was implemented through that program with this statement, "We go over how to maintain order in the classroom. We talk about methodology and how to convey how to have a good flow of operations for that."

Superintendent # 3 gave insight to what had been beneficial in improving their teacher retention rates. He stated, "But I think our teacher induction program did help us for a long time, but we have solved, we have seen that retention data decline." These findings are consistent with researchers such as Algozzine et al. (2007), Darling-Hammond (1996), Feiman-Nemser (2003), Huling, Resta, and Yeargain (2012), Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012), and Wong (2002) who declared that teacher induction programs would benefit school districts by reducing teacher attrition, improving teacher development, which would, ultimately, improve student achievement. Table 23 summarizes the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts.

Table 23

Cross-Case Analysis from Research Questions #3, #4, and #5: Strategies/Most Successful

	Superintendents	Principals	Teachers
Theme: Various Administrative Supports	Recruiting Fairs	Support: Fairness, Accessible, Encouraging	Mentors
	Teacher Induction Program		Teacher Induction Program

Most Successful/Beneficial Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

Research question #5 was: What strategies have been most successful in recruiting and retaining teachers? The one theme that emerged from the responses to this question was the support given by the central office administrators, principals, and other teachers in the schools. The superintendents and central office administrators offered support to the schools by attending recruiting fairs to screen participants for principals and they offered teacher induction programs through the central office to train teachers and prepare them for the classroom. The principals' responses were varied, with responses such as leadership roles, being fair, reflection on practices, and not being their boss. The teachers stated that strategies such as being provided professional development, being assigned mentors, having instructional coaches, and being able to rely on other teachers were the most beneficial strategies for them. This theme was consistent with previous research from Breaux and Wong (2003), who emphasized support from administrators is paramount to ensuring teacher success in the classroom. Administrators should support teacher induction programs. Watkins (2005) contended that principals should create environments that encourage new teachers to take ownership of their teaching. Teachers should

support each other by helping new teachers address the problems they may encounter in the classrooms, especially in rural school districts (Howley & Howley, 2004). Table 24 summarizes the most successful strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers from all cases' perspectives.

Table 24

RQ #5: What are the most successful/beneficial strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers?

Theme	Superintendents	Principals	Teachers
Support	Offered:	Offered:	Appreciated:
	Help with recruiting and they implement teacher induction programs	Leadership roles, being fair, reflection on practices, and not being their boss.	Professional development, mentors, instructional coaches and support of other teachers

What Teachers Say Keeps Them in Remote Rural School Districts

The findings to research question #6 (What teachers say keeps them in remote rural school districts) had one major theme to emerge. Geographical location was the reason that five teachers gave for continuing to teach in the districts they were employed. Two teachers noted that their principals would be the reason they would continue employment where they worked. Two teachers appreciated the support they had received from administrators and other teachers. This confirmed what researchers such as Lowe (2006), Barley and Brigham (2008), and Fry and Anderson (2011) reported about recruiting locals in rural school districts as a way to retain teachers. The researcher expected that finding after reading the literature.

One interesting thing to note was that none of the six principals mentioned that they provided mentors for their new teachers. Having interviewed the superintendents of each district first, the researcher knew that one district, District #3, had a well-planned teacher induction

program in place which included mentoring. The principals of District #3 did not mention

pairing their new teachers with veteran teachers. However, the teachers noted that the principals

paired them with mentor teachers and provided some guidance as to what to observe of the other

teachers. The researcher speculates that had she probed the principals more on the subject of

