

**An Investigation of Factors that Affect Teacher Retention in East Alabama Rural Schools**

by

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## Abstract

Many small rural school districts are consistently faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers (Lowe, 2006). These districts are faced with challenging factors such as low funding and being geographically isolated that influence teachers to leave these areas more often than urban and suburban areas. With Alabama being one of thirteen states where rural education is crucial in the overall educational performance (Johnson & Strange, 2007), it is very important to understand the factors present in rural schools and how these factors impact teachers and their intentions.

To aid in retaining more teachers in rural schools, this study sought to expand our knowledge of this issue by exploring why teachers remain and leave their teaching positions. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the strategies and factors present in rural schools based on the perceptions of teachers. The study was conducted in rural school districts located in the East Alabama Regional In-service area. Data were collected by survey.

As a result of the study, teachers noted having a strong support system, competitive salaries, and a positive working environment were major factors that influenced their intentions to stay in their current positions. Others that lacked support experienced more behavior problems and felt burned out due to an increased workload and paperwork reported that they would likely leave their current teaching positions due to these factors. The findings in this study will assist educators in understanding why teachers are leaving rural school districts in hopes that strategies will be developed to reduce the number of teachers leaving these districts.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Recruiting and retaining teachers in rural school districts across the United States has become a fundamental challenge facing school administrators. According to Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, and Salgado (2005), the schools that find it hardest to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers are those in highly urban and rural areas. Lowe (2006) stated that while not all communities face the problems of inadequate teacher supply, many small rural school districts recognize this as a continuing critical issue.

Aragon (2016) found that some rural schools see consistent staffing problems due to obstacles such as a limited local teacher supply, lack of rigorous training and certificate options, and geographic and social isolation. These factors make it difficult to attract good quality teachers that will remain for extended periods of time. Schools with poor working conditions struggle with recruiting and retaining teachers thus increasing teacher attrition rates (Hornig, 2009).

Policymakers and educators are interested in identifying ways to increase teacher retention rates (Lochmiller, Sigimoto, & Muller, 2016). Many research studies have discussed the teacher shortage in rural areas, but very little has been done to determine the factors that increase teacher retention in rural areas. Research has found that many rural schools are faced with challenges such as lack of administrative support, discipline problems, cultural mismatches, lack of resources, and a lack of teacher preparation. Due to these challenges above, researching teacher retention to discover why teachers make a choice to stay or leave schools has become of interest.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Perhaps, one of the challenges for many rural school districts is attracting and retaining teachers. Monk (2007) concluded that rural areas tend to have higher rates of teacher attrition. He proposed that the higher rates of attrition are in response to rural areas being impoverished, small in size, distant from population concentrations, and rely heavily on agricultural industries. According to the Eddy-Spicer, Anderson, and Perrone (2017), there are 27,264 rural schools in the United States. Of the nation's 27,264 rural schools, 2.6% are found within the state of Alabama. Within the state of Alabama, 43% of all schools are considered rural.

The Rural School and Community Trust study conducted by Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) found that Alabama ranked number three in the nation after Mississippi and Arizona for the highest need for attention to rural education. Four in ten students attend rural schools; 42% of students live in rural areas compared to 20% nationally; 49% percent of the public schools are considered rural, and Alabama ranks number five in the country for the highest proportion of rural to non-rural students. Figure 1 illustrates that of the 67 counties in Alabama, fifty-five counties are considered to be rural, and twelve are urban. In the United States, there are 13 states where rural education is most important to the overall educational performance of the state (Johnson & Strange, 2007). Alabama is one of the thirteen.

Alabama is also one of four states that is least conducive to rural educational student achievement (Lindahl, 2011). According to Mohammed and Elsunni (2016), student achievement measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. Each grade level has learning goals. Academic achievement is most often measured through either state or national assessments.

According to Sargent and Hannum (2005), teachers in rural schools are not satisfied with their jobs and often leave them because they lack the efficacy to understand the school’s organizational structure, develop strong collegial relationships, and garner commitment to student achievement. Understanding the factors that affect teacher retention and delving deeper into why teachers leave will help aid in attracting and retaining quality, innovative teachers.

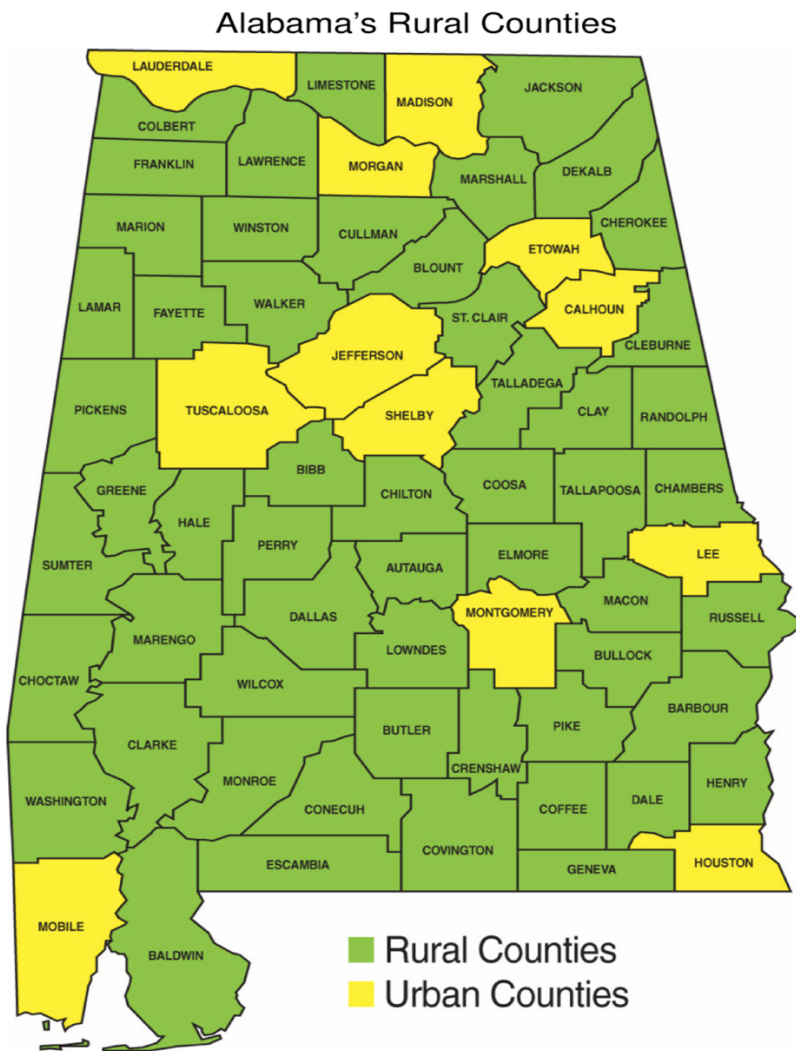


Figure 1. Map of rural and urban counties in Alabama. Adapted from Alabama Public Health. Retrieved June 10, 2018 from (<http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/ruralhealth/assets/StatewideReport.pdf>). Copyright 2007. Adapted with permission.

In the literature, retention was considered a major challenge in rural school districts. Teachers are leaving their jobs before reaching retirement age. Ingersoll (2001) has defined this rapid attrition as the revolving door. According to Goldberg and Proctor (2000), many who become teachers do so because of their desire to work with children or their love for teaching. However, teachers in rural schools are faced with the challenges of inadequate resources, minimal support, low compensation, inconsistent professional development opportunities, and lack of preparation that cause them to lose their momentum for the teaching profession. According to Malloy and Allen (2007), there are rural schools and school districts that employ different strategies to attract and retain teachers but lack a coherent plan to maintain the brightest and best teachers.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) stated that high annual attrition indicated problems that result in damages to the school environment as well as student performance. To minimize the attrition rates, the underlying problems must be identified. Researchers know that there is an increasing retention issue in rural schools, but the reasons for high attrition have not been addressed as much. These facts make it even more important to understand why teachers leave rural school districts. This research study will become the guiding force to increase teacher retention in Alabama rural schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

As Solomon Ortiz stated, “Education is the Key to Success.” One element of a successful education is the teacher. Teachers provide students with opportunities to learn. Sawchuk (2015) found that low teacher retention creates needless failures in student achievement and negatively affect the overall morale of students and teachers. In a time where higher demands have been placed on teachers, it is important to ensure that teachers remain in the

teaching profession. Ingersoll (2001) concluded that retaining teachers increases student achievement, builds collegiality, and improves school climate. Unfortunately, some rural schools are having trouble keeping good quality teachers. Therefore, understanding why teachers are leaving is worthy of investigation. The most effective way to do this is by acquiring input from teachers about their experiences to capture their perceptions of teaching.

This study will broaden the research on what factors influence teacher retention and how they contribute to the school organization. This study will also provide information to districts, so they make the appropriate decisions when recruiting teachers to rural schools, help supply districts with strategies to use when trying to retain teachers, and help education training institutions prepare future teachers. Only a few studies have addressed this issue; more studies are needed to evaluate the reasoning behind low retention rates in rural schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate factors present in rural schools to recruit and retain teachers. This study was based upon the perception of teachers because they are the person most critical to student success and are the closest to the issue of teacher retention. Research has indicated that there are many possible reasons teachers choose to leave. Investigating why they leave will help aid in attracting and retaining quality, innovative teachers. Furthermore, this study is intended to increase the literature as it relates to recruiting and retaining teachers in rural schools.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The Theory of Planned Behavior was proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985. TPB is a predictive framework that

“focuses on theoretical constructs concerned with individual motivation factors as determinants of the likelihood of performing a specific behavior” (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2008, p. 68). The theory of planned behavior suggests that people are much more apt to do things if they feel they will be successful at them. Additionally, Montaño and Kasprzyk (2008) stated the TPB had been used successfully to determine “health behaviors and intentions, including smoking, drinking, health services utilization, exercise, sun protection, breastfeeding, substance use, HIV/STD-prevention behaviors and use of contraceptives, mammography, safety helmets, and seatbelts.”

According to Ajzen (1991), TPB is centered around three constructs: behavioral beliefs (attitudes), normative beliefs (subjective norms), and control beliefs (perceived behavior controls). Ajzen (1991) has defined the constructs as they relate to the behavioral intention. The importance of these constructs is dependent upon the situation. In some instances, one construct may have more of an impact than the others. In others, all three constructs account for intentions (Ajzen, 1991). The theory has been instrumental in predicting intentions and as a result, has been used in a number of fields to determine intentions.

Attitudes refer to the degree to which a person has positive or negative feelings of the behavior of interest. Subjective norms refer to the belief about whether significant others think he or she will perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to the individual’s perception of the extent to which performance of the behavior is easy or difficult. The visual illustration in Figure 2 depicts the relationship between the constructs.

The Theory of Planned Behavior is commonly used in the medical field and has been used numerous times in predictive studies. The Theory of Planned Behavior was used in a study conducted by Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) to determine the probability of a teacher’s intent to stay or resign from their teaching position. The study examined each belief and determined which factors influenced a teacher’s decision to leave or stay.

The Theory of Planned Behavior was also used in a study conducted by Robinson (2016) to examine factors that influenced teachers’ decisions to continue teaching in high-needs schools in an urban school district. Robinson’s study of the Theory of Planned Behavior was utilized in this study to answer the research questions in a rural setting. This study was designed to understand teachers’ attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior toward their intent to leave or stay in their teaching position. This study will also look at what factors influence their decisions.

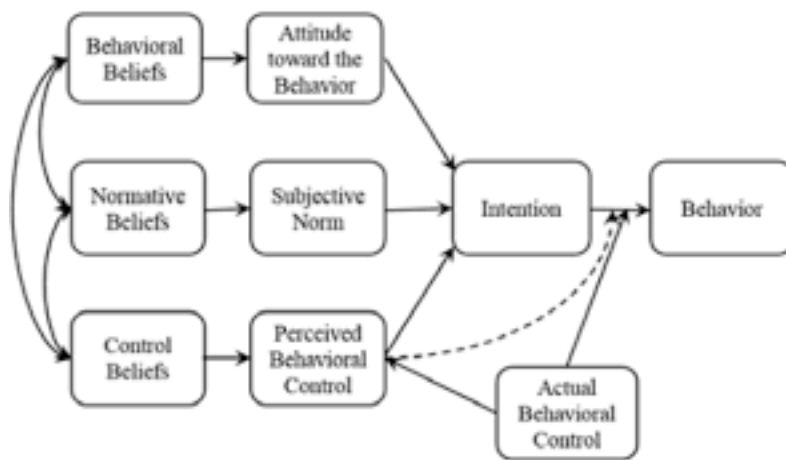


Figure 2. The Theory of Planned Behavior. Adapted from “From Intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior,” by I. Ajzen, 1985, *InAction Control*, p. 11. Copyright 2006 by Icek Ajzen.

### Research Questions

The research for this study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent do attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls relate to teachers’ intentions to remain in the profession?
2. Of the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls measured in this study, which do teachers report as important to their intention to leave or stay in their current position?

