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**Classroom Teachers: Why the Mass Exodus?**

by

MaryBeth Sanders

A DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Education in Teacher Leadership in the Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Summer 2023

Dr. Miyoshi Juergensen, Committee Chair

Dr. Sheryl Croft, Committee Member

Dr. Chinasa Elue, Committee Member

### **Abstract**

This research study is a qualitative case study that sought to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers on the effectiveness of instructional support and the impact those supports had on their decision to remain in the classroom the following year. The study compared the various kinds of instructional support to the eight school organization characteristics that were the determinants for improving new teacher retention according to the review of the literature as well as aligning with the five levels of needs as presented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The study included eight novice teachers in their first year of teaching in Title I schools within one learning community spanning kindergarten through twelfth grades and encompassing various disciplines. Four of the participants chose to remain in teaching while the other four participants chose to leave the profession. The researcher used a perception survey questionnaire, a 1:1 semi-structured interview, and a focus group for data collection. The data analysis was completed using a combination of a cloud-based application for organizing and analyzing research data and a research journal where some analysis was conducted by hand. The findings indicated that early career teachers in their first year of teaching are more likely to remain in their same positions within their same schools when they access and apply learning from the instructional support initiatives available throughout the year that promote personal and professional growth and well-being. Additionally, the findings revealed that when new teachers are able to establish meaningful relationships of mutual trust and respect with their school administrators, mentors, and instructional coaches, the new teachers feel both encouraged to continue and empowered to grow into the best educator for their students and for their schools. When the school organization characteristics are met and the various needs levels of the new teachers are satisfied, job satisfaction increases along with the new teachers' desires to stay, thus improving new teacher

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retention. The study also recognizes that there are other factors beyond the control of the school or the school district that impact new teachers' decisions to stay or leave.

*Keywords:* teacher retention, teacher attrition, teacher burnout, novice teacher, veteran teacher,

### Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to God, to whom I give all glory, honor and praise!

I would like to acknowledge the following people who walked this journey with me:

Husband, Scott Sanders, for his love and unwavering support and for taking care of us.

Children, Jonathan, Rachel, and Jordan, for dreaming with me what seemed impossible.

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Study participants who were vulnerable and honest so that future educators can benefit.

Thank you to each of you for believing in me and helping me achieve this goal. This degree belongs to all of us! *To fight the unbeatable foe – To reach the unreachable star.*

### Dedication

I dedicate this research project to you, Mom - Lucia Inez Wentworth (7/19/1922 – 2/17/2009). It was you who planted within me the idea of pursuing this degree more than three decades ago. I promised you that I would achieve this accomplishment “one day.” Well, Mom, “one day” is finally here! You instilled in me the importance of getting an education so that I could have options in life to be whatever I desired to be. I am a wife, mother, career educator, a life-long learner, and a Teacher-Leader. Thank you, Mommy, for believing this for me! God provides!

*If I Can Help Somebody*  
by Alma Bazel Androzzo

*If I can help somebody, as I pass along,  
If I can cheer somebody, with a word or song,  
If I can show somebody, he is travelling wrong,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.*

*If I can do my duty, as a good man ought,  
If I can bring back beauty, to a world up wrought,  
If I can spread love's message, as the Master taught,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.*

*Then my living shall not be in vain.  
Then my living shall not be in vain.  
If I can help somebody, as I pass along,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Barbara Johnson (pseudonym) was a middle school math teacher with five years teaching experience. She recently ended her educational career in the spring of 2022. Her reasons for abandoning her seventh-grade students were sent in a letter to her local School Board, her district administrators, and local school leadership team. She also shared her eight-page, single-spaced message (Appendix A) with the world by posting her concerns and sentiments of heartbreak on social media. This former educator expressed collective feelings of helplessness and frustration over the rapid deterioration of public education due to policy makers' poor decisions. She cited the lack of adequate administrative support for teachers in the classroom in terms of accountability for student behavior over the last two years as one of her top issues. The inadequacy of support and the lack of safety in the school building were given as two of her main affirmations that it was time for her to walk away. Mrs. Johnson is not alone.*

*In accordance with several news outlets (Jackson, 2022; Miler, 2022; Yu, 2022), Seth Goshorn was an elementary school teacher who also left his classroom in May after six years of teaching. He, too, opted to disclose his departure on social media using TikTok. In his video post that garnered substantial media attention, the 28-year-old announced that he traded in his white board and Expo markers for a fresh start in a managerial position as a stocking coach at Walmart. The giant box-store retailer wooed him away from teaching by offering him a higher salary and faster opportunities for advancement using his current degree. Anderson's new role in retail would pay him an increase of \$12,000 over his salary as an educator. During his short tenure as an educator in northeast Ohio, he began as a reading tutor, then transferred to a second-grade position. His annual salary was \$43,000. Expressing that he loved teaching, he*

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*readily admitted that his sole purpose for changing professions was because of the money. His choice to announce his decision using social media was not to discourage others from pursuing a career in teaching, rather to shed light on the low pay teachers receive, a factor he stated that makes his hard-working former co-workers feel underappreciated. Mr. Goshorn would love for teachers to be able to focus on teaching and avoid the need for a second job for financial stability.*

*Like the aforementioned educators, I am a 35-year veteran teacher. On the brink of turning 60 years old, I was ready for a change from the high school classroom. My desire was to transition to a position of advancement within education. Instead of the school district leadership utilizing my professional experience for the greater good of the learning community at large, I was insulted with an offer to remain in the classroom only. I was disheartened by the district's missed opportunity to promote one of its only Black female teachers to a position of leadership. Given my tenacity to pursue the desired position, I chose to retire from that school system and job searched in a neighboring school district. In a school district just over the state line, I secured the position as a New Teacher Coach. New Teacher Coach is a fairly new position for this county. By accepting the position of New Teacher Coach, I am able to serve as a teacher leader, implementing my knowledge by supporting teachers with less than four years of experience in the classroom.*

These three stories are not exclusive; they are examples of the current upward trajectory of teacher attrition and the simultaneous downward spiral of teacher retention in the United States. According to Dill (2022), teachers are leaving the classroom in mass numbers nationwide. Dill cited that approximately 300,000 public school educators quit the profession between February 2020 and May 2022 with even more considering doing the same thing. The National

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Center for Education Statistics reported that 44% of the school districts in our country are currently understaffed; more than half of these vacancies are the result of teacher resignations (Bennett, 2022). For the 2022-2023 school year, North Texas school districts reported 471 cases of contract abandonment, double the number of cases reported the previous year, with two to three teachers considering leaving each week (Jones et al., 2022).

Due to the increases in retirements and resignations, many school districts are using a variety of incentives to attract teacher candidates. One example is the South Carolina bill that is being considered for passage for the 2023 school year. The legislation would give teachers 30 minutes of unencumbered time as a daily break during school hours with no interruptions such as meetings or other duties (Jordon, 2022). In several states, teaching qualifications have been relaxed to allow military veterans with a minimum of four years of service, teachers without completed certification, and individuals without a degree at all to fill openings (Vivinetto, 2022). Likewise, Hillsborough School in Florida made plans to fill as many of their 700 teacher openings with district staff who were certified and could assist schools with their most dire needs (Mesmer, 2022). Another example was the adoption of a 4-day work week by 27 districts in Texas in 2022, hoping to recruit and retain teachers (Faheid, 2023). A third example was the dangling of an 11% pay raise before teachers in the Houston Independent School District. The Houston district is the largest school system in the state of Texas; it began the school year with long-term substitutes for remaining vacant teaching positions (Lodhia, 2022).

In addition to a salary increase for all teachers, Gunn and Latham (2022) reported some school districts “offered one-time retention or commitment bonuses” (p. 29) as well as stipends of varying amounts and referral bonuses as financial gestures of appreciation to teachers. Through its college tuition reimbursement program and offering to pay stipends for student

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teachers, Michigan, the state with the highest teacher shortage rate in the country per the US Department of Education data, was another example of enticing new recruits to the teaching profession (Shelton, 2023). Monetary incentives, similar to those mentioned above, contribute to the \$8.5 billion total paid out nationally for teacher non-retention. Hillard (2022) found the cost to school districts for each teacher who leaves the profession is \$20 to \$30 thousand dollars. (Hillard, 2022).

When looking at teacher attrition across the nation, the data point to several factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to leave. For example, in North Carolina, the President of the North Carolina Association of Educators, Tamika Walker Kelly, attributed the nearly 6,000 teacher openings across the state to long-term underfunding of public education resulting in the elimination of teacher support positions, of longevity pay, and of teacher preparation programs (Hudson, 2022). Schlemmer (2022) reported that in addition to low wages in North Carolina, factors such as extra duties, unprotected lunch time, school violence risks, and stress-induced mental health issues brought teachers to their breaking point. For instance, Angela Hinson Samuels was a high school special education teacher in Winston-Salem Forsyth/ County Schools who eventually became so overwhelmed by the paperwork from her case load that she felt forced to retire at 59 years of age, three years before the age of full retirement, because her anxiety produced gastric issues and exacerbated her diabetes (Schlemmer, 2022).

Similarly, just one week into the school year in Georgia, teachers of Chatham County in Savannah were already expressing feelings of frustration, burnout, and exhaustion due to covering unfilled teaching positions and the increased class sizes resulting from those vacant teaching slots (Carrero, 2022). Meanwhile, Maryland's Prince George's County teachers say that both pay and work conditions are a hindrance; this county began the school year with 300

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teaching vacancies despite the recent hiring of almost 750 teachers (Bell, 2022). Doherty (2020) noted that teachers stop teaching because there are elements about the profession that do nothing to sustain them.

Although previous research limits the reasons teachers leave to issues of safety, additional responsibilities, inadequate pay, increasing workloads, and insufficient free time (Jones et al., 2022), more recent research provides other factors to consider. Hammonds (2017) stated that the teacher supply has decreased for three reasons: retirement, transfers and promotions within education, or the selection of another profession. Recognizing the immediate availability of other alternatives, some teachers even choose fields in which they have no prior experience (Greenblatt, 2022). Gunn and Latham (2022) stated that “the job market outside of teaching is more lucrative than it has been in decades; some teachers’ skills are transferrable directly to non-teaching professions while other teachers can increase their incomes in other fields through retraining” (p. 29). That scenario is the case for Megan Wing, a first-grade teacher for five years in Wake County Schools in North Carolina; she resigned from the \$40,000 job she loved, plus her extra jobs as a nanny, tutor, and yoga instructor, to pursue her second passion as a life coach, a flexible position that provided her more freedom and an annual salary of nearly \$100,000 (Schlemmer, 2022). As evidenced by this situation, along with the challenges of the teaching profession that lead to teacher burnout, the reasons teachers leave are significantly associated with the increasing demands of the profession (Marshall et al., 2022).

The loss of teachers is a national crisis that has impinged upon teacher retention in the state of Tennessee as well. A 2021 survey conducted by Professional Educators of Tennessee revealed that 22% of its teachers were not planning to remain in the profession (Torres, 2022). According to the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee, the research site for this study,



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had at least 2,000 teacher openings at the start of the 2022-2023 school year, topping the 1,024 vacancies from the previous year (West, 2022). Weaver and Bowman (2022) estimated that currently there were 7,000 teachers statewide who were eligible to retire, with an additional 3,300 eligible by 2024. Tonya Coats, a former classroom teacher and current president of the Tennessee Education Association, said the teacher shortage did not happen overnight; it predated the pandemic (West, 2022).

Compounding the issue is an insufficient number of applicants in teacher preparation programs. For example, today fewer students choose education as their major when considering post-secondary options; meanwhile, the need for new teachers continues to increase across the state (Gunn & Latham, 2022; Weaver & Bowman, 2022). The areas hardest hit by teacher attrition are special education, science, and mathematics. The hardest hit schools are those that serve large populations of students of color, of the socio-economic disadvantaged, and of English Language Learners (Bukovac, 2022; Gunn & Latham, 2022). West (2022) stated that Tennessee Tech, Middle Tennessee State University, and the University of Tennessee-Martin, three of the colleges whose education programs produce the greatest number of teacher candidates, saw a dip in enrollment approximately eight years ago. This decline in interest in education as a profession adds to the significance of the study as Arnold (2022) asserts that “confronting the teacher shortage crisis is critical as teacher vacancies increase across Tennessee...[and warns that] more teachers have quit, and fewer fresh teachers are available to take their place” (p. 1).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Honey Rock School District (pseudonym, HRSD), where this study takes place, is not immune to the teacher flight issue. In fact, the teacher who composed the eight-page letter of resignation was an HRSD educator. This written communication indicates a problem of practice

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for her former school district, a problem of which the district leadership team is keenly aware. District leadership has enacted measures to mitigate teacher attrition. Torres (2022) reported the school district's increased trend of resignations and retirements, citing the change in the number of teachers who left the district from 330 in 2018 to 500 in 2021. In 2021, there were 23 more retirements and 178 more resignations compared to the previous year (Peña, 2022). Thus, resignation and retirement are additional contributors to the increase in teacher turnover (Gunn & Latham, 2022). According to the Chief Talent Officer (Campbell, K., personal communication, July 15, 2022), more than 400 new teachers participated in the new hire induction program since the end of the 2022 academic year. He indicated that there were several more vacancies to fill by the August 8<sup>th</sup> start date.

HRSD recognized that there was a major issue with teacher retention long before the untimely appearance of the Corona virus in 2019 and the multitude of challenges the pandemic thrust upon the state of education. A new district superintendent in 2018 began to address problems in this area immediately by creating and implementing several initiatives over a five-year time span. The first of many changes was to restructure the zoning of schools across the district by geographic location. HRSD has 79 schools from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 which are divided into five smaller organizations of schools called learning communities. Each learning community has its own superintendent and leadership team with one superintendent-at-large district-wide.

One clear objective was to revamp how new teachers were trained and supported in their first year in order to increase their effectiveness and to improve retention district wide. Previously, the task of supporting and mentoring first-year teachers was undertaken by the individual school principals along with district level content-area coaches. In the initial phase of

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the new strategic plan, new teacher hires were onboarded through the New Hire Orientation (NHO) program and attended the New Teacher Academy (NTA) in the summer. Additionally, the schools were equipped with a fortified teacher mentoring program that replaced a less effective one. Every novice classroom teacher had a personal mentor for their first year of teaching, with a shared mentor for years two and three. These mentors were monitored by a lead mentor in each school. Next, the content areas of mathematics science, English Language Arts (ELA), Social Studies, English as a New Language (ENL), and Exceptional Student Services (ESS) were reinforced by the addition of Content Lead Teacher positions. The lead teacher's main responsibility was to provide another level of support in those disciplines for all teachers, with a concentrated focus on struggling teachers in particular. Then, Content Instructional Coach positions on the district level were created in ELA and mathematics, to provide side-by-side teacher coaching for the improvement of teaching and learning. The district-level instructional coaches provided services in these disciplines within the schools of their respective learning communities on a rotating basis and whenever a referral requesting teacher support was submitted by a school administrator.