mentoring, they would have confirmed that pairing new teachers with mentor teachers was a
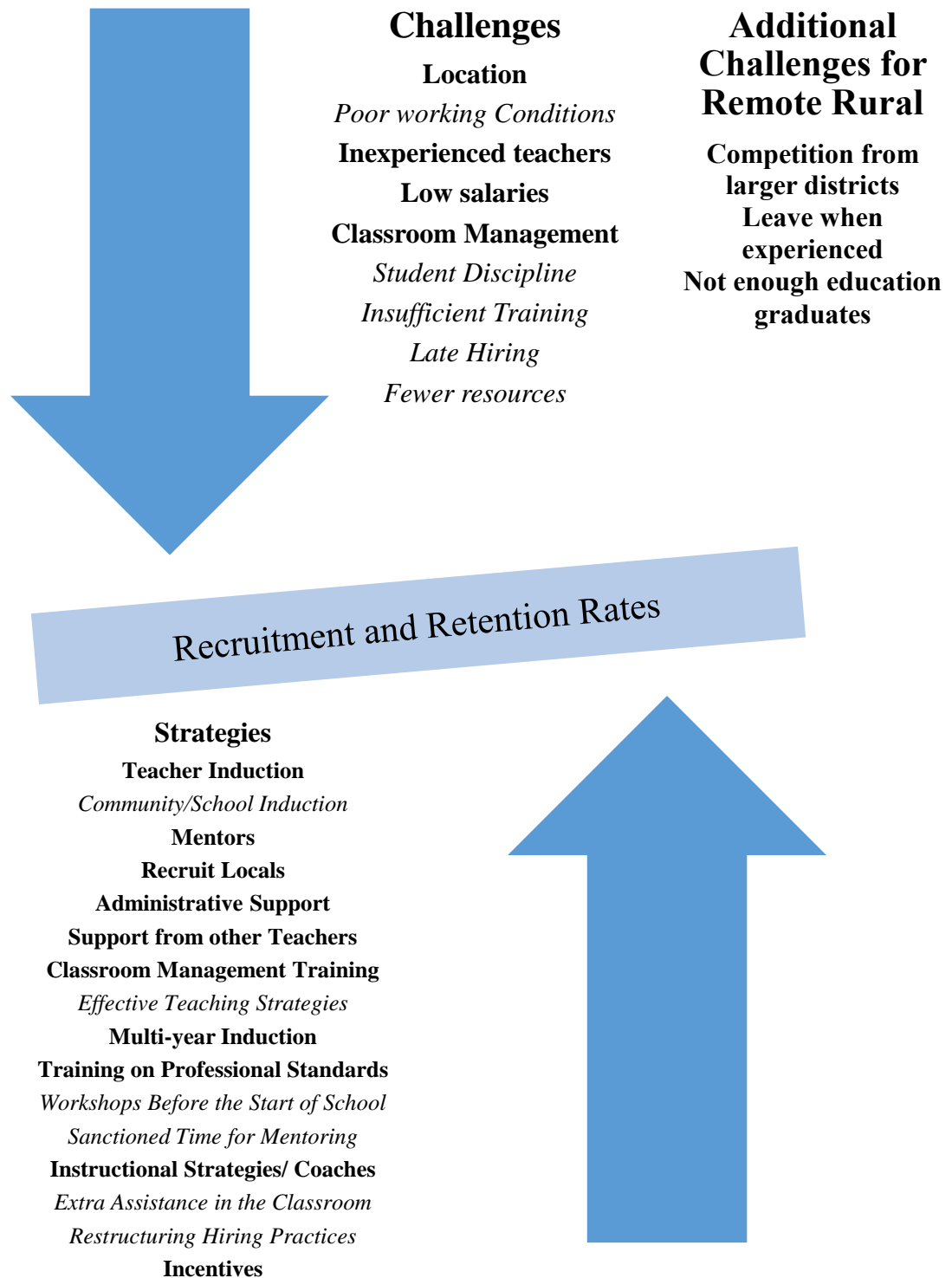
strategy that was successful.

These results confirmed the importance of administrative support for teachers in the form

of mentoring and new teacher induction programs. By having well-planned, meaningful

programs implemented in school districts, especially remote rural school districts, the teacher

retention rates could increase. The three remote rural school districts in this study have had

some improvement in their teacher retention rates. The researcher did not expect that the school

district with the Teacher Incentive Fund Grant did not have a higher retention rate than the

districts that did not offer incentives to its teachers.

