

Veteran Teacher Commitment: Veteran Teachers in Their Own Words

by

Jonathan Matthew Finch

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Approved by

Carey Andrzejewski, Chair, Associate Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership
and Technology

Lisa Kensler, Associate Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology
Ellen Reames, Associate Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology

Abstract

The commitment of veteran teachers is vitally important to schools. Their commitment to public education can be used in leadership roles to identify challenges and remove barriers of public education. The current literature is clear that teacher commitment is related to many positive outcomes, and there is a great deal about the commitment of novice and mid-career teachers. Yet, there is little available information about veteran teacher commitment. This qualitative, interview-based study addressed this deficit by using veteran teacher descriptions to illuminate the nature of veteran teacher commitment. This study finds veteran teachers in this study are very positive and their commitment has generative qualities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Public education has many challenges that require teachers to put forth extra effort to continuously pursue solutions to ensure appropriate public education. The challenges of public education come in the form of curriculum challenges, student dropout, and integration of technology just to name a few. The solutions to these challenges are taxing and require teachers who are willing to step up and commit themselves to improvement efforts in public schools.

For many, commitment is an important part of any school. Schools without committed teachers run the risk of having teachers who are unwilling to go above and beyond their call of duty to meet the goals and objectives of the school. The job of a teacher is extremely difficult and requires extra effort to meet the yearly goals and demands of state and federal requirements. Also the responsibility of ensuring children receive the best education requires teachers who are willing to develop meaningful lesson plans to provide students with the skills needed to be productive members of society. I suspect most, if not all, teachers would agree teaching is a difficult job and requires more time than is often available during school hours. Therefore, the only way for a teacher to meet the taxing demands and responsibilities of teaching is through being committed. Moreover, commitment can provide teachers with the strength and motivation to meet the demands, challenges, and responsibilities of their job.

The demands and challenges of public education can be challenging and conceivably difficult for teachers. Statistics in the field of education are beginning to show trends in teacher retention may have possible implications for schools across America. The U.S. Department of Education (2011) reported during the 2008 – 2009 school year the highest sub group of teachers to leave the profession was teachers with twenty or more years of experience. These numbers

imply there may be possible difficulties for veteran teachers and some of them are leaving the teaching profession prematurely. In another study, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2011) wrote that the loss of veteran teachers will result in thinning the experience base of the school. Their statistics show large numbers of veteran teachers are retiring. Furthermore, their survey shows 60 percent of the teachers nearing retirement plan to continue to work after retirement in jobs outside of public education. I believe large number of veteran teachers retiring is a serious concern for schools. In addition, I find it interesting 60 percent of teachers nearing retirement plan to continue work after retirement would consider working in a capacity that involves working in a public school setting. Therefore, I hope to learn more about veteran teacher commitment to keep veteran teachers engaged and committed to working in schools rather than only to retire and take their talents elsewhere.

Veteran teachers are an important part of schools because of their experience. The experience of veteran teachers is valuable to every school. The experience of veteran teachers can be used in mentoring programs to help novice teachers improve and grow into solid teachers. Veteran teachers can also be useful in improvement initiatives. Their experience as a teacher can help schools understand the barriers of failed initiatives, so new initiatives can be successful at the school. Therefore, learning more about veteran teacher commitment may provide clues to tapping into the experience and wisdom of veteran teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the commitment of veteran teachers. In my time as a teacher, I have worked with some extraordinary veteran teachers. They have shown their commitment by tirelessly working to integrate technology into their teaching practices and participate in other initiatives at my school. I believe veteran teachers, such as my

colleagues, are vital to the future of public education. My study answered the following questions about veteran teacher commitment:

1. How do veteran teachers define teacher commitment?
2. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that encouraged or sustained their commitment?
3. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that discouraged or threatened their commitment?

The research on commitment shows it has the capacity for individuals to involve themselves in an organization to put forth extra effort to meet the goals and objectives of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1989; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). The impact of commitment is why I believe commitment is important and this study is very relevant. Because it was not enough to just define commitment, the literature review provides details about different theories and ways commitment has been conceptualized as well as empirical work about commitment and its relationship to educational outcomes, organizational characteristics, and teacher characteristics.

In my research, teachers have unique concerns and challenges related to each stage of their careers (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Fuller, 1969; Huberman, 1989; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985; Unruh & Turner, 1970). The literature review discusses the career stages of teachers, their unique challenges and concerns, and level of commitment that accompany each stage. Also I emphasize the literature about veteran teacher stages, wherein information about commitment is deficient (Day & Gu, 2009). The lack of knowledge about veteran teachers and their commitment is the basis of this research. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to lessen the gap in the literature about veteran teacher commitment.

Method

I used a qualitative method to investigate veteran teacher commitment. I investigated veteran teacher commitment by interviewing veteran teachers and listening to their lived experiences as veteran teachers. The interview questions in my investigation allowed veteran teachers to tell me about their experiences that increased their commitment or experiences, which decreased their commitment. Finally, I analyzed the data for themes and presented in a way, which best protected the rights of my participants and best represented the data and spirit of qualitative research.

Key Terms

I designed my research to collect information about veteran teacher commitment. In the process of developing the study, I discovered different definitions of commitment and veteran teachers. I chose specific definitions for veteran teacher and commitment for this research study. Commitment is defined as a teacher's identification and involvement in the school setting (Reyes, 1990). Moreover, the definition in this study recognizes committed teachers have a strong belief in and acceptance of the school's goals and values, willingness to put forth extra effort in the school, and a strong desire to stay with the school. The definition used in this study for veteran teacher is a teacher with at least 20 years in public education (Day & Gu, 2009; Fessler, 1992; Huberman, 1989).

Limitations

There are a few limitations to my study. One the study will focus only on veteran teachers. There are many other great teachers with great insights about commitment, but those teachers will not have a voice in this study. Also this study will have a small number of participants. There is no guarantee the experiences of the veteran teachers in this study are

representative of all veteran teachers in public schools in the United States. Therefore, the study will not be generalizable for veteran teachers because understanding veteran teacher commitment in depth was more important than generalizing commitment for veteran teachers in schools across America.

Also, I think it is important to note that this study is limited due to the fact the data is only gathered from interviews. There is no observational data gathered in this study. I only rely on the nominations from school administrators to recruit participants. There is a possibility these veteran teachers do not know they should feel committed and could provide data based on what they think I want to hear.

A final limitation of this study is the limited number of representative schools. Just as the veteran teachers in this study are not representatives of all veteran teachers, the school in this study is not representative of all schools in the United States. Schools provide different experiences for different teachers and there is no guarantee these schools provide the same experiences as other schools.

Significance

This study is significant to the field of educational leadership because it provided information about the work lives of veteran teachers and their commitment to fill in the present gap in the literature. The more we know about veteran teacher commitment, the better the opportunities will be for educational leaders to increase the commitment of veteran teachers and help continue their improvement and growth in schools. Additionally, the resources invested in the careers of teachers through professional development and other forms of professional help are enormous. As stated by Day and Gu (2009), policy makers who ignore the commitment of veteran teachers fail to acknowledge the long-term investment placed into teachers to get them to

the veteran teacher stage. I believe the returns on the investments are greatest at the veteran teacher stage. Therefore, the more we learn about veteran teacher commitment, the greater the chances of benefiting from the investments throughout their career.

Finally, I believe if we can learn more about veteran teacher commitment, we will never have to worry about resistance, fear, or stagnation from veteran teachers. In addition, I believe the capacity and potential for veteran teachers to lead our schools is great. Moreover, their hard earned experience and wisdom gives veteran teachers a rightful place as leaders. Therefore, this study will provide administrators with knowledge about veteran teacher commitment. Thus, allowing administrators to foster veteran teacher commitment and use veteran teachers as leaders in schools to impact the lives of their students and colleagues.

The chapters that follow examine the relevant literature, describe the methods used in this study, present the findings from this study, and offer a discussion of the significance and implication of those findings. In addition, I propose future areas for further research about veteran teacher commitment.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Teaching is a profession that requires a high level of commitment because of the hard work it takes to do it. Teachers spend countless hours preparing lessons, teaching, grading, and improving themselves with professional development (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Because of the hard work and countless hours of preparation, being a teacher requires passionate commitment to meet the high expectations of public education. Commitment is important because it supports teachers' dedication to teaching and to going above and beyond the responsibilities to ensure student success.

This study will focus on the commitment of veteran teachers because veteran teachers are an important subgroup of public education and their commitment to public education is vital to the continuance of the teaching profession (Alvy, 2005). Veteran teachers possess wisdom and knowledge, which is extremely important in school initiatives, such as mentoring programs. I assume their commitment is vital to being able to benefit from their wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, this study aims at continuing research about the nature of veteran teacher commitment and the implications of knowledge about veteran teacher commitment for teacher leadership in public education.

Commitment

Several ground-breaking studies have explored commitment. The studies are mostly quantitative with a few qualitative studies and they provide important insights into commitment. Many of the early studies on commitment are related to fields outside of education but have influenced the works of many scholars who have written about commitment in education (Day & Gu, 2009; Day, Sammons, Stobart, & Gu, 2007; Reyes, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). Commitment

is very complex and has been defined by few authors; however, the definitions from those authors have been the foundation for works about commitment in education.

Becker (1960) described commitment as the “tendency to engage in consistent lines of activity because of the cost of doing otherwise” (p.33). According to Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974), commitment is “the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (p.604). Both definitions reflect the engagement needed on the part of an individual to be committed, but they also reflect key differences. Becker’s definition reflects the motivation of a person to remain committed to the organization. The definition implies if the cost of not remaining in an organization is high, then the commitment of the person is stronger to stay in the organization. On the other hand, Porter and colleagues’ definition suggests a person’s commitment in an organization depends on how strong the individual’s ideals and interest match the organization. In other words, this definition asserts the more common interests and ideals between the individual and the organization the stronger the commitment. It is important to note the commitment in Becker’s definition stems from extrinsic motivation, while Porter’s stems from intrinsic motivation.

Meyer and Allen (1989) used the terms affective commitment and continuance commitment to describe the differences. According to their research, the nature of the links between the employee and organization were very different. Affective commitment is when employees remain with the organization because they want to due to an alignment of their own personal goals and purposes and the ones of the organization. Figure 1 shows the overlapping nature of personal and organizational goals and purposes that lead to commitment. On the other hand, continuance commitment is described as commitment to an organization based on an

individual's needs rather than their personal desire. Figure 2 illustrates how continuance commitment increases and decreases in relation to the incentives offered in an organization.



Figure 1: Affective Commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1989)

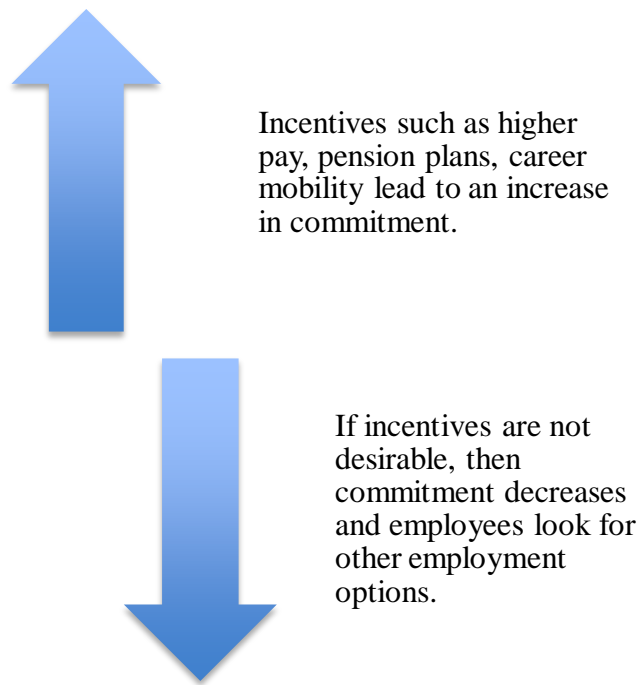


Figure 2: Continuanance Commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1989)

Affective commitment is more valuable than continuanance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1989; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Researchers suggest workers who work for organizations based on rapid promotion or pension plans (strategies that fall under continuanance commitment) remain with the organization based on the incentives rather than personal desire. Moreover, the incentives increase continuanance commitment and do not instill the necessary values to remain with the organization and be genuinely productive. Conversely, researchers suggest workers whose personal goals are aligned with the goals of the organization are affectively committed to the organization. Workers who are affectively committed tend to perform at higher levels and are more committed to the organization and its goals. (Meyer et al., 1989; Mowday et al., 1982).

Theories of Commitment

Commitment is an interesting phenomenon and many early studies were from the business sector. The conceptualization of commitment provides an understanding of how commitment develops between an employee and the organization. Three theoretical foundations of commitment are (a) sociological commitment theory (Kanter, 1968); (b) exchange commitment theory (Becker, 1960; Morris & Sherman, 1981) and (c) psychological commitment theory (Mowday et al., 1982). Each theory, as shown in Table 1, uniquely describes how commitment functions and has led to a better understanding of commitment.

Sociological Commitment Theory

The first theoretical approach is the sociological theory, which has its beginnings with Kanter (1968). Kanter proposed commitment is a process in which the individual's personality system and the organization's social system are clearly expressed and meshed together through interaction. According to Kanter, commitment in the sociological perspective has three basic forms: (a) continuance; (b) cohesion; and (c) control. In each form, the level of commitment is based upon the social or community aspects of the organization, such as incentives, group solidarity, and group identity.

Continuance. In Kanter's (1968) work, continuance commitment is a process through which an employee commits by viewing participation within the organization as either positive or negative. In this form of commitment, participation in the organization is based on how the employee views the reward system of the organization. If there are more positive incentives, then the employee is more likely to commit to the organization with greater participation.

Cohesion. Another basic form of commitment under the umbrella of the sociological perspective is cohesion commitment. Cohesion commitment is the individual's affective

solidarity with a group (Kanter, 1968). Solidarity in an organization is developed through symbolic activities to develop attachment to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). The symbolic activities are in the forms of teams, uniforms, belief in vision statements, all of which help develop solidarity and attachment to the organization. Of the three basic components, cohesion provides the most interaction for employees. Through the interaction and collective behaviors, employees are able to develop a sense of identity with their co-workers and organization. Kanter (1968) suggested individualism must be relinquished in favor of the collective groups. Therefore, the more cohesive the organization becomes through interaction, then the higher possibility of increased commitment to the organization.

Control. Lastly, Kanter (1968) proposed control commitment is commitment, which requires the individual to meet the demands of the system in spite of their personal goals. The individual in this commitment must fit the norm of the organization. Not to mention, the individual must whole-heartedly accept the norms of the organization. Anything other than what is expected on a daily basis would weaken the link between the individual and the organization; thereby lessening the commitment. Kanter indicated all organizations use all three forms of commitment in order to increase the productivity of the employees

Exchange Commitment Theory

The exchange perspective about commitment illustrates individuals who invest themselves in an organization expect returns on the investment and other rewards, thereby creating a bond between the individual and the organization (Becker, 1960). In support of this idea Hrebiniak and Allutto (1972) suggested the more favorable the reward, the more committed the individual will be to the organization. For example, school systems provide extra pay for teachers who earn advanced degrees. In this instance, many teachers who earn advanced degrees

may be doing it because of the increase in pay rather than increasing their professional knowledge. In all, the theoretical foundation of this perspective is based on a reciprocal relationship between the employer and employee most likely to benefit the employee rather than the employer.

Researchers, such as Meyer et. al. (1982), argued this approach to commitment could lead to continuance commitment. Continuance commitment only maintains employees that remain with the organization because of the rewards they receive for their accomplishments. If the rewards are no longer available, the organization could run the risk of their teachers looking for schools with better incentives or leaving the profession altogether.

From the perspective of the exchange theory, commitment is higher because there is more to lose by leaving the organization. For example, married teachers often have higher commitment because not working would damage their personal lives, which means it is easier to stay than to leave because the ramifications of leaving could result in losing a family or income (Reyes, 1990).

Psychological Commitment Theory

The final theoretical approach to commitment is the psychological theory, which suggests commitment is based upon a person's identification with the organization. Levinson (1965) explained that identification provides benefits for the individual by satisfying needs of the employee. This implies the benefits for the individual could lead to a more committed individual in the organization. Mowday et al. (1982) defined commitment as a psychological identification with the goals and beliefs of the organization. According to Mowday et al., the stronger the identification with and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the stronger the willingness to put forth extra effort and remain with the organization. Van Maanen and Schein

(1979) suggested the identification is due to a reduction of anxiety through efforts of organizational support. In all, commitment according to the psychological theory allows individuals to identify with an organization and feel committed to it, due to satisfaction of their needs, support, and comfort with the goals of the organization.

Summary of Commitment Theory (Table 1)			
	Sociological Theory (Kanter, 1968)	Exchange Theory (Becker, 1960)	Psychological Theory (Levinson, 1965)
Affective Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1989)	A process in which the employee's personality system and the organization's social system are clearly expressed and meshed together through interactions that promote the personal interests of the employee and the goals of the organization.	A bond between the individual and the organization is based upon the investment of the employee's time, effort, and personal interests with the expectation that the individual will be intrinsically rewarded for helping the organization reach its goals.	A psychological bond between the employee and the organization. The bond is created when the employee can identify with the goals and objectives of the organization.
Continuance Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1989)	A process in which the employee commits to the organization based on whether or not participation in the organization is rewarding. If participation in the organization lends itself to greater rewards, then the stronger the commitment.	A bond between the individual and the organization is based upon the investment of the employee's effort and time in exchange for extrinsic rewards such as extra pay or promotion.	A psychological bond between the employee and the organization. The bond is created by the organization's provision of comfort, support and satisfaction of the employee's needs. If the employee is not satisfied with the comfort, support, or satisfaction of needs, then commitment can be lost.

Commitment and Education

Teacher commitment is an important part of schools across the nation. Committed teachers are the teachers who are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure all students receive the best education. According to Singh and Billingsley (1998), teachers who are committed are less likely to be absent, which implies they are always at work ready and willing to meet the goals and objectives of the school. Rosenholtz (1989) concluded schools with committed teachers had faculties with future plans for their classrooms, academic plans, and plans for parental involvement. Most importantly, committed teachers are dedicated to their profession so much they are willing to continue learning best practices to improve instruction (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Firestone and Pennell (1993) did a complete review of the definitions of teacher commitment. Through their research, they concluded commitment is a psychological bond that allows teachers to identify themselves with the organization according to its mission and goals. Reyes (1990) developed a definition consistent with Mowday, Porter, and Steers (i.e. psychological commitment theory). Reyes (1990) defined teacher commitment as the strength of an individual's identification and involvement in the school setting. The definition also included three major components, (a) strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to put forth extra effort in the organization, and (c) a strong desire to remain with the organization. This definition will serve as the characterization of a committed teacher for this study. All together, these components describe the nature of teacher commitment, which increases the likelihood of a teacher's productivity because their personal goals are aligned with the goals of an organization and they remain with the school because they want to stay regardless of incentives.

Teacher commitment needs to be considered and researched to ensure a stable public education system in the future (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington & Gu, 2007). Researchers have found many correlations with teacher commitment. In order to get a better understanding of veteran teacher commitment it is important to review literature about individual and organizational characteristics in relation to teacher commitment.

Individual Teacher Characteristics

Every teacher is unique and individual qualities correlate with commitment to teaching. Research indicates personal characteristics are correlated with commitment. Individual characteristics such as age, experience, efficacy, and motivation can vary from teacher to teacher. The literature in this section discusses individual teacher characteristics and how they correlate with commitment.

Age, gender and tenure. Alluto, Hrebiniak, and Alonso (1973) determined gender, age, sense of competence, motivation, and needs have a positive correlation with teacher commitment. In a meta-analysis study, Aydin, Sarier, and Usyal (2011) explored the correlation between gender and commitment. Their study was a meta-analysis, which analyzed 15 different studies to investigate teacher commitment and gender. While the study raises more questions about gender and commitment, they found there is a correlation between gender and commitment. According to the study, men were more likely to exhibit affective commitment and women were more likely to exhibit continuance commitment.

In regards to age, researchers found older teachers tend to be more committed than younger teachers (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973). It is important to note older in this sense has nothing to do with experience or tenure. It is the age of the teacher that older refers to in this research. Teachers who enter teaching at an older age tend to be more committed. Other

researchers have included tenure, teaching experience, and educational level as having correlations with teacher commitment (Reyes, 1989). For example, researchers found teachers with greater tenure are more committed than teachers with less tenure (Reyes, 1989; Chan et al., 2008).

Educational experience. Educational experience is another correlate with commitment. The researchers found the correlation between educational experience and commitment was an inverse relationship (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973). Reyes (1990) stated this implies employees with higher levels of education tend to be less committed because the organization does not provide sufficient challenges to engage employees.