To distinguish the HRSD from other neighboring school districts, the final element for boosting the new teacher retention rate is currently being implemented with the addition of four New Teacher Coaches. I am one of them. While providing another opportunity for teacher leadership, the main responsibilities for this position are to provide continued support for every new teacher with zero to three years of experience throughout the course of the school year. In this new role, I conducted research on the improvement of teacher retention for HRSD. The internal data showed that even though there have been measures implemented to counteract teacher flight, the problem persisted for the district. There are 2,800 full-time teachers employed

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in the HRSD who serve 45,000 students Pre-K through grade twelve. Table 1 below provides the statistical data of the number of new teachers hired within the last three years based on their years of experience. HRSD added 461 teachers with 54% of them novice to the profession. Included in this table are the totals for new hires by learning community and by district for years one through three as well as those new to the county. Figure 1 depicts a color-coded bar graph included as a visual comparison of that same statistical data. This figure clearly illustrates that the greatest need for teacher replacement is in Learning Community 3 (LC3), where I am serving as a New Teacher Coach. With a total of 273 first through third year (222) and new to HRSD (51) teachers included in my responsibilities to provide professional support, the district leadership indicated that budgeting for additional new teacher coach positions will be considered when funding is available. A report of the LC3 new teacher data delineated by school level (elementary, middle, or high), years of experience (first through third years), and new teacher hires to HRSD employed in LC3 is attached as Appendix B.

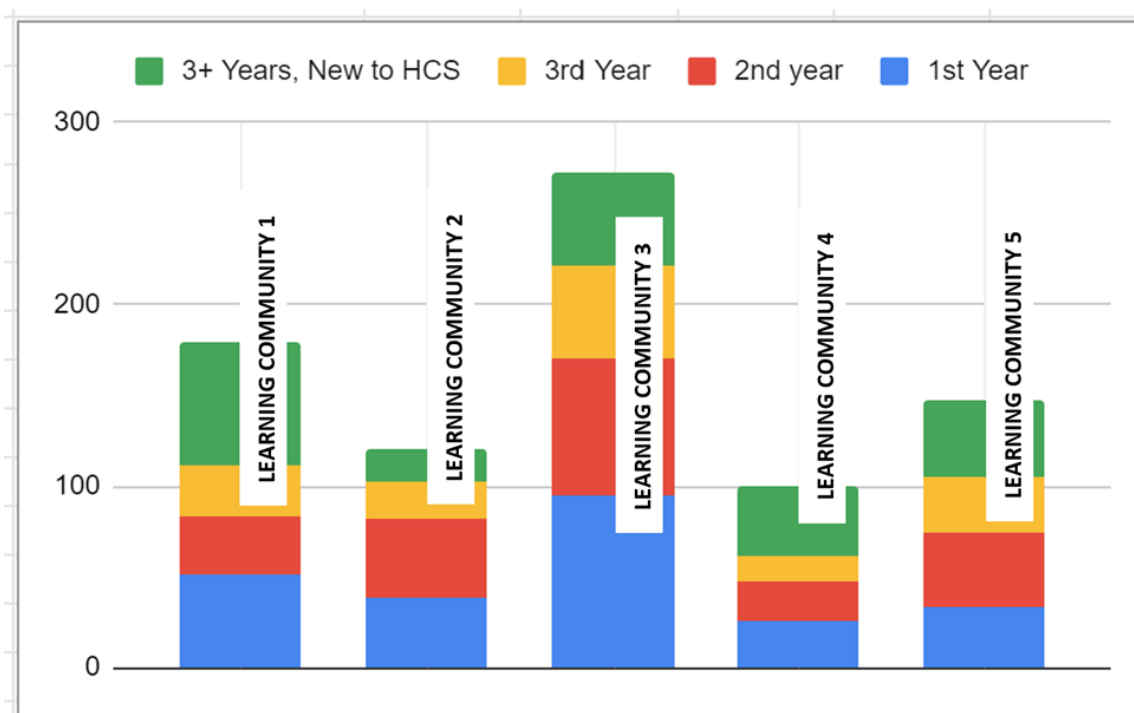
**Table 1**

### *New Teachers by HRSD Learning Communities*

	1st Year	2nd year	3rd Year	Total 1st-3rd	3+ Years, New to HCS
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITY 1</b>	51	32	29	<b>112</b>	67
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITY 2</b>	38	44	20	<b>102</b>	18
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITY 3</b>	95	75	52	<b>222</b>	51
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITY 4</b>	26	22	14	<b>62</b>	38
<b>LEARNING COMMUNITY 5</b>	34	40	31	<b>105</b>	43
<b>DISTRICT WIDE</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>217</b>

*Note:* The figures in Table 1 represent the number of 1st-3rd year teachers in HRSD for the 2022-2023 school year. The final column indicates the number of teachers new to the district.

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**Figure 1***New Teachers by HRSD Learning Communities*

*Note:* This bar graph represents the number of new teachers to HRSD by Learning Communities for the 2022-2023 school year color-coded by years of experience.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover new teachers' perceptions of the instructional coaching supports that they received regularly and whether the coaching strategies used improved the retention rate in Learning Community 3 (LC3). For this proposal, retention is defined as new teachers returning to the district in either their current teaching position or in a new role for the following school year. LC3 was specifically selected as the focus of this project based on the number of new teacher vacancies for the 2022- 2023 academic year. It was also selected because this researcher has a connection as a participant-observer with first-year faculty and the relevance of the direct services related to new teacher retention. Of the five

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learning communities for HRSD, the highest number of new hires for years one through three was identified in LC3 (Table 1). According to these statistics, LC3 showed the greatest need for an intentional effort to improve teacher retention. There was just one learning community with more new hires, but only in the category of teachers new to HRSD. Learning Community 1 (LC1) contracted 67 teachers who were new to the district compared to the 51 teachers in LC3. Therefore, the decision to conduct a case study in LC3 is supported by Shuls et al. (2020) who advocated for future research to find out what district instructional leaders are doing to retain new teachers. My aim for this study was to explore the impact instructional support has on teacher retention by addressing the following research questions:

1. What strategies are used by instructional leadership in LC3 of HRSD to increase the teacher retention rate?
2. How do new teachers in Learning Community 3 (LC3) of Honey Rock School District (HRSD) perceive instructional leadership support in relation to their desire to remain in the teaching profession?

Research question 1 (RQ1) sought to identify the instructional strategies designed to decrease teacher attrition that were implemented by the leadership and coaching support personnel for LC3. The team members who directly serve the new teacher population at HRSD are administrators, mentors and instructional coaches at the individual school level and content lead coaches and the new teacher coach at the district level. Meanwhile, research question 2 (RQ2) explored whether the participants agreed or disagreed with the idea that instructional support received had an impact on their decision to stay in education the following year.

### **Significance of the Study related to Teacher Leadership**

There have been studies that have explored reasons teachers leave education (Aiken, 2022, Bradley, 2019; Kuhn, 2018; Tison, 2022). This study was significant because it sought to discover how instructional support for new teachers impacted their decision to remain in the classroom. Conceptually, the findings of this study determined alignment with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) to positively influence the new teacher retention rate.

Lumpkin (2016) states, "Teacher leaders potentially can lead their colleagues to optimal performance levels based on a shared commitment to student learning, empowerment, relationships, and collaboration" (p. 6). To the building-level and district-level administrators, the new teachers' responses in this study brought valuable insight on the barrage of obstacles new teachers face that might cause them to walk away. Teacher leaders, like mentors and coaches, could play a critical role in this decision based on the instructional practices and teaching strategies they incorporated into support cycles for new teachers. According to Lambert (2003), all teachers have the potential to lead their schools to school improvement, especially when the teachers benefit from ongoing professional learning. Teacher leadership opportunities such as these provide personal and professional growth for both the giver and the receiver, expanding knowledge and skills on both sides of the relationship. First-year teachers in the study shared their perspectives about the struggle to juggle the incorporation of classroom management, individual and collaborative planning, the school-specific behavior plan, and requisite professional development into the schedule with the goal of receiving a favorable teacher evaluation. Using a distributive leadership model, school administrators could share leadership responsibilities and decision-making practices for policies and instructional initiatives that positively impact the education environment. In agreement, Catone et al. (2017) say that teacher

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leadership and advocacy for education policy provide opportunities for teachers to share their vision of public education and shape its direction in a way that recognizes teachers' shared responsibility to unite voices and create a greater impact" (p. 3). In this manner, veteran and new teachers are encouraged to advocate for their needs and the needs of their students by participating in teacher leadership roles because they feel empowered to do so. With a clearer understanding, the school and district leadership could improve upon the current program of new teacher support and continue to explore additional options that encouraged teachers to stay in the profession. The findings of this study also indicated to the instructional support team members that the specific areas of support they have provided throughout the new teacher's first year were effective in improving the teacher retention rate. Based on the results, teacher leaders contributed to instructional improvements with the hopes of increasing new teacher retention as an end result. Finally, this research sought to widen the body of literature on teacher retention for those in the education field.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are identified as specific to the research and are explained for the purpose of clarification in this context:

*Teacher retention*: new teachers returning to the district in either their current teaching position or in a new role for the following school year.

*Teacher attrition*: a reduction in the number of new teachers returning to the district in either their current teaching position or in a new role for the following year.

*Teacher burnout*: teachers in a high stress environment that negatively affects their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

*Novice teacher*: an educator new to the teaching profession; one who is in the first through third



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years of teaching experience.

*Veteran teacher*: an educator who has served in the teaching profession with four or more years of experience.

### **Summary and Organization of the Research Study**

This research study on new teacher attrition and retention is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presented an introduction of the research study rationale and foundation. Included in this chapter are the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study as related to teacher leadership, the research questions, and the definition of terms. The second chapter explores the various research studies on teacher attrition and retention in general as well as a specific focus on teacher attrition and retention for beginning-career educators. The conceptual framework that guides the study, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007), is introduced and connected to the attrition and retention determinants identified in the review of the literature. The third chapter presents the methodology that was employed in this study. Included in chapter three are the methods for the case study and the research questions that guided the study, the context of the study, the site participants, the data collection instruments, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. Data triangulation, research journaling, and disclosure of the study's limitations are incorporated in the trustworthiness procedures section. Chapter three concludes with my positionality as an account for the effect my identity may have had on the research process or findings. Chapter four is dedicated to examining the results of the study to determine the impact various instructional supports had on a new teacher's decision to stay or leave the teaching profession. A brief description of each participant is included. The relevant themes that emerged from the data analysis are reported as well. Chapter five is a discussion of the most significant

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research findings that emerged from the study data. This final chapter highlights key factors of support relevant to new teacher retention as connected to teacher leadership and outlines future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter explains the conceptual framework guiding the study and offers a review of the relevant literature on teacher retention. To better understand teachers' reasons for leaving, I used Maslow's (McLeod, 2007) Hierarchy of Needs to frame the project, guide the methods (specifically the interview questions and focus group questions), and inform data analysis and discussion. Following the section on the conceptual framework, I synthesized the literature on teacher retention and attrition by discussing the factors that influenced a new teacher's decision to remain in the classroom or leave the teaching profession after one year.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this research to explore the impact that direct instructional support had on a beginning teacher's decision to continue in education for a second year:

1. What strategies are used by instructional leadership in Learning Community 3 (LC3) of the Honey Rock School District (HRSD) to increase the teacher retention rate?
2. How do new teachers in LC3 of HRSD perceive instructional leadership support in relation to their desire to remain in the teaching profession?

#### **Conceptual Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Every organization struggles with employee turnover; however, the teaching profession is particularly affected (Satia et al., 2019). Ingersoll (2003) asserted that teaching, being one of the largest occupations, represents nearly four percent of the nation's workforce. He described the problem of teacher attrition as "a significant phenomenon, and a dominant factor behind the demand for new teachers and the difficulties schools encounter adequately staffing classrooms with qualified teachers" (2001, p. 501). Satia et al. (2019) claimed that job attrition leads to

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tangible losses such as replacing employees and training them, and intangible losses such as job expertise, work productivity, and organizational gaps. They noted that in schools, the sudden loss of a teacher severely impacts the learning environment resulting in instability, program closures, and reduced opportunities for students. Cooper and Mulvey (2009) agreed that recruiting, supporting, rewarding, and retaining quality new teachers is the greatest challenge that school leaders face. In the same vein, studies have shown that 50% of teachers change professions within their first five years of teaching, and over 200,000 of them leave the education field yearly excluding retirement (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Satia et al., 2019; Shuls et al., 2020; Wong, 2004). The teacher shortage is rising annually. Sutchter et al. (2016) predicted an increase of teacher demand by approximately 316,000 teachers by 2025 with only 200,000 teachers in supply, thus creating a deficit of 116,000 vacancies to fill. In sum, teacher retention is critical for school success (Doherty, 2020); therefore, teacher flight is a costly problem to be taken seriously.

Title 1 schools, like all schools in LC3 of HRSD, experience increased attrition. District leaders are concerned about high teacher turnover in Title 1 schools (Hammonds, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Education website, a Title 1 school receives federal funds to meet the educational needs of lower-income students identified by free or reduced lunch status who are failing or at risk of falling behind academically. Mangrum (2018) reports that beginning teachers often start their careers in high-needs schools with students who come from communities of concentrated poverty and low student achievement. Hillard (2022) concurs that schools who serve poor and minority communities also experience higher than average teacher non-retention rates. At least 20% of teachers in Title 1 schools leave each year; in some schools, the teacher dropout rate is higher than the student dropout rate (Kain, 2011). Teachers with experience working in Title 1 schools identified that the work environment was challenging due

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to limited induction and mentorship programs, inadequate work conditions, a lack of administrative support to develop professionally, poor student discipline, and low teacher salaries (Hammonds, 2017). Shields (2009) stressed that education systems are strengthened when school districts invest time and resources in ongoing training to improve their work environment as an effort to increase their commitment to the classroom. Rollert (2015) expressed the importance for novice teachers to be adequately prepared to work in economically disadvantaged schools. She recommends that teacher education programs address the concerns of teaching in underachieving schools to help minimize the discomfort for the new teachers. To retain teachers, work conditions in any school must be safe and conducive to learning.