Returning to the Conceptual Framework

Researchers reported the following as challenges for recruiting and retaining teachers in

all school districts: location, poor working conditions, inexperienced teachers, low salaries,

classroom management, student discipline, insufficient training, late hiring, and fewer resources

(Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007; Coronado, 2009; Darling-Hammond,

2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flanagan & Fowler, Jr., 2010; Greenlee & Brown, Jr., 2009;

Lynch, 2012). This study confirmed that location, hiring inexperienced teachers and low salaries

were challenges for remote rural school districts in Alabama. Superintendents and principals, in

this study, reported that remote rural school districts face additional challenges when recruiting

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and retaining teachers. Those challenges include: competition from larger districts, teachers leaving after gaining experience, and there are not enough education graduates.

Researchers contended that new teacher induction programs that span multiple years, along with a structured new teacher mentoring program, could help to halt the new teacher exodus from the teaching profession (Algozzine et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012; Wong, 2002). Other documented strategies that school districts used to recruit and retain new teachers include: offering administrative support, implementing community and school induction, providing quality and ongoing professional development, offering incentives to teachers, promoting active recruitment of new teachers, recruiting locals to become teachers, helping with certification in multiple subjects, restructuring hiring practices, providing training on professional teaching standards, providing sanctioned time for mentoring; and providing student teaching assignments in rural schools from the university teaching preparation programs (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Fry & Anderson, 2011; Lowe, 2006; McClure & Reeves, 2004; New Teacher Center, 2007; Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). This study confirmed, from the perspective of superintendents, principals, and teachers, that remote rural school districts utilized the following strategies to recruit and retain teachers: attended recruiting fairs, recruited local teachers, provided teacher induction programs, offered administrative support in the form of offering teachers leadership roles, not being their boss, reflecting to make improvements in practices, offered professional development, mentors, instructional coaches, and support of experienced teachers. The following conceptual framework was revised to highlight the findings from this study. The findings from this study are in bold print.

Challenges

Location

Poor working Conditions

Inexperienced teachers

Low salaries

Classroom Management

Student Discipline

Insufficient Training

Late Hiring

Fewer resources

Additional Challenges for Remote Rural

Competition from larger districts
Leave when experienced
Not enough education graduates

Recruitment and Retention Rates

Strategies

Teacher Induction

Community/School Induction

Mentors

Recruit Locals

Administrative Support

Support from other Teachers

Classroom Management Training

Effective Teaching Strategies

Multi-year Induction

Training on Professional Standards

Workshops Before the Start of School

Sanctioned Time for Mentoring

Instructional Strategies/ Coaches

Extra Assistance in the Classroom

Restructuring Hiring Practices

Incentives

Figure 4: Revised Conceptual Framework

Interpretation of the Findings

The researcher began conducting this study with minimal knowledge of mentoring and its effects on teacher retention, especially in remote rural school districts. The researcher has participated in mentoring programs as a mentor to new teachers, prior to conducting this research. Because of her prior role as a mentor, the researcher approached this study with the belief that mentoring as a part of a teacher induction program would have a positive impact on recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts. There is a thin body of research on the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in rural areas; the researcher was interested in knowing what strategies were being utilized in the rural school districts across the state of Alabama. The researcher was particularly interested in knowing what strategies were used in the remote rural school districts in Alabama. The findings from this study on the strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in remote rural school districts from the perspective of the superintendent, the principal, and the teacher, confirmed the researchers' beliefs that a well-planned and supported teacher induction program, with mentoring as a component, teacher retention rates can increase.