Work expectations. The engagement of employees is an important area to consider when considering what influences commitment. Employees of any field have different expectations for their organizations, especially in the areas of job tasks and job involvement. Job task expectations and job involvement expectations can vary from person to person within an organization. According to Steers (1977), workers have certain job expectations and take them into consideration while deciding whether or not to join an organization. In other words, if the worker's expectations of the job tasks are not met, then there is a possibility the commitment will not be strong. This implies if the job expectations of teachers are not met then the teachers could have low commitment to the school.

Along the same lines as job task expectations is job involvement. Job involvement has a positive relationship with teacher commitment (Blau & Boal, 1989). Job involvement means that teachers care about the amount of involvement they have in planning and decision making at the school. Job involvement is very important to teachers, but how much of a role (if any) it plays in the commitment of veteran teachers is an important question to explore in later research.

In relation to job task expectations and job involvement, job satisfaction plays a role in teacher commitment. According to Locke (1976), job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1300). Similarly, Rhodes, Nevill, and Allan (2004) defined job satisfaction as, “a state of mind determined by the individual’s anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which he or she perceives as significantly affecting his or her work situation” (p. 68). Both definitions reflect the importance of how a person views the organization and the experiences they have in the organization. How a person views their job and their experiences can play an important role in whether or not they put forth extra effort in an organization. As stated by Leithwood and Beatty (2008), “job satisfaction is a pleasant feeling likely to reinforce one’s existing practices and contributions, along with other feelings to the likelihood of sustaining those practices” (p.15). In the area of teacher commitment, it is important to have a pleasant and satisfied feeling at work because without it one can easily lose the feeling of wanting to contribute to the organization. According to a study by Freeston (1987), teachers who reported a great deal of enjoyment and personal job satisfaction had higher levels of commitment.

Morale, resiliency, and motivation. Leithwood and Beatty (2008) discussed teacher morale as a characteristic, which influences teachers’ feelings about the work they do in the school. Teacher morale is the “feeling that a worker has about his or her job based on how the worker perceives himself or herself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the workers needs and expectations” (Washington & Watson, 1976 cited in Lumsden, 1998, p.2). If the teachers’ needs are being met, then the morale should be high. Therefore, teachers, who have high morale or good feelings toward their job should be

committed because they will view the school as meeting their needs and expectations and put forth more effort to meet the schools goals.

Being satisfied with your job is sometimes difficult and not enough for a teacher to remain committed to teaching. With challenges of a classroom, teachers have to remain resilient and motivated to overcome all challenges and problems throughout their careers. If teachers are expected to progress with time, then it is also expected they will struggle; thus, increasing the need for committed, resilient, and motivated teachers who will be able to handle the challenges of teaching.

According to Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu (2007), resilience is important to teachers for three main reasons. First, resilient students have resilient teachers or teachers with resilient qualities. In order for students to adapt to the struggles of learning and creating new knowledge, they must have teachers who demonstrate resilient qualities in the classroom (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington & Gu, 2007; Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Second, teaching is a demanding job in a time of growing diversity and concern about sustainability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). In addition to developing pedagogies around diversity and sustainability, teachers must also take into account technology is rapidly changing the way we learn and communicate. Resiliency will allow teachers to adapt.

The third reason resilience is important to teachers and their commitment is it is the capacity for teachers to recover strengths or spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity (Day, et al., 2007). Additionally, resilience is closely tied to a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy, and motivation to teach, which are fundamental to promoting achievement in all aspects of students' lives (Day et al., 2007). The ties resilience has with self-efficacy, motivation, and a

strong sense of vocation strongly imply resilience plays a major role in the commitment of teachers.

Motivation is another individual characteristic of teachers. When a person perceives their present circumstances as hard, their motivation can be in danger. If the goals of the organization are concrete and clear, an employee's motivation within the organization will increase (Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). Moreover, when the personal goals of the employee overlap with the goals of the organization, motivation is especially strong (Geijsel, et al., 2003). If the motivation is high for a teacher, they will work harder and put forth more effort to meet the goals of the school, which means their commitment is high.

Teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is an individual characteristic, which varies from teacher to teacher and can determine the motivation or commitment to meet the goals of the organization. It is not enough for a person to want to be motivated or committed. A person must also have the confidence in himself or herself to be able to accomplish the desired goals for the organization (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Day et al. (2007) emphasized this point by quoting Bandura. Bandura (2000) stated: "When faced with obstacles, setbacks and failures, those who doubt their capabilities slacken their efforts, give up, or settle for mediocre solutions. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities redouble their effort to master the challenges" (p.120) Bandura's point supports the idea of why commitment is so important and its relationship to self-efficacy. Bandura's point implies teachers without a strong belief in their capabilities become less likely to remain committed to their tasks; however, those teachers who have a strong belief in their capabilities are likely to have higher commitment because they are willing to put forth extra effort to work and master any challenges.

In research by Ware and Kitsantas (2002), teacher efficacy was found to have a significant relationship with professional commitment. Teacher efficacy is defined as teacher beliefs about their abilities and competence. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), teacher efficacy is known to influence the motivation and commitment of a teacher to their work. Therefore, teachers who believe in their competence are able to be more committed and motivated to meet the challenges of the school setting. For example, teachers who believe in their ability to manage a classroom will be committed to finding solutions to student discipline problems. Teachers who are confident in their abilities to create lessons will be more committed to finding ways to integrate technology and hands-on activities into their lesson.

Ware and Kitsantas' (2002) work expanded the knowledge of efficacy in other areas of teacher work lives, such as self-advocating and its influence on teacher commitment. Their research supported that when teachers believe they have efficacy to gain support of their principal, influence the policies at their schools, and control their instruction the commitment is stronger. Conversely, teachers who are unable to self-advocate, influence policy or control instruction can have commitment issues because they become frustrated about the fact they are unable to get the support they need to survive.

Organizational Characteristics

Besides individual characteristics, there are also organizational characteristics that correlate to teacher commitment. Reyes (1990) developed a model of teacher commitment. It includes organizational characteristics such as organizational orientation, organizational rewards, support, and empowerment related to how committed a teacher is to his or her school.

Orientation, culture, and rewards. Organizational orientation is an organizational characteristic, which varies from school to school. The organizational values of a school are the

values and goals most important in the school. For example, some schools emphasize ideals, while some emphasize rules and regulations (Reyes, 1990). Reyes (1990) noted schools, which emphasize the normative aspects of a school, such as student achievement have higher levels of commitment. He added schools, which emphasize career ladders have lower commitment.

Rosenholtz (1989) added schools with well-defined cultures tend to create higher levels of commitment. As stated by Weiner (1982), organizations orient workers to the organization with well-defined goals and objectives and make it easier for workers to develop an identity that closely matches the organization, thereby creating higher commitment. Hill (1984) indicated in a study the more agreement there is between a teacher's individual self and their role in the school, the more committed individuals will be to the organization.

Another organizational characteristic with a correlation with teacher commitment is social rewards of the organization. The social rewards are the benefits of social interactions with all stakeholders such as principals, teachers, students and parents. As long as the relationships remain positive, the commitment of teachers will remain high (Reyes, 1990).

Collegiality. One of the biggest rewards a teacher can receive from social interactions with colleagues is support. Singh and Billingsley (1998) found peer support influences commitment directly. Peer support in a school can help teachers cope with stress, which is an inhibitor of commitment. Teacher stress is defined as the negative emotions resulting from teachers' work (Klassen & Chui, 2010). During the school year, teachers work an average of 50 -53 hours a week (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Teachers are required to teach, grade, discipline, contact parents, and stay abreast of current teaching practices. When teachers are stressed because of the day-to-day operations of the school it is nice for them to have a support group of people who share common experiences. Without support, teaching can be stressful and

difficult and lead to feelings of isolation dampening the spirit and commitment of the teachers within the school.

Team teaching. Many schools have begun using team teaching as a way to provide a supportive environment with schools. According to Dee, Henkin, and Singelton (2006), commitment is influenced by team teaching. Team teaching structures provide opportunities for teachers to participate in activities with a positive impact on a school. Meister (2011) supported the importance of team teaching and teamwork stating participants in the study enjoyed opportunities to collaborate and discuss issues with their peers. Moreover, participants stated collaborating and networking “broke feelings of isolation” and “provided them with the necessary support to overcome problems” (p. 777). It also rejuvenated them and gave them new ideas to add to their classroom practices.

Team teaching structures create environments to involve teachers in collaborative situations and increase feelings of attachment to the goals, values, and people of the school (Dee et al., 2006). Additionally, team teaching produces a high level of commitment because team teaching facilitates the development of a shared identity as a member of an organization and strengthens the bond of the team members (Postmes, Tanis, & Dewit, 2001).

Autonomy and empowerment. Participation in teaching teams can intensify the commitment of an individual. Kirkman and Rosen (1999) stated commitment is intensified because team members are given the autonomy to make decisions to advance toward the goals of the organization. Many teachers enjoy autonomy, which is being allowed to work without the fear of being watched or questioned about the decisions they make as a professional. According to Murphy (1991), teachers who have a voice in decision-making will take greater ownership over those decisions and invest more time in implementing those decisions. Teachers who have

the comfort of knowing they have a voice and the autonomy of working on school initiatives are greatly committed to their schools. In a study by Rosenholtz (1989), autonomy was a powerful predictor of teacher commitment. Rosenholtz stated commitment was increased when principals gave up control and trusted teachers.

Along with autonomy, empowerment is an organizational characteristic, which varies from school to school. Empowerment is defined as “a subjective state of mind where an employee perceives that he or she is exercising control over meaningful work” (Potterfield, 1999, p. 51). In a study by Kirkman and Rosen (1999), team members in schools reported they had higher levels of commitment due to an empowering work environment.

Communication. In addition to empowerment and autonomy, communication has been shown to be a predictor of commitment. Communication is the degree to which information is transmitted among members of an organization (Price, 1997). In any organization, communicating is a vital part of the organization. The most important quality of communication is openness. Openness in an organization is characterized by an organizational climate where people feel their ideas and other information matter are worthwhile and shared in the organization. According to Dee, Hickman, and Pell (2002), organizations with high levels of communication, collaboration, and trust also have collegiality. All together, open communication, collaboration, trust, and collegiality create an environment within a school where teachers are open to and supportive of each other. It is environments such as the one previously described where teachers are comfortable and willing to be committed to the organization.

Professional communities. Developing professional organizations, which allow for a collaborative and collegial atmosphere, is a main goal for many schools. These professional

communities have been a topic of research related to teacher commitment. Hausman and Goldring (2001) stated that administrators have a challenging responsibility of ensuring opportunity for teachers to grow professionally. In their research, they conclude professional communities can increase teacher commitment through increasing teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, schools provide the necessary development for teachers to solidify their role as a teacher and grow professionally to meet the needs and challenges of public education. Not to mention, it also increases the capacity of teachers to remain committed to the organization by providing for the professional needs of teachers.

School leadership. In a school organization, empowerment, autonomy, communication, and how the needs of the teachers are met are dependent upon the leadership of the school, which can vary from school to school. Tarter, Hoy, and Bliss (1989) conducted a study on principal leadership. In their study, they assert teacher commitment is higher in schools with principals who provide support, resources, and have the ability to influence system administrators for the good of the school. Similarly, in a study by Singh and Billingsley (1998), principal leadership and support had a strong relationship with commitment. Moreover, Singh and Billingsley noted leadership impacts everyone differently. In their research, they wrote teacher commitment is influenced by how a teacher perceives the leadership in the school. In other words, teachers who perceive their leaders as strong are likely to have higher commitment to the school. On the other hand, teachers who perceive the principal as being weak are likely to have lower commitment to the school. Research by Meister (2011) regarding the concept of how a leader is perceived and its influence on commitment supports Singh and Billingsley's findings. Additionally, she found that the same leader could affect teachers differently. Meister (2011) found two teachers who

saw their leader differently. One teacher saw the leader as supportive, whereas the other felt threatened by him. The teacher who saw the principal as supportive had higher commitment.

The research supported that leadership impacts teacher commitment; however, some studies have investigated specific leadership styles and their relationship to commitment. Leadership styles, such as transformational and distributed leadership have been studied to deepen the understanding of the relationship between leadership and commitment (Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003; Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009). Burns (1979) stated transformational leadership occurs “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 382). With Burns’ description in mind, higher levels of commitment are inevitable with leaders who are able to lead in a transformational way.

Transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1994) reiterated this point by stating, “transformational leadership motivates others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible” (p. 3). Furthermore, Bass and Avolio (1994) proposed there are four specific dimensions of transformational leadership. First, there is idealized influence, which includes characteristics, such as putting needs of followers first and being a role model. The second dimension is inspirational motivation, which includes motivating and inspiring followers to higher levels of enthusiasm and optimism. Third, there is intellectual stimulation, which is aimed at stimulating the followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative. Finally, individualized consideration is a dimension, which emphasizes paying attention to the needs and interests of the followers (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

All together, Bass’s research surrounding transformational leadership in non-educational settings reported transformational leadership has some influence on commitment, extra effort,

and organizational citizenship behavior. Very little research has been done with Bass's dimensions to understand teacher commitment; however, Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, and Jantzi (2003) did use the dimensions in a study of Canadian teachers. According to Geijsel et al. (2003), transformational leadership has some influence on teacher commitment, especially for teachers' context beliefs. In addition, vision building and intellectual stimulation further influence teachers' context beliefs, which in turn increase the capacity for teacher commitment.

Distributed leadership. Distributed leadership has also been researched as a leadership style with the capacity to increase organizational commitment. It entails shared leadership by several members of an organization. Leaders can have formal or informal leadership positions. Many schools distribute their power through teacher leaders and leadership teams. Although most empirical evidence has not directly shown the impact of distributed leadership on teacher commitment, the research available provided some very supportive evidence that implies distributive leadership has some correlation with teacher commitment. For example, distributive leadership has the capacity to foster creativity and innovation (Hulpia et al., 2009; Scribner, Sawyer, Myers, & Watson, 2004). The creativity and innovation fostered by distributive leadership implies teachers have autonomy and empowerment over their work, both of which support increasing commitment.

In research by Hulpia, Devos, and Rosseel (2009), the evidence implies a strong relationship between distributed leadership and organizational commitment. The result of the study showed cohesive leadership is strongly related to higher levels of commitment to the organization. This means schools have leadership teams regarded as competent and cohesive receive more commitment from the teachers than schools without competent and cohesive leadership teams. Also the study showed a supportive leadership team can also increase the

capacity for commitment from the teachers. Therefore, it implied teachers who are supported by the leadership team have greater capacity for commitment in the school. Overall, this research provides compelling evidence that distributive leadership can have strong influence on the commitment of an organization; especially if the leadership is competent, cohesive, and supportive.

Hulpia and Devos (2010) continued to research the relationship between distributed leadership and commitment using qualitative methods. In her latest research, she continued to find that schools with high commitment have strong supportive leaders who include a leadership team in the decision making of the school. Conversely, she found schools, which lacked a strong leader and no leadership team showed low commitment. One of the key findings in this research is that developing people and supporting people in the schools is not a function of one person, but it was a function of all members of the leadership team. Because all members of the leadership team were involved in developing and supporting people, teachers within the school were more committed to the school. Hulpia and Devos also noted schools without a strong system of developing and supporting teachers had teachers who were not very committed to the school.

As stated in Hulpia and Devos' (2010) research, developing and supporting teachers is an important part of fostering teacher commitment. With their experience and wisdom veteran teachers can play a substantial role in the leadership team of the school. Veteran teachers can help develop novice teachers and support them during the initial years of teaching. Therefore, my study seeks to understand the commitment of veteran teachers so they will continue to remain with schools in leadership positions allowing them to share their wisdom and experience with novice teachers and other members of the school.

Inhibitors of Commitment

Just as there are many factors associated with high commitment, there are also many factors associated with low commitment. School leaders must consider the barriers and inhibitors that decrease commitment. If the barriers and inhibitors are not taken into account, then the commitment of teachers is at risk, which also puts the education of students at risk. The literature in this section considers barriers and inhibitors of teacher commitment.

Stress. Teaching is considered to be a high stress profession (Kyriacou, 2001). Kyriacou (2001) described teacher stress as the negative emotions resulting from a teacher's work. Teachers have huge workloads and their work can be a major part of their stress (Boyle, Borg, Falzon & Baglioni, 1995). Teachers work 50 – 53 hours per week and are required to teach, grade, discipline, contact parent, and attend professional development (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Teachers who become overwhelmed and unable to manage their workloads may give into the negative emotions of teacher stress. When teachers give in to the negative emotions of teacher stress, they may begin to perceive their workload as unfair compared to their colleagues', which may lead to reduced morale and commitment (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Teachers who are unable to deal with teacher stress have lower self-efficacy, lower student rapport, and lower levels of effectiveness (Betoret, 2006; Schawzer & Hallum, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). In addition teachers who cannot deal with the stress experience absenteeism and burnout. Some teachers exit the teaching profession early in their teaching careers (Nir, 2000).

Uncertainty. The uncertainty of teaching is another inhibitor of commitment. Helsing (2007) stated there is a lack of a technical culture in education. As a result, there is little consensus about the methods and goals of good teaching. Even the assessments do not provide educators clear information about methods that will help teachers increase student learning

(Helsing, 2007). Helsing (2007) also stated human relationships add another layer of uncertainty to teaching. The assessment of others' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors can be difficult to handle for some teachers. Overall, the nature of teaching has many areas of uncertainty. I assume commitment requires the acceptance of uncertainty. In other words, teachers who are committed are able to move forward knowing the results can go either way and are willing to adjust their practice accordingly. If teachers are unable to accept uncertainty, then how can they ever commit to teaching?

Organizational politics. Because schools are political and school politics have an impact on teachers, organizational politics is another inhibitor of commitment. According to Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim and Hogan (2008), there is a negative correlation between teacher commitment and organizational politics. Schools with large numbers of teachers had greater perceived fragmentation and interpersonal conflicts because teachers perceived the organization as having negative organizational politics. Because teachers perceived the fragmentation and interpersonal conflicts, schools were unable to establish school norms, values, and behaviors (Chan et al., 2008). Schools without established norms, values, and behaviors are unable to create an identity shared by all stakeholders of the school. Additionally, commitment requires identification and if the stakeholders are unable to identify with the school, then there is less likely to be any commitment to the school (Reyes, 1990).

Leadership. Aside from organizational politics, leadership can be another inhibitor of commitment. Leadership is an important part of the school organization. As shown earlier in the literature review, leadership can have a positive relationship with the commitment of teachers. Conversely, leadership can have an adverse effect on teacher commitment. In Tarter, Hoy, and Bliss' (1989) study, they concluded authoritative or controlling leaders inhibit commitment.

They stated teachers feel they are being controlled are less willing to give extra effort within the organization.

Teacher Career Stages

Teachers have different levels of experience and knowledge. In a school there are novice, mid-career, and veteran teachers. The various needs, concerns and expertise of each level need to be considered and explored for the purpose of fostering commitment. At each stage teachers have different and unique concerns and challenges. In addition, the unique challenges and concerns for each stage in a teacher's career may have an impact on teacher commitment. Therefore, the literature in this section explores the career stages of teachers to discover what research says about teacher commitment at each stage, especially what the literature says about commitment at the veteran stage of a teacher's career.

Career stage models show the development of a person throughout their career. They also show the different levels of knowledge, skills, and behaviors at each stage of a person's career (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) conducted a notable study. It dealt with skill acquisition that expanded the knowledge about the progression of a person through career stages. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) stated there are five stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert.

In the model, novices begin with little experience and "context-free rules," which provide them with the necessary rules to survive the organization in the beginning of their careers. Ultimately, novices become experts through experience, which provides them with situational knowledge so they act intuitively and without detachment to the career (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). The Dreyfus and Dreyfus model provides an understanding for the development and skills acquisition for a person in a career. Their research showed various personal factors

influence the development and skills acquisition of a person, but they do not include the unique factors that include the career development of a teacher or commitment to the career in any of their stages. It is important to note this model provides a firm foundation for this study to establish different career stages in the field of education.

Teacher Career Stage Models

Extensive research has been done on teacher career stages (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Fuller, 1969; Huberman, 1989; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985; Unruh & Turner, 1970). The literature in this section will provide research about teacher career stage models. In addition, the literature will include the unique concerns and challenges of each stage of a teaching career. Finally, this section will include what research says about commitment at each stage and where this research study will attempt to further the understanding of commitment in the veteran career stage of a teacher's career.

Early teacher career stage models. The early career stage models of teachers showed teachers progressing through three or four stages (Fuller, 1969; Unruh & Turner, 1970). Frances Fuller conducted the earliest research about teacher career stages and developed a model to show the stages of pre-service teachers (1969). Although this model illustrated the development of pre-service teachers, it is very relevant to this study because it captures the essence of the struggle to grow as a teacher. Fuller found four stages:

- Pre-teaching concerns – Pre-teachers are concerned about their worth as a teacher, class management, rapport with students, supervisor's opinions, and evaluations.
- Early concerns about career – Pre-teachers at this stage have their first contact with teaching and are concerned about mastery of content and evaluations.