Teachers in general are leaving the profession for a variety of reasons. For example, salary and benefits, student variables, little to no collegial support, and poor workplace conditions are some of the influential factors (Harrell et al., 2004). Other contributing causes range from problems with student discipline, excessive acts of violence, disrespect and distrust from families and the community, in addition to federal and state-mandated program initiatives that increase teacher responsibilities (Weller, 1982). Weller said that turnover, burnout, and flight are some of the terms utilized to describe the exodus of teachers from the profession. He contended that teachers operate in an “educational void” (p. 32) that fosters an environment of frustration and discontent. The reasons for teacher flight have one element in common: they are grounded in a teacher's own basic needs. In order to understand why teachers are leaving the profession, it is important to see how their needs are not being met. In this case study, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory served as the conceptual framework.

Abraham Maslow created a hierarchy of needs in the 1940s that has been described as a “motivational theory in Psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted

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as hierarchical levels within a pyramid” (McLeod, 2007, p. 1). The theory is based on the idea that human beings have a ranking of needs that must be satisfied in order to achieve self-actualization, which he considered the highest level of human potential. The five levels of basic human needs with the most fundamental level on the bottom and the most complex level on the top (see Figure 2) are labeled as “physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs” (Noltemeyer et al., 2021). Figure 2 shows a representation of the level of needs being categorized as basic needs, psychological needs, and self-fulfillment needs on the right side of the pyramid as well as being divided into deficiency needs and growth needs on the left side.

**Figure 2**

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



Maslow separated the five levels into two categories - deficiency needs and growth needs (Huitt, 2007; Noltemeyer et al., 2021). Maslow's thesis maintained that the satisfaction of lower-order needs (food, water, and shelter) ushers in higher-order needs in an orderly and predictable manner (Weller, 1982). Noltemeyer et al. (2021) stated that Maslow proposed this theory in 1954

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and “hypothesized that if individuals’ lower level ‘deficiency needs’ were not met, their higher level ‘growth needs’ would be impaired” (p. 24). For example, deficiency needs might arise from one being deprived of food, clothing, or shelter. Conversely, growth needs might take into account the setting of personal or professional goals; however, they do not arise because something essential is lacking in one’s life (McLeod, 2018). Noltemeyer et al. (2021) added that Maslow theorized how all five levels of needs are necessary for “optimal human development” (p. 25). McLeod (2007) mentioned Maslow’s later clarification that one does not have to have a lower need satisfied before moving to a higher-level need. In other words, moving through the levels is likely to be non-linear due to one’s own life experiences and unexpected needs that may emerge. This conceptual framework guided the study by identifying the reasons for teacher attrition at the selected research site and how those reasons correlated to needs levels as depicted in Maslow’s hierarchy.

### **Literature Review**

This research used literature on the issue of teacher attrition because the aim of this study was to identify the reasons new teachers are opting out of the teaching profession. The scope of the literature review is from 2001 to present given the impact of accountability policies that gained prominence under No Child left Behind (NCLB) on the teacher workforce (Nguyen et al., 2019). Because the teacher turnover issue is so critical and costly for school districts, researchers have conducted a meta-analysis on the plight of teacher retention and attrition, focusing on the most up to date developments (Borman & Dowling, 2008) to better understand factors associated with teacher attrition and retention. The topic of attrition is the focus of this chapter; retention is highlighted in chapter five because this study is solutions oriented.

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The literature in this section addresses what is known about teacher attrition in general. The research on teacher attrition and retention considers multiple determinants associated with teachers deciding to stay or go. Synthesizing findings from 120 studies, Nguyen et al., (2019) organized these elements into three categories: personal correlates, school correlates, and external correlates. The two components of personal correlates are teacher characteristics (i.e., age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status) and teacher qualifications (i.e., test scores, graduate degree, certification, specialty area, experience). The four school correlates are school organization characteristics (i.e., work environment, teacher workload, teacher collaborations, teacher leadership, professional development, induction, mentoring, and instructional coaching), school resources (i.e., expenditure, class size, teaching materials), student body characteristics (i.e., student achievement, poverty, minority percentage, special education percentage), and relational demography (i.e., race/gender match of teacher to administration, of teacher to teacher, and of teacher to student). The three external correlates are accountability (i.e., assessment impact, teacher effectiveness, federal policies), school improvement (i.e., school reform, research-practice partnership), and workforce (i.e., employment rate, late hiring, salary, tenure). For the purpose of this study, however, I focused on the school organization characteristics under the school correlates category because of my role as a learning community instructional coach and because of my membership on the district induction team. Again, these determinants are work environment, teacher workload, teacher collaborations, teacher leadership, professional development, induction, mentoring, and instructional coaching.

The first characteristic of school organization under the category of school correlates is the work environment. Therefore, school conditions may contribute to the reasons teachers leave the classroom. Brown and Schainker (2008) stated that “a number of working conditions,



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including teacher autonomy, class size, and a collegial atmosphere, are main factors predicting high teacher morale and are decisive factors related to success in recruitment and retention” (p. 5). According to Jacob et al. (2012), some districts “struggle to build environments and cultures where the best teachers want to work... and working conditions can make a big impact on teacher retention” (p. 9). Cooper and Mulvey (2009) said that a poorly equipped, physically unattractive classroom can quickly turn off a new teacher, whereas a fresh coat of paint to the walls of a well-lit classroom can profoundly affect a new teacher’s outlook in a positive manner. They remarked that while a pinterest-esque designed classroom cannot guarantee first-year teachers’ happiness, a rundown space with shabby furnishings, limited materials, equipment, and technology is not likely to sustain their interest to remain in teaching. The presence of rats and roaches creates a working and learning environment both unappealing and unworthy for students and teachers. School leadership must provide appropriate resources to their teachers. Cooper and Mulvey reported that computers, adequately sized classroom furniture, worktables, content-specific equipment, textbooks and supplemental materials were important to new teachers. They added, “How these teachers see themselves in a wasteland or an environment rich in resources has an effect on longevity and perspicacity” (p. 7). The research surrounding teacher work environment aligns with meeting the new teachers’ physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow’s hierarchy.

A second characteristic that is important to consider is a teacher’s workload. Doherty (2020) called it “the crucial factor influencing teachers’ decisions to leave the profession and the greatest threat to retention” (p. 79). Workload considerations are among the top reasons teachers leave (Arsen et al., 2021; Doherty, 2020). The following excerpt from Cooper and Mulvey

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(2009) gives a clear depiction of how the classroom can be overwhelming for a novice teacher starting out:

New teachers have one challenge in common. They must all enter the classroom as newcomers, get to know their students, establish themselves as classroom managers and leaders, set the tone, fix the rules, and work out their complex relationships with their students - individually and in groups. Sound easy? It is one of the toughest things for a new teacher to do and accounts for why some teachers walk away, leave teaching, and find something else to do for a living. (p. 61)

Flanagan (2022) said that overworked teachers with their arrive early/stay late routine volunteer to perform unpaid labor in addition to fulfilling their expected “lesson planning, data collection, data analysis, routine paperwork, first-line first aid, mental health monitoring and physical health monitoring” (p. 1) often without planning time. Doherty (2020) also listed that some of the pressures teachers face are changes to curriculum, high-stakes testing, and teacher evaluation and accountability. He noted that there is a considerable risk of teacher burnout as a result of increased job demands. A teacher’s workload can entail not only their appointed duties but also the students that they are assigned to teach. According to Cooper and Mulvey (2009), having the most challenging, poorly behaved and difficult students upsets the balance of the new teacher’s regular workload. Many new teachers are given low-performing students and extra non-teaching duties inequitably; this practice, which increases the workload substantially, leads to teachers leaving their positions (Brown & Schinker, 2008; Jacob et al., 2012; Kearney, 2021). To Jacob et al.’s (2012) point, many struggling students would never experience the instruction from a top-performing teacher if course loads were assigned in this manner. The research that surrounds

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teacher workload aligns with meeting the new teachers' physiological needs, social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow's hierarchy.

A third characteristic of school organization is teacher collaboration. Positive relationships with other staff members foster the development of a collaborative work environment where teachers freely share materials, ideas, and good teaching practices (Hausman & Goldring, 2001). Easton (2011) advised that teachers become part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to foster collaboration and a common purpose. PLCs can be defined as a group of teachers who continuously work together to focus on student learning and to improve the quality of teaching (Easton, 2011; Zhang & Yuan, 2020). Zhang and Yuan reported that "it has been consistently found that PLCs can improve teaching practice, enhance teacher commitment and reduce teacher isolation" (p. 230). They pointed out several barriers to successful PLCs including over-controlling school leadership, limited resources, unprotected time for meetings, culture of individualism, and conservatism. They added that PLCs can contribute to teacher satisfaction by avoiding such pitfalls through creating an environment of open communication and meaningful collaboration of shared visions, goals, and methods. In order to grow and survive as a professional, a new teacher needs the kind of help that comes from working with others where time to meet and share ideas is provided (Mulvey & Cooper, 2009). Therefore, professional growth is fostered through on-going, job-embedded professional learning and support, using a kind, compassionate, and gentle approach (Boogren, 2018; Sweeney et al., 2017). As reported by Cooper and Mulvey (2009), retention and stability for education are determined by support provided in relationships that are rooted in mutual respect and understanding. Through collaboration, teachers feel validated in what they do; they feel encouraged, supported, and cared for. The research that surrounds teacher collaboration aligns

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with meeting the new teachers' social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow's hierarchy with an inclination toward meeting the needs of self-actualization.

A fourth characteristic of school organization is teacher leadership. York-Barr & Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (p. 288). Gone are the days, according to Boyd-Dimmock and McGree (2013), of the teacher leader role being limited to department chair, teacher association leader, or curriculum developer. As teacher leaders, veteran teachers can play a critical role in improving teacher retention as they provide their peers the necessary support that aligns with fulfilling each school organization characteristic. Teacher leaders can support new teachers within and beyond the classroom by establishing year-long mentoring and coaching relationships that require time for conversing, planning, problem solving, and learning together (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The non-supervisory role of the teacher leader as mentor and coach is not punitive nor evaluative (Scherer, 1999), rather it is a relationship developed in a safe, positive, and trusting environment that supports the teachers with the demands of the profession to the end of the school year through post-planning. Katzenmeyer et al. (2009) defined teacher leaders as those who "lead within and beyond the classroom...influence others toward improved educational practice" (p. 6). Based on this definition, the teacher leader who seeks to help others achieve success for all students is a vital piece to retaining new teachers. School administrators can support these retention efforts by selecting a more equitable form of leadership. One way to develop teacher leadership is for administrators to adopt a distributive leadership style. Sahraee et al. (2021) described distributive leadership as shared decision-making which can lead to improved teacher

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job satisfaction, teacher capacity, school culture, and ultimately student success. According to Levin and Schrum (2017), this style of leadership practice recognizes “that leadership is not about one person working alone and that authentic change flows not only from the top down, but also in all directions” (p. 11). In other words, everyone, including novice teachers, can lead from where they are; leadership is not a capacity given only to administrators. This strategy is essential for the development of teacher leaders. The research that surrounds teacher leadership aligns with meeting all five levels of new teachers’ needs on Maslow’s hierarchy.

A fifth characteristic of school organization is professional learning, also referred to as professional development (PD). Effective professional learning, according to Guskey (2003), provides new teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to be successful in the classroom. Vrasidas and Glass (2007) expressed that PD can also build a sense of community with other teachers whose emotional support can create a sense of belonging and connectivity. Aguilar and Cohen (2022) defined PD as “a transformative process in which learners are actively engaged and for which the aim is to explore and expand behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being” (p. 11). They named a variety of ways that people learn through PD such as being part of a PLC, instructional rounds, individual and team coaching, online courses, conferences, and book studies. Such activities help teachers to stay motivated and engaged in their work, thereby increasing the likelihood of job satisfaction. PD can provide a platform for the ongoing support (Scherer, 1999) that teachers need in order to navigate the challenges of teaching. Incorporating follow-up sessions to the learning teachers gain through PD improves instructional practices, which in turn leads to improved outcomes for students (Robinson & Timperley, 2007). When teachers are able to see the positive effects of their efforts on their students, then they are more likely to continue teaching. As per Guskey (2002), professional learning can foster a growth

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mindset when teachers experience improvement in their practice over time, which can be a powerful tool for retaining teachers. The impact of PD is its defining feature, and in order for the PD to be successful, teachers must use their learning to transform their practice (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022). The research that surrounds professional learning aligns with meeting new teacher's social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow's hierarchy with an inclination toward meeting the needs of self-actualization.

The literature in this section now addresses what is known about teacher attrition for beginning educators. Many young teachers exit the teaching profession within the first few years. New teachers break into the education profession through a variety of portals, some by way of the traditional four-year undergraduate degree pathway to teacher certification, and others by way of alternative certification programs with varied requirements (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Those who pursued an alternative certification route are more likely to leave (Nguyen et al., 2019). Regardless of how they arrive, the number of teachers in general who break away from teaching each year ranges from 5-50%, with a high percentage of them being young teachers (Schaefer et al., 2019). Ulferts (2016) reported that one-third of this population leaves within three years, half exits within five years, and almost 10% of beginning teachers abandon their contract before the end of the school year. According to Tiplic et al. (2015), the high demands of the job in the first year of teaching can determine the novice teacher's fate.

A sixth characteristic of school organization is induction. One way to provide on-going support to new teachers is through teacher induction. Teacher induction is one effective way to reduce teacher attrition and allow competent teachers to thrive (Kearney, 2021; McCreight, 2000). Shuls et al. (2020) cited that new teachers who attended an induction program decreased their chances of leaving the classroom between 49% and 58%. According to McCreight (2000),

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not affording every first-year teacher the opportunity to participate in formal induction in their schools is a mistake. Adding to that sentiment, Cooper and Mulvey (2009) argue that limiting new teacher training to a set period of time is misleading, stating that “learning to teach is a career-long journey, constantly changing in complexity and meeting diverse students’ needs” (p. 9). They advocated for induction to continue at least throughout the first three years of the new teacher’s beginning career. Wong (2004) defined induction as follows:

A system-wide, coherent, comprehensive training and support process that continues for two to three years and then seamlessly becomes part of the lifelong professional development program of the district to keep new teachers teaching and improving toward increasing their effectiveness. (p. 42)

Basically, Wong is saying that for an induction program to be effective, the school district must plan to invest in its new teachers over time with ongoing professional development and support from new teacher mentors, coaches, and administrators. In fact, Wong’s study showed that districts improved teacher attrition through the implementation of a new teacher induction program designed to meet teacher needs.