3. What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior controls, and intentions differ across school levels?

### **Definition of Terms**

- Administrative support: A principal assisting with problem-solving, exhibits listening skills and relaying information to school employees of school-related issues (Billingsley, 1993).
- Behavioral belief (Attitude): Factors that produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior (Ajzen, 2002).
- Behavioral Intention: the perceived likelihood of performing the behavior (Montaño & Kaspruk, 2008).
- Classroom Management: discipline and handling student behaviors (Allen, 2010).
- Staff development: the facilitation of improvement goals and programs developed by
- Leavers: teachers who leave K-12 teaching (Freedman & Appleman, 2009).
- Movers: teachers who leave to teach in another school in the same or a different district (Freedman & Appleman, 2009).
- Perceived Behavior Control: whether a person feels in control of their actions (Ajzen, 2001).
- Rural area: an area where there are fewer than 150 people per square mile.
- School level: elementary or secondary level.
- School migration: teachers who leave to teach in a different district (Freedman & Appleman, 2009).
- Stayers: teachers who have remained in the K-12 classroom (Freedman & Appleman, 2009).



- Subjective Norm: determined by how much the person feels social pressure to do something (Ajzen, 2001).
- Teacher Attrition: leaving teaching altogether (Billingsley, 2004).
- Teacher Retention: teachers who remain in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year (Billingsley, 2004).

### **Limitations**

This study represented a cross-sectional design; therefore, data were collected only once, within a limited time-frame. The sample size is dependent upon superintendents consenting to participate in the study and the number of teachers who voluntarily responded. The sample size was small in comparison to the state's population of rural schools. This study was limited because it only focuses on rural schools in the East Alabama Regional In-Service area. I did not collect data from which schools' teachers attended. Therefore, there is uncertainty about the number of schools represented in the sample. Different results may be found in rural schools based on poverty levels. The researcher did not have access to those teachers who have left before the study.

### **Assumptions**

The survey instrument was understood and properly addressed all the current issues affecting teacher retention. All respondents answered questions openly and honestly without consideration of researcher expectations. All responses accurately reflect the participant's professional opinions. The schools selected for this study serve as a representation for all rural schools in Alabama.

## **Summary**

This research study will consist of five chapters. Chapter I includes the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, research questions, definition of terms, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter II is a review of the literature related to teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and teacher attrition. Chapter III addresses the methodology used in this study that describes the research design, a description of the setting, who the participants are and how they were recruited, how the instrument was designed, how data will be collected and analyzed, the limitations, and summary. Chapter IV discusses the findings from the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Chapter V is comprised of a summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and future research opportunities.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the factors necessary to retain teachers in rural schools. This chapter will review the existing research to (1) elicit strategies for teacher recruitment, (2) reveal factors that increase teacher attrition, and (3) emphasize key factors to increase teacher retention. Furthermore, this study is intended to contribute to the literature as it relates to retaining teachers in rural schools.

### **Overview**

For many years, school districts have been faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers. Retention has been defined as teachers returning to their same school from one year to the next (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Recruiting and retaining good teachers for schools may be the most vexing problem facing America's education policymakers (Berry, 2008). Kersaint et al. (2007) found that the retention rate after five years is only 61% which has become a major area of concern in schools.

Rural areas often have small numbers of prospective teachers within the community, low salaries, and substandard facilities, which together contribute to difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers from outside the community and result in higher teacher attrition rates (McCreight, 2000). Rural areas have been categorized as either rural, remote, rural, distant, or rural fringe. According to Provasnik, KewalRamani, Coleman, Gilbertson, Herring, and Xie (2007) rural remote is a rural territory that is more than twenty-five miles from an urbanized area and is also more than ten miles from an urban cluster. Rural distant is a rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to twenty-five miles from an urbanized area, as well

as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to ten miles from an urban cluster (Provasnik et al., 2007). Rural fringe is a rural territory that is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster (Provasnik et al., 2007).

Rural teacher attrition rate has been defined as teachers that leave the learning organization over a period. As a method to collect teacher attrition rates, Kukla-Acevedo (2009) grouped teachers into categories as either leavers, movers, stayers, or drifters. Freedman and Appleman (2009) defined leavers as teachers who leave classroom teaching, movers as those that leave their school for another, drifters as those who leave urban education to either teach in a rural or suburban area and stayers as those who remain in the same school from year to year. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), twenty-seven percent of teachers leave the teaching profession after three years. For schools with low academic achievement and high poverty, the attrition rates are even higher (Curtis, 2012). According to Brown and Wynn (2009), the high teacher attrition rate produces a shortage of high-quality teachers, which has a negative impact on classroom instruction because schools then focus on the recruitment and retention of teachers instead of the quality of instruction.

According to Fall (2010), educational leaders continue to experience difficulties in staffing classrooms with highly qualified teachers. Schools deemed as “hard-to-staff”- those with high concentrations of low-performing, low-income students, high teacher attrition, and relatively high numbers of teachers not fully certified- must constantly struggle simply to staff their classrooms (Hirsch, 2006, p. 1). Continued teacher attrition makes it very difficult for districts to build learning communities and sustain reform (Brown & Wynn, 2009). There are times when leaders in schools are forced to hire those individuals who are certified but not

qualified. According to Ingersoll (2001), school staffing problems are primarily due to excess demands resulting from a “revolving door”- where a large number of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement.

In the study conducted by Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003), it was concluded that nearly one-third of new teachers leave the field within the first three years, and half depart after five years. Many studies have revealed that most teachers who leave have fewer than ten years of teaching experience (Inman & Marlow, 2004). School districts experience difficulties attracting and retaining teachers, and the impending retirement of a substantial fraction of public school teachers increase the shortage of teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2001). Due to current educational demands of districts and states the challenge of attracting and retaining high-quality teachers has been intensified (Patton & Kritsonis, 2006).

Nieto (2003) says that to make a difference in education the following should take place. First, teachers need to be prepared to work in challenging situations. Secondly, teachers need to be provided with meaningful professional development that targets high needs schools. Teachers need to be supported, and they're worth to the system needs to be celebrated. The essence of Nieto's argument is that to achieve the goal of education, there must be a change to the conditions faced by teachers especially those in underfinanced schools (2003). Amrein-Beardsley (2012) concluded that the most important factors to recruit and retain teachers are the quality of the principal, monetary incentives and benefits, adequate resources, and a positive learning community.

### **Teacher Recruitment**

In general, recruiting good quality teachers for schools is becoming more of an issue facing the education system in the United States (Berry, 2008). Researchers have found various

strategies that districts and universities are using to try and place teachers in these schools. There are different programs that have been established to aid in the recruiting process. In a study done by Amrein-Beardsley (2012), Arizona expert teachers felt that to recruit teachers; districts should offer teachers monetary incentives, benefits, school safety, smaller class sizes, access to resources, reasonable teaching assignments, preparation times, mutual respect, and professional development opportunities. Petty, Fitchett, and O'Connor (2012) argue that money is the most effective approach to recruit teachers. Petty, O'Connor, and Dagenhart (2011) also found that the most frequently used strategies to attract teachers have increased salaries, smaller classes, and signing or annual bonuses. Having a strong supportive leader, monetary incentives, and collaboration and planning time, like-minded educators, and proximity to home are strategies used in Alabama to recruit teachers (Hirsch, 2006).

Alabama programs such as the Mathematics and Science Scholarship/Loan Program and Troops to Teachers have been implemented to recruit mid-career professionals to education (Hirsch, 2006). These programs require an alternative certification route. There are two main avenues toward alternate certification in Alabama. Both require a recommendation from a superintendent to employ the applicant. The first option is called the Alternate Baccalaureate-Level Certificate (ABC). This certification is for those who have not begun earning their teaching certification through an approved program in Alabama. The second option is called the Special Alternate Certification (SAC). This certification is for those who have already begun a teacher education program and would like to enter the classroom before completing the program.

Berry (2008) conducted a study using National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCTs) from high-needs school districts in the states of North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Washington to aid in the process of staffing schools. The NBCTs recommended that to transform

teaching and learning in schools; leaders should prepare and support teachers for specific challenges by providing ongoing professional development, collaboration, mentoring, and induction programs. They also suggested recruiting and developing administrators who are instructional leaders, providing incentives, focusing on building teacher knowledge, and building awareness among policymakers, practitioners, and members of the public about specific challenges schools are faced with. Collins (1999) concluded that to recruit teachers in rural areas, administrators must target candidates with a rural background or with personal characteristics or educational experiences that predispose them to live in rural areas.

**Incentives.** Recruiting quality teachers to rural districts can be difficult. Some states and districts have proposed different strategies to overcome this issue. The strategy seen most often in school systems is providing teachers with some form of incentive. Darling-Hammond and Ducommun (2007) found that recruitment incentives are needed to attract and keep expert teachers in these schools. Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, and Vigdor (2008) found that offering a \$1,800 per year retention bonus decreased teacher attrition rates by 17%.

Some districts use financial incentives while others may use non-financial incentives (Hirsch, 2006). Fall (2010) found that districts use targeted financial incentives to recruit and retain teachers. Targeted financial incentives are a popular policy strategy for attracting talented professionals to public service jobs (Steele, Murnane, & Willett, 2010). Financial incentives most often used are state income tax credits, relocation reimbursement, housing assistance, signing bonus, retention bonus, loan forgiveness, scholarship, tuition assistance for advanced degrees, early retirement incentives, bonus based on student performance of individual teachers, and bonus based on performance at the school.

Non-financial incentives include providing a reduced teaching load or guaranteeing lower class sizes, additional support personnel for teachers and students, more planning time, opportunities for an active role in decision making, recruitment with like-minded teachers, and additional targeted professional development opportunities. Some areas have incorporated “grow-your-own” strategies such as school clubs to offer incentives to residents that have the potential to become teachers (Collins, 1999, p. 3). School clubs, such as Future Teachers of America, motivate students to return to their home communities once they have completed the requirements to become a teacher. According to the Suell & Piotrowski (2003), teachers who attained alternative certification have higher retention rates than those entering traditional colleges of education.

The Arkansas Department of Education has incorporated different programs like high priority bonus incentives, the teacher housing development foundation, and the state teacher education program to attract teachers especially in the high need areas of math, science, and special education (Maranto & Shuls, 2012). A high priority district in Arkansas is defined as a public school district that has less than 1,000 students, and 80% or more of the students are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. In high priority districts, new teachers are offered a one-time \$5,000 bonus after completing their first year, \$4,000 after completing year two and three, and \$3,000 after that. Teachers who are high performing in a high priority district are also offered assistance with conventional mortgages, down payment assistance, and an opportunity to acquire a second mortgage of less than 20 percent of the home’s value. Teachers could also qualify for loan forgiveness, \$3,000 per year in a shortage area, and if they are a minority an additional \$1,000 is offered.



**Hiring Practices.** Utilizing a recruitment website is one strategy states and districts attract teachers to their area (Maranto & Shuls, 2012). A recruitment website is an online job advertisement used to announce education vacancies for teachers, support staff, and administrators. Arkansas used this method to attract teachers outside of the area so that they can become familiar with districts before applying for a teaching position. According to Fall (2010), hiring decisions should be both school-based and district-based.

Liu and Johnson (2006) found that for teachers to succeed with their students they feel they need an information-rich hiring process that provides them with a good preview of their job, mentoring and support, an aligned curriculum with district and state standards, teaching assignments that are fair and appropriate, and school-wide approaches to student support and discipline. An information-rich hiring process allows the prospective teacher and administrator to develop a perception of whether they will be a good match. If the principal sees the candidate as a good match, then they should be hired early so that they can prepare for the position. Some districts use the Gallup Teacher Insight Assessment to screen applicants. The Gallup Teacher Insight Assessment is an online interview used in school districts to identify the best potential teachers. It helps a principal determine whether a candidate is a good fit for their school.

Brown and Wynn (2009) conducted a study with principals in an urban school district to identify different characteristics present and strategies used to recruit and retain teachers in their schools. They found that the schools with higher retention rates attracted and kept people who care, are dedicated, committed, hardworking, and focused on student progress. Districts should ensure that principals are strong supportive leaders that have characteristics to attract and retain effective teachers. Rural school districts need more dedicated, committed, and experienced

teachers, but unfortunately it has become a problem to do so. Researching strategies that have been effective will provide leaders with strategies to improve this dilemma.

### **Teacher Retention**

In the United States, an area in education that is most concerning in the supply of teachers is teacher retention (Fall, 2010). Petty et al. (2011) stated that to retain teachers, leaders should provide teachers with the necessary support which included an increase in salary and bonus compensation and provided teachers with the opportunity to be heard. Teachers that stay felt like they had a supportive principal found themselves loving what they do, and felt like they could make a difference in the lives of their students. Howard (2003) found that leaders can retain teachers by improving working conditions and granting teachers more autonomy in the school decision-making process.

Martin et al. (2008) concluded that designing high-quality alternative certification programs, improving work conditions, providing a high level of autonomy and administrative support, and engaging in a constant and consistent assessment of teaching effectiveness are strategies that can be used to help increase retention rates. According to Collins (1999), retention requires a school-community effort to help new rural teachers overcome feelings of isolation, acquire a sense of community security, and develop professional competence. One strategy that could be used to increase teacher retention in urban areas is recruiting teachers who are culturally diverse (Howard, 2003).

Hirsch (2006) found that reasons teachers stay due to supportive school leadership, salary and benefits, time to plan and teach, quality of facilities and resources, community environment, collegial experience, involvement in the decision-making process, professional development opportunities, and the cost of living. Fall and Billingsley (2011) concluded that when the

workload, paperwork, and caseloads are manageable, teachers are more likely to be committed to their schools.