- Teaching situation concerns – At this stage, education students are teachers. They are still concerned with their ability to teach and the demands of actually teaching.
- Concerns about pupils – Eventually, teachers' concerns shift to focus on their pupils' learning, emotions, and social needs. They are unable to fully act upon their concerns because they are still in the early stages of becoming a teacher, but the concerns are present.

Although the stages of Fuller's work highlight the concerns and growth of pre-service teachers, the work draws attention to the fact teachers (or those who want to be a teacher) progress through stages. Fessler (1992) described these stages in Fuller's work as a progression from concerns about the self, then concerns about the task of teaching, and finally concerns about the impact of teaching on their pupils.

After Fuller's work, other studies were done in order to expand the model of career stages to make it relevant to practicing teachers. Unruh and Turner (1970) did the earliest of many studies in the 1970s. Their model proposed three stages of a teacher's career. They include the initial teaching period, building competency, and the maturing period (Fessler, 1992; Unruh & Turner, 1970).

Teachers who progress according to Unruh and Turner's model (1970) begin with concerns for the self in the initial teaching period, which they believe happens between one and six years. During this stage teachers are concerned with job security, management, and curriculum development. The second stage is a period of building competency, which ranges from six to 15 years. In this stage, the teachers focus on the task of teaching and seek to improve their knowledge and expertise. Finally, the maturing period is the stage in which teachers have

become secure in their career and look for new ideas and concepts to improve their capacity as a teacher. The experience range for this stage is 15 years and beyond.

The previous studies set the foundation for subsequent career stage models. The models are a good representation of how teachers move from one stage to the next and the unique interests of teachers at each stage. Although the early stage models of a teacher's career do not include research about commitment at each stage, they do provide a basis for understanding the uniqueness of each stage. In order to understand the commitment of veteran teachers, I propose it is equally important to understand what it means to be a veteran teacher. Therefore, the literature in the next section will show how other research built upon the models of Fuller and Unruh and Turner to understand veteran teacher commitment.

Contemporary models. Even though Fuller and Unruh and Turner's models provide a process of teacher growth, more contemporary models show the progression of a teacher is more complex (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1989; Sikes et al., 1985). Because of the wide range of experiences and taking into account developmental theory, it is too oversimplified to illustrate teacher growth in only three stages. Additionally, the early stage models highlight the personal factors that affect teacher growth but neglect the organizational factors, which affect teacher growth. Lynn (2002) noted personal factors such as family support structures, positive critical incidents, life crises, and individual dispositions have an influence on the growth of a teacher. However, Lynn also noted organizational factors such as the environment of the school and school system, administration leadership style, atmosphere of trust in the community, and the professional activities of the school or system have an influence on the growth of a teacher. Because I assume the commitment of veteran teachers is influenced by both personal and organizational elements, contemporary models of teacher career stages will be discussed to

understand the relationship between teacher stages and personal and organizational factors.

Additionally, the literature in this section will highlight possible links between veteran teachers and commitment.

To show the complexity of teacher growth, Fessler (1992) developed a model that incorporates the personal environment, organizational environment, and the influences they have on the career cycle of a teacher. Fessler's model synthesized all of the earlier work in regards to teacher career stages and suggested the career cycle is dynamic rather than linear. The model consists of eight stages: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit.

According to the model, each stage of a teacher's career is unique and is impacted by personal and organizational factors. The impact personal and organizational factors have on teacher stages is important to this study because the commitment of teachers is increased or diminished by personal and organizational factors, just as teacher growth is stimulated or impeded. Also, the model illustrates the career cycle of a teacher as dynamic rather than linear. This means teachers move back and forth across the stages of their career dependent upon the personal and organizational factors. The dynamic nature of this model is important because I assume even though veteran teachers have all of the necessary experience needed to be an expert, they can have experiences that can increase or diminish their commitment, just as experiences can encourage or impede the growth of a veteran teacher.

Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu's (2006) study on teacher work life and resiliency provided another contemporary model for teacher career stages. Day's work synthesized the work of Huberman (1989), Sikes, Measor, and Woods (1985), and Fessler and Christensen (1992). According to Day's synthesis, there are five stages in the career of a teacher

as shown in Table 2. As noted in Fessler's model, Day also believed progression through a teacher's career cycle is not linear because teachers can overlap in certain stages. Because of personal and organizational factors, there are times when teachers can have setbacks, which require them to approach certain situations in a novice way. Day's work also highlights an important aspect of the career stages, which is not highlighted in Fessler's model, which is commitment. Because commitment is an important part of this study, Day's synthesis of previous models will help identify the gap in the understanding of commitment for veteran teachers. As the literature will show, researchers have a foundational understanding about what increases or diminishes commitment for novice and mid-career teachers; however, the literature is unclear about what increases or diminishes commitment for veteran teachers.

(Table 2)			
Career Stage	Years	Description	Commitment
1	1 – 3	Novice teacher, who has lots of enthusiasm to begin career as a teacher. (Day et al., 2006)	Initial commitment is correlated with the novice teacher's excitement to have own classroom (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989).
2	4 – 6	Mid-Career teacher, who has survived the first three years and discovered a solid talent for teaching. (Day et al., 2006)	Definitive commitment is correlated with their confidence of surviving the first three years (Huberman, 1989).
3	7 – 18	Mid-Career teacher, who continues to experiment and refine their teaching skills. At this stage, they will continue to grow as a teacher. (Day et al., 2006)	Definitive commitment continues to present its self in their confidence to experiment with their teaching methods (Huberman, 1989).
4	19 – 30	Veteran teacher, who has discovered a sense of mortality, a lack of desire for promotion, or enjoyment of where they are professionally and no desire to grow. (Day et al., 2006)	Commitment - ?
5	30 +	Veteran teacher, who has an increased concern with pupil learning and experiences, possible disengagement, possible disenchantment, and increased pursuit of outside interest. (Day et al., 2006)	Commitment - ?

In Day's model, the first stage is the launching of the career, which ranges from one to three years (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). The launching of the career is the novice teacher stage of a teacher's career. At this stage, there is initial commitment (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). Even though there can be easy or painful beginnings, the initial commitment is driven by the enthusiasm of a novice teacher to have his or her own classroom, pupils, and a chance to use the knowledge from their teacher preparation program (Huberman, 1989). The

initial commitment is important to the early years of teaching. Huberman (1989) stated, “teachers with little initial commitment to teaching are not apt to perceive initial difficulties as a matter of survival nor to stress the heady aspects of discovery” (p. 33). In other words, Huberman stressed initial commitment helps teachers to commit themselves to the early years of teaching and perceive it as a time of exploration and discovery. It will provide them with the experience to gradually become better teachers. Therefore, teachers without initial commitment are unable to step up to the challenges of teaching and have no personal desire to put forth extra effort to grow and become a better teacher.

The second stage is a period of stabilization, which is in years four through six years (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). At this stage of a teacher’s career, there is definitive commitment. In other words, the teacher at this stage has made a personal choice to be a teacher (Huberman, 1989). During this stage, the teacher has acquired enough experience and skill to be somewhat successful and has chosen to add to and refine their skills of teaching (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Huberman, 1989). The second stage illustrates commitment as solid for teachers at this point in their career because they have survived the early challenges in their career and have discovered their talent of teaching and are willing to grow. Huberman (1989) added most teachers have been granted tenure, an administrative act that helps to boost a young teacher’s confidence in their ability.

The third stage is a period of new challenges and concerns, which is in years seven through 18 years. This period is best characterized by experimentation, acceptance of professional responsibility for job performance, and times of dismay because of the challenges of teaching (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). While commitment is not explicitly explained, researchers agree teachers at this stage have received enough experience to remain committed

enough to the profession to experiment with their pedagogy and to search for ways to improve (Day et al., 2006; Fessler, 1992; Huberman, 1989). Huberman (1989) added, “there was too much uncertainty, confusion, rigidity and that most attempts to vary instructional treatments produced unpredictable and mostly unwanted results” prior to the third stage. (p.34). Therefore, the commitment of the teachers in stage three presents itself in their new confidence to experiment with their teaching methods.

The fourth stage is reaching a plateau, which is years 19 through 30 years. This stage is best defined by a sense of mortality, lack of desire for promotion, or the enjoyment of where they are professionally with a feeling of stagnation and no desire to grow any more (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). At this stage, teachers begin to plateau. The literature suggests plateauing can be detrimental to teachers’ career (Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Milstein, 1989). Milstein’s work stated longevity in a particular position, low growth organizations, and a worker’s age are factors that make teachers vulnerable to plateauing. Although the literature provides a good understanding of teachers in stage four, it does not mention commitment. The lack of information about commitment in stage four shows a gap in the knowledge about commitment for teachers.

The final stage of a teacher’s career is described as having increased concern with pupil learning, increased pursuit of outside interest, possible disenchantment, contraction of professional activity, possible disengagement, and serenity. According to Huberman (1989), teachers beyond the fourth stage become less active. Additionally, Huberman (1989) stated teachers were worn out; the trend toward disengagement from the organization was strong, even as teachers surpassed 30 years. Once again, there is no literature regarding the commitment of

teachers at this stage. Because there is no mention of commitment for stages four and five, I aim to uncover the nature of commitment for veteran teachers.

Veteran Teachers

The literature in this section will seek to define veteran teacher for my study. Even though there is an earlier discussion about characteristics of experienced teachers, there is no clear definition of a veteran teacher (Day et al., 2006). Additionally, this study recognizes the words veteran and experienced are used interchangeably in some research about teachers; however, my study will use the term veteran teacher.

The word ‘veteran’ has a specific meaning. In Day’s work (2009), he used the Oxford English Dictionary to define veteran. A veteran is a person who “has long experience in a particular field” (Oxford Dictionary, 2006; as cited in Day, 2009). With this definition, Day (2009) stated a veteran teacher is a teacher who has served in education for a lengthy period of time. Although true, this definition lacks a definite number of years by which to identify veteran teachers.

Researchers have different ideas about how many years are required for a person to be considered a veteran teacher. In a study by Rich and Almozlino (1999), veteran teachers had only seven years. In contrast, Teitelbaum (2008) conducted research with only eight years because the study concluded teachers who have taught eight years had already taught one-third of their career. Brundage (1996) conducted a study with veteran teachers identified as having at least 15 years, while Cohen (1988) conducted a study with veterans identified as having 35 years or more. With varying ideas about the years of experience for a veteran teacher, it is no wonder as to why there is no one definition.

Although this study is about veteran teachers, it is not an attempt to define ‘veteran teacher’. Therefore, my study will use Day’s definition of a veteran teacher, which is a teacher who has served in education for a lengthy period of time. For this study a lengthy period of time is at least 20 years. Twenty years was chosen for two reasons. First, the model by Day et al. (2006) recognizes a veteran teacher as someone with 19 – 30 years. Second, I believe all models (Day et al., 2006; Fessler, 1992; Huberman, 1989) will agree teachers with 20 or more years of experiences are indeed veterans.

Summary

In summary, commitment is extremely important. It is important because research stated when a worker’s personal goals are aligned with the organization they will evidence commitment and perform at higher levels to meet the goals of the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). In the area of teaching, the extra effort put forth as a result of commitment proved to have major benefits for schools. Commitment has positive impacts such as dedicated teachers that create engaging lessons and participate in continuous improvement efforts (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

In addition, I believe veteran teachers are an important part of our schools. Veteran teachers are teachers who have a great deal of experience. Their lengthy time as teachers has given them a wealth of know-how and wisdom to improve schools. However, we do not know how their lengthy time as teachers has impacted their commitment or what they need to remain committed.

Thus, my study seeks to understand veteran teacher commitment. My research will produce more information about veteran teacher commitment so we can understand the nature of it. In addition my research will discover if there are any particular individual factors or

organizational factors that shape the commitment of veteran teachers. The better we understand veteran teacher commitment the better we can attend to the unique needs of veteran teachers and reap the benefits of having committed veteran teachers in our schools by fostering their commitment.

Chapter 3: Method

Statement of the Problem

The preceding literature provides a framework through which to understand commitment, veteran teachers, and the lack of understanding about the nature of commitment for veteran teachers. Through the literature review, commitment is defined with three major components. First, commitment is defined as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values. Second, commitment is a willingness to put forth extra effort in the organization. Third, commitment is a strong desire to remain with the organization (Reyes, 1990). All together, these components provide a framework for defining commitment.

The literature review makes it clear commitment is very beneficial to education. Commitment leads to teachers meeting the goals and objectives of the school (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). It is a motivator for teachers to continue learning best practices to improve instruction. Moreover, it is a motivator for teachers to develop positive relationships with the stakeholders of the community (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Commitment allows teachers to rise to the occasion and put forth extra effort to help their school meet the high demands of education in the 21st century.

Veteran teachers play a big role in meeting the high demands of public schools and their commitment is just as, if not more, important as any other teacher. The nature of commitment changes during different stages of a teacher's career. At the novice stage, teachers are initially committed because of their enthusiasm to begin their career with the opportunity to have their own pupils and classroom to use the knowledge from their teacher program. This initial commitment is very important for novice teachers because they have little experience and the initial commitment gives them a personal drive to commit themselves to the school and put forth

the extra effort necessary to meet the goals of the school (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). As teachers progress in their career they gain more experience and skills to support their enthusiasm in early years of teaching. By the sixth year of teaching, a teacher has definitive commitment because they have made a personal choice to put forth extra effort to continue teaching, refine their skills and continue to meet the goals and objectives of the school (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). Even by 18 years, teachers continue to have a strong background in teaching to support their commitment (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989).

The literature provides understanding of commitment, how it relates to novice to mid career teachers, and what negatively or positively correlates with commitment. It does not provide an insight into commitment of veteran teachers. Beyond 18 years of teaching, the commitment of teachers is ill-described. The extant research does not explicitly discuss the commitment of teachers beyond 18 years of teaching.

The fourth stage of teaching includes years 19 - 30. At the fourth stage teachers begin to feel a sense of mortality and lack of desire for promotion, yet there is a feeling of enjoyment with where they are professionally (Day & Gu, 2009). The research shows contradicting information about the professional life of a veteran teacher. On one hand, some veteran teachers have a strong sense of commitment, while others begin losing motivation, which leads to detachment and early retirement (Day & Gu, 2009). The literature also states veteran teachers are subjected to plateauing and the possibility of disengagement from the school (Huberman, 1989; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). The literature about veteran teachers and their work lives is very informative, but there is no specific data about the commitment of veteran teachers.

Purpose of Study

The information about veteran teacher commitment is deficient. The methodology in this chapter provided a structure to research the experiences of veteran teachers. The data collected about the experiences of veteran teachers helped to develop a deeper understanding of veteran teacher commitment and discover experiences that could diminish the commitment of teachers and practices that can help foster veteran teacher commitment to preserve the wisdom and experience of veteran teachers.

Christopher Day researched veteran teachers in 2009. In his study, he researched veteran teacher commitment, resiliency, and quality retention. Day used data from a mixed method study conducted with over 300 teachers in 100 schools. He used semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather data. Day's research revealed a negative description of veteran teachers along with a call for further research about what builds and diminishes veteran teacher commitment. Thus, this study took up the challenge to understand veteran teacher commitment and what builds or diminishes their commitment.

In comparison, my study used qualitative methods to focus on veteran teachers, who are motivated and committed to their jobs in order to learn more about their commitment and the experiences, which have strengthened or lessened their commitment to the school. The information from my study about veteran teacher commitment information can be shared with administrators. Administrators can use the information from this study to understand veteran teacher commitment, so commitment can be fostered among veteran teachers. Additionally, their experience, wisdom, and leadership can be used to improve the school culture and curriculum.

Research Questions:

1. How do veteran teachers define teacher commitment?

2. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that encouraged or sustained their commitment?
3. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that discouraged or threatened their commitment?

Researcher's Role

My role in this research project has been the researcher. In this role, I have been a key instrument in understanding the commitment through the stories of my participants. I learned about commitment by interviewing and listening to the stories of my participants. In addition, I was responsible for analyzing and coding the data of my study. It is also important to note I was really unsure what I would find, so I used an emergent design. The emergent design provided me the opportunity to be flexible with my research and let the data guide me to a deeper understanding of veteran teacher commitment.

In addition to being the primary researcher, I am also a teacher and I feel I am a very committed teacher. In my opinion, a committed teacher is someone who works hard, cares for their students, and a team player on the faculty. I am not a veteran teacher and I did not have preconceived ideas about the commitment of veteran teachers. My sole purpose as the researcher was to understand the commitment of veteran teachers.

Assumptions

This is a study to understand the commitment of veteran teachers more clearly. First, I assumed schools put more resources into novice teachers, thereby deepening and strengthening the commitment of novice teachers. Also, I assumed veteran teachers are overlooked and not provided resources to strengthen their commitment. Moreover, I assumed veteran teachers have enough wisdom and experience to remain committed to the school's goals and purposes on their own. Additionally, I assumed veteran teachers experience commitment in a ways that may differ

from novice or mid-career teachers. Finally, I assumed the perspective of veteran teachers is worthwhile to pursue and veteran teachers would talk to me about their commitment. Also, I assumed veteran teachers would be open and honest about the commitment and experiences as veteran teachers.

Procedures

The procedures in this study followed a narrative approach as a method to collect and analyze the experiences of veteran teachers to understand their commitment. The narrative approach was best for my study because the experiences of veteran teachers were a primary focus in my study. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized, “Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it” (p. 18). The experiences of the veteran teachers helped me to understand veteran teacher commitment and what strengthened or diminished veteran teacher commitment. Also the narrative approach provided flexibility to analyze, restory, and present the data so it best represented the experiences of the participants and provided new knowledge about veteran teacher commitment.

Participants

I collected the data in this study from a sample of 10 veteran teachers (See Appendix A). Each veteran teacher had at least 20 years of experience. Twenty years of experience was chosen as the minimum because there is consensus among researchers that 20 years qualifies a teacher as a veteran (Day et al., 2006; Fessler, 1992; Huberman, 1989). In addition, I used 10 participants in this study as a way to add depth to the data about veteran teacher commitment and confirmability to the responses of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, the participants in this study varied in grade level and were from both elementary and secondary levels. Three teachers were from elementary school grades. Four teachers were from middle schools grades, and three teachers were from high school grades. The different grade levels among teachers added confidence to the transferability to other veteran teachers regardless of grade level.

The participants were committed veteran teachers in public schools and identified with the help of the school principal. Because principals have a personal relationship with the teachers in their schools, the principals nominated committed veteran teachers from their staff to participate in this study. I contacted each principal through e-mail with IRB approved documents attached to the e-mail (See Appendix B). In addition, each principal had the same criteria for nominating veteran teachers. My criteria for veteran teachers required principals to look for veteran teachers with at least 20 years of experience and veteran teachers committed to their school. After the principals granted access to the participants, I contacted participants through e-mail with IRB approved documents to determine a meeting time and place for interviews (See Appendix B). I informed participants of their rights and all of the procedures of the study before interviews took place to reassure the participants of the worthiness of the study and my ability as a researcher. All interviews were in locations determined by the participants for their comfort and convenience. Seven of the participants interviewed in their classrooms. Two participants interviewed in the media center of their respective schools. One participant interviewed on a college campus, which was a more convenient location, due to a schedule conflict.

Data Collection

I interviewed participants. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) stated, “interviews are an attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view and unfold the meaning of their

experiences” (p. 1). Kvale and Brinkman’s statement emphasized the main goal in this study, which was to learn about teacher commitment from the participants’ point of view as well as their experiences of supports for and hindrances to their commitment. The interviews were semi structured, which was best because I had formal questions to ask participants and the opportunity to ask follow-up questions (See Appendix C). Each interview lasted at least one hour with the longest lasting one-hour and a half. I taped the interviews on a digital recorder. Afterwards, I saved the interviews to a password protected USB drive to protect the data, so they could be transcribed for later analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

After the collection of data, I transcribed five of the interviews. Verbal Ink, a transcription company, transcribed the other five interviews. The researcher and Verbal Ink transcribed the data verbatim to ensure the transcripts included were the words of the participants and not the subjective paraphrasing of transcribers. Because the data were transcribed verbatim, there was natural stammering of the participants. I omitted the natural stammering of the participants in the findings section of this study for the sake of readability. In addition, the researcher wanted the data to be representative of the participants, who were knowledgeable professionals interviewed for this research study.

Because this was an emergent design, open coding was best suited to analyze the data. Open coding allowed for flexibility in the data analysis process. I was really unsure about what I would find and open coding was a way to remain open to unexpected themes that emerged from the data. Open coding helped to organize the information into manageable chunks for analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I read the data several times, until the codes became repetitious and easier to identify within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As I found passages in the data, I

coded them and placed them into a matrix to organize the emergent codes and themes (See Appendix D). I identified 40 categories that defined commitment and described the experiences that encouraged or threatened the commitment of veteran teachers. Afterwards, I read the coded data several times to group similar codes into larger themes (See Appendix E). Then, I used the data in a way that best represented the findings of my study.