The design of the induction program is also an important consideration. The orientation should be tailored to the teachers’ preferred and different learning styles that require varied approaches for growth and survival (Guskey, 2003). According to Strong (2009), an increasing number of school districts in the United States have developed and implemented an induction program intended to support, guide, and orient new teachers as a year-long process. Cooper et al. (2009) recommended beginning the program during the summer prior to the start of school. Assisting teachers with establishing and organizing their classroom learning environments during in-service days promotes preparedness for their students from the start of the school year

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(Strong, 2009). Scherer (1999) stated that the pre-planning days are to be highly structured for first-year teachers to “learn the rudiments of classroom management, instructional strategies, discipline, first-day classroom procedures, district policies and procedures, and lesson planning” (p. 35). Additional time spent in 1:1 collaborative planning and goal setting coaching cycles through the lens of inquiry (Aguilar, 2013) allows the coach to introduce research-based strategies for classroom management and behavior control as well as best practices for teaching to improve student learning as the school year progresses (Katzenmeyer et al., 2009). The focus is on respecting the new teacher as a peer and honoring them as learners (Scherer, 1999), while building their capacity using co-teaching, modeling, and demonstration lessons. The side-by-side model of coaching features the cycle of lesson planning, launching, and debriefing with valuable feedback for meeting the needs of their students (Aguilar, 2013). The research that surrounds induction aligns with meeting the new teachers’ physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow’s hierarchy.

A seventh characteristic of school organization is mentoring, often under the umbrella of the induction program. At times, teaching can be lonely as teachers work behind closed doors having limited to no interactions with their peers during the teaching hours (Mulvey & Cooper, 2009). Therefore, being assigned a mentor who can serve as a confidant and guide is the most critical part of any induction program (Kearney, 2021; Shuls et al., 2020). In tandem, the mentor is a source of knowledge for district procedural guidance as well as a coordinator of district resources and services that assist new teachers in maintaining professionalism and regulating their physical and psychological well-being and self-care (Boogren, 2018; Levin et al., 2016). New teachers enter the classroom with limited training and experience from their traditional preparation program; communicating and problem-solving with a co-worker is instrumental in



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reducing new-teacher frustrations and feelings of isolation (Mulvey & Cooper, 2009)). Per Cooper and Mulvey, a year full of stress and self-doubt can be a new teacher's exit ticket out of the classroom. For this reason, Gonzalez (1995) advised new teachers to spend time with a positive, supportive, and nurturing mentor who will enhance their chances to grow, mature, and thrive in the profession, thus increasing job satisfaction. She cautioned that first-year teachers should distance themselves from negative individuals whose toxic traits may inhibit their progress and leave them with feelings of insecurity, discouragement, or embarrassment. The research that surrounds curricular coaching aligns with meeting the new teachers' physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow's hierarchy.

An additional characteristic of school organization that was not specifically mentioned in the meta-analysis conducted by Nguyen et al. (2019) is curricular coaching, also known as instructional coaching. Given that this manner of coaching is a focused form of mentoring that impacts student achievement and teacher retention (De Jong & Campoli, 2018), its inclusion is merited. With job satisfaction decreasing due to high levels of work-related stress and unhappiness, teachers' desire to remain in the classroom has dropped to its lowest level in three decades (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Sutchter et al., 2016). De Jong & Campoli (2018) mentioned that early-career teachers in schools without instructional coaches are nearly twice as likely to leave the profession. School organizations that do employ content-based coaches see improved pedagogy and a rise in student achievement (Khalil & Brown, 2015). De Jong and Campoli (2018) proposed that curricular coaching can "enhance cultural competency and communication skills resulting in improved relationship with students and their families" (p. 193). In addition, new teachers who worked with a supportive, non-evaluative curricular coach reported a reduction in feelings of stress, isolation, and burnout and an increase in their commitment level

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to teaching (Khalil & Brown, 2015). Because of the investment of the instructional and emotional support provided, new teachers experience a sense of success (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2016) thus increasing their competence and confidence (De Jong and Campoli, 2018). Repeated successes, coupled with positive feedback and encouragement from the coaching relationship can result in an increase in job satisfaction, a raise in teacher morale, and growth in self-efficacy for the new teacher. The research that surrounds mentoring aligns with meeting the new teachers' physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and self-esteem needs on Maslow's hierarchy. The research that surrounds instructional coaching aligns with meeting all five levels of new teachers' needs on Maslow's hierarchy.

Each of the school organization characteristics, when effectively implemented, has an effect on the results of teacher attrition for all teachers as well, whether veteran or novice. These school improvement initiatives have the potential to increase teacher buy-in and grow practitioners' capacities as teachers and leaders (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018), thus incentivizing teachers to make a commitment to a career in education (Guarino et al., 2006; Macdonald, 1999; Shaw, 2016). Induction, mentoring, and instructional coaching, whose target audience typically is the beginning educator in the first three years of practice, can lead the early-career teachers to a sense of organizational commitment. Pingping and Huang (2019) added that teachers with organizational commitment "have a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the school, expecting to remain teaching at the school, working hard together with the school, and being honored to be a member of the school" (pg. 107). In agreement, Levin and Schrum (2016) stated that teachers are more likely to be retained when their voices are heard, their efforts are acknowledged, and "they have a vested interest in their school" (p. 7). These elements make room for the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to the needs of the beginning teacher.

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For example, a teacher's physiological needs can be satisfied by knowing the location of the teacher restrooms, adjusting time management struggles, or keeping lunchtime protected. A teacher's safety needs can be satisfied by learning school safety policies and procedures, knowing the schedule for arriving early or staying late, or following job requirements. A teacher's social needs can be satisfied by affiliating with other teachers and personnel school-wide, accepting invitations to school and non-school activities, or sharing resources and ideas with department members. A teacher's esteem needs can be satisfied by hearing words of encouragement, receiving recognition for service or ability, or being included as a member of a special task force or committee. Lastly, self-actualization, the highest needs level, can be attained when the teacher is confident as a practitioner and commits to developing the efficacy and capacity of other new teachers, imparting to them the various kinds of support that yielded this level of success.

### **Summary**

This chapter explored the various research studies on teacher attrition and retention for veteran and novice teachers alike. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the study's conceptual framework, was introduced and connected to the attrition and retention determinants of the school organization correlates as identified in the literature review of relevant research. In summary, many school organization characteristics like improving teacher work environments, providing better professional development, and developing teacher leadership can improve teacher job satisfaction and increase teacher retention by meeting or exceeding the fulfillment of the five levels of needs of teachers in accordance with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

### CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study sought to discover new teachers' perceptions of the instructional coaching supports that they received regularly and whether the coaching strategies used positively impacted their decision to stay in teaching. The research was conducted using first-year teachers in the Honey Rock School District (HRSD, pseudonym) from Learning Community 3 (LC3). This learning community was selected because it had the highest number of new teachers within the school district, and therefore provided the most informant rich data.

### Methods

This section discusses the methods used to conduct this study that align with qualitative research for a case study. A case study is the intensive study of a unique case. (Glesne, 2016). The context of the study was new teacher retention in the HRSD. The participants were randomly selected from the LC3. Data was collected in three phases from a perception survey questionnaire, an interview, and a focus group. The results were subsequently coded and analyzed. Permission to conduct this research was granted by the Accountability and Research Office of HRSD and by the Institutional Review Board of Kennesaw State University indicating acceptance of the research proposal.

This research was an instrumental case study, the intensive study of a unique case (Glesne, 2016), that explored new teachers' perceptions about the various levels of support they received throughout their first year in the classroom. According to Stake (2010), this type of experiential research can bring understanding to the issue of teacher flight by probing the meaning of the situation by learning through its participants. Creswell and Poth (2018), presented this definition of a case study:

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Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisuals material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study). (pp. 96-97)

In my study, the case explored the perceptions of first-year teachers who worked in the same learning community. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do new teachers in Learning Community 3 (LC3) of Honey Rock School District (HRSD) perceive instructional leadership support in relation to their desire to remain in the teaching profession?
2. What strategies are used by instructional leadership in LC3 of HRSD to increase the teacher retention rate?

### **Context of the study**

This study was conducted in the educational context of HRSD, located in the southeastern region of the United States. This school district covered 576 square-miles, serving the population of 357,738 residents. This large school district employed 2,800 full-time teachers who served 44,500 students. There were 79 schools total from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 which were divided into five smaller organizations of schools called learning communities. Established in 2018, each learning community had its own superintendent and leadership team with one superintendent-at-large over the HRSD.

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For the purpose of this study, the learning communities were identified by the numbers 1-5, with the focus on LC3. The reason for selecting this learning community was two-fold: it had the greatest number of new teachers out of the five learning communities in the school district, and I as the researcher had a connection as a participant-observer with the new teachers recently hired regarding the relevance the direct services that I provide had on teacher retention. This study occurred during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 school year.

LC3 had 14 Title 1 schools: seven elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools. A Title 1 school receives federal funds to meet the educational needs of lower-income students identified by free or reduced lunch status who are failing or at risk of falling behind academically (U.S. DOE, 2023). The total number of students in LC3 was near 9,023. The racial breakdown was 38% Black, 50% Hispanic, 1% multi-racial, 10% White, and 1% Asian. As provided by these percentages, LC3 was a majority minority. Approximately 62% of the student population qualified for free or reduced lunch status. The male to female ratio was about equal with the percentage of male students being 4% higher. The student to teacher ratio was 14:1. According to the school district's website, the overall testing rank was in the top 50% of the state. The daily bell schedule in each school varied by grade level; the day typically began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. This learning community prided itself on providing rich learning experiences, a nurturing learning environment, and 1:1 technology access so that all students had the opportunity to thrive and experience a future without limits. Focus was placed on personalized learning designed to address academic needs from each student's point of entry into the school district. Throughout their academic tenure, students were exposed to a variety of post-secondary options to define and develop interest in future career paths. Support for their social and emotional well-being was a priority.

## **Participants**

The participants of this study came from the pool of new teacher hires in LC3. All first-year teachers in this learning community received an email inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix C). The email explained the details of the study, as well as the participants' obligations. It also emphasized that participation in this study was entirely optional and had no impact on their professional practice. Subjects indicated their interest in participating by completing the perception survey questionnaire linked to the email invitation. This perception survey questionnaire remained open for one week to give the potential subjects time to contemplate the request to participate and ask any clarifying questions. They were also informed that all perception survey questionnaire responses were confidential; only the researcher had access to the results. At the end of the seven-day time limit, nine first-year teachers had responded to the perception survey questionnaire. All nine of them had indicated their intent to return to their current position for the next school year; there were no participants who had decided to leave teaching. Therefore, the invitation email was resent as a reminder to the first-year teachers of LC3 thus extending the response deadline and specifically requesting participation from novice teachers who would not be returning. Within one day, four participants came forward. From the perception survey questionnaire responses, participants' names were categorized by those who intended to return to their positions the next year and those who did not. In an effort to have at least one first-year teacher representative for each of the schools in LC3, the maximum number of participants was eight. The goal to have an even number of first-year teachers returning as there were first-year teachers leaving was met.

Next, the names of the first-year teachers returning were entered into a Wheel of Names, an online random name picker to select no more than four participants. The same process was not

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repeated for the first-year teachers opting not to return since there were only four in that category. Given the random selection process whether by the Wheel of Names or via self-selection, the participants varied in age, but not gender nor racial background. All participants were White females. The individuals from both groups were notified by email of their selection to continue in the study by participating in the interview process and the focus group session. They were reminded of the option to withdraw from participating in the study at any time they chose. No participants chose to withdraw. The participants were then interviewed individually in person. The interview was conducted at a time and place convenient and comfortable for the participant. Finally, the same group of participants answered additional questions about their experience as a first-year teacher in a focus group forum. The focus group was scheduled using Teams, an online meeting platform, at a day and time convenient for all participants.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection procedures for this study included multiple forms of data: a perception survey questionnaire (Appendix D), an interview (Appendix E), and a focus group (Appendix F). These varied sources were used to triangulate the data (Mertler, 2019) in order to maximize teacher voice, ensure confirmability, and establish a level of trustworthiness. All participants received an explanation of the aim of this research. Their signature on the Kennesaw State University informed consent form (Appendix G) indicated their desire to participate as a volunteer in the study. All personal identifiers were removed: the participants' names, the school names, and the Learning Community were only identified by pseudonyms. The consent forms revealing the participants' real identities and the list of pseudonyms were kept apart in an encrypted file on the password-protected laptop and separate from the list of participants' actual names. All 1:1 interviews were conducted in a neutral, public space that provided adequate



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privacy with appropriate visibility for the protection and comfort of both the researcher and the participants. The focus group was conducted online to accommodate the schedule of all participants.

### *Perception survey questionnaire*

For Phase One of this process, a perception survey questionnaire was used to initiate the collection of meaningful variations of open-ended responses of first-year teachers about how instructional supports impacted teacher retention. This survey was qualitative in nature, as it did not establish frequencies, means, and other parameters as measured in quantitative surveys (Jansen, 2010). This inquiry was administered electronically by way of a Google Form. The purpose of this type of survey was to understand, in a broad sense, how first-year teachers perceived the accessibility, quality, and relevance of the various levels of instructional support available to them. The multiple choice and open-ended survey questions provided a space for the novice teachers to share their opinions, feelings, comments, and recommendations about the school district's induction program. This information was important for providing new-teacher insight to the researcher as well as informing future program improvement. A copy of the perception survey questionnaire questions has been included in Appendix D. Time for completing the survey was estimated at 10 minutes. The results from this data collection tool were used to determine participant selection for the second phase of data collection.

### *Semi-structured interview*

Phase Two of the data collection process was a semi-structured interview as recommended by Creswell (2013). This session was scheduled with each participant separately. Based on the convenience and comfort of the participant, the interview was conducted face-to-face for seven participants. One participant requested her interview be conducted via Zoom, an

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online virtual meeting platform due to schedule constraints. The purpose of the interview was to gather more in-depth information about each participant's perception of the new teacher support received throughout the first year of teaching. The interview was semi-structured, thus following a guide for the questioning while providing some flexibility with incorporating appropriate additional inquiries as needed. A copy of the interview questions has been included in Appendix E. The estimated time allotted for each interview was 45 minutes. The audio and video recordings of the interview were transcribed verbatim to capture the precise words of the participants. This process created a system of checks and balances and a state of credibility for the study. Including member checking (Creswell, 2005) ensured that I represented each person's intended message accurately. The conclusion of the last interview ushered in the third phase of data collection.

### *Focus group*

The final research procedure, Phase Three, was a focus group (Birks & Mills, 2015) of the participants that were interviewed as individuals. The aim of the focus group was to provide an opportunity for each participant to interact with other first-year teachers in a group setting. Answering additional questions about the district's induction program allowed them to expand on the responses from the initial interview conducted in Phase Two, thus providing greater insight into their first-year experience with the school district. In addition, this format might have helped them generate ideas about new teacher support provided by the district that they might not have generated independently. A copy of the focus group protocol has been attached in Appendix F. One hour (60 minutes) was allotted for this final phase of data collection.