The first significant finding for the researcher was learning that there was funding available to school districts through a grant that allowed school districts the flexibility to offer teacher signing bonuses and bonuses for performance. District #1 received a five-year grant to do just that. The superintendent and his Director of Curriculum and Instruction were the organizers and trainers for the Beginning Teachers Apprentice Program in his district. This district's teacher retention rates improved by double digits. The researcher was not expecting the superintendent to make the following declaration during the interview that appears to refute the

research by McClure and Reeves (2004), Lowe (2006), and McCullough and Johnson (2007) for offering incentives for recruitment. He stated:

>We received a grant and it had been real, real successful. We were able to use that to recruit and keep our teachers. Since that program went away, we've had a large number of people to leave the district. Incentives do help. It's better if you can intrinsically motivate individuals.

Previous researchers report that teachers will leave a rural area if they are not involved in the community. Getting them involved requires a coordinated effort from the school and community, including an orientation to the community when teachers receive orientation to the school system (Collins, 1999; Harmon, 2001). The researcher noted on her drive to the interviews in District #1 there were multiple businesses that were closed. One principal noted that, "Basically, there's nothing here, especially if they're married. There's no opportunity for a job here." Thus, after the ending of the incentives program and the decline of the community, teachers began to search for employment in other school districts and the retention of teachers became an issue again.

The second significant moment for the researcher came when she interviewed the administrators in District #3 and asked how they funded their Teacher Induction Program. The researcher was under the assumption that you needed to pay teachers to get them to attend professional development before they were on contract. H. K. Wong (2003)advised that school districts fund teacher induction programs and pay stipends for attendance. The researcher has attended professional development during the summer without pay because she understood that it would enhance her effectiveness in the classroom, but other teachers she has known would not attend summer professional development unless they were receiving a stipend for attendance.

District # 3 administrators stated, "It's been an expectation that if you come to work for us, we have this induction program and mentoring program and it's just been an expectation from the beginning." This school district did not pay its teachers to participate in teacher induction. That was very significant to the researcher because she is the Federal Programs Director in her current school district and has wondered how federal funding could be utilized to provide a teacher induction program in her district.

The finding that only one of the principals mentioned having an official or unofficial mentor for their teachers was unexpected. Principal #4 stated, "While we don't have a formal program, we certainly have a lot of in-grade level support. They work in partnership with a new teacher." This principal has a 95% teacher retention rate at her school. The teachers at other schools mentioned that the principals provided the mentors. Although it was not labeled as a mentoring program, the researcher concluded that it was a form of mentoring that allowed the more experienced teachers time to discuss issues or concerns of the new teachers.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation to this study was the purposeful sampling of participants. The participants were limited to the state of Alabama and to the remote rural districts of Alabama who chose to participate. Therefore, the data related to this study cannot be generalized across all school districts in the state of Alabama. The data were further limited to interviewing two principals in the district with high teacher retention rates, and two teachers from each of those schools. Therefore, the data from this study cannot be generalized across all principals and teachers in the state of Alabama. In order to generalize, a larger sample of participants would be required in a replication of this study to determine what additional strategies might be used to successfully recruit and retain teachers.

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Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Several implications for how others could use this research occurred to the researcher as she analyzed the data. There are implications for the principals and district administrators, Alabama State Department of Education, university teacher and leader preparation programs, veteran teachers and new teachers.

Principals

Principals have the responsibility of recruiting and hiring teachers for their buildings. Some principals do not have the benefit of having a Human Resource Director in their district to attend recruiting fairs and screen applicants. They have to screen them through the application portal TeachInAlabama. The school district in this study with the highest teacher retention rates, District # 3, had principals who looked at the address for teachers before they interviewed them. As principal # 6 stated, "…Odds are if I hire somebody that's driving anything over about 45 minutes to get to work, as soon as something comes up close to home, they're going to take it…" Previous researchers have shown that teachers want to live close to where they grew up (Collins, 1999; Howley & Howley, 2004; LaPlante, 2005). With this in mind, principals should look to recruit teachers who are from rural areas or who live close to the schools where they will work. Those teachers would most likely continue to teach in those schools, thus the teacher retention rates would increase. Principals could utilize teacher preparation programs for high school students in career technical programs as a way to recruit local teachers to return to the area to teach. The last implication for principals is that they have the responsibility to set up support for the new teachers. They can assign mentors, set up time with the instructional coaches and support teachers in ways that show the teachers they are valued.