Confirmation of Research Findings

I confirmed the research findings of my study through member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I gave the participants an opportunity to confirm their responses to ensure honesty and integrity in the reporting. I gave them the transcribed version of their responses and allowed them to read their responses. I used the feedback to correct any misinformation during transcription or add any relevant information participants' felt was necessary to reflect their opinions.

Ethical Issues

Research comes with ethical issues must be addressed by the researcher. As a researcher I considered the rightness or wrongness of my actions as a qualitative researcher in relation to the people whose lives I studied, my colleagues, and those who sponsored my work (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, I developed a rationale for the importance of this study, a proposal of how the data would be gathered, analyzed, and presented, and the impact the knowledge produced by this study will have on veteran teachers and administrators all of which helped me to think through the process and the ethical issues.

Informed consent was an ethical issue considered for this research study. In order to ensure proper informed consent, I submitted an IRB to Auburn University. I gave participants the IRB approved documents and informed them of the study's purpose and procedures. The

IRB documents helped to establish clear understandings of the research goals and solid relationship between the participants and researcher. The transparency of this research study helped to obtain strong data from the participants.

In addition to informed consent, the confidentiality of the participants was another ethical issue. In order to prevent breaking the confidentiality of the participants, veteran teachers have pseudonyms to protect their identities. In addition, other identifying information was not included in this research study.

Finally, I considered other risks for this study. I relied upon veteran teachers sharing stories about their experiences. Because a person's experience is personal the participants may have felt uncomfortable disclosing some experiences. In order to overcome this ethical issue, I ensured privacy and confidentiality. The informed consent notified participants that raw data would only be seen and stored by my major professor and myself. Moreover, the consent documents were a binding agreement for the researcher to not disclose any information to break the confidentiality of the participants. In addition, I secured all data on a password protected USB drive and locked in a filing cabinet whenever it was not being used for the purpose of this research study.

Limitations

There were three main limitations in this study. One limitation of this study was the sample size. Only 10 veteran teachers interviewed for this study. There is no guarantee the experiences of the veteran teachers in this study are representative of all veteran teachers in public schools in the United States. Because I accept many people have their own truths and experiences, it is impossible to generalize this study to all veteran teachers. This study can only confirm the data for the veteran teachers of this study with the hope their experiences transfer to

other veteran teachers. A second limitation of this study was only one male participated in this study. Only having one male participant left questions as to whether or not there are different experiences for male veteran teachers.

Another limitation of this study was the limited number of representative schools. Just as the veteran teachers are not representatives of all veteran teachers, the schools in this study are not representative of all the schools in the United States. Schools provide different experiences for different teachers and there is no guarantee the schools in this study provide the same experiences as other schools.

Chapter 4: Results

The aim of this study was to better understand veteran teacher commitment. The responses from veteran teachers in this study led to data that answered fundamental questions of this research. The following are questions answered by this research study:

1. How do veteran teachers define teacher commitment?
2. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that encouraged or sustained their commitment?
3. How do veteran teachers describe experiences that discouraged or threatened their commitment?

The data in the following sections illuminate the meaning of commitment to these veteran teachers and the experiences that encouraged their commitment. In addition, the data provided an understanding of experiences that threatened the participants' commitment to education.

Commitment

One of the most practical definitions of commitment "is the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Porter et al., 1974, p. 604). Because this research is about veteran teacher commitment, it is important to include Reyes (1990) definition. It states teacher commitment is an individual's identification with and involvement in the school setting. Both of these definitions emphasize the importance of both the identification with and the involvement in the organization. The participants in this study provided data, which supports they identified and involved themselves in their schools with a sense of intrinsic commitment and responsibility.

The participants in this study defined their commitment as an intrinsic feeling. All of the participants felt their commitment resulted from an innate feeling of doing their job to their personal satisfaction. Ruth, a teacher for 40 years, shared many interesting experiences about

being a veteran teacher. She felt being committed was a part of who she was as a person and a teacher. Ruth stated, “I mean I wouldn’t do things any other way. I mean it’s just my work ethic...to half do my job, to come in here unprepared that’s just not me.” Her statement implied her involvement in her school was strong simply because of her personal commitment to do her job to her personal satisfaction.

Esther was another veteran teacher in this study, who taught for 33 years and provided insightful information. Esther echoed Ruth’s point. She stated, “I have a reputation and I have some pride. I want to be the best at what I do.” Esther’s pride played a pivotal role in driving the strength of her identification and involvement in her school. Both, Esther and Ruth, were representatives of the veteran teachers in this study because they represented the desire of veteran teachers in this study to do their very best each day.

Other participants expanded on the idea of a personal feeling of commitment. They stated their commitment came from their love of teaching, love of the subject area, and a desire to share knowledge. Paul, a veteran teacher with 44 years, was the only male in this study and brought another perspective to this study. He stated:

I mean this is all I’ve ever done as far as a main job. I’ll miss it I do believe. I’ll miss the kids. There are some things I could do away – do without, too. . .but, I really love what I do.

Paul’s statement, in addition to his 44 years of experience, showed he loved his job on a daily basis. Even though he admitted some things were difficult, he committed himself to his school and students. The love he felt for his students and school motivated him, drove his commitment, and helped him forget the little things to focus on the students and school.

In addition to the love of teaching, these veteran teachers enjoyed sharing knowledge. Phoebe, a visual art teacher for 32 years, described herself as a committed teacher. Her commitment was not only her love of teaching, but her desire to share knowledge with her students. She stated, “If I go to my conferences and learn something different, I try to come back and do it with the kids.” Phoebe’s commitment was in her knowledge of developing trends and when she shared new knowledge. She admitted she recognized technology as an important part of art now. Therefore, she attended conferences every year to return with new visual art techniques she taught to her students.

In addition to sharing knowledge with students, Phoebe shared her vast knowledge with her colleagues and interns. She said:

When I first started I was like wow I wish I knew as much as some of these other teachers that have been here a long time and now I feel like I’m there and sharing what I learn with new teachers; like I love to have interns. I don’t get very many of them, but I like to show them things to do and how to do things, learn new things and they teach me, too.

Phoebe’s commitment was in her desire to share with other teachers, too. She recognized being a novice teacher was difficult. Therefore, her desire to share her knowledge and mentor a novice teacher played a role in her commitment.

The intrinsic commitment described by veteran teachers also stemmed from their love of subject areas. The veteran teachers in this study showed a strong love for their subject areas, which drove their commitment to do their best each day. Mary, a 28-year veteran teacher, described her love of business technology classes as stretching all the way back to when she was in high school. Mary stated: “Well, when I was in high school my favorite classes were my

business classes. And this was when we typed on typewriters. We didn't even have electric typewriters or anything...but I loved my business teachers." Paul also stated his commitment was his love for physical education. Paul stated:

In our field, PE, it's a little bit different than what you guys in academics are. I enjoy watching kids have a good time. I enjoy watching kids have fun, benefit from activities, and just enjoy themselves. I think that's the biggest, it's watching kids enjoy themselves and get experience, self-confidence, and self-esteem, that's important.

Paul saw physical education more than just students playing and participating in games. For Paul, physical education was a way to provide students with new experiences in order to build their self-confidence and self-esteem. His point of view was representative of all teachers in this study, whose internal commitment stemmed from the value they saw in their respective discipline.

Responsibility

In addition to intrinsic commitment, responsibility became an apparent theme these veteran teachers used to describe their commitment. Mary had one of the most compelling things to say about her commitment to education. Mary stated:

I think teachers are called to a profession and I feel called by God. This is what God wanted me to do, and I have done it, and I feel responsible to Him and responsible to those that I teach and those that I work with. And that is what keeps me going. That is what makes me feel like that I am committed.

The responsibility Mary discussed was one other teachers felt. In Mary's case, the responsibility she felt helped her stay committed to education for over 25 years.

Rebekah, who taught for 23 years, also felt a responsibility to her students, colleagues, and the parents of her students. Similar to Mary, Rebekah felt a responsibility to God. Rebekah stated:

Well, you couldn't come to school all day every day, or I couldn't, if I didn't feel like I was here because of a higher calling. There is so much just yuck. I mean, a faculty meeting and a paper you have to turn in and reports that are due. I think it'd be really hard to stick in this profession because of all the extraneous sort of things that go on, if you didn't really feel like you were doing what God wanted you to do. It's hugely rewarding to feel like you're in God's will, and you're doing what he's called you to do.

Mary and Rebekah shared interesting thoughts about their commitment. Both veteran teachers felt a strong sense of responsibility to their jobs and their religious beliefs played a prominent role in their commitment.

Esther also discussed how responsibility drove her commitment each day. Esther stated:

If I don't prepare them someone may miss an opportunity later on. I tell the kids all the time, "Don't shut a door. Don't say I am not going to learn this because you don't know down the road you might decide you want to be a doctor or I want to be an engineer. If you close the door on Math, you'll be playing catch up and catch up is so hard." So, I don't want them

to play catch up. I don't want it to be my fault that I didn't prepare them. If it means learning something about a computer then I'll learn about the computer. If it's changing the books next to the last year, it's like ok we'll change the book and write new lesson plans. I mean it's learning new techniques. If that's what it takes to make sure the doors don't get shut. That's what you do. That's what you signed on for. When you became a teacher that's what you said. You were going to educate children. Not until you get tired of it. If you get tired of it, quit. If you don't want to do it, leave. But you've made this commitment to these children and they depend on you. Some of them don't have anybody else. A lot of parents will tell me that they can't do the math, so if they don't get it from me they're not going to get it. That's important to me.

Esther spoke extensively about her responsibility as a teacher which showed how committed she was to education. Here Esther described how it was her responsibility to prepare students for future careers. She also mentioned if she did not do a good job, she might cause a child or a teacher to miss out on an opportunity in the future. It is also important to note Esther spoke about teachers' responsibility to grow professionally because things change and teachers must be willing to change and grow accordingly.

Sarah, a 33-year veteran elementary teacher, echoed Esther's thoughts about responsibility. Sarah stated, "I mean, if the kids are not getting it, it's my fault. I have got to figure out how to do it so I can make it better, so they can understand it." Sarah placed a full weight of responsibility on her shoulders, too. In her statement, she clearly believed the success

of her students began with her. Moreover, it was her responsibility to remain committed and find ways to connect with her students, so they were successful.

Miriam, a 20-year veteran teacher, shared the same thoughts about how her feelings of responsibility motivated and kept her committed. Miram shared the following thoughts:

[Administrators] put you in a position that you are advising other students, other teachers, and so to make my department great I try to do all I can and just like the students I try to set high expectations for myself and for the teachers that are working with me. I have also been a mentor to several teachers and I try to teach them what I know and I try to learn with them as I go along myself. I try to learn something as things come and I try to learn something to better what I am already doing all the time. So, you know, I think that being in a position where you can't slack has helped motivate me, you know to continue to do my best in every area."

Miriam's thoughts about her commitment showed her responsibilities motivated her each day. In her case, it was not only the responsibility she had to her students, but also to her colleagues to set high expectations to make everyone around her including herself successful.

Sustainment of Commitment

Even though this study showed commitment is defined as driven by intrinsic motivation and a sense of responsibility, this study also sought to understand other factors, which encouraged and sustained the commitment of veteran teachers. Through data collection, time, impact, support, and success encouraged and sustained the commitment of veteran teachers in this study.

Time. Phoebe discussed the experience she gained over time sustained her commitment.

Phoebe stated:

I am more committed now than when I first started teaching. When I started I was really committed because I wanted a job, but now I am committed because I have been in it so long that when I retire it's going to be hard. So I think teachers are committed, but the more you are in it the more you have at stake.

Phoebe's thoughts about her commitment showed her experience kept her committed to teaching.

In addition, Phoebe showed she invested a lot in her career over time and she had a lot at "stake," so it was important to her to remain committed to her career.

Paul reiterated the point of commitment growing with time. He said:

I feel like I'm far more committed now than I was. I've always been committed to it and I've always cared about it. I became even more committed to it because I had more time. You know, when your family's young you're constantly involved in their activities, and once they've moved on. I've had more time to put into this job and been able to be a little bit more conscientious about being involved, being committed, that kind of thing.

Paul said he has always been committed to education, but his commitment grew stronger with time. As mentioned earlier in this study, teaching is an arduous job with many responsibilities, which may sometimes conflict with the personal lives and responsibilities of a teacher. Paul's thoughts provided an understanding about veteran teachers and how their commitment may

strengthen due to less responsibilities in their personal lives (i.e. adult children), so they may participate more fully in the school's culture and organization.

Both Phoebe and Paul discussed time in two ways, time in terms of years teaching and time in terms of more time to devote to teaching. The data here show time can be very important in both ways. As for Phoebe, time was important because it allowed her to learn more about the job and become more invested in the job. In regards to Paul, more time was key to being committed because of the many roles he had to play (i.e. parent, church member, etc.). Now, Paul's children are independent and it allowed him to become more committed to his school. Regardless of their different meanings, Phoebe and Paul touched on the importance time plays for the commitment of veteran teachers in this study.

Impact. In addition to experience, impact on student lives emerged as a theme and described the ways veteran teacher commitment was strengthened and sustained. Phoebe shared some thoughts about how school impacted a child. She said:

A lot of people do not worry about the kid's home life, but their home lives affect them here. You've got to find things that will make them a little more interested. Those experiences always make me more committed because there is something that you will find in a kid that will make them like school.

Phoebe's thoughts showed her commitment strengthened because she knew how important it was for her to impact a child's life. Moreover, her commitment remained constant because she understood children have different backgrounds and she had to provide them with the best experiences to ensure a connection and success at school.

Sarah felt her commitment remained constant and strengthened based on the potential impact she had on a child's life. Sarah said: "You're helping others and you're educating the world. It's about making other people better. It's about making other people feel good about themselves, and that's my commitment to it?"

Sarah touched on a subject that showed one of the many important jobs of teachers, which was to make people better and feel good about themselves. Paul shared the same feelings. He felt building self-esteem and confidence was one of the reasons he loved teaching. Both teachers represented the veteran teachers well in this study regarding the importance of impacting a child's life through building self-esteem and confidence.

Phoebe shared the same thoughts and shared an interesting story to emphasize how her commitment increased through her experiences. Phoebe shared this story about a troubled student:

He had never won anything in his life. He placed at the state level and the superintendent paid 50 dollars for his picture, so we could copy it again and at state level it placed and we went to the luncheon. He took art again the next year. Even though he kept getting in trouble in other classes, he would come to my class when he got in trouble and he would take pictures.

Phoebe's story was an example of how she impacted the life of a student. In her story, she tapped into a student's natural talent for taking pictures. She provided this student with an experience he would never forget and hopefully would continue to develop. In cases like this, veteran teachers are able to impact a child's life and hopefully provide them with a potential life long career, an important responsibility according to Abigail, who said,

I try anything and everything so a kid has an experience at so many different things, so they'll find something that they love and hopefully continue to do it the rest of their life. I believe that's my job description.

That's what I try to do.

Some veteran teachers in this study discussed their impact in a different way, but felt similar to other teachers that their commitment strengthened and sustained itself through their impact. Mary spoke to this idea. She said:

It is rewarding for me to see light bulbs come on or to say 'aha' or 'I get it' and that just thrills me, but also to see that I have made a connection with them and hopefully help them some way in their lives because they have certainly enriched mine.

Mary showed a strong connection between her commitment and the impact she had on the lives of her students. Esther felt the same way about her students and experiences. Esther discussed one of the most rewarding experiences as a veteran teacher,

Those days when you are teaching...suddenly everybody's getting it or even if it's not everybody, the majority of them are getting it, especially with math. Math is a hard subject for most people and so when you can get this conversation going where they understand it and they're going "wait, wait I get it!" I mean its just like...Whoa! This is why I come here. That to me is just the best.

The impact a teacher makes can be seen on a daily basis with the success teachers have when students are able to get a full understanding of the days lesson, however, the lasting impact a teacher can have on a child's life is not always known until years later. Here Ruth shared:

I guess during the school year it is so hard and I guess the rewarding thing is when the child comes back years later and says thank you and they do. And I have had many students that I see and they're all grown, "Yeah, I remember you. You were hard, but you taught me a lot." They don't appreciate it now just because of the age, but they do appreciate it later on and they come back and say thank you.

As shown by Ruth's response, the impact on a child's life may not be known immediately, but for Ruth it was a rewarding feeling to find out years later how much of an impact she had on a child's life. Esther shared a wonderful experience:

I have a stack of letters from one of my former students. She's teaching Math and I did not know this, but she is all the time telling her students about I was the reason that she wanted to teach Math and they all [students] wrote me notes. "Thank you for teaching our teacher." My favorite was one of the little, I think it was a boy. "She says that you are a really good math teacher, but I can't believe that you can be better than she is, but thank you any way." I mean it's just like, wow, I am really making a difference.

Esther said a veteran teacher could only experience this experience. She said it was definitely an awesome moment in her career and one that gave her great confidence in her abilities as a teacher. Moreover, Elizabeth, a 30-year veteran math teacher said successes such as the one she mentioned were important to her commitment. She said,

[I think to myself sometimes], let me go back and, and look at these good things, and that motivates me to come back the next day and the next year.

I think those successes are what helps me to be committed like when you've worked so hard to prepare a lesson, and you see it actually work and click.

The successes of students do not come easy. Mary reflected on how hard it was to prepare students to be successful. She stated:

Well, I have been an FBLA advisor for 27 years and a good example of that is that when you work with your kids and get them ready to go to competitions and you work with them and work with them and work with them then you go and they win, you get excited about that with them.

Even though it is difficult to prepare students to be successful, Mary said preparing students for success strengthened and sustained her commitment.

Support. Another theme identified from the data was support. For the veteran teachers in this study, support was an important area in order to sustain their commitment. As already noted, teaching is an incredibly difficult job, but with the proper support it can be a manageable and fulfilling career. This section will discuss support from administrators and colleagues and how it sustains commitment.

Support from administrators. The veteran teachers in this study noted support from the administration, colleagues, parents, and students helped to motivate them and sustained their commitment. Miriam talked about how important administrative support was for her. She said:

I think that it is very important that administrators be there to support the teachers and to help. You will get so much out of a teacher if you encourage them, listen to what they are saying and help them.

Miriam said her commitment strengthened with the support of administrators. Similarly, Phoebe believed support was important for her and other veteran teachers. Phoebe said:

When the administrator motivates you and supports you and things, like with the grants that I used to get...one year I won a national award and the principal at the time helped pay my way to the conference that I went to. It made me feel good and it made me want to do more.

Administrators provide support in many ways. Here paying for Phoebe's way was a tremendous boost in her commitment to write more grants and attend more conferences for the sake of better instruction.

Providing support may not always be in monetary form, sometimes support comes in the form of appreciation from administrators. Mary said:

Anything, any pat on the back and I know it works for me and it's got to work for other people as well to think, I am working hard and he or she recognizes it and that just really helps me in my commitment.

Support from colleagues. While administrators play a role in supporting teachers, veteran teachers also felt that the support from their colleagues played a role in their commitment. Esther was teacher of the year at her school a couple of times. She shared:

The first time I was chosen as teacher of the year, I had no clue. It was like, oh you're teacher of the year. You need to go get your picture made, and it wasn't all the paper work, and I was like, oh that's kind of neat. But a few years ago and I got chosen as teacher of the year again. And, I got a standing ovation which was you know...You don't often get a standing ovation. But, another teacher said, "wow, finally one that makes sense."

And you know when you hear that...wow. This is what these people think of me, just one more bar that I've got to live up to. They have just raised the bar on me... I've got to do even better now."

Esther's experience of the support and recognition of her hard work was very meaningful. An experience such as Esther's might strengthen and sustain the commitment of other veteran teachers, too.

Endangerment of Commitment

The commitment of veteran teachers is vitally important and should be sustained until veteran teachers choose to retire. Veteran teachers are often confronted with difficult challenges on their jobs. Through semi-structured interviews, participants in this study discussed experiences that endangered or threatened their commitment. Lack of support, leadership, lack of student success, and irrelevant tasks emerged as threats to commitment.

Lack of support. One of the areas of concern for veteran teachers was the amount of support they receive from parents, colleagues, and the administrators. The participants in this research study discussed how not having proper support threatened their commitment to their school. Elizabeth said:

Those were the discouraging times when you felt all alone and you didn't have that support group, but, I'm hoping that we've progressed past that and teachers aren't holding things in and being less willing to share.

Elizabeth's statement encompassed the feeling of all of the participants about lacking support. Not having support, discouraged her and possibly led to feelings of disconnect within the organization. For some veteran teachers, the lack of support from colleagues might lead to retirement.