**Data Analysis**

Stake (2010) stated that “research involves both analysis (taking things apart) and synthesis (the putting things together)” (p. 133). He called analysis “a search for both elements and associations” (p. 156). Data organization, analysis, and reporting occurred by the researcher while each session of the data collection process was in progress. The open-ended responses from the participants’ perception survey questionnaire, interview, and focus group were analyzed with Dedoose, a computer software program designed for qualitative data analysis. This software stored every type of data collection file like audio-video files, transcripts, memos, field notes, images, and demographic information of the participants and their responses. These records were examined repeatedly and as many times as necessary to exhaust the data source. Emerging themes were identified through active coding, annotations, and record keeping. Additional reporting and creating of data visualization, like tables or figures, were leveraged as needed. Every attempt was made to remedy any missing or incomplete information by contacting the participant and making necessary inquiries that satisfied the requirements of the study. There were no incidences of incomplete information resulting in and participants being excluded from the data analysis process.

**Trustworthiness**

To ensure trustworthiness of my research project, I gave appropriate considerations to credibility to address internal validity, transferability to address external validity, dependability to address reliability, and confirmability to address objectivity of the study by carrying out several procedures. For instance, the data was triangulated from the perception survey questionnaire, from the interview, and from the focus group to corroborate evidence (Creswell, 2013) that would adequately interpret the participants’ perspectives (Reilly, 2013). Another way, member

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checking verification (Hatch, 2002), provided an opportunity for participants to add, correct, or clarify their responses as a confirmation of their intended message. Additionally, memoing (a form of journaling) in a research journal allowed the researcher to capture the pertinent records, descriptions, observations, wonderings, and reflections about any aspect of the research process (Creswell, 2013). Lastly, peer reviewing introduced impartiality to the study after data analysis to ensure the data was presented free from the researcher's bias (Collins et al., 2013).

### ***Triangulation***

I triangulated the data from the perception survey questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group responses collected from new teachers at LC3 schools as a means to verify research findings. A comparison of these results was used to identify similarities and differences in the pattern of themes that consistently emerged across the data sources. In addition, comparing the data from different data collection instruments provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' decisions to stay or leave education. The triangulation of the data from these varied sources improved the quality and validity of the research outcomes, maximized the impact of teacher voice, and ensured confirmability and accuracy, to add levels of trustworthiness for this study.

### ***Research journal***

When conducting research, it is important to capture the various stages of the process in a reliable manner. The research journal was used as an organizational tool for thorough notetaking of the research questions, methods, and procedures (Stake, 2010). This versatile instrument was used to document observations, ideas, and findings as well as provide a place of focus and reflection for the researcher. Collecting a detailed record in this manner helped alleviate threats to reliability and validity by establishing research credibility for this project.

***Limitations***

Case studies provide valuable insights into the perspective of the participants in the context of the real world. However, there were limitations to this type of research. Firstly, this case study focused on a single group (LC3) and did not represent a larger population. Therefore, generalizability was limited to the context of that research site. To address this limitation, the researcher examined the research findings for applicability, “the extent to which the results are likely to impact on practice” (Wilson, 2010, p. 111). In other words, the focus was on how transferable the findings were to other contexts. Secondly, the case study ran the risk of researcher bias in data collection and analysis since this study was conducted by a single researcher. To avoid this pitfall, the researcher included member checking (Creswell, 2005); that is, requesting that the participants verify the accuracy of the data and the analysis of the results. Thirdly, the case study was time-consuming, requiring extensive data collection, analysis, and interpretation, making it difficult or unattractive for replication in other contexts. To eliminate this issue, a reasonable timetable was followed, along with the selection of a manageable sample size of participants. Lastly, my roles as New Teacher Coach in LC3 and as participant-observer for this research might have create a level of discomfort for the participants of the study given that I am inquiring about how the support services that I provided could have impacted their decision to stay or leave the classroom. To address this limitation, I disclosed my positionality and implemented safeguards in each step of the data collection process that reiterated the non-evaluative, non-punitive aspect of my role as a district-level instructional coach and that also reminded them of their voluntary participation status in the study that they could choose to terminate at will.

**Positionality**

New teacher retention research is critical in today's current climate of teacher flight. Stake (2010) defined research as a deliberate study of a topic with the goal of understanding how things work in a specific situation. As a qualitative researcher, my inquiry requires me to delve into the following practices: rely on human reasoning and judgment (interpretive), know something by experiencing it (experiential), consider meanings as influenced by context (situational), and work to have an understanding of others' perceptions (personalistic) (Stake, 2010). My objective as a qualitative researcher was to understand one thing well, being careful neither to oversimplify nor to overcomplicate that understanding for others reading my work. It was my desire to search for "why" the real-world situation is the way that it is, then look for "how" to improve that situation. Consequently, I selected to explore the teacher retention dilemma that many schools are experiencing today and the impact of teacher attrition on one learning community in my school district. As a 35-year veteran educator, I had ideas of why I believe this is happening; however, I was highly interested in making a scholarly inquiry into the subject. I had a vested interest in the work given my current role as New Teacher Coach, drawn in by curiosity as I explored the various reasons teachers are choosing to leave the field of education.

As a New Teacher Coach, providing various instructional support is vital to retaining first-year teachers in the HRSD. In addition to regular team collaboration opportunities, professional development with follow-up support can build teacher efficacy and capacity. As a member of the instructional support team, I was responsible for 244 new teachers first through third year, with 95 of them new to the teaching profession. My goal was to serve this population so that HRSD could retain as many of these teachers as possible. By conducting a study of new

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teachers' perceptions of how the support they receive might impact their decision to stay in teaching, I sought to gain the knowledge and insight to achieve success in that regard. As part of the study, I employed the Double Dutch Methodology (DDM) as a participant-observer. Green (2014) described this alternative qualitative research method as the participant-observer seeking to "participate as a 'member' of a group and critically observe the ways in which the participants perceive, make meaning of, and reproduce the interactions that define the group over time" (p. 148). She cautioned that as the skilled, flexible researcher, I would be required to fluidly manipulate the blurred lines for executing an entrance into the field of research, knowing precisely when to be a participant-observer, or just the participant, or just the observer while having a front row seat to "the everyday interactions, voices, and experiences of the participants" (p. 49). Green made me keenly aware that the researcher's role could shift when one is entrenched in the story as I served as the provider of new teacher support and services to the study's participants.

### **Summary**

The importance of retaining quality teachers has reached a critical level across the United States. Chapter three provided an overview of the research methods for this study on new teacher attrition and retention. The information contained herein described the research design and procedures with the inclusion of the research questions, context of the study site, selection of participants, and data collection and analysis as pertinent to a single-site case study. The questions for the perception survey questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and the focus group are included in the Appendices B-D. The process for methodology was described in a manner that permits future replication of the study. The aim of the study sought to discover how instructional support impacted a new teacher's decision to remain in education after the first year.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore first-year teachers' perceptions of the instructional coaching supports that they receive regularly and whether these coaching strategies improve the retention rate in Learning Community 3 (LC3) of the Honey Rock School District (HRSD). The first three chapters of this study contained the introduction, the review of the literature, and the methodology. This chapter is dedicated to examining the results of the study to determine the impact various instructional supports have on a new teacher's decision to stay or leave the teaching profession. A brief description of each participant is included. The relevant themes that emerged from the data analysis of the perception survey questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group are reported as well. The following research questions guided the study:

3. What strategies are used by instructional leadership in LC3 of HRSD to increase the teacher retention rate?
4. How do new teachers in LC3 of HRSD perceive instructional leadership support in relation to their desire to remain in the teaching profession?

### Demographics

#### Description of Participants

The participants in this study are first-year teachers representing five of the 14 Title I schools in LC3 of HRSD. The respondents taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; the content areas included mathematics, English, Spanish, Art, Health Science, Special Education, and Kindergarten. From the e-mail invitation to participate in the perception survey questionnaire, 13 out of 95 first-year teachers responded. Nine novice teachers indicated their



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intent to return to the classroom for a second year; four novice teachers indicated their intent to leave the classroom and the district. An online Wheel of Names was used to randomly select four participants from the group of novice teachers intending to remain in teaching. The four novice teachers who indicated their intent to leave were automatically included as participants to continue in the study. Their participation is considered random selection as they self-selected to participate.

**Table 2**

## Participant Demographic Information

Participant by Pseudonym	School Level	Content	Grade(s) Taught	Gender	Age	Race	Degree	Stay or Leave
Bonnie	Elementary School	Special Education	3-5	Female	23	White	BS Special Education	Stay
Farah	High School	CTE - Health Science	9-12	Female	29	White	BS Exercise Science	Stay
Hallie	Middle School	Art	6-8	Female	41	White	BA Studio Art	Stay
Isabel	High School	Spanish	9-12	Female	39	White	BS Health Education	Stay
Julia	Middle School	ELA	8	Female	25	White	BA Literary Studies	Leave
Kara	Middle School	Math	6	Female	22	White	BS Math	Leave
Lisa	Middle School	Math	8	Female	27	White	BA Music Education	Leave
Mia	Elementary School	All Core Subjects	K	Female	24	White	BS Elementary Education BA Spanish	Leave

Note: Table 2 represents the demographic information of the study participants along with their decisions to stay or leave teaching after the first year.

Table 2 represents the self-reported demographic information of the eight teacher participants in the study. All participants, identified by a pseudonym, are female and White with

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ages ranging from 22 to 41 years old. All participants teach in a Title I school. Two of the participants teach in the same elementary school; in the upcoming academic year, one is staying in the profession, and one is leaving. Three of the participants teach in the same middle school; in the upcoming academic year, all three of them are leaving the teaching profession. Each participant completed the perception survey questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group. The following information provides a brief biographical description of the participants with demographics pertinent to their initial experiences as an educator.

### **Background of Participants**

#### **Participant 1: Bonnie**

Bonnie is an elementary school Special Education Direct Service Instructor in reading and mathematics who serves third through fifth grade students. She is 23 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Comprehensive Special Education with a licensure in K-12 education. Her interest in becoming an educator began at the age of 13 when she served as a tutor in a Comprehensive Development Classroom (CDC). Growing up in a household of educators, Bonnie's parents and brother influenced her decision. She completed student teaching in third through fifth grades and felt that age group best fit her personality and age preference. Her placement at a Title I school came as a result of being the recipient of a \$20,000 Fellows scholarship requiring the fulfillment of a four-year commitment. Bonnie will continue to teach in her current position next year.

#### **Participant 2: Farah**

Farah is a high school Career Technical Education (CTE) teacher. She teaches health science and exercise science to ninth through twelfth grade students. She is 29 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science. Formerly a Physical Therapy Assistant,

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Farah selected the teaching profession to better fit the needs of her family after her first child was born. In her quest for a career change, education was not a consideration until a teacher-client in the CTE field shared potential professional and personal benefits for Farah and her family. Her placement at a Title I school came as a result of limited position availability for her content area. Farah will continue to teach in her current position next year and add a course in rehabilitation therapy to her workload.

**Participant 3: Hallie**

Hallie is a middle school fine arts teacher. As the Imagination Learning Designer (her school-given title), she introduces a variety of art forms to sixth through eighth grade students. She has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art with a minor in Education. With experience gained from working for various corporations and from owning her own business, Hallie chose to close her massage therapy studio to begin her teaching career at 41 years of age. Following in her mother's footsteps, a career educator, Hallie first volunteered at an elementary school. Subsequently, it was the experience of working at a summer art camp and the completion of her student teaching for the middle school grades that convinced her to select that age group for her first classroom. Her placement at a Title 1 school came as a result of her personal choice to work with a diverse population. Based on her three-year personal commitment to remain in education, Hallie will continue to teach in her current position next year.

**Participant 4: Isabel**

Isabel is a high school Spanish teacher. She teaches elementary and intermediate level classes to ninth through twelfth graders. She is 39 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Education and holds K-12 certifications in Spanish and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Isabel was drawn to the teaching profession while in high school,

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although it took nearly 17 years before she taught her first high school class. With a personal desire to learn Spanish, she participated in an undergraduate study abroad program to Spain. After college graduation, she served for many years as a missionary in Colombia, a Spanish-speaking country. Upon returning to the United States, she pursued a job teaching Spanish. Her placement at a Title 1 school came as a result of being called to serve at her school based on her faith in God. Isabel will continue to teach in her current position next year.

**Participant 5: Julia**

Julia is a middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teacher for eighth grade students. She is 25 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Literary Studies with a certification in Education. Being an educator stemmed from her childhood dream to teach, a vision that was solidified by the time she reached high school due to the favorable influence of her English teacher. Her placement at a Title I middle school was by choice based on her student teaching experience at the sister high school across the street from the middle school. This experience gave her confidence to work in a diverse community, and she preferred the maturity of 8<sup>th</sup> graders over the behavior of their younger peers. While Julia felt this was a year of personal and professional growth, she will not return to her current position next year. She is getting married and relocating to another state; she is undecided about immediately continuing in the teaching profession.

**Participant 6: Kara**

Kara is a middle school mathematics teacher in the same school as Julia. Her students are in the sixth grade. She is 22 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics with licensure in sixth through twelfth grades. Her interest in teaching stemmed from tutoring mathematics in middle school and high school. Student teaching in a sixth-grade

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classroom was instrumental in her grade level selection for her first year straight out of college. Her placement at a Title I school was based on availability of mathematics teaching positions within the school district. Kara acknowledged that she had no experience with teaching in a school with a diverse population; however, the majority of the students in her student teaching experience were identified as economically disadvantaged. Due to a difficult first year of teaching, Kara will not return to her current position next year. She is relocating to another state and may consider teaching again in the future or explore other career opportunities.

**Participant 7: Lisa**

Lisa is also a middle school mathematics teacher. She teaches eighth grade students in the same school as Julia and Kara. She is 27 years old, has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education, and has a certification endorsement in mathematics. Her initial interest was in teaching band; however, her abilities in mathematics provided her access to entering the teaching profession. Lisa served as a substitute teacher in mathematics for a few years before accepting her first job as a classroom teacher. She felt more comfortable working with middle school students because of her similarity with high school students in both physical size and youthful appearance. Her placement in a Title I school was based on availability of mathematics teaching positions within the school district. Lisa will not return to her current position next year. Her mathematics position was a provisional offer that was non-renewed. She plans to pursue mathematics teaching positions in other schools within and beyond the HRSD or enroll in a master's degree program.

**Participant 8: Mia**

Mia is a kindergarten teacher; she and Bonnie teach in the same elementary school. She is 24 years old and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and a

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Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish. Her passion to work with children developed while assisting in children's programs at her church at a young age. Her passion continued during her teenage years as a babysitter. She learned Spanish while serving on several missions' trips with her church to the Dominican Republic. Her placement in a Title I school is based on her bilingual status and her desire to teach students in their first year of formal education. Mia will not return to her current position next year. She is getting married and relocating to another state. She is actively seeking a teaching position in elementary education or in Spanish.