According to Kukla-Acevedo (2009), workplace conditions such as behavioral climate, classroom autonomy, and administrative support affect a first-year teacher's decision to stay. The behavioral climate entails challenging student behaviors. This factor was found to play a significant role in determining whether a teacher would stay or leave. Administrative support, which measured how much support the teacher received from the principal and administration, was a protective factor against teacher attrition. In the study conducted by Kukla-Acevedo (2009), the results were not substantial, but increased administrative support seemed to decrease the amount of teacher attrition. Workplace conditions have been linked with the beginning teacher's retention (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). Weiss (1999) found that schools with a supportive climate characterized by collaboration and teacher participation in decision making were related to a greater commitment to teaching and intention to remain in the profession for first-year teachers.

According to Patton and Kristonis (2006), there are five principles that should be implemented when trying to increase teacher retention. The first principle is to recruit teachers who are passionate about teaching and love children. Bennett, Brown, Kirby-Smith, and Severson (2013) also argues that experienced teachers decided to stay in the field of education because they loved teaching, believed it was their calling and had a love for children. The second principle is to provide new teachers with a highly-qualified mentor. Leaders should make sure that they assign the right mentor so that the process is a positive experience for both the mentee and mentor.

The third principle is to support teachers with classroom and school concerns. The first year of teaching can be challenging, but with the right support systems in place, the discomfort of the challenges can be minimized. The fourth principle is to train new teachers on curriculum and teaching strategies. Teachers should be equipped with the necessary resources and training to provide students with effective instruction. The fifth principle is to empower new teachers. New teachers who feel that they have a voice in the decision-making process of the school are more likely to stay in the field of education longer. Following these five laws will help increase retention rates and decrease teacher mobility and attrition rates (Patton & Kristonis, 2006, p. 8).

Swars, Meyers, Mays, and Lack (2009) reported five themes as essential for teacher retention: shared values, unique qualities of students, administration relationships, daily lives of teachers, and teacher relationships. To increase teacher retention, teachers need school conditions where teachers are successful and supported, have collaboration opportunities, differentiated leadership, opportunities to advance their career in education, and higher salaries (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Providing teachers with a support system to conquer challenges they may face might motivate them to stay in the profession and could help decrease the high attrition rates (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010).

Attracting and retaining good teachers is an area of concern for both educators and policymakers (Chapman & Green, 2001). Chapman's model, developed in 1983, (2001) suggests that teacher retention is the function of a teacher's characteristics, teacher preparation, initial commitment to teaching, first teaching experience, professional and social integration into teaching, and school climate. According to Chapman and Green (2001), these factors help a teacher determine if they will remain or leave the teaching profession.

Fall (2010) suggested that to increase teacher retention there should be the following factors in place: recruit teachers to districts and schools where they are needed most, invest considerable resources to provide early career teachers a variety of induction and support programs, develop supportive work environments, foster a collegial school culture, increase principal support, create manageable work assignments, and assure a good match between the teacher and assignments. Principals should select a new teacher's initial assignments carefully, set clear goals, welcome feedback, establish an encouraging and non-threatening environment, and provide opportunities to interact with experienced colleagues and parents (Collins, 1999). Collins also found that the school can also ease the way for new teachers by streamlining paperwork, providing a well-planned in-service program, and arranging release time for visiting other teacher's classrooms.

While reviewing the literature there were several factors found that aided in retaining teachers such as preparation, trust relationships, and support that recurred throughout the research, therefore, are delved into more explicitly according to the different lens of teachers.

**Preparation.** Teacher training institutions can contribute to teacher retention (Howard, 2003). If the school and university partnerships are in place and teachers are given the opportunity to experience working in rural schools, it becomes more likely that new teachers will remain in their position as teacher in these schools. These experiences can increase the teacher's knowledge, skills, and strategies so that they can work more successfully in challenging situations. According to Inman and Marlow (2004), teacher education programs need to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to interact with teachers and students in rural schools.

In the North Carolina study conducted by Petty et al. (2011), middle school teachers suggested that new teachers be offered coursework that is related to classroom management,

practicum experiences, and opportunities to build relationships and participate in mentoring programs. Future teachers with experience in challenging classrooms are more apt to stay (Petty et al., 2012). According to Howard (2003), teacher education programs and professional development programs for new teachers in challenging school settings can help reduce teacher attrition. Fall (2010) suggest that the appropriate match of teacher preparation and classroom assignment positively influenced a teacher's commitment to remain in teaching. Teachers who are provided with the proper resources to effectively teach students are more apt to stay in teaching positions making it very important that equitable funding be implemented in all schools to provide quality teaching.

**Support.** Teaching can be very demanding and challenging. Principals should ensure that there are practices in place to support teachers, such as support systems within the school are essential elements to increase retention. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that the more support teachers are given, the more likely they are to remain in their position. If schools have a well-planned induction support system, supportive working conditions along with a strong partnership with universities then teachers are more likely to stay (Fall, 2010).

Good administrative support provides mentors for new teachers, helps teachers with behavior management issues, and finds ways to create positive school environments (Bennett et al., 2013). Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found that administrative support makes the teaching task easier and more satisfying which increases the chances of a teacher remaining in their teaching position. The combination of mentoring, school culture and principal leadership are major factors in teacher retention (Wynn et al., 2007).

One support factor that has been proven by several researchers is mentoring. Regarding teachers, mentoring often consists of an experienced teacher who gives a novice teacher advice

or guidance. Mentoring can provide critical support for new teachers (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu & Donaldson, 2004). Mentors must develop trust relationships with the mentees. Once the relationships have been built, it allows for the opportunity of building instructional capacity within both individuals.

Mentoring components in teacher inductions programs have a positive impact on novice teachers (Yost, 2006). Wynn et al. (2007) recommend that novice teachers have two types of mentoring support: psychological and instruction-related. Psychological support addresses the personal and emotional challenges new teachers may be faced with. Instruction-related support aids new teachers with help during lesson planning, school rules, and classroom management. An effective mentoring program also focuses on development which helps teachers understand the pedagogy of teaching (Wynn et al., 2007).

Teachers in rural schools require more intensive support measures due to the many challenges they are faced with (Fall, 2010). Mentoring and induction programs have been found to aid in teacher retention and build trust relationships between teachers and administration. Yost (2006) argues that the most important aspect of the teacher induction program is a collaboration with other teachers. According to Brown and Wynn (2009), new teachers felt that principals' support for mentoring and induction programs aided in their decision to quit or remain on the job. Brown and Wynn (2009) also found that there is an association between having a mentor, common planning time with other teachers in the same subject area, collaboration time, and retention. Having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject, having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being part of an external network of teacher reduces teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Fall (2010) found that teachers who were placed in supportive working conditions were more likely to remain at a school. Teachers in this study felt that having a supportive principal and colleagues along with adequate resources, and the opportunity to make decisions influenced their commitment. Some researchers found that many novice teachers are finding their first teaching jobs in challenging schools; this phenomenon has inspired many districts to implement mentoring and induction programs to support novice teachers. (Petty et al., 2011).

Fall (2010) suggest that support from the principal and other teachers in the school positively influence teacher commitment. Inman and Marlow (2004) discussed how important it is for new teachers to have colleagues that they can share ideas, make plans, and help them solve problems. Teachers who are a part of this process have fewer feelings of isolation and more likely to stay in the teaching field.

Gallagher (2012) investigated the characteristics of schools that foster effectiveness. In this study, he found that collaboration, support, and high expectations were the key factors that both schools considered important components of a successful school. The collaborative culture of the school was emphasized by both teachers and principals. The principal acknowledges that a collaborative culture allows teachers the opportunity to address common standards at one time, create curriculum and assessments, share successful intervention strategies, and provide each student with quality instruction (Gallagher, 2012).

Petty et al. (2011) also argued that such programs should be funded by schools or districts to aid in the retention of teachers. According to Berry (2008), mentoring programs should be established to increase the number of support teachers receive in cultural competence and differentiating instruction. Administrators who support their new teachers provide them with mentors (Bennett et al., 2013).



In a study conducted by Useem and Neild (2005) in a high-poverty low-performing school district, new teachers who were provided with a new teacher coach to serve a mentor increased the chances of retaining the new teacher. These coaches were veteran local teachers who had retired or been given an opportunity to assist in the development of the new teachers. Therefore, they had more time to devote to effectively helping the new teachers with any challenge they were facing. Due to the supportive measures in place new teachers were more apt to remain in their positions (Useem & Neild, 2005). According to Inman and Marlow (2004), new teachers should be teamed with experienced teachers based on classroom similarities.

Rural school districts also lack adequate financial support. The amount of funding provided for schools in rural areas is considerably lower than compared to funding in urban and suburban areas. In many cases the costs to replace a teacher is significant. Some costs associated with replacing teachers are recruiting strategies, incentives, administrative processing, and training for teachers. According to Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007), districts are allocating more money to address attrition costs, therefore neglecting to invest in resources to improve teacher effectiveness. Continually replacing teachers puts districts at a disadvantage to increase student performance if they are continually being taught by inexperienced teachers. Schools with higher teacher attrition rates will correspondingly have higher costs associated with teacher attrition (Barnes et al., 2007). If rural school districts provide policymakers with an attrition cost analysis, then maybe it will help them make data-based decisions to aid in retaining teachers.

**School leadership, trust, and culture.** Hirsch (2006) concluded that leadership is an important factor in a teacher's decision to stay in their current position. Strong, supportive principal leadership is crucial to the retention of teachers (Howard, 2003). Boyd et al. (2011) also found that the support of administrators is an important factor in retention decisions. Howard

concluded that instructional leaders who provide opportunities for professional development, support teachers' innovations, and create a positive working environment are more likely to have higher retention rates.

Establishing and maintaining trust relationships sets the stage for teacher retention. Principals have a leading role in establishing and maintaining trust within a school. These individuals have the positional power to put structures in place so that trust relationships can be developed and maintained. School leaders are very important when trying to build a community that can shape and mold new teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2009). School structure can determine whether teachers stay at schools for extended periods of time. The structure of schools can look different depending upon both external and internal factors.

Trust relationships require some form of vulnerability. Being vulnerable can be difficult but a necessity for relationships. Vulnerable can be defined as open to moral attack, criticism, temptation, and so forth. In schools, all stakeholders should be able to accept both the negative and positive to increase the effectiveness of the organization. According to Koerner and Abdul-Tawwab (2006), trustful relationships are difficult to establish among teachers, students, and families because many teachers are not from the communities where they teach, and, therefore, are not familiar with the cultural nuances of their students.

According to Saffold (1988), the core of the organizational culture is shared values. Individuals within an organization want to feel a sense of belonging. They want to know or feel that they are being heard and their thoughts are being considered. Leaders must create innovative ways to get all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. By doing so, leaders allow a plethora of ideas to be brought to the table. This within itself helps to develop trust relationships and build a stronger culture.

Trust is a very important component of building a positive culture. The location of a school, its history, and what message is being sent are all important aspects of building culture. Schools develop their own identity based upon the history and message they convey to others. The mission, vision, values, and goals should be shared among all stakeholders. When a community shares the mission, vision, values, and goals, it helps to build a stronger school culture.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that if principals were willing to assist teachers with the instructional matter, the teachers were more apt to trust the principals because of the supportive characteristics of the principal. Price and Moolenaar (2015) also found that there is a direct relationship between the principal-teacher interactions and trust. According to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015), cultivating a climate of trust allows the members of a school community to amplify their school's strengths and create environments where curiosity and the love of learning abide. How teachers experience principal leadership depends upon the level of trust they have for the principal (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Their research examined the various factors that are often present in principal-teacher interactions and teacher-teacher relationships.

The most important component of trust building is the people. It is very critical to know who you are and whom you are working with. Treating teachers with respect and allowing them to teach increases teacher retention (Petty et al., 2012). Relationships between teachers and students can influence the social context and how a teacher builds the environment in their classroom helps to determine how much the student will trust them. Teacher support is one of the strongest correlates with youth adjustment, social and motivational development, and achievement (Sakiz, Pape, & Hoy, 2011). Social support and the lack of threat and anxiety in the

learning environments result in positive attitudes toward school, greater engagement in classroom activities, and higher achievement (Sakiz et al., 2011)

Teacher characteristics such as caring, interest in, respect for, and concern for students help to cultivate a trusted environment (Sakiz et al., 2011). These characteristics coupled with encouragement and high expectations may improve the psychological climate of the classroom and increase the feeling of safety, which stimulates students' classroom engagement and learning especially in diverse, learning environments (Sakiz et al., 2011). Based on research by McKown and Weinstein (2008), students carefully observe teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors and develop self-beliefs and academic behaviors based on these observations.

Pride also helps to develop a positive culture. When leaders, students, teachers, parents, and other community members take pride in their school, there are typically positive results. For example, the school's atmosphere is defined by students' ownership of the school. Building a positive school culture can increase teacher retention and decrease teacher attrition rates.

Many school districts focus more on recruiting teachers than retaining them. It is equally important for rural school districts to both recruit high-quality teachers as well as retain them. Providing leaders in rural school districts with factors that promote teacher retention is very beneficial.

### **Teacher Attrition**

Many teachers who leave the teaching profession or move to other districts do so because of either social, demographic, or economic reasons. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are several factors that contribute to teacher attrition such as inadequate pay, inadequate support, discipline problems, limited input into decision making, retirement, family, school staffing actions, and job dissatisfaction. Amrein-Beardsley (2012)

found that factors such as low salaries, lack of support, lack of resources, high teacher to student ratios, and student discipline issues are reasons why teachers decide to either stay or leave the teaching profession. She also found that other factors outside of the control of the school like retirement, family, and health issues play a role in the retention decisions.