Veteran teachers expected the school culture to be supportive. They expected all stakeholders to be supportive of one another. Two participants mentioned it was important to receive support from parents, but when it was not given it discouraged them. Esther in particular was straight forward about how she felt when she did not receive support from parents. She said:

Sometimes you will run into the parent that just doesn't really respect you.

For whatever reason. . .they are mean to you, they're rude to you. I can understand a thirteen year old being rude to me. But when someone comes up to me and you can't have a decent conversation or respectful conversation. Then I'm thinking, "Why do I do this? Why am I here?"

The area most important to veteran teachers in this study to receive support was from the administration of the school. As Abigail put it, "not supporting the teacher is probably the worst thing you can do." It is important to mention that she recognized that when she was wrong it was important for her to take responsibility, but she felt it was important to be supported especially when she made the right decision.

Discipline is an area in which veteran teacher's look for a great deal of support. Discipline is often an area where teachers need support from administrators particularly when something needs immediate attention or a teacher has unsuccessfully used strategies to resolve a classroom situation Phoebe said:

Sometimes you get a class that is full of kids that are behavior problems and you think it's you. I had one last year and I was ready to quit. You know you send them to the office and sometimes you need the administration's back up and sometimes you get it and sometimes I don't know if we have it.

Phoebe emphatically stated she was ready to quit, due to a challenging class. In addition she stated she was unsure of the support she was receiving from the administration at times. She discussed an incident, which she felt could have been handled a lot better. The way the incident was handled was a real challenge to her commitment.

Leadership

The lack of support from administration emerged as a theme from the data. Veteran teachers also felt that bad leadership was a challenge to their commitment. The participants felt leaders who were disrespectful, used an authoritarian leadership style, or were not visible challenged their commitment. Mary provided an example of how one's commitment can be challenged with difficult leadership. She shared this experience:

I had one that was really unkind to me and it really broke my heart because I had never been talked to in an ugly way. I was old enough to be this man's mother. You know and I felt like that was a childish thing. That is one of the times that I told my husband that I can't go back. He yelled at me in front of other teachers and students.

According to Mary this was a very challenging moment in her career. It almost drove her to retirement because of the situation with her administrator.

In addition to disrespectful leaders, leaders with an authoritarian style were a challenge to their commitment. Participants felt not being included in school decisions was a challenge to their commitment. Abigail discussed why it was so important to seek input from veteran teachers. Abigail stated,

It's much better when you ask me something, ask them [other teachers] something. Let's collectively decide the schedule, what we're going to

adopt, how we're going to spend our money. That feels like you have a stake in what you're doing, and that's huge."

Here Abigail implied a leader with an authoritarian style of leadership was counterproductive to the faculty. When leaders do not seek input from teachers, it caused feelings of disconnect and threatened commitment.

Besides leadership styles, Sarah and Miriam raised points with regards to leaders. According to Sarah and Miriam, the visibility of leaders was important for the school. Miriam spoke about the importance of leader visibility for students. She stated, "Administrators are pulled out of the building so much they need to be here because the students need to see their presence." Sarah also spoke about how important visibility of leaders was for both teacher and students. She said:

You can have some administrators that are in their office and don't really know what's going on. I've had administrators, when they walk in the room, and you go, "Are they here to evaluate me? What are they looking for? Why are they in here?"

Both Miriam and Sarah's perspective implied an administrator's presence makes a difference in the leadership ability of administrators. The visibility of administrators allow them to develop a supportive relationship rather than being a distant administrator, who only shows up to discipline or handle the bad things at school.

Lack of Student Success

Another area of concern for these veteran teachers was their concern for the lack of student success. At the veteran stage of a teacher's career, student success is very important

(Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). Participants in this study felt student success was very important to them and the lack of student success was a challenge to their commitment. Ruth cited the achievement gap as a major concern and challenge to her commitment. She said,

The achievement gap and being one to 25. I can't reach them. So that's the least rewarding thing. They need me one-on-one. I know at this age they need someone to sit down with them and watch them do their homework That's the least rewarding because they need one-on-one. A lot of them need my attention and I can't give them the attention that they need with one to 25.

Ruth emphasized her students needed her attention, but it was very difficult to give them the attention they needed because of the one to 25 ratio she had in her classroom. She said it was a challenging and unrewarding feeling for her.

In addition to the achievement gap, Miriam discussed how the unwise decisions by students affected their ability to be successful at school. Miriam described the following as an unrewarding experience, "If there is a discipline issue and that student is lost to either the alternative center or some place where you don't have the opportunity to still be apart of that child's life." When a student was sent away, Miriam felt the opportunity to impact that child's life was gone. As stated earlier, the opportunity to impact a child's life is very important to these veteran teachers, which means having a child taken away is potentially damaging to a veteran teacher's commitment because the opportunity to impact their life is taken away. In Miriam's case, she lost the opportunity to develop a relationship with a student to impact their life through educating them with the skills needed to be successful in school.

Finally, veteran teachers also addressed the changing times have brought about more apathetic students, which presents another challenge to developing successful students. Phoebe said:

It makes me feel like times are changing. I don't feel like its my fault, but I take it personally and I get upset when kids don't want to do things. It frustrates me. It makes me almost want to retire sometimes like... what can I do?

Paul echoed the same concerns as Phoebe about the apathy of students. He said:

It just seems like there's increasingly more and more kids that don't care about their progress in school and don't care about their school. They're more destructive than they are beneficial. I think that's another area that's really kind of a pet peeve, I guess shall we say of mine is the kids not caring about their school.

As Paul implied, it was very difficult to do a good job of developing successful students when the students seemed to not care about their academics or school. Because these veteran teachers were concerned with student achievement, apathy was definitely a challenge to their commitment.

Irrelevant Tasks

Finally, veteran teachers in this study reported they were willing to work hard and do whatever it took to develop successful students. They had numerous responsibilities and professional development requirements in order to meet the expectations of their school. Veteran teachers reported it was easy to get overwhelmed by the day-to-day tasks. Elizabeth said:

And what ends up happening many times, and in my experience has been the veteran teachers, the committed – not even necessarily veteran teachers, even the novice teachers, those committed teachers get overwhelmed.

They are the leader in three professional learning communities. They are on the continuous improvement team. They are on the technology team – and so what happens is because you [administrators] need that report written, and continuous improvement plan, you're going to the people who you know will get the job done. And that ends up overwhelming those people. And because they're committed, because they want to do a good job, they get totally overwhelmed.

One of the most overwhelming things for the veteran teachers in this study was the paperwork, which many felt increased and became a challenge to their commitment. Mary said:

The least rewarding...there is a lot of rewards...the least rewarding would probably be a lot of what I consider red tape or fluff that has nothing to do with what I am trying to teach my students or what I am trying to build or help them with. But you know, I do my job, but it gets worse. That is the discouraging thing about me. They take so much away from the time we could be spending teaching doing what I call red tape.

In addition, these veteran teachers reported anything not relevant to them or their students was a challenge to their commitment. Paul stated:

I think that's one of the biggest frustrations that I have I think is to sit through an in-service that has absolutely nothing to do with my area of subject that I teach. Now I know that there are some things that are very

important, and I understand that, and I appreciate what everyone else does.

But there's absolutely no reason for me to sit through an in-service that has absolutely nothing to do with my area or area of subject that I teach.

Paul completely understood some things were very important, but he clearly felt with all of his responsibilities that sitting through something not applicable for his subject area was not a good use of his time and challenged to his commitment.

Rebekah echoed Paul's. She said:

The least rewarding are the things that you have to do that really don't involve the kids...the committees that you have to be on...the reports you have to write. If it's not applicable to the children and enriching their lives and helping them prepare for a brighter and a better future – and I understand some of that's necessary, but – a lot of it isn't.

The veteran teachers in this study indicated they were willing to work tirelessly for their school. Consequently, one of the more important points in the data was that the work must be relevant. Anything considered less than relevant or not in the best interest of the students was a threat to the commitment of these veteran teachers.

Summary

The data presented in this study provided a deeper understanding of veteran teacher commitment. One of the first findings was veteran teacher commitment was an intrinsic feeling. The commitment veteran teachers reported in this study was an innate feeling that drove them to work at a high standard based on their personal expectations. Veteran teachers in this study enjoyed their job as a teacher. Secondly, the data informed us these veteran teachers were committed because they felt a personal responsibility to their students, parents, and co-workers.

They felt a personal responsibility to produce successful students because it was expected from the stakeholders and themselves.

Furthermore, this data also informed us of what sustained the commitment of the veteran teachers in this study to teach well beyond the requirements of retirement eligibility. The data showed time was a reason the veteran teachers continued teaching. At the veteran stage, these teachers felt comfortable with the day-to-day challenges of teachers because of the amount of time spent as a teacher. Moreover, the data reported the impact these veteran teachers had on the life of a student meant a great deal to their commitment. The impact a teacher can have on a child's life can be profound. These veteran teachers embraced the reward, even when the impact they had on a child was not immediately known. Finally, teaching has its challenges, so support was very important to these veteran teachers. They felt support from their administration and colleagues was very important to their commitment.

In addition, the data show how commitment is threatened among these veteran teachers. First, just as support strengthens commitment, the lack of support can threaten commitment. Teaching is a demanding profession and doing it well it requires support in order to do it well. Also, leadership, or inadequate leadership, can threaten commitment, especially if the leadership cannot provide the support needed for teachers to do their jobs. Finally, student success was important to these veteran teachers; however, the lack of student success was a threat to their commitment. In addition, the irrelevant tasks obstructed their ability to teach and were a threat to their commitment.

Lastly, this study provided an answer to the question: how should scholars and educators describe veteran teacher commitment? The extant literature offered answers to this question for teachers at other career stages. Researchers described novice teachers as having initial

commitment, while mid-career teachers have definitive commitment. In addition, researchers defined veteran teachers with a range of descriptors that did not all fit the veteran teachers of this study (See Table 2). Descriptors such as no desire to grow, disengagement, disenchantment, and increased pursuit of outside interest did not fit the veteran teachers in this study. Thus, the question remains, how does one describe veteran teacher commitment? First, veteran teachers in this study were aware their role as a teacher would come to an end. Also they lacked a desire for promotion because they were content with their position based on the data from each veteran teacher in this study. Moreover, there was no data to support disengagement or disenchantment from them. Based on the data in this study, I concluded these veteran teachers have generative commitment. (See Table 3) Their increased concern with pupil learning experiences and enjoyment of their job led to this conclusion.

The idea of generativity originated with Erikson's (1959) stage model of personality development. In Erikson's work, he described eight stages of development. In the seventh stage generativity versus stagnation, Erikson defined generativity as "an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (p.97). This idea of generativity aligns with the ideas expressed by veteran teachers in this study. Their responsibility to their students and the impact they have on students' lives strengthened the commitment of these veteran teachers.

In Erikson's seventh stage, he also recognized the possibility of stagnation. He stated stagnation results from the lack of interest in providing guidance to the next generation (Erikson, 1959). None of the data suggested these veteran teachers lacked interest in supporting the next generation of students. However, the data supported any tasks irrelevant to impacting students' lives and lack of support encouraged stagnation or threatened their commitment.

Overall, the veteran teachers provided rich data to illuminate veteran teacher commitment. Therefore, the data showed veteran teacher commitment as generative commitment. The veteran teachers of this study showed “interest in establishing and guiding the next generation”. Their love of their subject and making a meaningful impact on their students is the basis of their commitment as veteran teachers. Moreover, the data showed no stagnation among these teachers and illuminates the positive qualities of veteran teachers overshadowed by the data in Day’s research.

(Table 3)			
Career Stage	Years	Description	Commitment
4	19 – 30	Veteran teacher, who has discovered a sense of mortality, a lack of desire for promotion, and enjoyment of where they are professionally. (Day et al., 2006)	Stagnation, according to Day's research, is found at the veteran teacher stage. Teachers may show enjoyment of where they are professionally, but a sense of mortality evidence a lack of desire to make changes in their professional lives. (Finch 2014; Erikson, 1959)
		Veteran teacher, who enjoys their professional career. They have lots of experience and knowledge and enjoy using their experience and knowledge to make a meaningful impact of their student's lives. (Finch, 2014)	Generative commitment, according to Finch's research, is found among the veteran teachers in this study. These teachers enjoy teaching. Their commitment is based on the desire to make a meaningful impact on their students. (Finch 2014; Erikson, 1959)
5	30 +	Veteran teacher, who continues with a sense of mortality and has an increased concern with pupil learning and experiences (Day et al., 2006)	Stagnation continues to present itself at this stage according to Day's work. Teachers continue to enjoy their job and concern themselves with student learning and experiences, but still have a sense of mortality. (Finch 2014; Erikson, 1959)
		Veteran teacher, who enjoys their professional career. They have lots of experience and knowledge and enjoy using their experience and knowledge to make a meaningful impact of their student's lives. (Finch, 2014)	Generative commitment, according to Finch's research, is found among the veteran teachers in this study. These teachers enjoy teaching. Their commitment is based on the desire to make a meaningful impact on their students. (Finch 2014; Erikson, 1959)

Chapter 5: Discussion, Limitations, Implications, and Future Research

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of veteran teachers and their commitment. While the literature on teacher commitment is detailed and robust, the literature about veteran teacher commitment is deficient. Therefore, I sought to add to the literature. Using qualitative methods, I illuminated veteran teacher commitment, so educational leaders would have a better understanding of veteran teacher commitment to increase the leadership capacity of veteran teachers and continue the growth and development of students and early career teachers in their school.

One of the most striking findings in the literature suggests a trend of veteran teachers leaving the field of education. According to a 2011 report from the U.S. Department of Education, in 2008 – 2009 the largest subgroup of teachers to leave the field of education was veteran teachers. Because of the exodus of veteran teachers, many believe a wave of wisdom and experience left the field of education too. The data in the report are relevant to this study. If the number of veteran teachers who retire continues to rise, there is an increasing risk of losing valuable wisdom and experience. The knowledge gained from this study will allow administrators to support the commitment of veteran teachers, so they do not lose veteran teachers as soon as they are eligible for retirement.

This study yielded useful findings to help further the understanding of veteran teacher commitment and expand the current literature. First, this study uncovered the positive qualities that many veteran teachers possess. In Day's research, veteran teachers were described in a negative way. Teachers with negative qualities of veteran teachers overshadowed the positive qualities found in this research. According to this study, veteran teachers described their

commitment as an intrinsic motivation and sense of responsibility. Throughout the study, veteran teachers indicated being a committed veteran teacher was a part of their personality. Each veteran teacher discussed they have very high expectations for themselves and they work very hard to meet those expectations. In addition, veteran teachers in this study stressed they felt a certain responsibility to their students, colleagues, and other stakeholders, such as parents. Thus, this study found intrinsic motivation and sense of responsibility as ways to describe veteran teacher commitment.

Additionally, this study yielded findings regarding what encourages or strengthens veteran teacher commitment. Time emerged as a theme. Each veteran teacher in this study had at least 20 years experience, and only two veteran teachers had fewer than 25 years of service. These veteran teachers believe time was very important in the progression of their career. Without the time to gain more experience, they felt they would have never been comfortable enough to make it to the veteran teacher stage of their career. With time, veteran teachers of this study felt they were able to experience many ups and downs that allowed them to learn and become great professionals. Additionally, time allowed their personal lives to become less demanding, thus allowing them to invest more time in the school.

Furthermore, the time the veteran teachers invested in their career was really important to veteran teachers. Over time, they invested a great deal to gain a lot of valuable experience. The veteran teacher stage was the point where these teachers began to see the benefit of their investment and each was able to do the most for their pupils, with whom veteran teachers are most concerned. Moreover, the school received the benefits of the investments they made in providing veteran teachers with professional development opportunities.

In addition to time, veteran teachers spoke about the impact they had on their students. The data confirmed the importance of student impact for veteran teachers. In the literature, veteran teachers were described as teachers who had an increased concern with student learning and experience (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). Veteran teachers in this study discussed how important it was to provide students with the best education they could provide for them. According to the data, the impact teachers had on students happened in two ways. First, there was an immediate impact teachers had on students, wherein many students learned new skills and were successful at applying those skills in classroom settings. Second, there were long-term impacts, which students exhibited in various ways from graduating high school or college to becoming productive members of society. Veteran teachers in this study discussed both ways of impacting students' lives and both ways were encouraged participants' commitment.

Additionally, support emerged as an important way for commitment to be strengthened among the participants in this study. The support participants referred to as being important came from administrators and colleagues. Participants felt when they felt supported by administrators and colleagues their commitment was strong. Not only did data from participants support this claim, but previous research also supports this data. Teachers who work in team-teacher settings are likely to be committed because team settings are conducive to collaboration and support for each other from within the team (Meister, 2011). In addition, Ware and Kitsanas (2002) stated teachers who were able to gain the support of the principal found themselves more committed to the school.

The data provided information that suggests how commitment is fostered and provided evidence of threats to veteran teacher commitment. One of the prevalent themes participants mentioned, as a threat to veteran teachers was the lack of support. Participants felt not having

the support of administrators was the biggest threat to their commitment. Discipline was the most important area for which these veteran teachers expected support. They felt anytime an administrator did not provide support in a discipline matter, it left them with a desire, perhaps fleeting, to quit the profession.

In addition to lack of support, leadership style was another theme mentioned as a threat to commitment. Leadership styles with respect for workers, supportiveness, and seeking input from teachers were thought of as ideal. Conversely, participants felt autocratic leaders threatened their commitment. These veteran teachers felt disrespectful behaviors, lack of support, and unwillingness to seek teacher input were leadership qualities, which deterred commitment among staff. Their perspectives of how leadership affected their commitment is echoed by researchers who found leadership styles such as transformational leadership and distributive leadership can foster commitment and motivation in a staff (Hulpia et al., 2009; Scribner, Sawyer, Myers, & Watson, 2004; Geijsel et al., 2003).

Another important finding from the data about threats to commitment was how the lack of student success threatens veteran teacher commitment. These teachers felt strongly about the importance of student success and their desire to provide students with experiences to foster their success. Conversely, anytime those students were not successful, it damaged their commitment, especially if they felt they had done everything possible for them.

Finally, I found the veteran teachers in this study do not like irrelevant tasks. They consistently disclosed they were willing to go the extra mile for their respective schools, but only if the tasks were meaningful for the students and the school. The participants said being asked to do anything not in the best interest of the students or the school was a threat to their commitment.

All together, the findings in this study help to begin filling a gap in the literature about the nature of veteran teacher commitment specifically. Novice teachers have what is called initial commitment; commitment based on the general excitement of starting a career in education (Day et al., 2006). Then, I found mid-career teachers have definitive commitment, commitment based on the successful growth of a teacher, along with the confidence to continue teaching (Day et al., 2006, Huberman, 1989), yet the literature to-date does not provide a label for the commitment of veteran teachers. As a result of the data collection and analysis for this study, I believe generative commitment is an apt a label for veteran teacher commitment. Generative commitment is a term rooted in Erik H. Erickson's idea of generativity. Generativity is found in Erickson's stage model of personality growth (1959). Generativity is defined as "an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (p.97). As I analyzed the data and identified the themes, it became evident that generativity was the best way to label veteran teacher commitment (see also Andrzejewski, 2008).

In previous research, veteran teachers are described as professionals with the enjoyment of where they are professionally and an increased concern with pupil learning and experiences (Day et al., 2006; Huberman, 1989). My study supports the description of veteran teachers by describing them as intrinsically motivated and finding enjoyment in their career. None of the veteran teachers in this study gave an indication they were tired of the classroom or seeking promotions. Rather, each veteran teacher enjoyed discussing their current career and the success of current and former students. Likewise, these veteran teachers discussed the importance of building confidence and self-esteem to help students lead productive lives. Together, previous research and this study has the potential to support the idea of veteran teacher commitment being labeled as generative commitment.

Limitations

While this study yielded important and novel findings, there were a few limitations to this study. One of the biggest limitations of this study was it was not generalizable. There were only 10 participants in this study. Even though the participants provided great data about their commitment, I am unable to claim the findings in this study represent all veteran teachers' experiences and perspectives.

In addition, the teachers of this study were all from suburban areas. I was left to wonder about the differences between the responses from a rural or urban veteran teacher. Additionally, schools are not the same across the country in general. Therefore, the schools in this study are not representative of all the schools in the United States thereby limiting my ability to truly understand veteran teacher commitment.

Another limitation of this study was only one male veteran teacher participated. Only having one male participant leaves questions as to whether or not there are different experiences for male veteran teachers.

A final limitation of this study is the potential for researcher bias. Even though I have been honest about the implementation of the methodology, there was still potential for researcher bias in this qualitative research.

Implications

A major contribution of this study is the assertion veteran teacher commitment can be described as generative commitment. The data in this study lends itself to the idea these veteran teachers were unlike many of the veteran teachers in Day's study whose description are described as stagnate in their careers. The teachers in this study had more generative qualities and were less stagnant in their roll as veteran teachers. Thus, this study helps to call school

administrators' attention to the generative qualities veteran teachers may possess and use those teachers in ways to help improve the schools.