### **Results**

Determined by the findings of this study, New Teachers' decisions to stay in the teaching profession are dependent on the relevance they place on the multiple, district-wide initiatives that they have accessed. These resources are divided into two main themes: effective instructional support initiatives (RQ1) and human elements of support (RQ2). Participants selected the following as effective instructional supports: New Hire Orientation (NHO), New Teacher Academy (NTA), Quarterly New Teacher Academy (QNTA), District-wide New Teacher Academy Dinner and PD, the Classroom Set up Lab (CSL), Whole Teacher=Well Teacher (WT=WT), the Things to Know Thursday (TTKT) newsletter, and the Classroom Organization Management Program (COMP). Participants identified the following as human elements of support: Lead Mentor, Support Mentor, Administration Team, and the New Teacher Coach.

#### **Research Question 1: Effective instructional support initiatives**

The effective instructional support initiatives are new teacher support resources that are made available to the participants during their first year through various professional development sessions across the district. Facilitated or dispersed by the Induction Leadership Team, many of the presentations are conducted in person with an online option for the participants' convenience. Participants earn stipends for attending the initiatives scheduled

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outside of the normal school calendar or beyond the hours of the regular school day. Table 3 represents the new teacher supports that the participants attended or utilized from July through May. The following section provides a description of each resource followed by the participants' perceptions of effectiveness.

**Table 3**

## Participants' Usage of Instructional Support Initiatives

Participant	Instructional Support Initiatives Accessed	Decision to Stay or Leave
Bonnie	New Hire Orientation New Teacher Academy Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions New Teacher Network Dinner and PD Classroom Set Up Lab Whole Teacher=Well Teacher Things to Know Thursday newsletter COMP Training	Stay
Farah	New Hire Orientation Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions Whole Teacher=Well Teacher Things to Know Thursday newsletter	Stay
Hallie	New Hire Orientation New Teacher Academy Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions New Teacher Network Dinner and PD Whole Teacher=Well Teacher Things to Know Thursday newsletter COMP Training	Stay
Isabel	New Hire Orientation Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions New Teacher Network Dinner and PD Whole Teacher=Well Teacher Things to Know Thursday newsletter	Stay
Julia	New Hire Orientation Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions COMP Training	Leave

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Kara	New Hire Orientation New Teacher Academy Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions COMP Training	Leave
Lisa	New Hire Orientation Quarterly New Teacher Academy New Teacher Network Sessions COMP Training	Leave
Mia	New Hire Orientation Summer New Teacher Academy Classroom Set Up Lab Whole Teacher=Well Teacher	Leave

Note: Table 3 represents the instructional support initiatives that the study participants attended throughout the year. Each participant's decision to stay in teaching or leave after the first year is included for reporting retention status.

### **New Hire Orientation**

New Hire Orientation (NHO) is a new teacher's introduction to the Honey Rock School District (HRSD). Attendance to the two-part sequence is required of all HRSD employees as the orientation program connects employees to essential district information and resources related to learning communities, benefits, licensure, and technology access. The orientation element is designed to ensure that all new hires feel connected, knowledgeable, and valued. Part one of the orientation provides participants with asynchronous access to beneficial onboarding video modules. Part two of the orientation provides a synchronous follow-up session in person or via a virtual platform option led by the Induction and Leadership Development team that includes opportunities for networking and receiving essential onboarding information and updates. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$100.00 for attending NHO.

All participants in this study attended NHO as a requirement for newly hired employees. Three of the participants shared that each section of NHO provided detailed, relevant material that adequately informed new employees about job expectations. Included in their responses were their first impressions of HRSD.



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Farah said that both portions of the orientation were “well-organized, very informative, and thorough.” She described the school district as “very supportive of kids and teachers” and she felt excited to begin the school year “because of the warm welcome and orientation.”

Julia expressed that orientation had “great information.” She said she left feeling confident she would have “lots of support. I will not be alone during my first year of teaching.”

Mia said that the online video modules were “informative, and the Canvas platform was easy to navigate. The in-person portion for her was “interactive and full of information.” She enjoyed “getting to know peers and hearing a refresher on the information from the Canvas course.”

### **New Teacher Academy**

New Teacher Academy (NTA) is a five-day workshop scheduled during the summer that is rich in information about the policies and procedures of the HRSD. New teachers to the district have the opportunity to explore relationship-building strategies within the classroom, throughout the building, and within the community. Additional sessions and flexible scheduling provide options for participants to take advantage of curriculum training by content area, to learn how to access instructional technology resources, and to interact with school support personnel. Attendance is not required but highly encouraged. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$250.00 for attending NTA.

Three participants in the study who indicated that they attended NTA in the summer shared that the relaxed atmosphere and flexible schedule encouraged an environment of networking and uninhibited inquiry. Included in their responses were their impressions of the program’s advantages or drawbacks.

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Bonnie shared that after attending NTA last summer she was “blessed to receive so much information and knowledge prior to beginning my job.”

Hallie, who has found NTA beneficial, described her experience as “super helpful.” She explained that “positivity and connection to other teachers was key. Toxic positivity is not helpful, so when new teachers were given an atmosphere to ask any questions and not feel stupid, this was a great way to start the school year.” She also appreciated the flexibility of the schedule to “pick and choose” the sessions she wished to attend. The drawback she reported about NTA was how limited she felt by the length of time for each session. She recommended “maybe opportunities to have bigger chunks of supportive time. Let's say I'm someone who feels really comfortable with classroom management because I'm an older adult, but technology freaks me out, and I need more than just a one-hour class.”

Mia said she, too, found NTA helpful for preparing her for the school year by offering plenty of professional development sessions. She explained, “I would say New Teacher Academy was super beneficial for me to get the year started off. It was really awesome because it was before school started, and so I already had several professional developments that were provided for me based off of what I would be teaching within my classroom.” As a Kindergarten teacher, Mia acquired useful information in the sessions that connected to the pedagogy of literacy. She stated,

I was able to attend New Teacher Academy this past summer, and I thought that was super beneficial because it not only took just literacy as a whole, but it talked about literacy within the district and what they expected from the district, and just specifically what I will be teaching as a teacher in the school district. So that was super beneficial because I knew what to go through, what the steps of teaching the child how to read, and

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then what's the program or curriculum that I'll be using to make that happen. So that was a good start and got me thinking.

Mia also found advantages to attending the teacher panel that provided pertinent advice for new teachers entering the new school year. She shared that the “teacher panel was also super helpful because they were answering questions and putting me at ease in some areas or giving me resources to look further into.” She also recognized how much she benefited from the experience of the teachers on the panel who had just finished their first school year and “had some pretty recent things to add” to benefit the attendees. NTA being held in the summer was another positive for Mia. She explained,

It was a lot easier to do something during the summer before because I had more time available. I didn't feel like I was leaving or going to get behind in work by going to New Teacher Academy. During the school year, things just got really hectic for me, especially during the first year.”

### **Quarterly New Teacher Academy**

The Quarterly New Teacher Academy (QNTA) extends first-year teachers' training by providing the opportunity to attend three additional job-embedded days strategically scheduled throughout the school year in the fall, winter, and spring. The first half of the day is spent in professional learning sessions that include content-specific classroom learning labs and collaborative planning sessions within cohorts. The second half of the day is spent exploring effective strategies in improving teaching and learning, classroom management, professionalism, and teacher wellness. Participants do not earn a stipend for attending because QNTA is offered during the teacher workday.

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Seven participants identified QNTA as an effective instructional support during their first year of teaching because of the multiple interactions with content peers within the school district. All the participants in the study shared their impressions of the advantages or drawbacks of the quarterly sessions.

Hallie only attended the first QNTA session due to scheduling conflicts with other school-based supports. During that full day of professional development, she enjoyed having time to spend with colleagues and indicated that “it was wonderful to be able to network at the beginning of the year.”

Bonnie felt QNTA allowed her to interact with peers in Special Education across the district. She said, “The professional developments were extremely helpful just being able to meet people, build relationships, network, and get supports where maybe you weren't able to at your school or get questions answered.” She also acknowledged that being paid a stipend for attending professional development was a positive incentive. She stated, “We're all teachers. We know it's not the biggest paycheck, but being paid for that extra time makes you feel appreciated for taking that little extra time.” A drawback of QNTA for Bonnie is that many of the sessions were geared towards General Education teachers. She mentioned that in those sessions she “got a lot of really good ideas for classroom management and building relationships with students.” However, expressed an interest in “professional development on how to properly do inclusion within a General Education classroom.”

Lisa recognized that one of the greatest benefits of QNTA for her was attending the math learning labs that targeted teaching and learning for middle school students. She described the three sessions as “really helpful because we were digging deep into one lesson and just having that single lesson helped broaden my idea of what I could do in the classroom.”

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Farah, who was not able to attend summer NTA, did take advantage of the QNTA day-embedded new teacher meetings where she felt “supported with timely and helpful information.” She, too, appreciated having protected time scheduled with CTE peers within the school district. She described the morning sessions as “very helpful because meeting with CTE specific support coaches provided information and strategies that I could apply the next day.” Farah was complimentary of the afternoon sessions as well. She said, “They were also great. I loved the last one we did in the spring. That was probably the most beneficial to me on self-regulation, but also how to regulate the kids.” A drawback about QNTA for Farah was that the PD focus level was often geared towards elementary students. Farah continued,

There were a lot of great classroom management tools given, but they were all about elementary school. So, I couldn’t see myself applying some of those strategies and interventions to my classroom with my kids because they were so elementary. As a new teacher, I just didn’t have the capacity to transfer that information to my class at the time. Farah concluded she would “love more CTE or secondary education specific PDs.”

Julia said she “really enjoyed the New Teacher Academies.” She felt that the content for QNTA sessions was good “quick grab and go” information especially for the classroom. She also mentioned the benefit of networking with peers across the district as a positive outcome for attending each quarter. She said, “I have a community which I can go and I can talk about my school experience without the bias of another coworker, and that community has really helped.” Julia also mentioned the importance of having a district-scheduled break from the classroom for a teacher’s well-being. She remarked, “just having a break a few times a year in the middle of a week and just taking a breath and kind of taking a breath with people who are also needing to take a deep breath is a good thing.”

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Julia emphasized a message that she learned while attending QNTA about the autonomy of the classroom for the new teacher. She explained,

Something that was really pushed through my head at a New Teacher Academy that nobody ever told me was this is my classroom. This isn't the principal's classroom. It's not the assistant principal's. This is my room. And if I don't want an assistant in here helping, they don't need to be in here. Especially as a new teacher, I have felt a little pushed around, that I need to do this because this is just what's done. And not knowing that actually the veteran teachers aren't doing this, it's just you can be pushed because you don't know any better. So, when I realized there are things that I want in my room and things that I don't, I was able to put up those boundaries, whether it's my peers or my students - I decide! It's my room. When I figured that out, it was empowering, because even then, my lesson plans started to change. I learned that this is my space; I am my own teacher.

Julia shared how the message she received at NTA made a lasting impression on her, and she considered it “the best piece of advice” for the year.

Isabel felt that QNTA afforded her valuable opportunities to spend time collaborating with other high school Spanish teachers. She mentioned that she “would love to see more collaboration and support between the World Languages departments in general county wide for all teachers, not just us newbies.”

Kara said that QNTA provided good material and good modeling but did not find it very effective overall. She felt that she was not able to replicate the lessons she observed in the learning labs because of the differences in school culture and behavior management. She explained,

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The environment in those schools is completely different from the environment at my school. While I got to see great lessons and great strategies, we don't have the basic behavior structures being implemented here. So, it ended up being a waste of time for my particular classroom.

Mia shared that she did not attend QNTA due to timing and scheduling. She admitted to having a hard time navigating the high volume of emails at the beginning of the year. She said, There were just so many emails coming in at the beginning, so I was learning how to figure out the emails and which I needed to respond to. Eventually, there were just times that I overlooked it. I think it was just I didn't want to miss school or feel like a burden to anyone else for having someone to cover for me so I could go. If I were to do it again, I probably would go.

### **New Teacher Network Meetings**

New Teacher Network meetings are hosted by school-based Lead Mentors each month during the school year. Novice and veteran teachers within the first three years of teaching are invited to attend sessions that address common issues with classroom management, teacher well-being, and teacher operations. Content for the meetings aligns with the teacher evaluation system along with the developmental stages of a new teacher. School-specific topics are introduced as needed based on the results from periodic needs assessment surveys administered to teachers new to the school district throughout the year. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$200.00 for attending a total of 10 sessions.

Seven participants identified NTN sessions as a place to associate with other novice and veteran teachers within the school building to develop peer relationships. Four of the participants in the study shared their impressions of the advantages or drawbacks of the monthly meetings.

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Hallie said she “really enjoyed the new teacher meetings we had. We met once a month.” She felt that getting paid a stipend for attending was “a huge deal. When you're exhausted and you want to go home, and then you're like, wait, I get support and I get 20 bucks - that's great! That was really valuable.”

Isabel agreed that the NTN meetings were helpful. A drawback for her was that there were not more sessions scheduled. She expressed, “I would have liked to have some more of those meetings, mostly for an opportunity to connect with other teachers in my school.”

Farah shared that she rarely attended NTN meetings because of scheduling. She admitted that she didn't find the after-school sessions as useful as she would have liked. She stated,

I didn't get to do it a ton, but every time I went, I kind of wish I hadn't gone. This wasn't super helpful necessarily in terms of content. It was always very inspirational and helpful in terms of attitude and that sort of thing, but not necessarily with problems in class.

Farah was looking for more substance in the meetings that related directly to her teaching responsibilities and less messages about encouragement.

Bonnie was faithful to attend the NTN meetings every month; however, she was the only teacher who did. She praised her Lead Mentor for being prepared with a PowerPoint presentation and so many awesome things planned.” She did not fault her colleagues for not attending. She explained, “No one was ever really able to go due to scheduling and other things – we're all just so busy.” She felt that the idea of having the meetings “was really good, just bad timing.”

### **District-wide New Teacher Network Dinner and PD**

District-wide New Teacher Network Dinner and PD is an extension of the New Teacher Network that also focuses on classroom management, professionalism, and authentic teacher wellness. Each semester a combination two-hour session of dinner and professional development



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is scheduled for mentors and mentees to convene for a time of collaboration and relaxation as well as network with peers within grade bands and content areas from across the district.

Participants earn a stipend of up to \$80.00 for attending the District-wide NTN Dinner and PD.

Three participants identified District-wide NTN Dinner and PD as an effective instructional support during their first year of teaching. One teacher shared that the biannual social was beneficial for deepening the mentor/mentee relationship while discussing practices to improve difficult classroom behaviors.