District Administrators

The district administrators may utilize the literature from this study as a guide to design an induction program for their teachers. All teachers who reported participation in an induction program noted how beneficial the induction programs were to easing their transition into their teaching careers. These findings should help district administrators better understand what teachers need to feel supported in their teaching careers. By designing and implementing a structured induction program district administrators can support teacher growth at a faster rate, which may positively impact student achievement (Hoover, 2012). District administrators should be willing to allocate funding for teacher induction programs with a mentoring component. A well-planned teacher induction program will also save money for school administrators, because it will reduce the cost of having to recruit and retrain for positions they have to keep filling (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Portner, 2005).

Alabama State Department of Education

These findings demonstrated that programs without financial support often are only as good as the paper they are printed on (Portner, 2005). The State Department can utilize the literature in this study to obtain a better understanding of what they can do to support teacher induction programs in the state. They could design induction training for liaisons in the state to help the local school districts implement well-planned and structured teacher induction programs, especially in the remote rural areas. The findings will also inform the State Department of the challenges in rural areas to have professional development designed to meet their needs. Lindahl (2011) and National Center for Education Statistics (2007) report that 46% of Alabama's student population is enrolled in rural schools. Teachers need training to help meet the needs of the students in these regions which tend to have high poverty rates and low achievement scores.

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University Teacher and Leadership Preparation Programs

The findings of this study can be used to inform university teacher and leadership preparation programs for preparing new teachers and new leaders for positions in rural areas. The university programs can implement courses that could help students understand the challenges of rural school districts such as: isolation, low fiscal funding, planning for multiple subjects and learning about the dynamics of the rural community that are different than urban community settings. The university programs can utilize this study to inform them of the types of partnerships they can form with rural school districts to design programs that would serve their teachers with professional development specifically designed to meet the needs of teachers and administrators in rural schools.

Veteran Teachers

The findings of this study can be used to inform veteran teachers of the importance of their support for teacher induction programs. The teachers in this study indicated that one of the most beneficial strategies for them was the support of the veteran teachers. Portner (2005) stated that teachers who felt supported remained in the profession. The more teachers a school district retains, the less work the veteran teachers have to take on (Wong, H. K., 2003). New opportunities may come out of induction programs for new teachers, allowing them the opportunity to build leadership skills that will be useful in leadership roles (Moir, 2009).

New Teachers

The last implication of this study is for the new teachers. The findings from the literature demonstrated the benefits of teacher induction programs for new teachers. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) reported that after teacher induction training, new teachers felt they were more prepared for the classroom. Findings from the teachers in this study confirmed that teachers felt more prepared for the classroom after a structured teacher induction program along with having

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the support of a mentor. New teachers should be encouraged by the findings to seek out mentors who can help support them.

Overall Significance

This study will contribute to an emerging body of literature on recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts. The findings can be beneficial to: principals, district administrators, Alabama State Department of Education, university teacher and leadership preparation programs, veteran and new teachers in various ways. Remote rural school districts with common challenges, such as geographical location and competition from larger school districts, may be able to utilize the strategies that were successfully utilized by the three remote rural school districts in this study. The superintendents, principals and teachers in this study reported the strategies they considered most successful or beneficial in their districts. The list of most successful strategies for recruiting include: active recruitment by attending college recruiting fairs, trying to hire local teachers, and offering signing bonuses. The most successful strategies for retaining teachers was reported by two districts as teacher induction programs with mentors for support. Teachers reported the most beneficial strategy for them was the support from administrators and other teachers. Previous research literature confirms these findings. Additionally, the challenges listed in this study for remote rural school districts: location, competition from larger school districts, and hiring inexperienced teachers were supported by previous research literature. Figure 5 is a summary of the overall significance of the study.