In addition, the generative qualities of veteran teachers illuminated by this study also has implications in the area of motivation. The generative qualities of veteran teachers in this study imply veteran teachers are motivated by their impact on students and the support they receive from administrators and colleagues. Therefore, this study implies more teachers can be motivated and kept positive through seeing the impact make and feeling the support of colleagues and administrators.

Another implication in this study is found in the veteran teachers' love of content and love of teaching. The love of content and teaching has a strong connection with Shulman's (1987) pedagogical content knowledge. Shulman's idea of pedagogical content knowledge concerns itself with how teachers teach and ways they present it to students. Veteran teachers in this study spoke about their love of teaching students and presenting it in a way to make them successful. The connection with pedagogical content knowledge of veteran teachers in this study implies administrators must be sure to consider the specific needs and characteristics of veteran teachers. By considering the pedagogical content knowledge of veteran teachers, it can ensure proper and meaningful professional development. In other words, if administrators consider the characteristics of veteran teachers, then professional development in schools will become more content specific and grade level specific, thus sustaining the commitment of veteran teachers.

Additionally, another implication of this study includes administrators' ability to provide veteran teachers with opportunities to share their knowledge and experience. Because generativity is the proposed way to describe veteran teacher commitment, it is safe to assume veteran teachers are interested in preparing the next generation of veteran teachers. The veteran

teachers in this study implied they enjoyed sharing their knowledge with their colleagues as well as interns. Therefore, administrators should develop more opportunities for veteran teachers to mentor novice teachers. The opportunity to mentor novice teachers might provide the veteran teachers with responsibility, which participants noted as sustainment of their commitment. Moreover, the opportunities to mentor should be structured in a way to prevent it from becoming an irrelevant task, which the data showed to be a threat to commitment.

This study also implies administrators should make sure everything that veteran teachers are involved with has purpose for them and most of all their students. The veteran teachers of this study noted tasks irrelevant to their students threatened their commitment. Administrators should find innovative ways to make tasks, such as faculty meetings, department meetings, and professional development meetings worthwhile than just another thing on a list for veteran teachers. This includes developing professional learning communities where teachers can focus on the school's mission statement and become more focused on how to help their students (DuFour, 2004).

Finally, this study suggests student impact was an important element for the veteran teachers in this study. Student impact allowed the veteran teachers in this study to recognize the fruits of the labor. Each veteran teacher felt good about being apart of a student's success, whether it was passing a test or graduation from high school. Therefore, this study implies school administrators should find more innovative ways to celebrate the successes of students. With the help of technology, administrators should be able to help teachers see students successes high school and beyond.

Future Research

This study examined veteran teacher commitment with the intent to understand what strengthens and diminishes the commitment of veteran teachers. The data collected provided insightful viewpoints from ten veteran teachers about veteran teacher commitment. Although the data were very helpful in illuminating veteran teacher commitment, they also raised several questions for further research on veteran teacher commitment.

One of the limitations of this research is it is not generalizable to other veteran teachers. The research in this study is only guaranteed to be applicable to the veteran teachers in this study. Therefore, the research raised the question of what other veteran teachers have to say about their commitment. Moreover, the teachers in this study were from suburban areas, so it would be equally interesting to know what veteran teachers have to say in rural or urban areas.

In addition, there was only one male interviewed in the research study. I interviewed only one male veteran teacher, which raised the question of what other veteran male teachers have to say about their commitment. Researchers should investigate if there are differences in what male and female veteran teachers have to say about their commitment. This may be of particular importance because Aydin, Sarier, and Usyal (2011) found men were more likely to exhibit affective commitment, while women exhibited continuance comment. Future research in this area should query this claim.

Another area of further research on veteran teacher commitment is its significance for other teachers. Veteran teachers in this study felt a sense of responsibility towards their colleagues. This sense of responsibility implied these veteran teachers work hard for their colleagues and possibly inspire their colleagues to work hard in return. Thus, this idea leads me

to question the significance of the impact of the commitment of veteran teachers have on other teachers. Do other teachers become more committed because of veteran teacher commitment?

Veteran teachers have the capacity to be great leaders. Even though they have the capacity to be great leaders, it does not mean they are used in that capacity or ready to accept a role as a leader. Therefore, this research raised the question of whether or not veteran teachers are being prepared for leadership roles. Moreover, are veteran teachers being used in leadership roles?

Finally, two participants discussed how their religion played an important role in the commitment to teaching (see also Palmer, 1998, 2003). Both participants said they felt their job as teachers were responses to a higher calling. The connection between spirituality and commitment seemed very important to them. Future research should work to understand the connection between spirituality and commitment.

Overall, veteran teacher commitment is an important part of schools. Veteran teachers have the capacity to have a huge impact on their schools. They have lots of experience and the motivation to continue working as long as they are appropriately engaged in the workplace. The veteran teachers in this study have provided data to support the capacity veteran teachers have to impact schools. In addition, their data have provided a better understanding of veteran teacher commitment and its generative qualities.

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Appendix A

	Self-Description	Content and Grade Level	Years Teaching	School Context
Abigail	Committed Veteran Teacher	Physical Education K – 2 nd	29 years	Highland Elementary, Urban, Mid – High SES
Elizabeth	Committed Veteran Teacher	Advanced Placement Geometry and Math – 9 th and 10 th grade	30 years	Midtown High School, Urban, Mid – High SES,
Esther	Committed Veteran Teacher	General and Advanced Math – 8 th Grade	33 years	Letterman Middle School, Urban, Mid – High SES
Mary	Committed Veteran Teacher	Business Technology – 8 th Grade	27 years, 19 years high school, 8 years middle school	Hope Middle School, Urban, Low – Mid SES
Miriam	Committed Veteran Teacher	Physical Science – 8 th Grade	20 years, middle school (5 years private school)	Hope Middle School, Urban, Low – Mid SES
Paul	Committed Veteran Teacher	Physical Education – and 9 th -12 th grade	38 years	Bayside High School, Urban, Mid –High SES
Phoebe	Committed Veteran Teacher	9 th Grade – Visual Arts	32 years	Bayside High School, Urban, Mid – High SES
Rebekah	Committed Veteran Teacher	Reading, Language, Math – 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th Grade	22 years	Roosevelt Elementary, Urban, Mid – High SES
Ruth	Committed Veteran Teacher	8 th Grade – General Math	40 years	Letterman Middle School, Urban, Mid – High SES
Sarah	Committed Veteran Teacher	Kindergarten – Reading and Math	34 years	Highland Elementary, Urban, Mid – High SES

Appendix B



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

INFORMED CONSENT for a Research Study entitled “A Narrative of Veteran Teacher Commitment”

You are invited to participate in a research study to understand veteran teacher commitment, specifically what builds, supports, or diminishes commitment. The study is being conducted by Jonathan M. Finch, Auburn University graduate student, under the direction of Carey Andrzejewski, Assistant Professor in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a veteran teacher with 20 or more years of service and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss your experience as a veteran teacher. Your total time of commitment will be approximately one hour.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no risks or discomforts involved in participating in this study.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to provide data that will provide the educational community, especially school administrators, with knowledge about veteran teacher commitment. I believe that the more the educational community knows about veteran teacher commitment the more likely it is that veteran teachers will be supported and used in more leadership positions to improve education. Please note that I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Will you receive compensation for participating? You will not receive any compensation.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, there will be no costs.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can answer some, none, or all questions. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundation Leadership and Technology, or your school system.

Participant's initials _____



Page 1 of 2

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation will be used to complete dissertation requirements at Auburn University and possibly future publication in a professional journal and/or presentations. Please note that your name or identity will not be included in the final dissertation or future publications or presentations.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Jonathan M. Finch at finchjo@auburn.edu or Dr. Carey Andrzejewski at cea0011@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@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

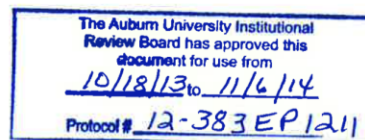
Investigator obtaining consent Date

Printed Name

Printed Name

Co-Investigator Date

Printed Name



Appendix C

Interview Record: Descriptions of Veteran Teacher Commitment

Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Description of Interview Structure:

The questions below are a part of a semi-structured interview. The structure below includes prompts and follow-up questions; however, I am leaving room for myself to ask additional follow up questions as they arise during the interview.

Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching? Do you remember why you chose to become a teacher? Could you tell me about why you chose to become a teacher?
2. How long have you been at the school that you currently work?
3. Can you tell me the most rewarding thing about being a teacher? How does it make you feel?
4. Can you tell me about the least rewarding thing about being a teacher? How does it make you feel?
5. Do you consider yourself a committed teacher? What does being committed mean to you?
6. How does it feel to be committed to your work as a veteran teacher?
7. As a veteran teacher, describe some experiences in as much detail as possible that motivated you to put forth extra effort at your school?
8. As a veteran teacher, describe some experiences in as much detail as possible that made you feel as if you no longer wanted to teach?

9. Can you recall a time when your administrative staff motivated you to put forth extra effort at your school? If so, describe the situation in as much detail as possible? What feelings did you experience?
10. What experiences with your administrative staff have you had that made you feel uncommitted to your school or a program in your school? What type of feelings did you experience?
11. How can administrators encourage commitment among other veteran teachers? Describe the most important experiences that administrators can provide for veteran teachers.

Appendix D

Code	Definition	Exemplary Data	Cross references
1. Ability to keep up with the changing times	Veteran teachers have the ability to be flexible and change according to the times	<p>I mean some people teach something's the same way all the time. Well, I've done it for 30 years I'm not changing now. You know that is a good thing sometimes, but sometimes it is not a good thing because times are changing. So you've got to kind of go with the flow. 167 – 171, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>If I go to my conferences and learn something different I try to come back and do it with the kids because times are changing, especially with technology a lot of old teachers don't want to learn the new technology but I keep up with it because that's where it's going in the arts. I just bought an I pad because all the kids use them and I bought an I phone because I had to keep up and you can do so many things on them, but yeah I'm pretty committed. 142 – 147, Phoebe, 3</p>	Mrs. Logan says this several times throughout her interview. Cross-reference it with other veteran teachers. I think that this is a great trend to note in my findings. If you are not able to change in education, then you are doomed because times change and students change. Technology has really been a catalyst for the changes that are seen in education today.

		<p>my school currently has a motto, "Whatever it takes." So my commitment level, what am I willing to do for my students. And, and I, I, I've told principal before, you know, "If you told me that, you know, standing on my head in the corner would help my students learn, I might go, 'You really think so?' but then I would try it," because that is my number goal, and my number commitment is what do I need to do to help my students learn, and to help my students grow, and to help my students become mature. Elizabeth, 186 – 194, 7</p> <p>– the students have changed. How students learn have change. All of those things have changed, and, and, therefore, we have to change. And I think part of being a committed teacher is w-, being willing to change and be willing to do things to meet every – every student doesn't learn the same way. Ah, every student is not an auditory learning, and is not gonna</p>	
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		learn just by you talking to 'em. Some have to see it. Elizabeth , 230 – 236, 7	
2. Impact on students lives	Veteran teachers have the ability to impact student lives. They can impact students short term (in	So there's another, you know, 25-30 kids that you coached. So it's kinda neat part about education that you get to, you	

	<p>the classroom) and long term (after students have graduated from high school).</p>	<p>know, you get to know a lotta kids and, and, and that's a good thing, and there are a lot of good kids. And you like to see 'em be successful. It's always neat when you see 'em and they're, you know, they're – they've been suc-, they're successful, think? They're out. They've got families. They got kids.</p> <p>They've, you know, they gone off to school and, they, you know, got good jobs and we see that a lot. 833 – 842, Paul, 6</p> <p>it's just being open to the kids and those kind of things experience making, put an extra effort, you know, maybe I can touch somebody else, maybe I can get somebody else interested, maybe I don't want to give up on this one. 236 – 238, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>You know, know the kid, a lot of people not worry about the kid's homelife, but the home lives affect them here and you've got to find things that</p>	
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		<p>will make them a little more interested 245 – 247, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>those experiences always make me more committed cause you know that there is something that you will find in a kid that will make them like school. I think there are some programs that we need for these at risk kids, a vocational type program at this level that we are missing because we are so academic based that we are missing out on some of these kids that don't have it. Some of these kids aren't going to be academia they are not going to college they are going to go to trade school, which they don't have very many of or they are going to... you know we still need people to drive garbage trucks, we still need people to work in manual labor and they are not servicing those kids and that is something that I wish we could work on. I say that every year. I wish that we could do something for the kids that don't want to be..go to college. 258 – 269, Phoebe,</p>	
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		<p>3</p> <p>You're helping others and you're educating the world. It's – it's about making other people better. It's about making other people feel good about themselves, and it's all about – that's my commitment to it, you know? 534 – 537, Sarah, 10</p> <p>You know, and being able to be a part of their lives, and encourage them, and help them, and, um, hopefully minister to them a little bit, you know. And then, um, there's still kiddos that I keep in touch with that are married and have children, you know, so, um, to me, it's the relationships that you get to – the bonds you get to form with so many neat kiddos. 192 – 197, Rebekah, 8</p>	
3. Influence of former teachers	Inspiration to become a teacher came from former elementary or secondary teachers	Well, when I was in high school my favorite classes were my business classes. And this was when we typed on type writers. We didn't even have electric type writers or	

		<p>anything. But I loved my business teachers, 9 -11, Mary, 4</p> <p>Influence of my old teachers and encouragement of my husband, there you go. 24 – 25, Mary, 4</p>	
4. Encouragement from spouse	The spouse plays a role in encouraging and supporting the veteran teacher in their career.	<p>Well, I went to college but I did not finish my degree and then I got married and started a family and then when my husband was transferred to Arkansas, they kept calling me to substitute. And I was almost a full time employee substituting. My children were small, I was a stay at home mom so I could do that. My husband said, if your going to do that you should go ahead and get your degree. 13 – 18, Mary, 4</p> <p>Influence of my old teachers and encouragement of my husband, there you go. 24 – 25, Mary, 4</p> <p>I am blessed to have a wonderful husband. He always</p>	

		listens to me and says have you tried this or have you tried that or it will be all right honey it will be ok you'll go back and it will be fine and it is. 184 – 187, Mary, 4	
5. Love of subject area	The commitment to education stems from the love of the subjects.	Well, when I was in high school my favorite classes were my business classes. And this was when we typed on typewriters. We didn't even have electric typewriters or anything. But I loved my business teachers, 9 – 11, Mary 4	There are a wide variety of subjects Math, Science, Art, Business Tech, P.E.. Each one says that they love their subject.
6. Internal/intrinsic commitment	Commitment that comes from a teacher's personal desire	I mean I wouldn't do things any other way. I mean it's just my work ethics. Uhh.. to half do my job, to come in here unprepared. That's just not me, so I don't know how it feels to be prepared. I am always prepared. I always try to come in here prepared. It takes me because I am older. It takes me longer. I have to come up here on the weekend to get ready for the next week. Alright, I didn't come yesterday because we had a long church service. So I didn't get my board up. I feel bad. I	

		<p>had the wrong date up their. It just doesn't....I feel bad when I am not prepared. That's what it is. Things just don't go smooth. I have to have things organized. 127 – 135, Ruth, 2</p> <p>it's just my personality..you understand. If you give me something I am going to figure it out. So that's what I did. It's just me. It's not like someone put a whip over me. I just said this is interesting, so I'll go learn it. 256 – 258, Ruth, 2</p> <p>I have a reputation and I have some pride. I do not want to be. . I want to be the best at what I do and I don't know if I am always the best, but I am going to make a really good try at it. So, I don't want at the end, where there are students going "oh yeah. . I had her. . I didn't like her" I am sure there are students, who didn't like me, that's fine, but I think I am skewed to the other side a little bit. I think there are more that liked me, than don't. .but I think that's it. .It's my pride. I want to be the best</p>	
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		<p>at what I do 108 – 114, Esther, 1</p> <p>When I come here everyday, I'm going to be ready to give it my best shot at whatever I have to teach to try to make sure that everybody gets it. Like here, I've got to go through the textbook, I've got to come up with a lesson with all the new technology. I've got to make slides. I've got to make sure that. . I fell down on the job today. We were going over homework and I looked at the problems and thought. .yeah those look good. . .and there's one like..uhhh.I'm not sure I know how to work this problem. I was working on it as you came in because I said I'll get it for you tomorrow. I've got to have that tomorrow because I told them I would have it. .and that's what it is. It's I'm here.</p> <p>218 – 226, Esther, 1</p> <p>I fee like there is something that I have to offer them and every day I come here I try to</p>	
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		<p>give it my all. SO it doesn't bother me to get up and come everyday. 100 – 102, Miriam, 5</p> <p>I mean, I just – I just – I've never been a slacker. I've always wanted to do the best I can. 470 – 471, Sarah, 10</p> <p>You know, I – I often say to my aide, I go, "I wish I could just roll the ball out and let them play," and I can't, because that's not in my, you know, DNA. I don't do that. 313 – 315, Abigail, 9</p>	
7. Calling/awesome feeling of knowing that you are doing what you are supposed to do	The idea that you are/were destined to be a teacher.	<p>I think teachers are called to a profession and I feel called by God to do... this is what God wanted me to do and I have done it and I feel responsible to Him and responsible to those that I teach and those that I work with. And that is what keeps me going that is what makes me feel like that I am committed. 140 – 144, Mary , 4</p> <p>Well, I don't – you know, you couldn't come to school all day</p>	

		every day, or I couldn't, if I didn't feel like I was here because of a higher calling. 209 – 211, Rebekah, 8	
8. Responsibility to God, teachers, students	The feeling that you are accountable to your profession (teachers, students, and in some case God)	<p>I think teachers are called to a profession and I feel called by God to do... this is what God wanted me to do and I have done it and I feel responsible to Him and responsible to those that I teach and those that I work with. And that is what keeps me going that is what makes me feel like that I am committed. 140 – 144, Mary, 4</p> <p>It makes me feel happy and that I did what I was supposed to be doing. I mean that was one of my goals was to make kids appreciate art and like learning because even though they are learning stuff here in art. I try to teach them things that will apply to other classes. They might not be an artist, but they might be a doctor or they might be another teacher, they might be a veterinarian or anything like that, but things that I teach them apply to their</p>	

		<p>other classes and that kind of... and some of them that come in may not wanting to learn maybe I can spark something and help them through school. 56 – 63, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>I just don't take sick days and when I'm out of the classroom it's for a real reason, so I'm going to be here. And I'm going to prepare for my students. I am going to have a lesson. We are not going to sit here and watch a movie. We are going to do a lesson. Now, I get a lot of complaints. "Why can't we do nothing? Can't we just sit?" No, because I'm here to teach. I am not here to babysit you. We're going to learn something today. And um...I'm gonna be prepared. Like, when we take a test by all the energy I have [bangs on desk] I am going home to grade those. SO I can get them back to you the next day. So I am committed and I going to my part to here and I just wish I had their commitment to do their part. 102 – 111, Ruth, 2</p>	
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		<p>They just. . you know if I don't prepare them someone may miss an opportunity later on. You know I tell the kids all the time. . You've got to. .don't shut a door. Don't say I am not going to learn this because you don't know down the road you might decide you want to be a doctor or I want to be an engineer and if you close the door on Math, you'll be playing catch up and catch up is so hard. So, you know it's like I don't want them to play catch up. I don't want it to be my fault that I didn't prepare them. If it means learning something about a computer then I'll learn about the computer. If it's changing the books next to the last year. It's like ok we'll change the book and write new lesson plans. I mean it's learning new techniques. If that's what it takes to make sure the doors don't get shut. That's what you do. That's what you signed on for. When you became a teacher that's what you said. .You were going to educate children. Not until</p>	
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		<p>you get tired of it. If you get tired of it quit, if you don't want to do it, leave. But you've made this commitment to these children and they depend you. Some of them don't have anybody else to . . you know. . . If they go home and a lot of parents will tell me that they can't do the math. So if they don't get it from me they're not going to get it or form a teacher. . . so .um. . that's important to me. I've got children I wanted it for them. I've got grandchildren now. I want it for them. SO I have no patience for teachers that "oh this is my last year. I'm just gonna coast." Go out on a high note, don't go out on a low note." . . I'm just rambling 116 – 135, Esther, 1</p> <p>oh, I can't go back into the classroom. . . Yes, I can because there are more children coming and there may be more sick children coming, but they need to learn, too. You just keep on. 198 – 201, Esther, 1</p> <p>this is what it means to be a</p>	
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		<p>teacher sometimes. It's beyond the math. It's being there for this child. 324 – 325, Esther, 1</p> <p>I just need to be the best that I can be cause you don't know who is going to walk through that door. 377 – 378, Esther, 1</p> <p>I mean, if the kids are not getting it, it's my fault. I got to figure out how to do it so I can make it better, so they can understand it. 452 – 453, Sarah, 10</p> <p>I try to make an asserted effort everyday to give them something hands on and something that..not just stand and talk and you know have them to communicate with each other. 47 – 49, Miriam, 5</p> <p>put you in a position that you are advising other students..other teachers and so to make my department great I try to do all I can and just like the students I try to set high expectations for my self and for the teachers that are</p>	
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		<p>working with me. I have also been a mentor to several teachers. And I try to teach them what I know and I try to learn with them as I go along my self and I try to learn something as things come I try to learn something to better what I am already doing all the time. So, you know, I think that being in a position where you can't slack because there is no such thing as slacking in that position so I think that has helped motivate me, you know to continue to do my best in every area. 134 – 143, Miriam, 5</p>	
<p>9. Investment of time and effort</p>	<p>Veteran teachers see their work as an investment. When there is a return on the investment, it increases their commitment.</p>	<p>Well, I have been an FBLA advisor for 27 years and a good example of that is that when you work with your kids and get them ready to go to competitions and you work with them and work with them and work with them that they're forth the effort then you go and they win, so you get excited about that with them. 153 – 156, Mary, 4</p> <p>it's just like all the – all the</p>	

		time you put into it is worth it. [in reference to the fact that when you take the time to develop a lesson and you see it going well] 77 – 78, Abigail, 9	
10. Fortitude	The ability to continue teaching during the times of adversity.	it has become increasingly more demanding as the years have gone on and I have found myself thinking do I want to continue to do this. You know and I pull myself together and say yes I do. I mean this is what I want to do I have done the profession that I wanted to do, but when you....during those times when you are at the lowest and everybody gets there when you are at your lowest and you feel like I am doing all I can and I can't do anything else and you just sometimes want to go poof..you know just throw up your hands and say I'm tired of this So I say that and I will get tired of it and it does challenge my commitment and then I just go to bed and get the next morning and start all	

		over again. 166 – 175, Mary, 4	
11. Support from administrators	The support from administrators is very important in staying committed to teaching.	<p>that's been the way it has been with a lot of my administrators some it has been a professional relationship, but a very good relationship and I never felt like they were looking down at me or anything. I have been very very blessed very fortunate that I have had those kind of people to work with and work for. 243 – 247, Mary, 4</p> <p>I will tell you when you become an administrator is you need to back up your teachers. Even if you think they are on the wrong side. You back up your teacher in public and then have a discussion with them in private. 348 – 351, Mary, 4</p> <p>I didn't always see eye to eye with him, and that's okay. But he was always there. Cafeteria? He was there every</p>	