Hallie attended both sessions of the District-wide NTN Dinner and PD that she described as “amazing,” especially the one where her mentor also attended. She said, “the one she came to was the most meaningful because we have that shared experience outside of work.” She stated that the professional learning segment that incorporated elements of teacher wellness provided her with “personal strategies for self-care.” Hallie discovered that using the critical friends protocol during one of the meetings was a beneficial tool as a group problem-solving technique. She mentioned,

It was helpful to break into small groups and talk through scenarios with a group leader keeping us on task. Whatever group sharing model was used was an amazing example to us as educators of teaching in action, and being able to see how student engagement works along with classroom management.

### **Classroom Set-up Lab**

The Classroom Set-up Lab (CSL) is a 3-hour interactive, small group experience provided within various schools across the school district during the summer. New teachers observe, brainstorm and develop a plan for creating an inviting learning environment for their students. The hands-on, content-specific presentations by veteran teachers assist with practical

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ideas for room arrangement for whole and small group needs, the utilization of classroom wall space, teacher organization skills, and the organization of student materials. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$60.00 for attending CSL.

Two participants in the study indicated that they attended CSL in the summer. However, neither of the participants shared their thoughts about the effectiveness of this session.

### **Whole Teacher=Well Teacher**

Whole Teacher=Well Teacher (WT=WT) is a bi-weekly afterschool well-being program designed and led by a mindfulness consultant and former educator who has been contracted by the school district. This online course provides teachers with wellness practices that complement essential social and emotional learning (SEL) classroom practices. The video program presents modules for self- and others-awareness, stress management, and resilience building. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$270.00 for attending 18 sessions of WT=WT.

Five participants identified WT=WT as an effective instructional support because the shared wellness strategies were practical and provided immediate results for improving overall wellness and reducing stress management. Three teachers shared their impression of the advantages or drawbacks of the online self-regulation sessions.

Hallie felt she benefited greatly from the Whole Teacher=Well Teacher afternoon meetings. She found it most instrumental halfway through the school year. She said, “It came to me when I was breaking apart in January. It was a good self-care practice.” Hallie would like to see the program expand as she feels “each school needs more self-care options for teachers, devoted not just to new teachers, but to self-care, meditation, non-violent communication for the adults first so that it trickles down to our students.”

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Bonnie also found that WT=WT was “very helpful” for her emotional wellness. She said, “For me as someone who has anxiety and ADHD, I struggle trying to find grounding techniques and trying to be the best teacher I can be. It's very hard sometimes” Due to a conflict with her schedule as a tutor, Bonnie was not able to attend every session. She mentioned, “every time I was able to go, I was like, ‘Oh, this is so good. This is such good information that I didn't even know I needed.’”

Kara admitted that she did not take advantage of WT=WT when it was presented online. She remembered having access to the program’s well-being techniques through QNTA. She stated,

I’m pretty sure I remember them telling me during our orientation over the summer that they have online therapy sessions. I didn't take advantage of that. The only wellness thing you could say I participated in was when we had our new teacher days and we did these breathing exercises.

### **Things to Know Thursday**

Another manner for new teachers to the school district to feel connected, knowledgeable, and valued is through the distribution of the Things to Know Thursday (TTKT) newsletter. TTKT is a weekly communication distributed on Thursday via email. Each issue provides the reader with district-related updates and resources, research-based teaching and learning strategies, and timely wellness tips that coincide with the stages of the first-year teacher. Participants do not receive a stipend for reading the TTKT newsletter.

Two participants in the study indicated that they accessed the weekly TTKT newsletter sent by e-mail. One participant shared that she valued receiving school district information

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through this form of communication. Isabel simply indicated that the material presented in “Things To Know Thursday was great.”

### **COMP (Classroom Organization and Management Program)**

COMP (Classroom Organization and Management Program) is a research-based training platform that guides teachers in the use of effective classroom management strategies for Tier 1 classroom management support. Presenters emphasize modeling, teaching, and acknowledging positive social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills. School-day-embedded workshops are scheduled throughout the school year; summer workshops are also available. Participants earn a stipend of up to \$360.00 for attending the summer workshop.

Five participants in the study indicated that they attended the 18-hour COMP training. Three participants shared their thoughts that the program was effective for being solutions-oriented for classroom management issues by fortifying attendees with proactive tactics for next-day implementation. Included in their responses were their impressions of the program’s advantages or drawbacks.

Kara indicated that she found COMP training extremely instrumental for improving her struggles with classroom organization and behavior management. She said the program “was the most beneficial thing to me this year.” She continued,

I liked that it talked about literally every aspect of the classroom. It was something as simple as your room set up, what's going to be best for your certain room, I guess structures and for the actual furniture you have. And we also went through the breakdown of what's going to be distracting to a kid and things like that. And then it went all the way to let's talk about actual scenarios, things that we're struggling with within the classroom

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and break that down and think about what we could do to either reduce or eliminate that situation happening again.

Kara was able to implement helpful strategies for restructuring classroom policies and procedures. She described the benefit of using these tools in the following manner:

It helped me set up consequences. We talked about scripts for any kind of reset we needed to do. So, one of the things I had a problem with for a long time was them coming in and just not being all over the place. So, I had to set scripts. I wasn't deviating or rambling or lecturing them. It was just like, this is what we need to do, this is what went wrong, let's do it, execute it, things like that.

Kara reported that the drawback she had with COMP training is not with the program itself but with the time of year it was made available to her. She would have preferred to have completed the sessions sooner. She stated,

It was helpful, but it wasn't timely because I did it in February. So, I think that was one of those things where if I would've had it maybe in the summer before or even earlier in the year, August, September, I think that would've really helped me because it would've helped me start with something good, and then I could have been trying to be consistent with whatever program we made then.

Lisa, in agreement with Kara's assessment of COMP training, recommended the program to all teachers. She said, "COMP training was really beneficial. I definitely learned a lot about classroom management and how important it is to make your invisible expectations visible, and that definitely made a difference in my classroom." Lisa, too, said,

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I wished I would have been able to attend it earlier in the year because having it in the second semester made it a little bit difficult to implement some of the strategies. I felt like some of my classroom set up and management was a little too far gone.

Julia was not able to attend COMP training even though she requested to go. She said, “They did not arrange COMP training for me, even after I asked. There were other educators in the building that I guess needed it more than I did, so I never got COMP training this year.” Julia did manage to glean some of the strategies presented in the COMP sessions through her surrogate mentor teacher next door. She remarked,

The veteran next door was the one that walked me through classroom flow. And she's like, this is all stuff that you learn in COMP training. And so just over the months getting a lot of mentorship from her, she's kind of like, “yeah, you would've learned this in COMP training.” Especially at the start of the year, classroom flow matters so much more than I could have ever imagined. The way kids come in, the route that they take to get their binders, just to have that routine at the start of the day, I think really changes the environment for the rest of the class period. I had to learn that through some mistakes, some misplaced binder locations, but once we got it, now they come in, they grab their “do now,” their binder, and they sit down. That just set the whole rest of the class up for success. So, I guess I learned procedures through my buddy peer teacher and then just trial and error. In addition, one of the other teachers who went in my stead came back and relayed some of the things that she had learned. And I was like, “man, I really wish I could have gotten that.”

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Julia suggests that COMP be made available for all new teachers after the first month of teaching. She recommends, “After they felt what it's like in their room, felt the environment, put them through COMP training, because I just think that would've been so beneficial to me.”

### **Summary: Research Question 1**

The HRSD provides support to early career educators through a variety of professional development sources. First-year teachers are highly encouraged to attend the variety of instructional support initiatives strategically scheduled throughout the year. Participants are incentivized to attend as the majority of the sessions are stipend eligible. Based on the number of supports the participants indicated they accessed, the stipend does not seem to be a huge enticement. Some participants benefited from the learning labs that focused on classroom management, well-being, content and curriculum development, and teacher operations. Conversely, other participants determined that not all content presented was relevant to their grade level and therefore a turn off.

Table 4 that represents an overview of the general perceptions of effectiveness of the instructional support from the participants of this study is included in Appendix G. It appears that there is a relationship between the number of instructional support initiatives accessed and the new teacher retention rate. The participants who attended more instructional support initiatives are the participants who are planning to stay in teaching.

### **Research Question 2: Impact of human element of support**

The human element of support are resources that are executed by people who impact the teaching and learning in a first-year teacher's development through direct access to their practice in action. Participants shared how supported they felt by their Lead Mentor, Support Mentor, Administrative Team, and the New Teacher Coach. The following section provides a clarifying description of the main responsibilities of each support. The participants' perceptions of each

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level of support are represented by the categories of extremely supported, sufficiently supported, somewhat supported, hardly supported, or not supported at all. A rationale with supporting evidence for their category selection is included.

### Lead Mentor

Lead Mentors in the HRSD serve as an extension of site-based induction and Leadership Development. Their principal responsibilities include presenting an on-site orientation program to new teachers to the building, both novice and experienced, pairing first through third year teachers with an appropriate mentor, coordinating direct support for mentors and their mentees, and facilitating the departmental Professional Learning Community (PLC) monthly meetings also known as the school-based New Teacher Network (NTN).

In Table 5, the participants in the study indicated the impact they felt the Lead Mentor support had on their first year of teaching. One participant felt extremely supported, two felt sufficiently supported, four felt somewhat supported, and one felt hardly supported.

**Table 5**

Perception of Lead Mentor Support

Participant	Perception of Lead Mentor Support	Rationale
Bonnie	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly New Teacher Network meetings</li> <li>• Shares good information</li> <li>• Collaborate on best supports for mutual students</li> </ul>
Farah	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very supported by the meetings</li> </ul>
Hallie	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided space and autonomy</li> <li>• Happy to not feel smothered</li> </ul>
Isabel	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude, uplifting spirit</li> <li>• Solutions-oriented</li> <li>• New Teacher Network meetings</li> <li>• Increased communication and connection between meetings</li> <li>• Regular check ups</li> </ul>



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Julia	Hardly Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions occurred only during New Teacher Network meeting times</li> </ul>
Kara	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Teacher Network meetings offered late in the year</li> <li>• Greater benefit if offered earlier in the year</li> </ul>
Lisa	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive to emails</li> <li>• Busy schedule, yet available when needed</li> <li>• Rarely visited the classroom</li> </ul>
Mia	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met one time</li> <li>• Check-ins not a priority</li> </ul>

Note: Table 5 represents the participants' perceptions about the impact they feel the support they received from the Lead Mentor had on their first year of teaching with a rationale included.

Farah is the lone participant who indicated strong satisfaction with the support she received from her Lead Mentor. She remarked that the school-based PD sessions were meaningful and made her feel “very supported; they were like gold.” Farah, a former physical therapist assistant, is in the process of completing an alternate certification path. She expressed,

That was probably why the first half of the year was pretty tough, because I had no preparation. The PD sessions from the summer, I was holding on to those things. But in terms of classes and programs, I didn't start those till January. I think that's why January and February were tough, but I also learned tools that I could implement in March and move on into the rest of the year, which has been really pretty smooth.

Bonnie indicated that she was sufficiently supported by her Lead Mentor, given that they were able to collaborate on best practices for supporting the Special Education students they have in common. She found the NTN meetings to be beneficial. She reported,

We do hold our monthly meetings, even if other new teachers are unable to join us. She is always prepared for our meetings and has really great points to be made. She also teaches

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some of my students, so it is very helpful to think about how to best support our students together. Our lead mentor is phenomenal.

Hallie, the fine arts teacher, also felt sufficiently supported. She acknowledged that her Lead Mentor seemed to prioritize her time with younger new teachers who taught in core subject areas like English, mathematics, social studies, and science. She said that her lead mentor “has spent more time and energy on supporting younger teachers. Also, the core teachers have been focused on more, understandably so.” Being the oldest new teacher participant in this study, Hallie preferred this minimal hands-on approach that offered her room to grow in a more organic fashion. She stated, “I also appreciate being given space and autonomy as a related arts teacher. If I had to check too many boxes, I would feel smothered.”

Isabel praised her Lead Mentor for having a positive outlook and being solution oriented. However, Isabel says she felt somewhat supported since the desired number of interactions with the Lead Mentor outside of the monthly NTN meetings was not met. Isabel reflected,

Her character and personality are enough to uplift those around her. I have very much appreciated her focus on positivity and looking for solutions. She has done an excellent job with the new teacher meetings. I would have loved to have more communication and connection with her in between the meetings on a regular basis. I should have reached out to her more often, but it also would have been nice to be checked up on outside of the new teacher meetings.

Kara and Lisa teach in the same school and share a Lead Mentor. They also identified as feeling somewhat supported by this supporter. Kara would have found greater value in attending the NTN meetings after school had they been scheduled from the beginning of the school year. She said, “These sessions were helpful, but could have been more beneficial if offered earlier in

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the year.” Lisa was satisfied with the Lead Mentor’s timely written responses, but less satisfied with her lack of availability. Lisa reported that the Lead Mentor was “very responsive to emails when I needed something quick. I hardly saw her in my classroom. I understand that she is busy and not always available.”

Mia is another participant who felt somewhat supported by her Lead Mentor because they had limited connections. Mia said, “We met once. We have not really checked in with each other.”

Julia felt hardly supported by her Lead Mentor due to limited interactions with her. Julia expressed that her Lead Mentor only “mentored during the required meeting times to turn in paperwork. I think there were teachers in the school that might have needed more support than I did.” Julia was able to recount one helpful situation where she took advantage of her Lead Mentor’s offer to model a lesson for her and her students. She said,

I was having a really hard time; I don’t know why it was so hard. We were right in the middle of learning the argumentative essay, and she came in one class period and just did the lesson and showed me. And it really resonated with my kids. And you could see the years of wisdom and teaching that she had had. And the modeling was something that really helped me because it’s like that’s how it should look like. Of course. That makes sense. Why was I doing it any other way? In that moment as an instructional support, she was just awesome. She was a powerhouse.

All the participants expressed receiving some level of support from the Lead Mentor in their schools. They indicated that the NTN meetings that were facilitated by the Lead Mentor were helpful. Some participants felt they would have benefited from more connections and communication with their Lead Mentor.

### Support Mentor

Support Mentors in the HRSD provide individualized physical, emotional, instructional, and institutional support to their designated mentees on a regular basis. Their principal responsibilities include communicating school specific procedures and expectations, connecting novice teachers with school resources, and explaining the teacher evaluation process. Informal check-ins and communication between the mentor and mentee should extend beyond the monthly NTN meeting.

In Table 6, the participants in the study indicated the impact they felt the Support Mentor support had on their first year of teaching. Two participants felt extremely supported, two felt sufficiently supported, three felt supported, and one felt hardly supported.