Remote Rural. Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p.122)

Challenges for Recruiting & Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts

Geographic Location

Competition from larger districts

Hiring Inexperienced Teachers

Strategies to Meet Challenges

Active Recruitment

Hire Locals

Incentives

Teacher Induction Programs

Mentors for Support

Administrative Support

Why Teachers Stay in Remote Rural Districts

Geographic Location

Administrative Support

Support from Other Teachers

Figure 5: Summary Chart of Overall Significance

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a thin body of research on recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts. This research contributes valuable findings on successful strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts in Alabama. Despite implications for principals, district administrators, the Alabama State Department of Education, university teacher and leadership preparation programs, veteran teachers and new teachers, additional studies should be conducted. The following are recommendations for future research.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand this study to a larger sample size that includes more remote rural school districts in the state of Alabama and beyond. A larger sample size would make this study more generalizable.

This study can also be expanded by conducting case studies of school districts whose teacher retention rate improved with structured teacher induction programs. The qualitative data from case studies could provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of a structured teacher induction program on teacher retention in remote rural school districts.

A qualitative case study can be conducted to determine the specific strategies implemented in a teacher induction program of a remote rural school district with high teacher retention rates. This data could inform the Alabama State Department of education and school district administrators of best practices to improve the design of teacher induction programs for better results.

Finally, a qualitative case study of teachers who have completed teacher induction programs could inform district administrators of the strategies that teachers find beneficial. Data from case studies and interviews will provide evidence of what teachers find more valuable and will improve the chances of teachers being retained in their districts.

Researcher's Positionality and Learning Experience

The researcher of this study currently serves as the Federal Programs Director in a small rural school district that consists of six elementary school, two middle schools, two high schools and one career technical center. There are 287 teachers in this district. Prior to this position, the researcher worked as a high school counselor in this same district. Prior to that position, the researcher had spent 24 years as a teacher of students with disabilities in grades K–12. The majority of the researcher's tenure had been in rural school districts.

Prior to beginning this research, the researcher had been a new employee four times in her career as she transitioned to four different school districts. This gave the researcher some prior knowledge about beginning teacher training programs and mentoring. This could have been a limitation in that the researcher could have preconceived ideas about what to expect in the literature on teacher induction and mentoring programs. However, after completing the literature review and research study, the researcher believed her knowledge of new teacher induction and mentoring programs, as well as the characteristics of rural communities had been enhanced. The enhanced understanding of the teacher induction and mentoring programs has led the researcher to utilize her position as the Federal Programs Director to ensure that new teachers to the profession and to the school district will receive the necessary training to make them more effective teachers, prior to the start of school.

As the researcher conducted her research, she began to ask new teachers what they felt they needed more during new teacher orientation. After listening to what the teachers said, the researcher approached her colleagues, the Elementary Curriculum Director and the Secondary Curriculum Director and discussed what the teachers stated would have been useful to them in their first year of teaching. This conversation led the directors to extending the new teacher

orientation from one day to two days. The sessions presented included classroom management, teacher ethics, Lee v. Macon training, and an informal talk session with the principals of their respective schools. The teachers reported those sessions as very helpful in the follow up surveys.

The researcher has recently been appointed as the Mentor Liaison for the Alabama Teacher Mentoring Program for her district. The knowledge that the researcher gained concerning mentoring will make the researcher more effective in that position. The knowledge gained about what rural teachers need will enhance the researcher's ability to design a more effective mentoring program for the new teachers in her rural school district.