Based on research by Bennett et al. (2013), teachers that leave the field do so because they feel teaching is overwhelming, too much paperwork and record keeping, too many state requirements for teachers, too many meeting requirements, standardized assessments, obligations other than teaching, and lack of time. High-quality teachers in rural schools are more likely to change schools or leave the profession due to the challenges they may experience while working in a rural school (Jacob, 2007).

According to Bolich (2001), teachers leave the teaching profession due to the lack of support, difficult teaching assignments, increased stress levels, discipline problems, and unrealistic daily demands. Reasons high school teachers decided to leave their teaching jobs were due to psychological burnout and lack of administrative support (Petty et al., 2012). Boyd et al. (2011) found that over 35 percent of teachers that leave the profession do so because of the dissatisfaction with the job. Cochran-Smith et al. (2011) say that teachers with the most challenging assignments are also more likely to leave.

Ingersoll (2002) concluded that teachers who vacated their positions would have stayed if the schools had better salaries, smaller class sizes, stronger student discipline, more parental involvement, more faculty authority, more opportunities for advancement, less paperwork, better classroom resources, higher standards, tuition reimbursement, mentors, and merit pay. Howard (2003) found that many teachers leave teaching positions because of increased stress levels, lack of administrative support, discipline problems, and cultural mismatches. Teacher blame, low

salary, the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation, and lack of administrative support are primary reasons for leaving (Curtis, 2012).

Student behavior and discipline, low salary, lack of materials and supplies, and lack of administrative support are factors teachers in North Carolina cited as reasons for leaving the teaching profession (Petty et al., 2011). Gayton (2008) found that low salary, lack of safety in urban areas, lack of professional growth opportunities, and blame placed on teachers were factors that caused teachers to leave their job.

Hirsch (2006) concluded that teachers leave their teaching profession due to the following factors: lack of administrative support, negative school environment, poor classroom management, lack of autonomy, lack of comfort for effectiveness with students, lack of resources, student discipline problems, low salary, retirement eligibility, insufficient time during day, personal, focus on testing, and teaching assignments such as class size and subject. There were a few factors that many of the researchers found to be prevalent in schools where attrition rates were higher: lack of support, teacher burnout, and a negative school environment.

**Lack of support.** One factor seen most often that cause teachers to leave is the lack of support. Devecchi et al. (2012) suggested teachers allude to the lack of support and poor working conditions as primary factors in teacher attrition. Without the support of the community, teacher attrition will steadily increase. The most important component of trust building is the people. It is very critical to know who you are and whom you are working with. Schools that lack a culture of trust typically have higher teacher attrition.

Student achievement is a major focus for many schools. Because of the focus on student achievement novice teachers who need help with classroom management are not receiving the support, they need to manage the students, and therefore student achievement is steadily

decreasing. Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) found that a student's negative behavior will interfere with learning. Such behaviors could be but not limited to bullying, horse playing, class cutting, sexual harassment, fighting and vandalism, cursing, and being disobedient and disrespectful.

According to Borman and Dowling (2008), high rates of attrition make it difficult for schools to attract and develop effective teachers, and, as a result, high-poverty and minority students who attend so-called "hard-to-staff schools" are routinely taught by the least experienced, least effective teachers. Ingersoll and May (2011) found that efforts to solve these staffing problems often pay little attention to systematically supporting and retaining teachers once they are there. Repeated attrition thwarts the kind of continuity needed to build sustained, trustful relationships among teachers, students, and families. Hanselman et al. (2016) believe that such relationships develop over time and are critical for forming a sense of community unified by a common mission and an agreed-on strategy for achieving it. Compensation policies to lower attrition rates are higher pay, student loan forgiveness, and the expansion of alternative certification and housing for teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2001, pg. 4).

**Teacher burn-out.** According to Maele and Houtte (2014), teachers tend to burn-out easily due to the stress caused. More often, especially in low-income schools, principals tend to ask the same group of people to perform different tasks. These teachers tend to burnout which can lead to increased teacher attrition. Trust can act as a buffer against teacher burnout (Maele & Houtte, 2014). For burnout to be minimized, principals should provide teachers with opportunities to develop professionally. It is very important that the professional development chosen for teachers be adequate, meaningful, and useful. Collaboration has increased in

importance and has shown to be effective in high performing schools. In schools where the principal values collaboration, teacher retention has increased.

**Negative school environment.** In deciding whether to continue or leave teaching, the school's culture can be a deciding factor (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Schools that lack a culture of trust typically have higher teacher attrition. Some schools struggle to attract and retain teachers due to their location or socioeconomic status. In rural areas housing, poor community demographics, and teacher load are major factors that shape the decision of whether a teacher will remain in their position.

Brown and Wynn (2009) found that the more difficult the working conditions are, especially in hard-to-staff schools, the less likely teachers are attracted to or want to continue working in these areas. Tighter senses of the community seem to be a main factor when teachers in rural schools decide to stay (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012). Teachers who have less positive perceptions of their school administrators are more likely to transfer to another school and to leave teaching (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2008). It is very critical that rural school districts discover what controllable factors are in place in their schools that encourage teachers to leave. According to Ingersoll (2001), understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay.

## **Summary**

There is not a plethora of research that exists on retaining teachers in rural schools. There is very minimal "high quality" research available on rural education (Arnold, 2004). However, there has been more research done on recruiting and retaining teachers in urban schools. Urban schools and rural schools are similar in that both areas tend to have an increased number of individuals who live in poverty. Teachers are being placed in rural schools without the



knowledge or skills to address many of the challenges they are faced with. This study looks at retention and will provide leaders with an understanding of how to aid in the process of retaining teachers in rural schools.

### **Chapter III: Methods**

This chapter describes the methods used to answer the research questions that have guided this study. A description of the setting, how participants were recruited, and a detailed description of the instruments used are included. Also, the validity and reliability of the instrument and procedures used to describe how data was collected and analyzed from respondents are discussed.

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors in rural schools inspire teachers to stay or leave their teaching position. A quantitative study was used to investigate the perceptions among teachers and to better understand their reasoning behind their decisions. Qualitative questions were used to offer the respondent the opportunity to explain their intentions. The goal of this study is to provide school leaders and policymakers with evidence to make more profound decisions to attract and retain teachers in rural schools.

#### **Research Questions**

The research for this study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control relate to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession?
2. Of the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls measured in this study, which does teachers report as important to their intention to leave or stay in their current position?

3. What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions differ across school level and school classification?

### **Research Design**

This study was designed as a quantitative investigation to identify factors present in rural schools that affect teacher retention rates. The quantitative data generated by a survey will help determine if there is a relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and teacher retention in rural schools. Table 1 below describes the data that will be collected to answer each of the research questions. The researcher used qualitative questions in this study to offer teachers the opportunity to explain why they have remained teaching or planning to leave their current position, as well as to investigate from the teachers' point of view, what factors influence their intentions.

### **Participants and Recruitment**

This study took place in rural schools within the East Alabama Regional In-Service area. Figure 3 is a map of the school districts in the East Alabama Regional In-Service area. A listing of the public schools in the East Alabama In-Service Region was obtained from the East Alabama Regional In-Service Center (EARIC) website (<http://www.education.auburn.edu/earic>). There were a total of 112 schools identified through the EARIC website. The EARIC serves nearly 4,500 educators in fifteen East Alabama school systems. Information about the setting of the school was found on the AdvancED website (<http://www.advanc-ed.org/>). Additional information (i.e., district address, school address, student population numbers, and principals' email address) was also obtained from the AdvancED and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) website.



*Figure 3.* Map of the East Alabama Region School Districts. Adapted from Auburn University College of Education. Retrieved June 10, 2017, from (<http://www.atim.us/au.html>).

Of the 112 schools, thirty-four were considered rural. Table 1 lists how schools were categorized as either rural, remote, rural, distant, or rural fringe. This study included certified teachers in a public-school setting who work with students. This study excluded all private school in this region of the state.

Superintendents from each school district were contacted to request permission to conduct a research study within their district or school. Permission to collect data for this study was obtained through the Auburn University Institutional Review Board. Once permission was granted, an email was sent to each principal and teacher explaining the specifics of the study.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and an informed consent document was required of all participants. There were no known foreseeable discomforts or risks expected for the participants nor were there any direct benefits. According to each school's website, there

were approximately 1,070 teachers. Of this number, the researcher anticipated a 70% response rate or 749 participants. The minimum acceptable response rate was 15% or 161 participants.

### Description of Setting

The sample chosen for this study included regular rural public schools in the East Alabama Regional In-Service area. The schools were labeled Schools A through I.

Table 1

#### *Demographics of Sample Populations*

School	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Percent of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	Category (Fringe, Remote, or Distant)
A-1	7-12	317	91	9	0	0	69%	Remote
A-2	3-6	215	83	17	0	0	78%	Remote
A-3	K-2	198	86	14	0	0	79%	Remote
C-1	K-5	236	94	0	6	0	63%	Distant
C-2	K-7	122	53	0	47	0	61%	Distant
C-3	6-8	133	100	0	0	0	60%	Distant
C-4	9-12	242	93	0	7	0	52%	Distant
D-1	K-4	620	22	4	74	0	68%	Fringe
D-2	9-12	666	26	2	72	0	51%	Fringe
D-3	K-6	646	19	4	77	0	63%	Distant
D-4	7-12	519	20	0	80	0	60%	Distant
D-5	K-6	329	68	21	11	0	94%	Fringe
D-6	7-12	196	92	8	0	0	86%	Fringe
D-7	5-8	550	23	0	77	0	63%	Distant
D-8	K-6	506	17	0	83	0	52%	Fringe
E-1	K-4	497	11	0	89	0	54%	Distant
E-2	5-8	457	10	0	90	0	50%	Distant
E-3	9-12	480	12	0	88	0	48%	Distant
E-4	K-4	621	7	0	93	0	57%	Fringe
E-5	5-8	537	8	4	88	0	54%	Fringe
E-6	9-12	456	9	0	91	0	46%	Fringe
F-1	K-6	106	100	0	0	0	67%	Distant
F-2	K-12	269	100	0	0	0	70%	Distant
G-1	K-6	154	24	0	76	0	51%	Distant
G-2	K-6	366	49	0	51	0	45%	Distant
G-3	9-12	945	47	4	48	1	58%	Distant
G-4	7-8	479	43	6	49	2	56%	Distant
H-1	K-6	620	42	0	58	0	76%	Distant
H-2	7-12	552	45	0	55	0	74%	Distant
H-3	K-12	796	5	3	92	0	57%	Distant
H-4	K-12	831	26	0	74	0	65%	Distant
I-1	K-4	694	28	3	69	0	61%	Fringe
I-2	5-8	524	24	0	76	0	58%	Fringe
I-3	9-12	548	28	0	72	0	53%	Fringe

## **Description of the Instrument**

Using a quantitative study provided the researcher with a quantitative analysis of the teachers' perceptions of their school. In this study, a survey developed by Robinson (2016) was utilized to gather data. The items for the survey were adapted from previous surveys: Teacher Retention Survey (Kersaint, 2007), Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), and Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFP).

Fink (2003) defines content validity as the extent to which the survey appropriately measures characteristics it was intended to measure. To ensure the validity of this survey instrument, Dr. Robinson sent the survey out to nine educators in school districts within and outside of Alabama. The survey was revised, corrected, and then piloted to a group of ten educators. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. According to Robinson (2016), the survey instrument had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .936, and because the coefficient is greater than .7, the survey was reliable.

Table 2 displays the reliability of how closely related attitudes and teachers' intentions were based on the presence of the belief and the importance of the belief. The Cronbach's alpha for the presence of the belief was .79 and for the importance of the belief was .65. The alpha coefficient for the presence of the belief was acceptable. The alpha coefficient for the importance of the belief was questionable. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine how closely related teachers' attitudes and intentions were. According to George and Mallery (2003), a Cronbach's alpha of .7 is considered to be acceptable and indicates good internal consistency of the items in the scale.

Table 2

*Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha for Attitudes*

Areas	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Presence of the Belief	.79	5
Importance of the Belief	.65	5

Table 3 demonstrates the reliability of how closely related subjective norms and teachers' intention were based on the presence of the belief and the importance of the belief. The Cronbach's alpha for the presence of the belief was .78 and for the importance of the belief was .88. The alpha coefficient for the two areas was acceptable.

Table 3

*Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha for Subjective Norms*

Areas	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Presence of the Belief	.78	6
Importance of the Belief	.88	6

Table 4 demonstrates the reliability of how closely related perceived behavior controls and teachers' intentions were based on the presence of the belief and the importance of the belief. The Cronbach's alpha for the presence of the belief was .87 and for the importance of the belief was .77. The alpha coefficient for the two areas was acceptable.

Table 4

*Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha for Perceived Behavior Control*

Areas	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Presence of Belief	.87	9
Importance of Belief	.77	9

The survey was composed of 36 questions. The questions were broken down as follows: attitudes = five questions, subjective norms = seven questions, perceived behavior controls = nine questions, intention = four questions, and demographic = nine questions. Table three lists

the questions. Twenty-five questions that target the four constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior controls, and intention) were generated to support the theoretical framework.

The survey had two sections. Section one utilized a seven-point Likert-scale (from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”) to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of the respondents’ behavioral beliefs. The higher the mean score, the more the participants agreed with the statement. The lower the mean score, the more the participants disagreed with the statement. According to Weijters et al. (2010), answering questions becomes less problematic if the researcher uses scales with more response categories because it allows the respondent the opportunity to express his/her feelings to a certain degree; therefore, the author of this survey chose to use the seven-point Likert scale. Section two consisted of multiple choice questions to gather demographic information about the participants.