		<p>lunch break. He had his notebook. He was writing down everything that went wrong, and kids were in detention hall. You know, he was always there. And I, I think that was important. I think that was important. And I, I – and we don't have that as much now, you know? 1187 – 1193, Paul, 6</p> <p>I used to get visiting artists to come in I would get grants from the Alabama State Council of Art and that was when one administrator was here and he was real supportive of it and all the teachers were pretty good with it. 348 – 350, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>when the administrator they'll motivate you and support you and things um like with the grants that I used to get..um one year I won a national award and the principal at the time helped pay my way to the conference that I went to. It made me feel good and it made me want to do more 358 – 361, Phoebe, 3</p>	
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		I think just feeling like I've got the support. The principal that I taught here first, Dr. Tom McCormick, I can remember. I don't know if it was during the interview, but at some point he said, "I will always support you, all the way, if there's a problem, I will all ways support you, 535 – 539, Esther, 1	
12. Encouragement from administrators	An act or word that promotes commitment.	They were encouraging. They would pat you on the back. 220 – 221, Mary, 4	
13. Appreciation from administrators	An act or word that shows gratefulness and encourages commitment.	<p>They would say you are doing a good job or Thank you for being on this committee or thank you for going the extra mile. Thank you for doing this in the community. 221 – 223, Mary, 4</p> <p>So anything, any pat on the back and I know it works for me and it's got to work for other people as well to think, I am working hard and he or she recognizes it and that just really helps me in my commitment all along because I know they are pretty much in the same boat that I am in.</p>	

		<p>They've got somebody above them telling them to do this, this and this that they don't have time to do. We're all in it together and when you have administrators like that you feel like you are part of the team rather than a subordinate. 223 – 229, Mary, 4</p> <p>I think everybody like their back patted every little bit, you know? And I, I, I'm not one – I'm not a big one – say, "Oh, you know, he's just doing a fantastic wonderful job," you know? Or but just, you know, little appreciation, you know, "Hey, appreciate you doing this," you think, and, "Thanks for your help." Just – you know, I don't need much, you know, just – I just want – I, I, I personally like to just be – well, let – no, it's not a phrase. I guess be appreciated for what you do. 1457 – 1464, Paul, 6</p> <p>say you have a teacher that's doing a great job doing something, or takes care of a</p>	
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		<p>certain situation that does a good job, you know, "Yeah, nice job. Appreciate it." You know? Everybody likes to be appreciated, you know, if they if they're doing something or even a little something, or just, just, you know, the fact that, that the administrator knows they're there. 1469 – 1475, Paul, 6</p> <p>I've had notes from the central office thanking me for things and the school board will recognize you for different things. When the administrator supports you and says that you do a good job. 365 – 368, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>Sometimes with the ELL kids, some of them will win awards or even just have art work up and they want to be in art. I will get an e-mail from and administrator saying thank you for the good job that you are doing with these kids and that even the kid that I talked about before with the photography, you know. 368 – 371, Phoebe, 3</p>	
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<p>14. Wanting to share knowledge</p>	<p>Sharing what they know with other teachers and students</p>	<p>when I first started I was like wow I wish I new as much as some of these other teachers that have been here a long time and now I feel like I'm there and sharing what I learn with new teachers; like I love to have interns. I don't get very many of them, but I like to show them things to do and to do thing, learn new things and they teach me, too. 179 – 183, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>I, I think, um, asking a teacher to be a mentor for a new teacher, that's huge. That helps you to be not only committed to your students, but to their students as well, to help them improve, to help them be better. 536 – 539, Elizabeth, 7</p> <p>If I go to my conferences and learn something different I try to come back and do it with the kids because times are changing, especially with technology a lot of old teachers don't want to learn the new technology but I keep up with it because that's where it's</p>	
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		going in the arts. I just bought an I pad because all the kids use them and I bought an I phone because I had to keep up and you can do so many things on them, but yeah I'm pretty committed. 134 – 140, Phoebe, 3	
15. Seeing the impact they have made	The commitment of a veteran teachers is sustained by the impact they have made on the lives of others.	<p>Well, I guess it works both ways , but the most rewarding thing is a file that I have full of notes from students and even teachers that I've made in all these states over all these years and the funny thing is that most of them are not thanking me for what I taught them, but for how I treated them. 34 – 37, Mary, 4</p> <p>I'm still in touch with so many of them. I look at e-mails and now they have found me on facebook and so we're friends, so I am seeing their weddings and I am seeing their babies and their college graduations and they are a part of my life and always will be. 48 – 51, Mary, 4</p>	

		<p>I guess during the school year it is so hard and I guess the rewarding thing is when the child comes back years later and says thank you and they do. And I have had many students that I see and their all grown, "Yeah, I remember you. You were hard." [laugh] "But you taught me a lot". So um... they don't appreciate it now just because of the age, but they do appreciate it later on and they come back and say thank you. 56 – 61, Ruth, 2</p> <p>You have to be a veteran teacher for this to happen as much. . when you see someone and they're like do you remember me. A lot of times it's sad because I don't. I can vaguely remember a face or a name, but they'll come back. I had someone at church the other day come up to me and she said" Mrs. Wright," And I was going I was going oh....I was pretty sure I knew her name, but I was afraid to call it out, but she said "I just want to introduce you to my children</p>	
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		<p>and I was telling them about you and you're the reason that I like Math. I mean it's just like. . I have a stack of letters from one of my former students. She's teaching now. . she's teaching Math and I did not know this, but she is all the time telling her students about I was the reason that she wanted to teach Math and they all [students] wrote me notes. "Thank you for teaching our teacher." . . and my favorite was one of the little. . I think it was a boy. . ."She says that you are a really good math teacher, but I can't believe that you can be better than she is, but thank you any way." I mean it's just like . . Wow I am really making a difference. You know it's sometimes as a teacher, you don't always see that, but when you get to the point where I am and people are coming up to you in the grocery store somewhere going. . ."oh yeah, I remember when I was in your class" or " I really liked. . ." and even if I didn't change their mind and turn them into teachers or</p>	
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		people who love Math at least it's like. . ."I remember your class." And you know that's neat. Maybe I have made a difference and helped some people along. 84 – 103, Esther, 1	
16. Seeing students get it/light up	The term light up appears several times in interviews. Light up is equivalent to saying, "the student understands." When a student lights up, it is a great feeling for a teacher because they feel that they have done a good job of teaching. This increases commitment	<p>So it is just rewarding for me to see light bulbs come on to say aha or I get it and that just thrills me, but also to see that I have made a connection with them and hopefully help them some way in their lives because they have certainly enriched mine. 37 – 40, Mary, 4</p> <p>You know? "I, I can hit the ball," or, "I can catch the ball," or I, you know, "I know what to do now." "Oh, really? That's how you do that?" You know, that kinda thing. Just good to see a kid, you know – it's almost like a light bulb, you know, goes off. You know, they, they finally figured out that they can, you know, do things that they didn't think they could do. And I, I think</p>	Participant 4, 6 have said this. I also believe hearing it in Participant 1, 3, and 5.

		<p>that's the biggest g-, is just, it's, it's watching kids enjoy themselves and, and, and, you know, get experience and, and self-confidence so, you know get – positive, you know, like we all talk about self-esteem. Well, that's important, you know. 135 – 144, Paul, 6</p> <p>Those days when you are teaching. . suddenly everybody's getting it or even if it's not everybody, the majority of them are getting it. . especially with math. . Math is a hard subject for most people and so when you can get. .and they get this conversation going where they're understanding it. . and they're going "wait, wait I get it!" I mean its just like. .Whoa! This is why I come here. I mean it just fun..It is. . You just want to clap. That to me is just the best. You know and I see those kids in there going. . "this is fun, this is exciting. I didn't know math could be like this." 74 – 80, Esther, 1</p> <p>So – but it's that light bulb going – it's that – that feeling</p>	
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		<p>that they're learning, and that you're watching them learn, and how – how important it is for them to learn. 209 – 211, Sarah, 10</p> <p>So that helped me I mean it just really helped me to understand that you know my goal that day I reached that goal. So that really is a really great feeling to see when the student has really achieved that goal. 49 – 52, Miriam, 5</p> <p>the most rewarding experience would be..regardless of what you are trying to get over to the students..they actually get and to see that light come on when they get it. And then for the struggling students really get something it is something to celebrate because all of them know they have different learning styles and when you can reach that one that seems to be very difficult at the beginning of the year to see that light come on toward the end getting what you are trying to do that is rewarding</p>	
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		<p>to me. 27 – 33, Miriam, 5</p> <p>When you see the bulb off, things click, and you – you know, then you know, you feel like, hey, I'm making some headway here. 50 – 51, Abigail, 9</p>	
17. Advocate for profession (art teacher)	The ability to make others aware of the needs and importance of the profession	<p>I have always been one of those that has been an advocate for my field...especially the arts...but for education in general. Umm.. I serve on a lot of national committees and especially for art education..I've been on a lot of boards. I have done the state course of study committee twice..um I am currently serving on the national standards committee rewriting the voluntary national standards for the nation and even though it may not affect me because I may be retired when they come out. It will still affect future teachers and future students so I worried and making sure that the right things are taught. 122 – 129, Phoebe, 3</p>	
18. Care about the	The respect for the school,	Well, I, I care a tremendous	

<p>school</p>	<p>facilities, and program. This respect encourages commitment within the teacher.</p>	<p>amount about, you know, as I say, about this gym. This gym itself, the, the facility, taking care of it, having a good program with the kids. Ah, you know, I'm up here and I'm not patting myself on the back at all. Don't get me wrong. I don't want you to think that. 347, 351, Paul, 6</p> <p>I'm cleaning the lobby, making sure everything's in the right spot, getting ready for the next day, that kinda stuff. You know? And, and, and I, I mean I want it to be as, as good as it can be, you know? 357 – 360, Paul, 6</p> <p>it's real frustrating to me, too, when people don't take care of it. You know, people – seems like there's l in there all the time and they don't care of it, and that, that's really aggravating. But, you know, I really, I really care a tremendous amount about the school. I want the school to be successful. I want the kids to be successful. 365 – 369, Paul, 6</p>	
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		<p>I care about the place. I – you know, I, I'll paint walls. You know, I'm, I'm up here painting walls. I'm, I'm fixing things, you know? I'm always doing something to try to keep the place as nice as I can keep it. 376 – 379, Paul, 6</p> <p>Ah, but I, you know, I do, I put a lotta time in up here. Um, and, you know, it's because I care about the place. You know, I care about it. I care about the job. I care about you know, the, the – I want our program in PE to be as good as it can possibly be. Um, that's why we do a lotta the things we do. Um, think, we, we actually – we – like I say, we run the concession stand so we'll have funds for our PE program, you know? We'll keep band-aids out there and lotion out there and stuff like that, little stuff like that. 383 – 391, Paul, 6</p>	
19. Love of	Teaching is an essential	You know? I mean this is all	

teaching	part of the veteran teacher's life. The commitment of a veteran teacher is driven by this love of teaching.	<p>I've ever done as far as a main job, and I – you know, I'll really miss it, I do believe. Ah, I'll miss the kids. Kids keep you young, you know? Kids keep you young. Being around kids all day – you know, I don't – I'm 60 years old, but I don't think of myself as being that old, you know, because I'm around kids all day. I'm around a 14-15 year-old-kid all day <i>[laughs]</i> so, you know, you tend not to think of yourself as getting older, even though you are, because you're with kids all the time – ah, and I think they keep you younger. Just because, ah, you're around 'em all the time. But there some things that I'm really – I could do away – do without, too ____ so I ____ – nah, I, I love – I, really enjoy what I do. 422 – 434, Paul, 6</p> <p>It's, it's enjoyable. Like I just kiddingly say a lotta times, it beats working for a living. Playing with kids all day beats working for a living. 437 – 439, Paul, 6</p>	
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<p>20. Staying outside of the box</p>	<p>The ability to seek out new ways of doing things or keeping up with current trends</p>	<p>Also, don't get inside a box and stay in there. You don't go outside and reach outside the box. You know, you say, I've done this all these years, I'm not going to change. Well, that's committed in a sense but it's committed to not learn anything. You know teachers have to learn, too. Um, part of the national board certification is how do you improve as a teacher year to year? And then when you re certify you have to show how you have improved from the last time. That's a big thing about being committed finding new things with special needs students when I first started teaching I taught them, but I never new how and I never really had them, I might have had them in a separate class, but now they are al mainstreamed and I never had autistic students, so when I did my national board certification I did research on autistic kids, I did work shops, I bought books and I learned things that we could do with them and I work with special needs teachers here to find out</p>	
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		ways to help the kids and what things they like, like if they like to work with clay. Like now I have my autistic kids, if we are doing something they can't do, I bring out clay. I have blocks for them . I have coloring books or things that they can use for finger painting things that will help them be successful, too. You want to get outside your box and not hide it too long. I mean some people teach something's the same way all the time. Well, I've done it for 30 years I'm not changing now. You know that is a good thing sometimes, but sometimes it is not a good thing because times are changing. So you've got to kind of go with the flow. 152 – 171, Phoebe, 3	
21. Experience	Skill and knowledge gained overtime.	<p>And I've learned so much from just from experience 'cause, you know, internship, you know, in college – 477 – 478, Paul, 6</p> <p>Um, and then as the years progressed, I learned things, you know? You learn things that work well. Some things</p>	

		<p>don't work so well. Ah, you kinda experiment a little bit and find what does go and what doesn't go. Um, and by no means do I have all the answer. If I – like I say, if I stop learning, I might as well quit, you know? And, and I, I learn every day I come in here. Some little things might work with some kids. Some don't work with some kids. Ah, and, you know, I've learned, I've learned to – just in experience-wise, just over the years a lotta things that, you know, I, that I've learned just from experience to that point. But, ah, especially in those first several years. 522 – 532, Paul, 6</p> <p>I am more committed now than when I first started teaching. When I first started, I was so new and there were so many new things. I mean, I came and taught, and I'd go home, but once I started joining my organizations and stuff like that I really...and learning you know when I first</p>	
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		<p>started I was like wow I wish I new as much as some of these other teachers that have been here a long time and now I feel like I'm there and sharing what I learn with new teachers; like I love to have interns. I don't get very many of them, but I like to show them things to do and to do thing, learn new things and they teach me, too. You know they will come in with some new ideas and I'll go, ohhh! My intern this time did a new project and I thought it was really cool and we are going to do it next year because the kids like it. But um...I forgot what I was going to say. But, yeah.. I um... when I stared I was really committed because I wanted a job, but now I am committed because I have been in it so long that when I retire it's going to be hard. It's going to be hard not to stay out of people's business and you know and do things. Um....I think you teachers are committed, but the more you are in it the more you have at stake 176 – 190, Phoebe, 3</p>	
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<p>22. Bringing out the best in students</p>	<p>Helping students be successful. This helps</p>	<p>And like I said, I like to see kids enjoy themselves. I like to see 'em ha-, be successful, you know, ah, to, to have s-, s-, y-, it was nothing like watching a kid that's never done anything, "I can't do this," and then, you know, y-, you work with 'em a little bit and they find that, "Hey, you know, I can do this." 126 – 131, Paul, 6</p> <p>Well, I think a lot of it is when you get a student and they are really shy and they don't draw...they draw really well, but they are really scared and then all of a sudden they blossom in your class. You know I have them for two years, so luckily they will come back the next year and take art again. 203 – 207, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>I had a student on year.. I think he was in you class that was photography nut...I won't say his name..but he hated art, he hated school...he hated everything, but he liked photography and I saw a picture one day that he had. I said who took that and he said</p>	<p>I think this goes with bringing out the best, new experiences, and enjoy themselves</p>
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		<p>I did. I said oh my gosh you should do photography...let's do some photography stuff and I said bring me some pictures. So I entered on of his pictures in the superintendent art show. Well it won. 209 – 214, Phoebe, 3</p>	
<p>23. Providing students with new experiences</p>	<p>Giving students a chance to do something they have never done before. This increase commitment.</p>	<p>And like I said, I like to see kids enjoy themselves. I like to see 'em ha-, be successful, you know, ah, to, to have s-, s-, y-, it was nothing like watching a kid that's never done anything, "I can't do this," and then, you know, y-, you work with 'em a little bit and they find that, "Hey, you know, I can do this." 126 – 131, Paul, 6</p> <p>You know? "I, I can hit the ball," or, "I can catch the ball," or I, you know, "I know what to do now." "Oh, really? That's how you do that?" You know, that kinda thing. Just good to see a kid, you know – it's almost like a light bulb, you know, goes off. You know, they, they finally figured out</p>	<p>I think this goes with bringing out the best, new experiences, and enjoy themselves</p>