Overall, the researcher has gained a better understanding of the culture of the rural areas. She has realized that there are cultural differences that should not be devalued by outsiders. As the researcher's understanding of rural cultures grew, the researcher became less frustrated with the lack of structure of processes in the district that she works in. The researcher has learned that the informal nature of the district is a product of the rural culture. The researcher will share the characteristics of the rural community with new teachers to increase their understanding of the culture and train them how best to utilize that information when instructing the students to make the lessons more meaningful and more engaging to the students.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirmed the challenges experienced by remote rural school districts when trying to recruit and retain teachers in their districts. The researcher identified strategies that help to recruit and retain teachers in the remote rural school districts. The results of this study will contribute to the emerging body of research pertaining to recruiting and retaining teachers in the remote rural school districts. The research unveiled the importance of support from administrators, university programs and other teachers to the retention of new

teachers. The researcher believes the findings provide a deeper understanding of the effects of a well-planned teacher induction program, with a mentoring component, on recruiting and retaining teachers in remote rural school districts. School districts can no longer afford to hire teachers and hand them the keys to a classroom and expect the teachers to remain in the classrooms without support (Portner, 2005; Wong, 2002).

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APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT – SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent

AUBURN

U N I V E R S I T Y

College of Education

Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH
CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
*"Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts: Strategies for
Success"*

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore the strategies used by rural school
district leaders in Alabama to retain new teachers and help them to be successful in the
classroom. The study is being conducted by Alicia Lyles, under the direction of Dr. Linda Searby
in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.
You are invited to participate because you are one of eight rural remote schools in the state of
Alabama.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete a query with 7
questions to determine if you meet the criteria for the study. That query will take approximately
20 minutes because you may have to research total numbers of new teachers hired in your district
in the last three years and the number of new teachers who have left in the last three years. If you
meet the criteria to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will take
approximately 30 to 60 minutes of your time, as well as refer the researcher to two principals in
your district who have a good teacher retention rate. The principals' interviews will be about the
same time commitment or less. I would also like to interview two new teachers who have
completed some form of new teacher induction in your district. Your total time commitment will
be approximately one hour and twenty minutes with approximately one hour of time from each
of your principals and teachers.

If you participate in this study, you can expect to identify you teacher retention rate and identify
strategies used by your school district to recruit and retain teachers. I will provide you with the
results of the query and if you elect to participate. I cannot promise you that you will receive any
of the described benefits.

Participant's initials _____   Page 1 of 2

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221   Telephone: 334-844-44660   Fax: 334-844-3072

The risks associated with participating in this study are that the researcher will be able to associate your email with the query and you are asked at the end of the query if you may be contacted for to participate in an interview. To minimize these risks, we will use pseudonyms in the interview and in the reporting the results. There are no benefits or compensation to you for participation in this the research study. There will be no cost to you for your participation in the study. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, a journal publication or a professional presentation.

Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, a journal publication or a professional presentation. Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Any quotes used from your interview will be disassociated from the participants, the school district, and school. Any documents collected for the study will also be disassociated from the participants and their school districts and school. A pseudonym will be used in all audio recordings and reporting.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable by emailing me at ARS0048@tigermail.auburn.edu. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the College of Education, or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Alicia Lyles at ARS0048@tigermail.auburn.edu or call 706-442-6557 or Dr. Linda Searby at ljs0007@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep if you are chosen to participate in the interview.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's signature	Date	Investigator obtaining consent	Date

Printed Name	Printed Name

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
Document for use from
04/26/2016 to 04/25/2017
Protocol # 16-104 EP 1604

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APPENDIX 2

INFORMED CONSENT – PRINCIPALS

College of Education

Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH
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INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
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district leaders in Alabama to retain new teachers and help them to be successful in the
classroom. The study is being conducted by Alicia Lyles, under the direction of Dr. Linda Searby
in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.
You are invited to participate because you are one of eight rural remote schools in the state of
Alabama.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an audio
recorded interview that will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes of your time, as well as refer
the researcher to two new teachers in your building who have completed some form of new
teacher induction in your district and who have less than five years of teaching experience. The
audio recording will be used for transcription purposes, only. Your total time commitment will
be approximately one hour.