### **Data Collection**

Written permission was sent electronically to the Superintendent of each school district. Upon agreement of the Superintendent, letters of consent were sent electronically to each teacher. The survey was distributed using Qualtrics, an electronic survey service provided to Auburn University students. There was a one-month window for participants to complete the survey. A link was provided in an email from the researcher to each participant. A reminder email was sent out to each participant two weeks after distribution. There were no names recorded on the survey to ensure anonymity.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using the computer program software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following tests were conducted to determine if there is a relationship between teacher retention rates and factors within a school: descriptive statistics,



multiple regressions, and ANOVA (Table 5). Descriptive statistics were to describe the basic features of the sample. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare school levels in these schools. Multiple regression was used to predict teachers' intentions according to their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control. The researcher used the process of coding to analyze the qualitative data. Themes emerged from the coding.

Table 5

*Research Questions and Statistical Analysis*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey Items</b>	<b>Statistical Analysis</b>
1. To what extent do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control relate to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession?	1-49	Multiple Regression
2. Of the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control measured in this study, which does teachers report as important to their intention to leave or stay in their current position?	1-49	Multiple Regression Qualitative Coding of Open-Ended Questions
3. What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions differ across school level and school classification?	23-26, 63	Descriptive/One-Way ANOVA

**Limitations**

This study represented a cross-sectional design; therefore, data were collected only once, within a limited time-frame. The sample size is dependent upon superintendents consenting to participate in the study and the number of teachers who voluntarily responded. The sample size was small in comparison to the state's population of rural schools. This study was limited because it only focuses on rural schools in the East Alabama Regional In-Service area. I did not collect data from which schools' teachers attended. Therefore, there is uncertainty about the number of schools represented in the sample. Different results may be found in rural schools

based on poverty levels. The researcher did not have access to those teachers who have left before the study.

### **Summary**

Retaining teachers can be a challenge. The survey data provided administrators with what factors were present in their school that caused teachers to either leave or stay. Based on data from the interviews, why teachers remain at their school will assist administrators with ideas to influence retention. This mixed-methods study will reveal teachers reasoning behind their decisions in East Alabama rural schools and serve as a guide to increase teacher retention rates.

## **Chapter IV: Results and Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to determine what factors found in rural schools influence teachers' intentions. This study was based upon the perception of teachers. The Theory of Planned Behavior was used as a framework to investigate the factors present in rural schools. The results of this study will increase the literature as it relates to recruiting and retaining teachers in rural schools.

This chapter will present the results of the study in two forms: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics provided a summary of the sample and the measures by reporting the mean and standard deviation. Multiple regression was used to make judgments about the population based on the sample. A one-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a difference between school level and school characteristics.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control relate to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession?
2. Of the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls measured in this study, which do teachers report as important to their intention to leave or stay in their current position?
3. What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions differ across school level and school classification?

## Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive information for the respondents is summarized in Tables 7-10 based on the Teacher Intentions Survey. This survey was distributed through central office personnel in each school district. The survey was intended for teachers in rural schools but was distributed to all professional personnel in these rural schools. Therefore, others attempted to take the survey.

There were 34 schools that were invited to participate in the survey. Of the 34 schools invited to participate, there were approximately 1,070 teachers of which 579 (54%) were elementary teachers, 168 (16%) middle school teachers, and 323 (30%) secondary high school teachers. Table 6 shows that only 298 respondents participated in the survey. Of those who participated 239 (80%) were teachers and those that attempted to participate 17 (6%) were administrators, 36 (12%) were other professional personnel, and six (2%) did not specify their job title. The response rate was 22.3. Teacher participation underrepresents the teachers in the East Alabama In-Service region.

Table 6

### *Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants*

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Teacher	239	80%
Administrator	17	6%
Other Professional	36	12%
Missing	6	2%
Total	298	

Table 7 depicts the tenure status of the respondents. According to the data, 118 (49%) of the teachers were considered to be tenured, 49 (21%) were non-tenured, and 72 (30 %) of the respondents did not report their tenure status. Based on the data, there was a higher percentage of teachers that had tenure status that participated in the study over those that were non-tenured.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Tenure Status*

<b>Tenure Status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Tenured	118	49%
Non-Tenured	49	21%
Missing	72	30%

Table 8 displays the number of teachers who taught in elementary, middle, or secondary high schools. In the East Alabama Regional In-Service area, there are approximately 1,647 teachers of which 744 (45%) are elementary teachers, 289 (18%) are middle school teachers, and 574 (35%) are secondary high school teachers. Of those who responded, 80 (33%) were elementary teachers, 41 (17%) were middle school teachers, 47 (20%) were secondary high school teachers, and 71 (30%) did not indicate school level. In comparison to the region numbers, all levels of teachers represented the region fairly well. Based on the data, there were more elementary teachers who responded to the survey than middle and secondary.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics of School Level*

<b>School Level</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Elementary	80	33%	744	45%
Middle	41	17%	289	18%
Secondary	47	20%	574	35%
Missing	71	30%		

Table 9 demonstrates how many years of teaching experience that respondents had. Of the respondents, 18 (7%) had 0-3 years of experience, 25 (10%) had 4- 7 years of experience, 13 (5%) had 8-10 years of experience, and 112 (47%) had 11 years of experience or more. Unfortunately, 71 (30%) did not specify how many years they had been in the teaching profession. According to the data, there were more teachers who had 11 years or more of teaching experience who participated.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics of Number of Years of Teaching*

<b>Number of Years Teaching</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0-3	18	8%
4-7	25	10%
8-10	13	5%
11 or more	112	47%
Missing	71	30%
Total	239	100%

**Inferential Statistics**

A simple regression, multiple regression, and one-way ANOVA were used to make predictions about the population. In this study, multiple regression models were used to predict teachers' intentions according to their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control. The independent variables were attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control. The dependent variable was the teachers' intention. According to Casson and Farmer (2014), when using a linear regression, there are six assumptions that are required to give you a valid result. The assumptions which justify using a simple linear regression analysis for the purpose of making a prediction about the intentions of teachers based on teachers' attitudes are: (1) continuous variables, (2) additivity and linearity, (3) independent errors, (4) homoscedasticity, and (5) normally distributed errors, (6) random.

**Research question one.** To what extent do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control relate to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession? A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior controls for teachers and the teachers' intent to remain in their current teaching position. The predicted variable was the scores of the attitudes, subjective norms, and the perceived behavior controls. The criterion variable was the score for intention. To test the

assumption of independent errors a Durbin-Watson was done. The Durbin-Watson value was 1.90 which indicates there is a positive correlation between residuals. The assumption was met.

A scatterplot was used to test for the assumptions of normally distributed errors, additivity and linearity, and homoscedasticity. The results indicated that the observed standard residuals were normally distributed and there is a linear relationship. The assumption of homoscedasticity was violated. The results shown in Table 10 indicated that 48.2% of the variance in the intention score could be accounted for by the teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control score ( $R^2=.482$ ). The ANOVA result indicated that it was a good regression model ( $F_{(3,171)}=53.08, p < .001$ ). Based on the coefficient results in Table 10, the attitudes ( $t_{(171)}= 9.09, p < .001$ ) were good predictors to predict the teachers' intentions to remain in their current teaching position, whereas the subjective norms ( $t_{(171)}= 1.30, p= .19$ ) and perceived behavior control ( $t_{(171)}= -.35, p = .73$ ) were not good predictors.

Table 10

*Multiple Regression Table for Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavior Controls*

Values	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	-1.45	.564		-2.58	.011
Attitudes	1.003	.110	.643	9.09	<.001
Subjective Norms	.138	.106	.090	1.30	.194
Perceived Behavior Controls	-.023	.066	-.020	-.346	.730

Note: N = 298; R = .694;  $R^2 = .482$ ;  $F_{(3,171)}= 53.08, p<.001$ .

**Research question two.** Of the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls measured in this study, which does teachers report as important to their intention to leave or stay in their current position? The attitudes of teachers were measured with five paired items. Table 11 illustrates what factors teachers felt as important or present that influenced their intentions. These items measured the teachers' attitudes towards job satisfaction, helping

children, benefits, job security, and personal fulfillment. The results were ranked from the most influential to the least influential. The actual belief score for helping children was 6.48, job security was 6.29, benefits was 6.23, job fulfillment was 5.93, and job satisfaction was 5.82.

Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes*

Attitude Statistics	M	SD	Total
Presence of the Belief – continuing to teach in my current school provides me high job satisfaction	5.30	1.66	
Importance of the Belief – high levels of job satisfaction are important to me	6.39	.74	
Actual Belief Score			5.82
Presence of the Belief – Continuing to teach at my current school allows me to help children learn	6.17	.93	
Importance of the Belief – Helping children grow and learn are important to me	6.8	.43	
Actual Belief Score			6.48
Presence of the Belief – Continuing to teach at my current schools affords good benefits, such as health insurance and retirement pensions	6.06	1.09	
Importance of the Belief – Health insurance and retirement pensions are important to me	6.40	1.10	
Actual Belief Score			6.23
Presence of Belief – Continuing to teach at my current school affords me job security	6.09	1.09	
Importance of Belief – Job security is important to me	6.49	.94	
Actual Belief Score			6.29
Presence of the Belief – Continuing to teach at my current school offers personal fulfillment	5.28	1.75	
Importance of the Belief – Personal fulfillment is important to me	6.65	.54	
Actual Belief Score			5.93

The subjective norms of teachers were measured with 6 paired items. Table 12 illustrates what factors teachers felt as important or present that influenced their intentions. These items measured subjective norms towards the community, parents, family, administrators, co-workers, and students. The results were ranked from the most influential to the least influential. The actual belief score for the students was 5.73, co-workers was 5.64, administrators was 5.60, family was 5.33, parents was 5.26, and community was 4.52.



Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics for Subjective Norms*

<b>Subjective Norms Statistics</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Total</b>
Presence of the Belief – Community leaders indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school	4.1	1.88	
Importance of the Belief – Community members’ opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me	4.17	1.87	
Actual Belief Score			4.52
Presence of the Belief – Parents have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school	5.82	1.38	
Importance of the Belief – My student’s parents’ opinions about whether I remain teaching at my current school are important to me	4.75	1.78	
Actual Belief Score			5.26
Presence of the Belief – My family had indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school	5.03	1.85	
Importance of the Belief – My family’s opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me	5.64	1.49	
Actual Belief Score			5.33
Presence of the Belief – My administrators have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school	5.68	1.49	
Importance of the Belief – My administrators’ opinions about whether I remain teaching are important to me	5.50	1.59	
Actual Belief Score			5.60
Presence of the Belief - My co-workers have indicated that they would like for me to remain teaching at my current school	6.19	1.15	
Importance of the Belief- My co-workers’ opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me	5.14	1.67	
Actual Belief Score			5.64
Presence of the Belief - My students have indicated that they would like for me to remain teaching at my current school	6.25	.96	
Importance of the Belief- My students’ opinions about whether I remain at my current schools are important to me	5.25	1.70	
Actual Belief Score			5.73

The perceived behavior control of teachers was measured with 9 paired items. Table 13 illustrates what factors teachers felt as important or present that influenced their intentions. These items measured perceived behavior control towards student behavior, school rules and procedures, paperwork and responsibilities, resources, mentoring, professional development, autonomy, empowerment, and facilities. The results were ranked from the most influential to the least influential. The actual belief score for student behavior was 5.22, autonomy was 5.00,

empowerment was 4.73, facilities was 4.62, school rules and procedures was 4.17, meaningful professional development was 3.92, mentoring was 3.81, resources were 3.53, and paperwork and responsibilities were 3.03. According to the data, student behavior was an important factor that influences a teacher's decision to remain teaching. The mean score was high, 5.76 and the standard deviation was 1.22. Teachers also reported school facilities, autonomy, and empowerment as important to them and influenced their decision to continue teaching.

Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Behavior Control*

<b>Perceived Behavior Control</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Total</b>
Presence of the Belief – The behavior of my students influences my decision to remain at my current school	4.73	1.96	
Importance of the Belief – I am able to manage my students' behavior effectively	5.76	1.22	
Actual Belief Score			5.22
Presence of the Belief – My principal's ability to enforce school rules and procedures influences my decision to remain at my current school	5.08	1.98	
Importance of the Belief – I am able to influence the way my principal enforces school rules and procedures	3.43	1.79	
Actual Belief Score			4.17
Presence of the Belief – The amount of paperwork and other non-teaching responsibilities influence my desire to remain teaching at my current school	4.21	2.23	
Importance of the Belief – I have control over the amount of paperwork and non-teaching responsibilities that I must do in my school	2.18	1.49	
Actual Belief Score			3.03
Presence of the Belief – Access to resources, such as computers and textbooks, influences my decision to remain at my current school	4.52	2.00	
Importance of the Belief – I am able to secure additional classroom materials and resources when I need them	2.75	1.71	
Actual Belief Score			3.53
Presence of the Belief – The availability of quality mentoring influences my decision to continue teaching at my current school	3.95	1.92	
Importance of the Belief – I have access to a mentoring program	3.67	1.95	
Actual Belief Score			3.81
Presence of the Belief – Meaningful professional development influences my decision to remain at my current school	3.91	1.94	
Importance of the Belief – I am able to select professional development that is meaningful to me	3.92	1.86	
Actual Belief Score			3.92
Presence of the Belief – The degree of autonomy that I have in my classroom influences my decision to remain at my current school	5.01	1.83	
Importance of Belief – I have autonomy as a teacher at my school	4.99	1.62	
Actual Belief Score			5.00
Presence of the Belief – The degree of empowerment that I have in my classroom influences my decision to remain at my current school	4.74	1.90	
Importance of the Belief – I am empowered as a teacher at my current school	4.73	1.80	
Actual Belief Score			4.73
Presence of the Belief – The quality of building facilities influences my decision to remain at my current school	3.96	1.90	
Importance of the Belief – The quality of my building is beyond my control	5.38	1.56	
Actual Belief Score			4.62

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls for teachers and the teachers' intent to remain in their current teaching position. The predicted variables were the scores of the importance of teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control whereas the criterion variable was the score for intention. To test the assumption of independent errors a Durbin-Watson was done. The Durbin-Watson value was 1.99 which indicates there is a positive correlation between residuals and does not violate the assumption of independence of errors.