		<p>that they can, you know, do things that they didn't think they could do. And I, I think that's the biggest g-, is just, it's, it's watching kids enjoy themselves and, and, and, you know, get experience and, and self-confidence so, you know get – positive, you know, like we all talk about self-esteem. Well, that's important, you know. 135 – 144, Paul, 6</p> <p>You know, a kid out – you, you work with a kid. It, it's never – I had a kid this year never served a badminton b-, birdie over the net, and I wo-, you know, I worked with him a little bit and I said ____ worked with him some, you know. Before you know it, they were whacking it over the net, just easy as could be.</p> <p>You know, these little things like that throughout the day that, you know, make it worthwhile 'cause you gotta lotta knuckleheads as you well know, and they can kinda mess you up, but g-, you know, generally, you know, we have</p>	
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		<p>good kids here I think in our school system, and, and they try I most of 'em, and, and just to see 'em have fun and enjoy themselves and, and, ah, and gain some, some experience and some knowledge in different kinda academies and sports. 148 – 161, Paul, 6</p> <p>He never had won anything in his life. He also placed at the state level and the superintendent paid 50 dollars for his picture, so we could copy it again and at state level it placed and we went to the luncheon. They invited us to Montgomery. He'd never been to Montgomery and he is from here. His mother had a factory job. She got off work. His grandmother drove him. She bought him a new shirt and everything. And he had never even been to a dinner. They had a real nice luncheon and they had these little butter balls that you put on bread and so he ate all the butterballs. He wanted my dessert cause he'd never had a really good dessert. We took him around</p>	
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		<p>Montgomery and he took pictures and he thought that was the neatest thing. And so he took art again the next year, even though he kept getting in trouble in other classes. He would come to my class when he got in trouble and he would take pictures. 215 – 226, Phoebe, 3</p> <p>I try anything and everything so a kid has an experience at so many different things, so they'll find something that they love and hopefully continue to do it the rest of their life. I believe that's my – my job description. So that's what I try to do. 392 – 395, Abigail, 9</p>	
24. Commitment grows with time	Commitment grows with time. It can be for a lot of reasons. IN this case, the participant's children are grown with their own lives, so he has more time to spend on his	Well, yes, I'm definitely – I, I would say yes seeing that because I feel like I'm, I'm far more committed now than I was. Um, I think <i>[clears throat]</i> , yeah, ah, yeah. Yeah, I think back over the years I	

	professional life.	would say, yes. I mean I've always been committed to it – and I've always cared about it. I think part of it once my kids went through the school system – I – of course, obviously, when my kids were going through, I was doubly focused on what was going on with them and the schools and, and the school system and that kinda thing. And then once they kinda got on out and let 'em, you know, college and all that kinda stuff, I actually became even more committed to it because for one thing, I had more time. You know, when your, when your family's young and you're constantly involved in their activities, and, and once they've moved on and gone on, of course, they both off on their own now for sure, but I've had more time to put into this job and been able to be a little bit more conscientious about being involved, being committed, that kinda thing. 449 – 469, Paul, 6	
25. Appreciation	The gratitude received	When I'm sittin' there at night	

from students	from students for the hard work that teacher put into doing their job	<p>and it's getting to be 9:00 and I'm going. .gee, I wish that I was through with this. I wish that I didn't have to grade these papers, but that's part of what I do. And again, it goes back to that little bit of pride that I have. I have a thing where I . .pretty much. .if I give you a test, you're going to get it back the next day. So if I have to stay up until midnight grading a test, then that's what I going to do because that's what I do and I get good feedback on that because a lot of students tell me, "Oh wow, so in so hasn't given us back our test from last week." Well, I'm not so in so, here you go. It's just, um. . it just makes me feel good and I like strokes and if I've done something good, then people are going to say, "Gee, she was a good teacher because she does that" , then I like that, it's just things like that. . .warm fuzzy. . it's not warm and fuzzy while I'm in the middle of doing it, but when you know, you get those from people saying, "Wow, that was really good." And a lot</p>	
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		<p>of times it's just students. It's like somebody that's thirteen years old going "Wow, I really like that", Well, wow I do to, you know, that's good, that works.</p> <p>257 – 271, Esther, 1</p>	
26. Support/appreciation from colleagues	The support and gratitude received from colleagues.	<p>Oh, wow. .umm...that's hard. I'll try to think of something. . . I guess, um, and you've been teacher of the year and you know how that feels. . um the first time I was chosen as teacher of the year. I had no clue. It was like, oh you're teacher of the year. . you need to go get your picture made and it wasn't all the paper work and I was like, oh that's kind of neat. Um...but a few years ago and this is . . it doesn't go back that far. . a few years ago and we hadn't been back here very long, um. .I got chosen as teacher of the year again. And, I got a standing ovation which was you know. . that doesn't happen too much in this. . you don't often get a standing ovation. But, another teacher said, wow, finally one that makes sense. And you know when you hear that. . .</p>	

		<p>oh wow. This is what these people think of me, just one more bar that I've got to live up to. You know they have just raised the bar on me. So that was . . .that was like they were saying because of what you've done. .well, that just made me. . I've got to do even better now. 286 – 298, Esther, 1</p> <p>Or, or you have teacher come back and say, "Hey, I tried that activity and it was great. It was a great," when you've shared those things. That's what – that's what motivates me to, to stay committed and keep doing the things that I do. 387 – 390, Elizabeth, 7</p>	
27. Success/Reminders of success	The achievements and reminder of achievements made as a teacher.	<p>Okay, I don't know if I'm gonna come back tomorrow." Well, let me, let me go back and, and look at these things, and look at these, and look at these good things, and that motivates you to come back the next day and the next year and those kinds of things. And I, I think also, um, tho-, those successes are, are what helps you to be committed and, and when you see, you know, when</p>	

		you've worked so hard to prepare a lesson, and you see it actually work and click 374 - 382, Elizabeth, 7	
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Code	Definition	Exemplary Data	Cross References
28. Lack of support from administrators	The lack of assistance provided by administrators with student, parents or other situations in a school	<p>Um, not supporting the teacher is probably the worst thing you can do. I would rather – you know, if – obviously, if I – and I’ve been wrong once or twice. <i>[Laughter]</i> You know, when I – I get called out on something, I expect to take responsibility for it, just like I would my students. Abigail, 796 - 800</p> <p>you like to know that people appreciate what you do, respect you, because you always, and we’ve all said this ..have you forgot what it means to be in the classroom. Esther, 557- 559</p> <p>You know you’re supposed to be an instructional leader. Then help me out every once and a while. You know, if you see something, and I think it goes back to those evaluations. Let me know that you could do this better. Esther, 565 – 568</p> <p>Sometimes you get a class that is full of kids that are behavior problems and you think it’s you. I had one last year and I</p>	

		<p>was ready to quit. You know you send them to the office and sometimes you need the administration back up and sometimes you get it and sometimes I don't know if we have it. But there is just...you get that grouping of kids. I had a student knock me down one time and you know he was told don't do it again. He wasn't suspended or anything. Phoebe 274 - 279</p>	
29. Lack of support from parents	The lack of assistance with from parents with regards to issues at school such as discipline or academics	<p>Parents don't hold their children accountable. . . . And that's – you know, I've seen a lot of that change, and that's very frustrating. You know, you call a parent and you want a child to take responsibility for their actions, and they don't. They make excuses for them. That's probably the biggest frustration for me. Abigail, 170 – 177</p> <p>the attitude of people. . .um. . .sometimes you will run into the parent that just doesn't really respect you. They think they are smarter than you. For whatever</p>	

		<p>reason. . .they are mean to you, they're rude to you. I can understand a thirteen year old being rude to me. . .that I can deal with that. . .but when someone comes up to me. .another adult. . and you know, you can't have a decent conversation or respectful conversation. Then I'm thinking. . what. . you know. . .Why do I do this? I am here. Esther, 145 – 151</p> <p>I think that's one of the things over the years that has been the hardest. Is when I've had. . and I've had not that many, but every one in a while those parents that are just. . you know. . second guess everything that you do. Don't support you. You know. .if they child says it, then it must be true and you're the one making up the stories. . those kinds of things. Esther, 151 - 155</p>	
30. Paperwork/"red tape stuff"	These are irrelevant tasks that do not directly involve children such as extra paperwork or unnecessary meetings	I'm finding the later I get on, and I don't know if it's the time and society where we are, um, there's more frustrations, more paperwork. Abigail, 103 - 105	

		<p>Um....I think the more paper work. And I know everyone talks about this, but the more paper work that comes into it .um . . I think there are a lot of people and I. .it is always in the back of your head .um. .you are going to get sued for something. You were doing the best you can and something went wrong. Esther, 141 – 144</p> <p>The least rewarding...there is a lot of rewards...the least rewarding would probably be a lot of what I consider red tape or fluff that has nothing to do with what I am trying to teach my students or what I am trying to build or help them with. That is the least rewarding part because sometimes I and listen I have been around long enough to see every bright idea come and go. You know every where I go and every state Oh this is the best thing, this is the best way we are going to and I am saying um um I have already seen that it's not. But you know, I do my job, but it</p>	
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		<p>gets worse. That is the discouraging thing about me they take so much away from the time we could be spending teaching doing what I call red tape. Mary, 71 – 79</p> <p>IT feels overwhelming. How am I possibly going to get this done when I have to do that and I have to do that and I have to do that. Sometimes it is overwhelming and sometimes it is discouraging. I am a very positive person, but sometimes I just think oh man because it gets worse and my years go on and it gets worse. Mary, 85 - 89</p> <p>I mean, sometimes, I – sometimes when the paperwork and that sort of stuff gets – you think, ugh, is this worth it? 657 - 658</p>	
31. Dictatorship	Schools/leaders that do not seek out input from teachers.	<p>Getting micromanaged, divisiveness on the staff. Abigail, 637</p> <p>Um, it's much better when you respect – you know, ask me</p>	

		<p>something, ask them something. Let's collectively decide the schedule, what we're going to adopt, how we're going to spend our money. That feels like you have a stake in what you're doing, and that's huge. Abigail, 646 - 651</p>	
32. Lack of Support	The lack of assistance from colleagues or administrators. A discouraging feeling	<p>those were the discouraging times when you felt all alone and you didn't have that support group, but, ah, I'm hoping that we've progressed past that and teachers aren't holding things in and being less willing to share. 448 – 452, Elizabeth</p>	See lack of support from administrators and parents.
33. Overwhelmed	A feeling caused by having too much to do at one time.	<p>I think because administrators need to get certain jobs done, they are gonna give those jobs and those responsibilities to the teachers they know will get it done. And what ends up happening many times, and in my experience has been the veteran teachers, the committed – not even necessarily veteran teachers, even the novice teachers, those committed teachers get overwhelmed. They are on – yeah, they are the leader in three professional</p>	

		<p>learning communities. They are on the, ah, the continual improvement, ah, continuous improvement team.</p> <p>They are on the technology team. They <i>[laughs]</i> are on – and so what happens is because you need that the report written, because you need to have that, that continuous improvement plan, because you need those things, you're gonna go to the people who you know will get the job done. And that ends up overwhelming those people. And because they're committed, because they wanna do a good job, they get totally overwhelmed. 597, 614 Elizabeth</p> <p>I guess for me it's just the. . all the routine and you get backed up with a lot of stuff that you have to do. You know when we've had no planning because you have to do plenty of professional development or subs aren't showing up and you have to cover somebody else. Just those. .when everything piles up and you just can't get it</p>	
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		<p>done. That's when I go oh boy. .I need to find something else to do. Esther, 452 – 457</p> <p>I feel like there's a lot of paperwork sometimes put on us, especially if you're on a lot of committees. I wish there was a way that – that we didn't have to have so many committees and everything. And I've been lucky this year, because I'm not on that many. Sarah, 321 - 328</p>	
34. Disrespectful leaders	Leaders that do not consider the feelings of their staff	<p>I had one that was really unkind to me and it really broke my heart because I had never been talked to in an ugly way. I was old enough to be this man's mother. You know and I felt like that was a childish thing. That is one of the times that I told my husband that I can't go back. He yelled at me in front of other teachers and students for... and I really didn't understand what it was about and I just broke down and cried Mary, 205 – 211</p>	

		<p>As a veteran teacher, yes the support the respect you know if something is wrong there is a way to talk about it. You know there is a way versus, you know I like the..if I am not doing something right according to what you believe we should be doing call me in and talk to me. Don't get in a faculty meeting and go we are going to have to do better on this. If you know who it is, then talk to that person. Instead of the ...everybody don't need to hear it. So I am more of a direct...I appreciate the direct approach, so let's talk about it versus you know talking at me. Talk to me. Miriam, 182 – 189</p> <p>During my last class, he came down into my room. In my office, and started screaming at me. Telling me that my awards and all the things that I have done all these years meant nothing. That I embarrassed the whole school and it up being that he had a brand new teacher organizing the thing</p>	
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		<p>and it wasn't organized and he had to have someone to blame. He was telling me that he doubted that I would ever be back in this school again and the I embarrassed him and how dare I send a special needs student down to talk about it. It was just awful and when he came out my kids said our parents will make sure you are here. I was worried to death about my job. I was crying I was upset. I wanted to quit then and there and my opinion of that administrator went down hill and I never respected him again. It was his fault for not having the thing organized and wanting something at the last minute. That made me feel like I never wanted to come in this school again and it was real hard for me to come back to school the next year and I still get upset about it. Phoebe 439 - 452</p>	
35. Having a student lost to alternative school	This means that the student does not have any interaction with the teacher. The teacher is unable to have an impact on the student's life.	The least rewarding..I would think..I am thinking..maybe if there is a discipline issue and that student is lost to either rthe alternative center or some place	

		<p>where you don't have the opportunity to still be apart of that child's life. SO I think the least rewarding is that the student has to be removed for some reason. Miriam, 57 – 60</p> <p>I try to do what I can to inspire them, but some of them you just can't reach. I mean their home lives are so bad that they can't focus in schools. Some of them have been on drugs, you know you can't get through that. I've taught a lot of kids. I've taught about 12 that are in jail for murder and when they were here you knew then that weren't going to be.. you try to reach them, but 9 times out of 10 you couldn't and that's the worst part when you can't reach some of the kids and I want to reach them all, but I've seen a decline in respect with the kids. Everything is me, me, me Phoebe, 75 – 82</p> <p>It makes me feel like times are changing. I don't feel like its my fault, but I take it personally and I get upset whne kids don't want to do things..it</p>	
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		frustrates me...it makes me almost want to retire sometimes like you know what can I do. Phoebe, 87 – 89	
36. Visibility	This is a term used when administrators are more than just a person in an office. They are out in classrooms where students can see them and hopefully administrators have an impact of students	I just believe they need to be present and a lot fo things going on now cause administrators to be out of the building a lot. So they need to be in thebuilding more and students need to see that. I don't mind them coming in because I like to see them come in so they kids can say hey we are working together. That's the big thing they need to be present and some of the things that are on there mind that could probably wait. They are bombarded with too much, just too much. And the state department is lining it up and of course you have to be able to multi task, but they need to be able to focus as well. Miriam, 231 - 239	
37. Apathy of students	Students who do not care about their academics.	I think that's the biggest thing is, is the most frustrating is kids don't care. Um, you know, you, you tell 'em and you tell	

		<p>'em, you know, and PE is simple, you know,? PE's simple. You come in here. You dress out. You prepare for playing. _____ your tennis.</p> <p>How hard is that? But, ah, you know, they, they won't, you know, we'll go out. We'll do our run. They have a certain amount of time they have to make their run in. They don't make it. They walk. They take – you know, it's a five-minute walk/run. They take nine minutes. You know? And, and, and it – they just don't care, you know? And, and, and their points, they drop and they drop. There, there's no reason for a student to make a C, a D, or an F in PE, none, or probably any academic. And, and some – there are some areas I know students will struggle. Paul, 247 – 264 I think that's the biggest thing. They don't care about their grade. They don't care – really don't care about anything. And, and, and I think another thing, too, is frustrating to me down here is they don't care about</p>	
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		<p>their environment. I mean not their – not – their school environment. Let me rephrase that. School environment. You know, I take, I take a lotta pride in trying to keep my gym as clean as I can possibly keep it. I've always said that it's not what you have. It's what you do with what you have. And, and I try to keep this gym, you know, as nice as I can keep it for the kids. I – you know, I, I know as a student I wouldn't wanna go out there and sit in a pile of dirt. Paul, 289 – 299</p> <p>But it's just there seem like there's increasingly more and more kids that don't care about their ac-, their progress in school and don't care about their school. And they, they, they're here _____ more destructive than they are beneficial. So I think that's another area that, that's really kind of a pet peeve, I guess shall we say of mine is that the kids not caring about their school. You know, how – you know, I love my school. Paul 312 - 318</p>	
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38. Lack of relevant professional development	The lack of professional development that is applicable for teachers	<p>In service is not applicable, you know? I think that's one of the biggest frustrations I, that I have I think is, is to sit through – to have to sit through — and in service that has absolutely nothing to do with my area or area of subject that I teach. Now I know that there are some things that are very important, and I understand that, and I appreciate what everyone else does. Paul 871 – 880</p> <p>You know? It's an activity course. And I feel like so many times, I think – that's the biggest – and I've said that several times. I'll sit through and in service and come out and say, "I just wasted three hours of my life." Paul, 932 – 935</p> <p>I'm always behind, and I get really, really frustrated with that. And I think that, I think of all things that frustrated me with education now is that, is, is, is, is in service that's not applicable to what we do, and</p>	

		the compute – the – everything's on the computer. Paul, 1016 - 1019	
39. Things that don't help students	Things that are not beneficial to students	Um, least rewarding are the things that you have to do that really don't involve the kids. You know, the committees that you have to be on, the reports you have to write, um, just coming on professional development days when the kids aren't here. Rebekah, 264 - 271	See irrelevant tasks.
40. Achievement gap	The gap between higher level students and lower level students. Some view it as the gap in achievement between students of different backgrounds (ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.)	The gap. . .the achievement gap and um....being 1 to 25. I can't reach them. So that's the least rewarding thing. They need me one on one. I know at this age they need someone to sit down with them and watch them do their homework. And if I could clone my self. That's the least rewarding because they need one on one. A lot of them need my attention and I can't give them the attention that they need with 1 to 25. Ruth, 79 - 86	

Appendix E

Themes and Definitions	Codes Related to Final Themes	Abigail	Elizabeth	Esther	Mary	Miriam
Intrinsic Commitment – Commitment that comes from a teacher’s personal desire. (6/10 Participants)	Love of teaching, Love of subject area, Calling, Fortitude, desire to share knowledge with students and teachers		X	X	X	
Responsibility – The feeling of holding ones self accountable for the things that are done as a teachers (in regards to students, teachers, and administrators) (8/10 Participants)	Care about the school, advocate for profession, Responsibility to students, teachers, and administrators, Responsibility to God			X	X	X
Impact – The affect that veteran teachers can have on students. It drives that commitment of veteran teachers in this study. (8/10 Participants)	Seeing students “light up”/get it, Impact on student lives, Providing students with new experiences, Seeing the impact they have made, Bringing out the best in students,	X		X	X	X
Time – The progression of a teacher’s career that is filled with many unique experiences that strengthen commitment. (4/10 Participants)	Investment of time and effort, Experience, Commitment grows with time,	X			X	
Support – The aid provided by administrators or colleagues that benefits the veteran teachers in this study and strengthens their commitment. (7/10 Participants)	Support from administrators, Support from colleagues		X	X	X	X

Themes and Definitions	Codes Related to Final Themes	Paul	Phoebe	Rebekah	Ruth	Sarah
Intrinsic Commitment – Commitment that comes from a teacher’s personal desire. (6/10 Participants)	Love of teaching, Love of subject area, Calling, Fortitude, desire to share knowledge with students and teachers	X	X		X	
Responsibility – The feeling of holding ones self accountable for the things that are done as a teachers (in regards to students, teachers, and administrators) (8/10 Participants)	Care about the school, advocate for profession, Responsibility to students, teachers, and administrators, Responsibility to God	X	X	X	X	X
Impact – The affect that veteran teachers can have on students. It drives that commitment of veteran teachers in this study. (8/10 Participants)	Seeing students “light up”/get it, Impact on student lives, Providing students with new experiences, Seeing the impact they have made, Bringing out the best in students,	X	X		X	X
Time – The progression of a teacher’s career that is filled with many unique experiences that strengthen commitment. (4/10 Participants)	Investment of time and effort, Experience, Commitment grows with time,	X	X			
Support – The aid provided by administrators or colleagues that benefits the veteran teachers in this study and strengthens their commitment. (7/10 Participants)	Support from administrators, Support from colleagues	X	X			X

Themes and Definitions – Diminishment of Commitment	Codes Related to Final Themes	Abigail	Elizabeth	Esther	Mary	Miriam
Lack of support – The lack of aid provided by administrators or colleagues that benefits the veteran teachers in this study and strengthens their commitment (5/10 Participants)	Lack of support, Lack of support from administrators, Lack of support from parents, Lack of professional development	X	X	X		
Leadership – The ability to lead an organization with a common goal along with strategies to seek input from the stakeholders to meet those goals. In this case, it is the lack of this quality that diminishes commitment. (6/10 Participants)	Dictatorship, Disrespectful leaders, Visibility	X			X	X
Lack of Student Success – The lack of student success in regards to academics, discipline, and overall interest in school. (4/10 Participants)	Having a student lost to alternative school, Apathy of students, Things that don't help students, Achievement gap					X
Irrelevant Tasks – The day-to-day tasks that these veteran teachers viewed as overwhelming and not relevant to their student success. (6/10 Participants)	Paperwork/"red tape stuff", Overwhelmed, Things that don't help students	X	X	X	X	

Themes and Definitions –	Codes Related to Final Themes	Paul	Phoebe	Rebekah	Ruth	Sarah
Diminishment of Commitment						
Lack of support – The lack of aid provided by administrators or colleagues that benefits the veteran teachers in this study and strengthens their commitment (5/10 Participants)	Lack of support, Lack of support from administrators, Lack of support from parents, Lack of professional development	X	X			
Leadership – The ability to lead an organization with a common goal along with strategies to seek input from the stakeholders to meet those goals. In this case, it is the lack of this quality that diminishes commitment. (6/10 Participants)	Dictatorship, Disrespectful leaders, Visibility	X	X			X
Lack of Student Success – The lack of student success in regards to academics, discipline, and overall interest in school. (4/10 Participants)	Having a student lost to alternative school, Apathy of students, Things that don't help students, Achievement gap	X	X		X	
Irrelevant Tasks – The day-to-day tasks that these veteran teachers viewed as overwhelming and not relevant to their student success. (6/10 Participants)	Paperwork/"red tape stuff", Overwhelmed, Things that don't help students	X		X		