If you participate in this study, you can expect to identify you teacher retention rate and identify
strategies used by your school district to recruit and retain teachers. I will provide you with the
results of the query, if you elect to participate. I cannot promise you that you will receive any of
the described benefits.

Participant's initials _____   Page 1 of 2

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221   Telephone: 334-844-44660   Fax: 334-844-3072

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The risks associated with participating in this study are that the researcher will be able to associate your name with your school and school district. To minimize these risks, we will use pseudonyms in the interview and in the reporting the results. There are no benefits or compensation to you for participation in this the research study. There will be no cost to you for your participation in the study. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, a journal publication or a professional presentation.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential Any quotes used from your interview will be disassociated from the participants, the school district, and school. Any documents collected for the study will also be disassociated from the participants and their school districts and school. A pseudonym will be used in all audio recordings and reporting. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion of transcription.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable by emailing me at ARS0048@tigermail.auburn.edu. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the College of Education, or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.

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HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

_____   _____   _____   _____
Participant's signature   Date   Investigator obtaining consent   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name   Printed Name

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
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__04/26/2016__ to __04/25/2017__   Page 2 of 2
Protocol # ____16-104 EP 1604____

APPENDIX 3

INFORMED CONSENT – TEACHERS

College of Education

Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

**(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH
CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)**

INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
"Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Remote Rural School Districts: Strategies for
Success"

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore the strategies used by rural school
district leaders in Alabama to retain new teachers and help them to be successful in the
classroom. The study is being conducted by Alicia Lyles, under the direction of Dr. Linda Searby
in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.
You are invited to participate because you are one of eight rural remote schools in the state of
Alabama.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an audio
recorded interview that will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes of your time. The audio
recording will be used for transcription purposes, only. Your total time commitment will be
approximately one hour.

If you participate in this study, you can expect to identify you teacher retention rate and identify
strategies used by your school district to recruit and retain teachers. I will provide you with the
results of the query, if you elect to participate. I cannot promise you that you will receive any of
the described benefits.

Participant's initials _____   Page 1 of 2

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221   Telephone: 334-844-44660   Fax: 334-844-3072

The risks associated with participating in this study are that the researcher will be able to associate your name with your school and school district. To minimize these risks, we will use pseudonyms in the interview and in the reporting the results. There are no benefits or compensation to you for participation in this the research study. There will be no cost to you for your participation in the study. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, a journal publication or a professional presentation.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential Any quotes used from your interview will be disassociated from the participants, the school district, and school. Any documents collected for the study will also be disassociated from the participants and their school districts and school. A pseudonym will be used in all audio recordings and reporting. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion of transcription.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable by emailing me at ARS0048@tigermail.auburn.edu. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the College of Education, or the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Alicia Lyles at ARS0048@tigermail.auburn.edu or call 706-442-6557 or Dr. Linda Searby at ljs0007@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep if you are chosen to participate in the interview.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's signature   Date   Investigator obtaining consent   Date

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Printed Name   Printed Name

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APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Instrumentation – Interview Questions

Superintendents

1. What are the challenges you face in recruiting new teachers?

2. What are the challenges you face in retaining new teachers?

3. What does your district do to meet those challenges?

4. Can you describe in more detail those strategies you employ to recruit new teachers?

5. How do you retain new teachers in your school district?

6. What seems to be the most successful thing you do to recruit and retain new teachers in your school district?

Principals

1. Describe some of the challenges that you face when trying to recruit new teachers to your school.

2. Describe some of the challenges that you face when trying to retain new teachers in your school.

3. Describe the tools or mechanisms you use for recruiting new teachers.

4. Describe the tools or mechanisms you use for retaining new teachers.

5. Which of those tools have been the most successful?

Teachers

1. What attracted you to this school district?

2. Does the district have a program for new teachers? If so, describe the program.

3. Describe the mechanisms of support for you that your principal had in place at your school level.

4. Describe the ones you found most beneficial to you in your first year of teaching.

5. What reasons would you give for deciding to continue teaching in this district?