The results for the tests for assumptions of additivity and linearity and normally distributed errors indicated that the observed standard residuals were normally distributed. The assumption of homoscedasticity was violated. The results shown in Table 14 indicated that 24.5% of the variance in the intention score could be accounted for by the teachers' attitudes score ( $R^2=.245$ ). The ANOVA result indicated that it was not a good regression model ( $F_{(3,156)}=16.86, p<.001$ ). Based on the coefficient results in Table 14, the importance of attitudes was not a good predictor of the teachers' intentions ( $t_{(156)}= 1.05, p= .296$ ). There was not a positive correlation between the importance of attitudes and intentions. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and say that there is no relationship between teachers' attitudes and their intentions. The importance of subjective norms for the teachers' intentions ( $t_{(156)}= 2.26, p=.03$ ) and the importance of perceived behavior controls ( $t_{(156)}= 6.15, p < .001$ ) were good predictors for the teachers' intentions. Based on the results of this data, we reject the null hypothesis, and it was concluded there is a relationship between subjective norms and perceived behavior controls and teachers' intentions.

Table 14

*Multiple Regression for Importance of Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavior Controls*

Values	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	-.230	1.46		-.158	.875
Attitudes	.228	.217	.075	1.05	.296
Subjective Norms	.189	.084	.163	2.26	.025
Perceived Behavior Control	.698	.114	.432	6.15	<.001

Note: N = 298, R = .495, R<sup>2</sup> = .245,  $F_{(3,156)} = 16.86$ , and  $p < .001$ .

**Research question three.** What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions differ across school level? A one-way ANOVA with post hoc test using Tukey procedure was conducted to determine the effect of teachers' intentions based on the means of differing school levels. Before conducting the one-way ANOVA assumptions were tested. To test the assumption of homogeneity of variances a Levene's test was employed. The Levene's test results for school level intentions were,  $F_{(2,163)} = .541$ ,  $p = .583$ , indicating equal variance. Skewness and kurtosis were used to test for the assumption of normality. The value of skewness was .39 indicating that data was normally distributed. The value for kurtosis was -1.51 which indicates a flatter peak but normally distributed. The assumption of normality was met.

The descriptive data for school level (elementary, middle, and secondary school) across the three constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control) and intentions are presented in Table 15. To determine how the three constructs and intentions differed across school level, descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA were used. The mean test results indicated that elementary teachers experienced better attitudes towards teaching than middle and secondary teachers. The mean results also indicated that middle school teachers reported

subjective norms influenced their decision to continue to teach more than elementary and secondary teachers. Finally, descriptive statistics determined that middle school teachers also believe that perceived behavior controls influenced their decision to continue teaching more than elementary and secondary teachers. These results are not consistent with research citing that elementary teachers were more satisfied with their current teaching position than secondary teachers (Perrachione et al., 2008).

Table 15

*School Level Descriptive Statistics*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>
Attitudes	Elementary	6.62	.46	78
	Middle	6.48	.57	40
	Secondary	6.46	.54	45
	Total	6.54	.51	163
Subjective Norms	Elementary	4.85	1.39	79
	Middle	5.64	.96	40
	Secondary	4.97	1.39	46
	Total	5.08	1.33	165
Perceived Behavior Control	Elementary	3.82	.95	78
	Middle	4.29	1.08	41
	Secondary	4.00	.17	45
	Total	3.99	.97	164
Intentions	Elementary	5.09	1.59	79
	Middle	5.17	1.44	40
	Secondary	4.85	1.60	47
	Total	5.04	1.55	166

Additionally, Tukey post hoc and a one-way ANOVA were computed on the three constructs and intention to determine how they differed across school level. The independent variable was school level, and the dependent variables were intentions, attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control. Table 16 displays the results for the one-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc tests. The results for the Levene's test for attitudes indicated that there is no difference between school levels,  $F_{(2,160)} = 1.70, p = .19$ . The results for the Levene's test for subjective norms indicated that there is a difference between school levels,  $F_{(2,162)} = 5.11, p = .01$ . Therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The subjective norms score between the elementary

and middle school level was significantly different,  $p = .01$ , whereas the subjective norms score between elementary and secondary was not significantly different,  $p = .88$ . Also, the subjective norms score between middle and secondary was significantly different,  $p = .05$ .

The results for the Levene's test for perceived behavior control indicated that there is a difference between school levels,  $F_{(2,161)} = 3.17$ ,  $p = .05$ . Therefore we reject the null hypothesis. The perceived behavior control score between elementary and middle school level indicated that there is a difference between the school levels,  $p = .03$ . There was no difference between elementary and secondary school levels,  $p = .60$ , and middle and secondary school levels,  $p = .34$ . The results for intentions indicated that there is no difference among school levels,  $F_{(2, 163)} = 1.31$ ,  $p = .58$ . Finally, the intentions score between elementary, middle, and secondary was not significantly different. Therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no difference across school levels.

Table 16

*One-Way ANOVA for School Levels*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i>
Attitudes	Between Groups	.88	2	.44	1.70	.19
	Within Groups	41.62	160	.26		
	Total	42.51	162			
Subjective Norms	Between Groups	17.29	2	8.64	5.10	.01
	Within Groups	274.29	162	1.70		
	Total	291.58	164			
Perceived Behavior Control	Between Groups	5.78	2	2.89	3.17	.05
	Within Groups	147.06	161	.91		
	Total	152.85	163			
Intentions	Between Groups	2.62	2	1.31	.54	.58
	Within Groups	395.12	163	2.42		
	Total	3.97.75	165			

## **Qualitative Analysis**

In section three of the survey, there were open-ended questions used to further examine research questions. The open-ended questions allowed teachers to provide additional information about their intentions. This information provided the researcher with clarifying answers and additional factors that were not addressed in the survey. The questions were:

1. If you reported that you plan to continue teaching, please explain why.
2. If you reported that you plan to leave teaching for another profession, please explain why.
3. If you reported that you plan to retire, please explain why.

To organize the data and analyze it, the researcher used coding to process the information. The coding method used was further organized into themes. Themes represent the findings in qualitative information (Creswell, 2013). Table 17 demonstrates the themes and selected participant responses for each theme.



Table 17

*Sample Teacher Responses to Open-Ended Questions*

Open-Ended Question #1 – If you reported that you plan to continue teaching, please explain why.			
Theme	Definition	Sample Responses	# of Comments
Love for Students	<i>A feeling of strong or constant affection for something or about something.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The kids matter.</li> <li>• I love the children.</li> <li>• I teach for my students.</li> <li>• I love making a difference in the lives of my students.</li> <li>• I love helping kids</li> </ul>	62
Passion	<i>A strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is my passion</li> <li>• I was born to teach. It is what I was meant to do.</li> <li>• I love teaching.</li> <li>• Teaching is my life.</li> <li>• I enjoy teaching and making a difference.</li> <li>• It's what I've always wanted to do.</li> <li>• If I continue teaching, it will be because I must have the salary and benefits.</li> </ul>	53
Benefits	<i>A payment or profit made by an employer, the state, or an insurance company.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The health benefits and retirement are good.</li> <li>• I can keep good insurance and retirement plan.</li> <li>• I must continue to teach to become vested in state retirement.</li> </ul>	6
Job Security	<i>The presumption or confidence of an employee that he or she will not lose their jobs in the near future.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job security.</li> <li>• Job security and benefits keep me in the teaching profession.</li> <li>• I have job security in special education because few people want the position.</li> </ul>	4
Positive Community	<i>A group that inspires members to promote a sense of self-discovery and group connection, encouraging members to express their beliefs and values, as well as build relationships with others.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy my fellow English teachers. We work well together.</li> <li>• We have a great school environment.</li> <li>• Resources, facilities, co-workers, yes, they matter.</li> </ul>	3
Open-Ended Question #2 – If you reported that you plan to leave teaching for another profession, please explain why.			
Theme	Definitions	Sample Responses	# of Comments
Money	<i>A current medium of exchange in the form of coins.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers aren't paid enough money.</li> <li>• I don't make enough money.</li> <li>• Need pay increase.</li> <li>• Finances.</li> <li>• Money is a big factor.</li> <li>• My family's financial needs far outweigh any benefits of teaching.</li> </ul>	16
Negative Student Behavior	<i>Being disruptive in class.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student behavior at my school is out of control.</li> <li>• Behavioral problems.</li> <li>• Behavior is getting worse.</li> <li>• Our school has no discipline.</li> <li>• Student behavior is draining.</li> <li>• School discipline environment is the reason I will leave the profession as soon as possible.</li> </ul>	13
Workload	<i>Amount of work to be done by someone or something.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overwhelming amount of paperwork.</li> <li>• Burden of paperwork.</li> <li>• The paperwork takes up a good deal of my time.</li> <li>• Workload is mentally stressful.</li> <li>• Teaching is about paperwork and test scores.</li> </ul>	12

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of paperwork required for my job and the amount of assessments required negatively affect the amount and quality of teaching I feel I am able to perform.</li> </ul>	
Lack of Support	<i>Without assistance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of parental support.</li> <li>No support.</li> <li>I don't feel that I have any support from administrators or parents.</li> <li>I don't feel supported.</li> <li>Lack of parental involvement.</li> </ul>	7
Extra Duties or Responsibilities	<i>Having additional things to do.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing amount of time I am required to be at school performing duties outside of the classroom.</li> <li>Too many demands and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	4
Burned Out	<i>In a state of physical or mental collapse cause by overwork or stress.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am feeling burnt out.</li> <li>Burned out with my job.</li> <li>Burn out.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Open-Ended Question #3 – If you reported that you plan to retire, please explain why.</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Sample Responses</b>	<b># of Comments</b>
Time	<i>The measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed 25 years.</li> <li>Put in my 25 years.</li> <li>I have been teaching for 27 years.</li> <li>25 years is the max time I want to teach.</li> </ul>	21
Paperwork	<i>Routine work involving written documents such as forms, records, or letters.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of additional paperwork is overwhelming.</li> <li>The number of meetings due to said paperwork.</li> <li>The amount of paperwork required overshadows the enjoyment I get from teaching.</li> </ul>	5
Family	<i>A group of usually related individuals who live together under common household authority.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would like to be free to spend time with my family and travel.</li> <li>My significant other will be retiring before I do and we have plans to move upon his retirement.</li> <li>There will come a day when it is time to retire and spend quality time with my family.</li> <li>Both children will have completed college and it will provide me the opportunity to be more available to family adventures.</li> </ul>	4
Benefits	<i>A payment or profit made by an employer, the state, or an insurance company.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits/Social Security</li> <li>Health insurance and retirement plan.</li> </ul>	2
Money	<i>A current medium of exchange in the form of coins.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay for the amount of school and responsibilities is not sufficient.</li> <li>I can easily go to Georgia and make \$5-8,000 a year more.</li> </ul>	2
Lack of Support	<i>Without assistance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of support from administration regarding student discipline.</li> <li>No support.</li> </ul>	2

## **Chapter V: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations for Future Research**

Chapter V provides a summary of the study and is divided into five sections. The first section is a brief review of the literature. The purpose of the study, research design, and data collection method is reviewed in section two. The next section reviews the findings of the study that were presented in Chapter IV. Additionally, conclusions about teachers' intentions and their significance were also made based on the research. Chapter V will also discuss implications of the findings and help various stakeholder groups recognize the importance of factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain teaching in rural schools. The last section will provide researchers with recommendations for future research.

### **Review of Literature**

Hiring and retaining teachers has presented a challenge for many school districts across the United States. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2015), twenty-seven percent of teachers leave the teaching profession after three years. For schools with low academic achievement and high poverty, the attrition rates are even higher (Curtis, 2012). Ingersoll (2001) concluded that staffing problems are due to excess demand, resulting from a "revolving door" where a large number of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement.

Examining factors that influence teachers' intentions may be one way to increase teacher retention. Based on research conducted by Ingersoll and Smith (2003), improving teachers' working conditions will lower new teacher attrition rates. Certo and Fox (2002) found that reasons teachers remain generally due to a commitment to the profession, quality administration, or relationships with colleagues. Petty et al. (2011) stated that to retain teachers, leaders should

provide teachers with the necessary support which included an increase in salary and bonus compensation.

Understanding factors that affect teachers' intentions can impact decisions made by schools and school districts. By addressing what factors influence teachers' intentions, school and district leaders can combat increasing teacher attrition rates. According to Kukla-Acevedo (2009), workplace conditions such as behavioral climate, classroom autonomy, and administrative support affect a first-year teacher's decision to stay. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that the more support teachers are given, the more likely they are to remain in their position. If schools have supportive working conditions along with a strong partnership with universities, then teachers are more likely to stay (Fall, 2010).

Fall (2010) concluded that teachers in rural schools require more intensive support measures due to the many challenges they are faced with. Rural school districts also lack adequate financial support. The amount of money allocated to schools in rural districts is not as abundant as in urban and suburban districts. The cost to replace a teacher is expensive. Barnes et al. (2007) found that such high rates of departure from public schools each year costs the United States more than \$7 billion in recruitment, administrative processing, hiring, professional development, and replacement training. According to Ingersoll (2001), the rate of teacher attrition appears to be higher in comparison to other professions. Therefore, continuously replacing teachers becomes a significant problem.

### **Summary of Research Design, Data Collection, and Data Analysis**

A quantitative study approach was employed to conduct this research. The sample consisted of teachers in rural districts across the East Alabama Regional In-service Center. The researcher sent emails to the superintendents of all rural school districts in the region to request

their participation in the study. Seven superintendents agreed to participate in the study. A survey was sent to teachers to collect the data. A total of 298 teachers responded to the survey.

After collecting the quantitative data, it was then analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, multiple regressions, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. There were three open-ended questions that were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher identified commonalities and categorized the commonalities into themes.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study used a quantitative approach to examine factors that influenced teachers' intentions to continue teaching in rural schools. A survey designed by Robinson (2016) was used to address three constructs from the Theory of Planned Behavior: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior controls and determine if there was a relationship between these constructs and teachers' intentions. A multiple regression analysis was used to address research questions one. Multiple regression and qualitative coding were used to address research question two. A one-way ANOVA was used to address question three. Each question was analyzed, and conclusions were made based on the results.

**Research question one.** To what extent do attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control relate to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession? The multiple regression model showed that teachers' attitudes and subjective norms were not good predictors to predict teachers' intentions to remain in their current teaching position, whereas the perceived behavior control was a good predictor. In this study, factors such as student behavior, paperwork and responsibilities, resources, mentoring, professional development, autonomy, empowerment, and facilities influence teachers' intentions to remain in their current teaching position.

**Research question two.** Of the attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior controls measured in this study, which does teachers report as important to their intention to stay in their current position? Descriptive statistics showed that teachers' attitudes regarding job satisfaction, helping children, benefits, job security, and personal fulfillment did not affect teachers' intentions. Teachers reported that helping children grow and learn as an important factor. The mean score for the importance of belief was high, 6.5 with a standard deviation of .51 which indicates that the teacher responses were consistent. The mean score for job security and benefits were also high, 6.49 with a standard deviation of .94 and 6.4 with a standard deviation of 1.10. These findings are consistent with the research cited by Kersaint et al. (2007) that the joy of teaching is of low importance across all leavers and stayers.

Descriptive statistics showed that teachers' intentions were affected by subjective norms. According to the data, teachers reported that the opinions of their family were important to them. The mean for the importance of the belief was 5.64, and the standard deviation was 1.49, suggesting that the teacher responses were consistent. Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) found that 31% percent of teachers who leave attribute leaving to family considerations. The data also suggested that students, parents, co-workers, community members, and administrators indicated that they would like for the teachers to remain, but their opinions was not as important as their family.

Descriptive statistics showed that teachers' perceived behavior control measures such as student behavior, school rules and procedures, paperwork and responsibilities, resources, mentoring, professional development, autonomy, empowerment, and facilities did affect teachers' intentions. McCoy (2003) reported that if new teachers have support from administrators and other colleagues, then they are more likely to remain in the teaching

profession. If administrators provide teachers with a strong support system, then they are more likely to stay. Ingersoll et al. (2017) suggested that providing teachers with the ability to have input on key decisions that affect teaching and learning is a major factor in increasing teacher retention. Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Maseo (2009) also suggested that when teachers feel that they have input in school decisions, then they are more likely to continue teaching.

Additionally, a multiple regression produced results indicating a strong correlation between subjective norms, perceived behavior controls, and teachers' intentions. The data indicated that the adjusted  $R^2$  was .05, meaning 5% of the variance in teachers' intentions to continue teaching can be accounted by subjective norms. By examining the survey questions associated with subjective norms, it was determined that teachers' intentions were determined by the opinions of students, co-workers, administrators, family, parents, and community. According to the results, the opinions of students were most important in teachers' intentions to continue teaching.

The data also indicated that 20% of the variance in teachers' intentions could be accounted for by perceived behavior controls. The survey examined teachers' intentions based on student behavior, resources, autonomy, empowerment, facilities, school rules and procedures, meaningful professional development, mentoring, paperwork and responsibilities. The results demonstrated that student behavior was an important factor in teachers' intentions. Furthermore, there was not a strong correlation between attitudes and teachers' intentions. The results indicated that 0.8% of the variance in teachers' intentions to continue teaching could be accounted by attitudes. The findings displayed that helping children was important in teachers' intentions to continue teaching.

**Research question three.** What are the contextual factors across which teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and intentions differ across school level? A one-way ANOVA model showed that there was no difference between school levels and teachers' attitudes. However, when comparing the subjective norms at different school levels, there was a difference in teachers' intentions at the elementary and middle school level. There was also a difference between the middle and secondary school levels.

The results for perceived behavior control and teachers' intentions at different school levels also showed a difference between elementary and middle and between middle and secondary school levels. Based on the data collected, factors that influence teachers' intention are dependent upon what significant others think about the teachers' ability to perform (subjective norms) and the perception of how easy or difficult the teacher find the task (perceived behavior control). Shin (1994) found that elementary school teachers are more likely to remain teaching than secondary teachers.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Open-ended questions were used in the survey to get a deeper understanding of the factors that influence teachers to remain in their teaching position and also those factors that influence teachers to leave their teaching position. In organizing the data, I first read through all of the teachers' responses before deciding on a method of coding (Creswell, 2013). While reading through the responses, I looked for patterns, attempting to determine potential themes to represent data. I then reread each response, coding them into what appeared to be common themes and documenting those responses that did not easily fit into one of the categories. The themes used for the first question were the love for students, passion, benefits, job security, and a positive community. The themes for the second question were money, negative student



behavior, workload, lack of support, extra duties and responsibilities, and burned out. Lastly, the themes for the third question were time, paperwork, family, benefits, money, and lack of support.

**Open-ended question one.** If you reported that you plan to continue teaching, please explain why. There were five factors teachers stated that influenced their intentions to continue teaching. Those factors are job security, love for students, passion for teaching, benefits, and retirement, and a positive community. Of the 128 responses, forty-eight percent of the teachers indicated that the reason they plan to continue teaching is their love for students. Some of the responses elicited from the teachers were, “I love helping kids,” “I love making a difference in the lives of my students,” and “I teach for my students.”

Forty-one percent stated that they are passionate about teaching. They made comments such as “I was born to teach,” “teaching is my life,” and “it is what I always wanted to do.” These educators expressed a sense of belonging or being connected. This compassion for teaching has been defined as spirituality (Marshall, 2009). Teachers want to make a difference via teaching and thus find a sense of purpose. Grayson and Alvarez (2008) indicated that most teachers enter the education field to make a positive difference in the lives of children. The other eleven percent of teachers expressed remaining in the teaching profession because of benefits and retirement, job security, and being in a positive community.

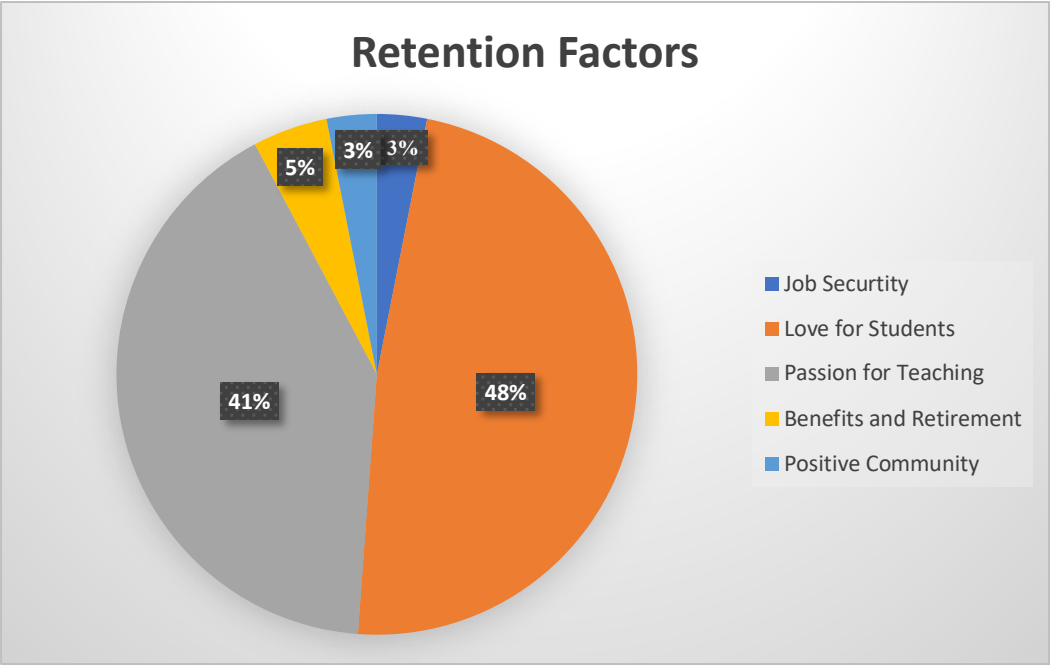


Figure 4. Retention Factors

**Open-ended question two.** If you reported that you plan to leave teaching for another profession, please explain why. Some teachers indicated planning to leave teaching for another profession. Reasons they mentioned for wanting to leave were: too little money, student discipline, lack of support, extra duties and responsibilities, increased workload and paperwork, and burned out. Money, student discipline, and increased workload and paperwork were the main reasons teachers wanted to leave. Ingersoll (2001) proposed that four conditions (i.e., salary, administrative support, student discipline, and faculty influenced input) contribute to a teacher’s attitude towards job satisfaction. Unsatisfied teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession rather than stay.

Twenty-nine percent of the teachers in this study indicated that they would leave teaching due to their dissatisfaction with teacher compensation. Some of the comments were: “Teachers are not paid enough money,” “My family’s financial needs far outweigh any benefits of teaching,” and “I don’t make enough money.” Petty et al. (2012) conducted a study exploring

how to attract and retain teachers in high-needs high schools. They found that teachers considered money to be the most significant factor in retaining teachers. Certo and Fox (2002) reported that teachers who left the teaching profession rated salary and benefits as the number one factor for leaving the profession.

Twenty-four percent of teachers in this study indicated that they would leave because the student behavior was troublesome and stressful. The teachers made statements like “Student behavior is draining” and “School discipline environment is the reason I will leave the profession as soon as possible.” Ingersoll (2001) concluded that schools with more behavior problems have more teacher attrition. He also found that schools who have supportive administrators regarding student discipline are a crucial factor in a teacher’s job.

Twenty-two percent of the teachers specified that the amount of paperwork and workload was becoming overwhelmingly too much. One teacher stated, “the workload is mentally stressful.” Another teacher reported, “the amount of paperwork required for my job and the number of assessments required negatively affect the amount and quality of teaching I feel I can perform.” Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) found that workload was directly related to teachers being satisfied with their job.

Thirteen percent reported that a lack of support would influence their decision to leave. The teachers mentioned a lack of support from both administrators and parents. Administrative support may include providing teachers with the necessary resources, effective professional development, managing student behavior issues, and positive mentor relationships. Ingersoll (2001) also concluded that poor administrative support is another factor that stood out in the SASS data.

According to Kukla-Acevedo (2009), administrative support appears to affect a first-year teacher's decision to remain or depart from the workplace. Teachers also expressed a desire for parental support. One teacher reporting stated, "I don't feel that I have any support from administrators or parents." Having parental support could increase the likelihood of teachers remaining in their position because parents play a vital role in a child's education. Being able to have a broader learning community aids in developing a high-quality education for children. The other twelve percent mentioned being burned out and having extra duties and responsibilities as reasons they were planning to leave. To decrease teacher attrition, it is important to keep the factors above in mind.

In the literature, many researchers found that geographic isolation was a contributing factor to teacher attrition. In this study, geographic isolation was not mentioned by any of the respondents. An explanation is offered to attempt to account for this factor not being mentioned. Most rural schools in the East Alabama region are within thirty to the fifty-mile radius of a city center, and therefore, the teachers may not feel as geographically isolated. However, other rural schools in the state may not be as close and would probably yield different results. Another explanation may be that the researcher did not design this survey. The survey was designed for an urban school district. The questions were written more geared towards teachers working in an urban district rather than a rural district.

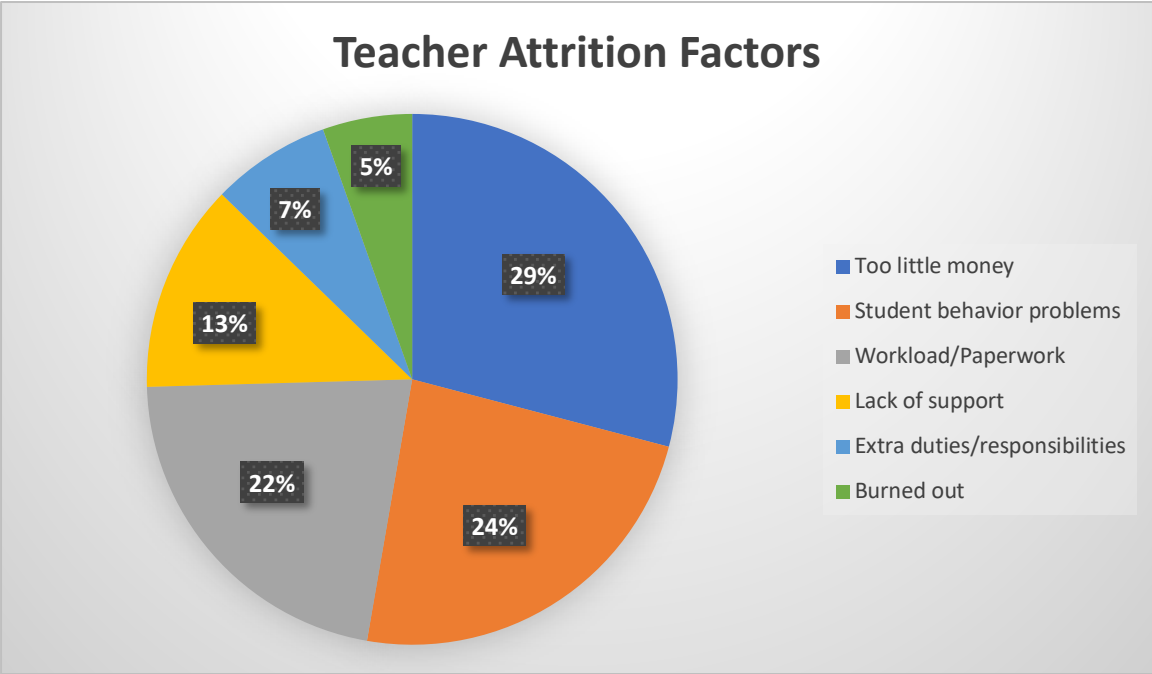


Figure 5. Teacher Attrition Factors

**Open-ended question three.** If you reported that you plan to retire, please explain why. Boe et al. (2008) reported that teachers most often leave the profession due to family considerations, poor health, school staffing actions, and retirement. Teachers who reported planning to retire stated that it was time to do so. Many of them planning to retire have taught for 25+ years. The others were planning to retire because of benefits, too much paperwork, too little money, lack of support, and family interactions.

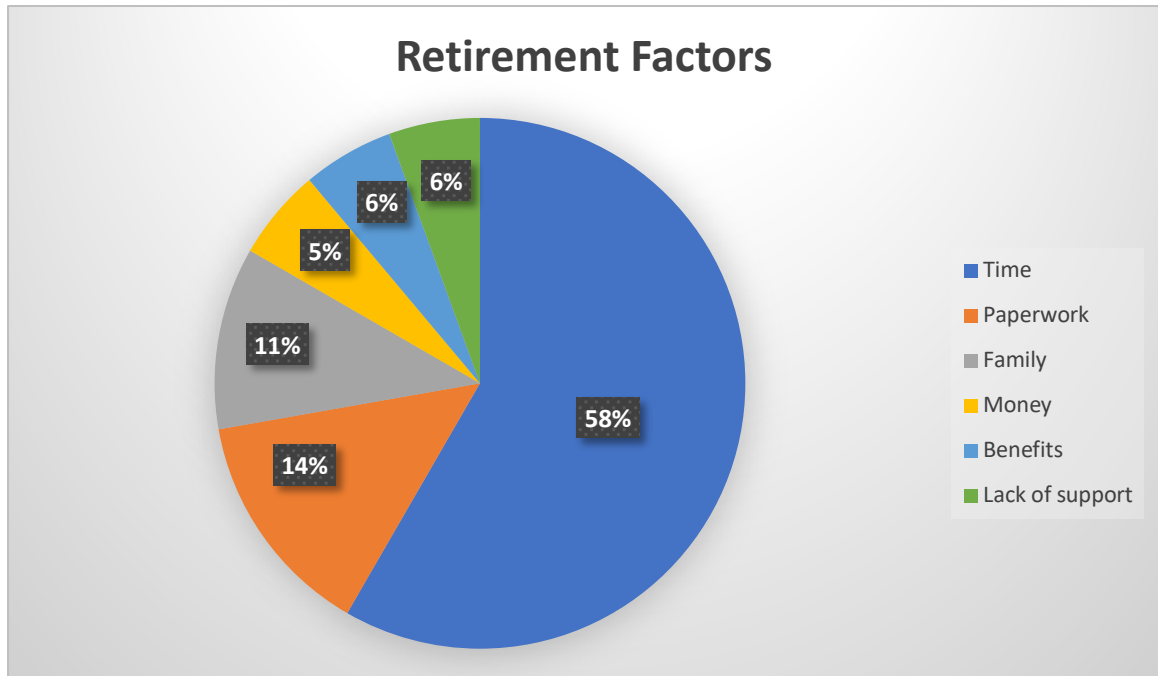


Figure 6. Retirement Factors

### Conclusion

After comparing all factors, teacher perceived behavior control accounted for the greatest variance. As a school leader, knowing what factors cause teachers to leave and stay could alleviate the continued challenge of staffing and retaining teachers in rural schools. Theobald and Michael (2002) concluded that not having consistency with teachers disrupts the stability, continuity, and cohesion of instruction, and therefore, affects student performance. As a way to increase teacher retention, stakeholders must focus on increasing teacher salaries, providing adequate support measures, managing student discipline issues, and lessen the number of paperwork teachers are expected to complete.

### Implications for Action

The goal of schools is to provide quality education to all students, therefore requiring quality teachers to provide this education. Rural schools and districts are faced with the challenge of retaining quality teachers. District and school leaders can address the challenge of retaining teachers by putting measures in place such as support with student discipline, mentoring programs, decreasing the amount of paperwork, and extra duties required. Elfers et al. (2006) concluded that to understand teachers' work and how to support it in greater depth, the information should be gathered directly from the teachers. The results of this study suggest that elementary teachers in rural schools are more apt to remain in their current teaching positions than middle and high school. According to the data, providing teachers with a competitive salary, a positive working environment, strong support system, autonomy, and empowerment could improve teacher retention.

In a recent study conducted by Robinson (2016), the researcher found that the construct attitudes contributed significantly to predicting intentions, however, in this study, the construct perceived behavior control contributed significantly to predicting intentions. The study conducted by Robinson was in one urban school system, whereas this study was in several rural school districts. Also, the survey was designed for an urban school district which may have alluded to the difference in results. Therefore, the results indicate that the needs for rural school districts are different from those in urban school districts.

### **Competitive Salary**

In general, studies have concluded that higher teacher pay increases teacher retention rates. In a study conducted in North Carolina, it was found that by providing teachers with bonuses teacher attrition was reduced by seventeen percent. In Florida, a similar study showed that by providing a retention bonus twenty-five percent of the teachers remained. According to

Imazeki (2005), increasing teacher salaries for novice teachers can also help increase retention rates specifically in districts with high attrition such as urban and rural districts. If rural school districts increase the salaries of teachers, then the cost associated with teacher attrition would decrease, therefore increasing the ability to build and sustain a positive working environment.

### **Positive Working Environment**

According to Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2015), relationships are a key component in a positive school climate. Faculty changes occur for various reasons. As a principal, it is important to choose a new faculty that is a good fit for the school. Being able to fit in allows others to trust and welcome you to their organization. “Trust is a necessary, yet a fragile part of human relationships” (Walker, Kutsyuruba, & Noonan, 2011, p. 473).

According to Deal and Kennedy (1982), school culture consists of the shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together. If the school community is not closely knit, then the school is typically not effective because different groups have a different agenda and don’t share the same values and goals. In other words, they all would have a different mission and vision. Therefore, the leader of the school must foster trust relationships throughout the school community.

Leaders can do this by being firm and purposeful, involving others in the process, exhibiting instructional leadership, frequent personal monitoring, and selecting and replacing staff (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). In a closely knitted organization, individuals share common values and beliefs (Buschgens, Bausch, & Balkin, 2013). Some researchers have argued that those values are constituting a culture guide organization members’ actions by providing a perception of goal congruence and by helping individuals to determine what is in the best interest



of the organization (Buschgens et al., 2013). These actions help to develop stronger trust relationships and effective learning communities.

According to Saffold (1988), the core of the organizational culture is shared values. Individuals within an organization want to feel a sense of belonging. They want to know or feel that they are being heard and their thoughts are being considered. Students who are connected to their school tend to do better in school and are more motivated to achieve (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). Teachers want to feel connected as well. Leaders must create innovative ways to get all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. By doing so, it allows for a plethora of ideas to be brought to the table. This within itself helps to build a stronger culture.

### **Strong Support System**

Administrators should ensure that there are practices in place to support teachers. Inman and Marlow (2004) reported that it is very important for novice teachers to have colleagues with whom they can share ideas with, make plans with, and have collaborative conversations.

Strategies used in many states are mentoring and induction programs. According to Wong & Breaux (2003), new teacher induction and mentoring programs are two strategies suggested to reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession. Induction is a training program for new teachers that continues two or more years. Induction programs assist teachers with becoming familiar with the specific needs of the district.

Mentoring is the process in which an experienced individual gives a novice individual advice or guidance. Mentoring can provide critical support for new teachers (Johnson et al., 2004). For mentoring to be successful, mentors and mentees must develop relationships. Once the relationships have been built, it allows for the opportunity of building instructional capacity within both individuals. Being able to provide an effective mentoring and induction program

will assist schools and school systems in an effort to increase teacher retention rates in rural schools.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is a limited amount of research examining recruiting and retaining teachers in rural school districts. The information provided in this study provides school administrators and various stakeholders with valuable information about factors that could increase teacher retention rates. Future researchers could expand the study across the state to make a comparison based on geographic locations. Larger sample size would make it easier to generalize.

A qualitative case study can be conducted to delve deeper into teachers' reasoning behind their intentions. This information would give school administrators a different lens to reflect on their practice. It could also provide a general understanding of what factors are in place in schools that could increase the chances of teachers being retained in their districts. Researchers could also research those who left the teaching profession to find out what factors influenced their decision to leave teaching. Finally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to determine the direction of predictability between the constructs.

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Appendix A

*Teacher Retention Survey*

Construct	Number	Question (Presence of Belief)	Paired Question (Importance of Belief)	Reference
Attitudes	1	Continuing to teach at my current school provides me high job satisfaction.	High levels of job satisfaction are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007 SASS, 2008
	2	Continuing to teach at my current school allows me to help children learn.	Helping children grow and learn are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	3	Continuing to teach at my current school affords good benefits, such as health insurance and retirement pensions.	Health insurance and retirement pensions are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007 SASS, 2008
	4	Continuing to teach at my current school affords me job security.	Job security is important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	5	Continuing to teach at my current school offers personal fulfillment.	Personal fulfillment is important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
Subjective Norms	6	Community leaders have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school.	Community members' opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007 SASS, 2008
	7	Parents have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school.	My students' parents' opinions about whether I remain teaching at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	8	My family has indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school.	My family's opinions about whether I remain teaching at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007



	9	My administrators have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school.	My administrators' opinions about whether I remain teaching at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	10	My co-workers have indicated that they would like for me to remain teaching at my current school.	My co-workers' opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	11	My students have indicated that they would like for me to continue teaching at my current school.	My students 'opinions about whether I remain at my current school are important to me.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	12	High stakes testing, such as ACT Aspire and Global Scholar, influences my decisions to remain at my current school.	I am able to influence the amount of high stakes testing, such as ACT Aspire and Global Scholar, given to my students.	Kersaint et al., 2007 Teacher Follow Up Survey, 2008
	13	Opportunities to make more money influence my desire to remain at my current school.	There are plenty of opportunities to earn extra money for performing additional duties at my school.	Amrein-Beardsley, 2012 Pucella, 2011
Perceived Behavior Control	14	The behavior of my students influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I am able to manage my students' behavior effectively.	Pucella, 2011 Teacher Follow Up Survey, 2008
	15	My principal's ability to enforce school rules and procedures influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I am able to influence the way my principal enforces school rules and procedures.	Pucella, 2011 SASS, 2008
	16	The amount of paperwork and other non-teaching responsibilities influences my desire to remain at my current school.	I have control over the amount of paperwork and non-teaching responsibilities that I must do in my school.	Amrein-Beardsley, 2012 Pucella, 2011 Teacher Follow Up Survey, 2008

	17	Access to resources, such as computers and textbooks, influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I am able to secure additional classroom materials and resources when I need them.	Kersaint et al., 2007 SASS, 2008 Teacher Follow Up Survey, 2008
	18	The availability of quality mentoring influences my decision to continue teaching at my current school.	I have access to a mentoring program.	Amrein-Beardsley, 2012 SASS, 2008
	19	Meaningful professional development influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I am able to select professional development that is meaningful to me.	Amrein-Beardsley, 2012
	20	The degree of autonomy that I have in my classroom influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I have autonomy as a teacher at my school.	Kersaint et al., 2007 SASS, 2008
	21	The degree of empowerment that I have in my classroom influences my decision to remain at my current school.	I am empowered as a teacher at my current school.	Kersaint et al., 2007
	22	The quality of building facilities influences my decision to remain at my current school.	The quality of my building is beyond my control.	Kersaint et al., 2007
Intention	23	I plan to remain teaching at my current school next year.		
	24	I plan to remain teaching at my current school for the next three years.		
	25	I plan to remain teaching at my current school for more than three years.		
	26	If the opportunity arose, I would leave		

		the teaching profession for another occupation.		
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