**Table 6**

Perception of Support Mentor Support

Participant	Perception of Support Mentor Support	Rationale
Bonnie	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared learning space</li> <li>• Provided resources for job compliance</li> <li>• Think partner for student behaviors</li> <li>• Received timely feedback and reassurance</li> </ul>
Farah	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional conversations</li> <li>• No meetings all year</li> </ul>
Hallie	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very helpful with teaching experience</li> <li>• Difference in age and life experience</li> </ul>
Isabel	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives time sacrificially</li> <li>• High availability</li> <li>• Modeled good practices</li> <li>• Advocate to administration</li> </ul>
Julia	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phenomenal job with support</li> <li>• Strong at the beginning of the year</li> </ul>

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Kara	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided suggestions at beginning of the year</li> <li>• Support waned as year progressed</li> </ul>
Lisa	Hardly Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not actively supportive</li> <li>• Available if needed</li> <li>• No follow up</li> </ul>
Mia	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met one time</li> <li>• Insight provided</li> </ul>

Note: Table 6 represents the participants' perceptions about the impact they feel the support they received from the Support Mentor had on their first year of teaching with a rationale included.

Isabel felt extremely supported by her Support Mentor who doubles as her department chair for Spanish. She recognized her high availability, modeling of good practices, and advocacy for new teachers to the school administration. Isabel stated,

My mentor has gone above and beyond to help us in any way possible. She has given of her time very sacrificially to be available to answer questions and show us how to do something. She has been a huge support for us new teachers and has really shown us the ropes in all areas. She has been an excellent representative and advocate for us in communicating with admin. She has helped with absolutely anything we've needed help with. I could not imagine getting through this past year without her help. Having her right next door and having the same planning time were a huge help with a lot of the administrative side of learning: the school system and PowerSchool, all of the policies and procedures, the paperwork, emails, reports, and all of those types of things. I am very thankful for our mentors and coaches.

Bonnie also felt extremely supported by her Support Mentor who also teaches students with disabilities in the same classroom. Bonnie's mentor provides in-the-moment encouragement and feedback and shares knowledge and resources specific to Special Education. Here are Bonnie's thoughts about her Support Mentor:

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I just wanted to agree with Giselle. I am very blessed to have my support mentor teacher; she was the most helpful person. We share a room together since we both teach direct services, and she is only a few feet away from me when I need her. She has walked me through really difficult paperwork and student behaviors. She also is in the room with me as I teach my small groups and will often give me really needed feedback after a lesson. Even on hard days where I am discouraged or anxious about how I am doing she is always there to reassure me. She has even come to meetings with me to give me feedback and assure me all the legalities are correct. Even up until today I was able to be like, “Hey, this happened. What am I supposed to do?” And it's the second to last day of school. So, she was definitely a phenomenal support. She is wonderful! Again, I am very blessed and thankful for my support mentor teacher. My mentor is a 10/10. I don't know where I would be without her. She's been my biggest cheerleader.

Julia expressed feeling sufficiently supported by her Support Mentor who also serves as her Instructional Coach for English Language Arts. Julia commented that her mentor “did a phenomenal job more at the start of the year.” Since then, Julia has forged a mentor/mentee relationship with a neighbor veteran teacher who also teaches ELA. When communicating with her surrogate mentor, Julia’s disappointment over the minimal number of interactions with her assigned mentor is evident. She mentioned,

I do know that if I ever needed anything, my assigned mentor would be there, but there wasn't a proactivity on her part to make sure I had everything I needed. My actual mentor occasionally would say, “Hey, on our way to bus duty, let's talk.” She has interviewed me maybe three times, and I found out probably a month ago that she got paid for that. I went

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to my ELA partner teacher who has really taken me under her wing and said, “You should have been getting paid for this.”

Hallie reported that she too felt sufficiently supported by her Support Mentor. She mentioned that although the two of them are in different stages in their personal and professional lives, Hallie found her mentor’s teaching advice useful. Hallie stated,

My support teacher is younger than I am with no children. I have more life experience, but she has more teaching experience. Some life things she does not understand, but as far as teaching, she has been a very helpful mentor. I can’t say that there was anything negative that happened. I think in order for her to be considered highly effective, she would've had to been closer to my age and had kids and understand that level of my life.

Hallie was not disappointed with the support she received from her Support Mentor.

Mia said she was somewhat supported by her Support Mentor since she did not connect often with her mentor as expected throughout the school year. While she appreciated the idea of having a direct support within her school and in her grade level, Mia commented that she and her mentor “only met once officially.” She said,

Whenever I had a question, I knew I could go to her. And she was never upset that I had to come to her. She was always helpful to find me a solution right away. So that was super nice to know I could have that person to rely on within my first year and not feel judgment because of it. I know I only met with my mentor once the whole school year, but I was okay because I found my own mentor unofficially. I created my own resource in another teacher that I would seek out when I had questions that I needed to have answers to. It would've been nice to have someone also checking in on me as well without me

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having to ask for it. I do think, like Olivia said, when the mentorship program is done well, it's super beneficial. But for me, my mentor was not just working.

Kara also felt somewhat supported by her Support Mentor because of the diminished number of connections as the school year continued. She explained that her mentor “provided suggestions and support at the beginning of the year in Quarter 1 but became less involved as the year progressed.”

Farah was the other participant who felt somewhat supported by her Support Mentor since they did not meet until December. Farah indicated that they hadn't “met all year” and only engaged in “conversations occasionally.” She continued, “There was no mentoring happening in the time that I really needed it in August through October.” She said she found “support through coworkers.” She said,

Thankfully, I had really great coworkers in close proximity to my classroom who had been in my shoes six months earlier or a year earlier, and they were able to really help me specifically. So, I felt like because I didn't get to do the new teacher meetings quite as often, it was just enough when I needed it. Just having their support feedback was super helpful.

Lisa was the only participant who felt hardly supported by her Support Mentor because the check-ins were sparse and the support was limited. She mentioned receiving some support with “making seating charts and rearranging the classroom when behavior was getting out of hand.” Lisa shared her perspective through these words:

I did reach out to my mentor a couple of times. She was available if I needed something but was not actively supporting me and checking in even though she knew I was struggling with managing my classroom. I have the problem that I don't know what I



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need, and she was aware of that, but still did not step in until the behavior in my classroom got extreme and then did not follow up.

Lisa indicated that her math department peer teacher also did not provide her any support. She said of him,

We had collaborative planning sessions every Monday, and he did not say a single word to me. After the first quarter, he just did his own thing, and did not collaborate with me at all. I know you can't force someone to collaborate, but I was lacking information on best practices for this curriculum from a teacher that taught the curriculum the previous year. He was aware this was my first year teaching and did not offer support for classroom learning structures or methods of teaching certain concepts. I do very well with modeling, but due to us doing the same thing on the same day early in the year, I was not able to observe my content partner run classroom activities such as stations which would have been very helpful to me.

All the participants expressed receiving some level of support from the Support Mentor in their schools. The participants who had an established rapport with their Support Mentor were satisfied with the support they received. The participants who minimally communicated with their Support Mentor did not feel they received the maximum benefits of having a mentor for their first year of teaching.

### **Administration Team**

Each school building has an Administration Team comprised of the Principal, Assistant Principal(s), Dean of Discipline, and Instructional Coaches. Content Leads on the district level also offer support as requested by the new teacher or by any member of the team. Their principal responsibility is to provide new teachers with ongoing and intensive coaching cycle support for

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the development, reinforcement, and refinement of instructional moves and practices related to curriculum, content, pedagogy, and teaching skills.

In Table 7, the participants in the study indicated the impact they felt their school's Administration Team support had on their first year of teaching. One participant felt extremely supported, three felt sufficiently supported, three felt somewhat supported, and one felt hardly supported.

**Table 7**

## Perception of Administration Support

Participant	Perception of Administration Support	Rationale
Bonnie	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received feedback</li> <li>• Provided autonomy in teaching</li> <li>• Defended in meetings</li> </ul>
Farah	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided plenty of assistance</li> </ul>
Hallie	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel cared for</li> <li>• Sometimes feel alone on an island</li> <li>• Tried not to request assistance too often</li> <li>• Frequent mandatory meetings that eat up time</li> </ul>
Isabel	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to meet as needed</li> <li>• Minimal communications</li> <li>• Delayed responses or unanswered emails</li> <li>• Behavior least supported – rare consequences</li> </ul>
Julia	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advocacy for new teachers</li> <li>• No space to share opinions</li> <li>• Public lecturing without problem resolution</li> </ul>
Kara	Hardly Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided improvement strategies</li> <li>• Felt abandoned when the issues did not improve</li> </ul>
Lisa	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided limited solutions or targeted support</li> <li>• No follow up</li> </ul>
Mia	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate support available</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt comfortable requesting assistance or information</li> <li>• No judgement for needing help</li> </ul>
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Note: Table 7 represents the participants' perceptions about the impact they feel the support they received from the Administration had on their first year of teaching with a rationale included.

Farah was the only participant who felt extremely supported by her school Administration Team. She indicated that “they have been wonderful and helped me out a lot.” She welcomed the support she received from the instructional coaches. She commented,

I knew that I needed help. That's definitely when I felt it the most was the first few weeks of school. It was like, “man, I have no idea what I'm doing.” The first day of school, one of our instructional coaches was like, “Okay, here's all the things admin wants us to do.” She gave us a list. She was like, “Here's three things I want you to focus on.” That was one of the most helpful things for me in the first week of school of here's all the things you're supposed to be doing, but here's the essentials. So, it was kind of like an accommodation for our kids. That's exactly what I needed, to focus on these three things, get your room set up. I can't remember all the things, but it would've been helpful every week to have someone say something like, “Okay, I know you're overwhelmed, and this is all the admin is saying to you, but maybe it's not to you specifically. Here's what you need to be doing. “So that was very helpful for that week. And then it kind of dropped off. I think they got busy, which is understandable and fine, but having just that focus four type of thing, “this is what you need to do”, would be helpful.

Bonnie felt supported sufficiently by her school Administration Team. She attributed her sentiments to the positive relationships established with the instructional coaches and the administrators who provided her beneficial feedback, supported her autonomy in the classroom,

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as well as held a space for her to feel seen and heard. Bonnie spoke favorably of her

Administration Team:

The administration at my school has always shown they have had my back in all of my decisions. They gave wonderful feedback for me and made me feel like I have a lot of say in my teaching. My administration has often stood up for me when people would come to meetings and make a comment about my lack of experience as a new teacher. That really meant the most to me as I know not everyone has that relationship with their administration. My administration is always very supportive. Even when there are some conflicts or anything like that, they're always like, "Hey, you're okay." I'm a big crier too. So, they would always just see me cry. They're like, "you're good. It's going to be A okay." Which was very nice to hear. I keep a bunch of notes from my admin. Even when people from the district would come and be like, "Oh, you're just a first-year teacher. You don't know yet. You'll get good in a little bit. In a few years you'll be a good teacher." My administration was like, "no, she's good now. She's a good teacher. Please don't speak to my employee like that." That meant the world to me. Very, very supportive.

Bonnie shared that she felt equally supported by her school's instructional coaches as well. She shared,

Our instructional coaches are awesome too. As a Special Ed teacher, it's hard to find those connections to the grade level standards and where my kids are at. So, I've got kids that are learning their phonics in fifth grade, and it's hard to say, "how am I supposed to make this grade level? How am I supposed to make that meet?" And they were so helpful with saying, "okay, ask this question and do this and pair it to this text that they're doing in class" is where the teachers are so busy, they have so much going on. And the

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instructional coaches had, I don't want to say that time cause they're all also extremely busy, but they had that moment in the day where I don't know what to do with this.

If Bonnie had one suggestion to give her administration, she would request additional reinforcements to streamline the referral process in order to efficiently expedite support for student behaviors. She mentioned,

We've had a lot of pretty severe behaviors in my school across the board. Some of the kids were Ex Ed [Exceptional Education] or have disabilities, and it took a lot to get the help we needed. We have a Bridge class for Ex Ed students who struggle with self-regulation throughout the normal school day. The students are referred to the transition class where they can work for eight weeks in a behavior classroom and learn the needed skills so they can come back to their classroom. For one fourth grade student who had aggressive tantrums daily, the process took almost an entire semester before she got the help we had been begging for. With the help of my mentor, we were finally able to complete the referral process successfully, but in the meantime, it was frustrating. Now the student is back in our class, and she's a phenomenal success story.

Hallie also said she felt supported sufficiently by her school Administration Team as a whole, especially in moments when she needed information or emotional support. Hallie said, "I have felt very alone on my island here in Fine Arts. I feel supported that when I have a question or a freak out, ultimately my admin and coaches truly care about me."

However, she did reflect that there were times throughout the year when she doubted the sincerity of the principals' support for her. She explained,

I've just been really surprised at how the administration will support you on the surface, and they will say they have your back. And then something happens. And if they are in

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any way afraid of anything happening to them, things really don't feel supported. I mentioned to a coworker that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. So, whenever we felt like our principal was on a power trip, that's when things were really bad. I know our principal listens in on the intercom. This gets at why I feel a little paranoid. I just wish that she respected and trusted her workers enough to not be so micromanaging. For as much as has happened to me this year, I really think it would be because of the principal if I left. And there were kids who came up behind me and cut my hair this year, not with my consent. Just the way I've been treated as a human being has been really difficult. I have to say, I wouldn't be going back if it weren't for my coworkers.

Mia is the third participant who felt supported sufficiently by her school Administration Team, a support that she described as non-judgmental. She expressed, "When I have had a question, a problem within my classroom, or need clarification, I have always received an answer without judgement or feeling like I was a bother." Mia has expressed great appreciation for the level of support she has received from her instructional coaches. She said,

Well, my instructional coaches have been phenomenal. I love them so much, and I know that if I have a question, they can fix that for me. And I mean, our math coach came in to observe me several times just to watch me teach and then suggest some things. Even she would take over at times where it seemed like I wasn't connecting. And that was totally fine with me because then I was able to see her take the standard that I was teaching and just transform it into a way. So that was super helpful and not something I asked for actually, but it was just there for me. So that was super awesome. And then my literacy coach also came in a couple of times to observe and just help. And she came and modeled

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a few lessons because I was confused about something. And she was very happy to come in and model and be a part of that. So, I never felt like I was a burden on them. I always felt like they were happy to help. And that was super encouraging because I never want to be a burden to someone. So that was nice.

Mia indicated that she has benefited from the collaborative support she has received from her administration when dealing with some unexpected difficult behaviors from her kindergarten students. She explained,

Admin wise, I have felt nothing but support just due to the behaviors within my classroom especially starting out. I had a very well-known behavior within my class. So, from the get-go, they were ready to provide that support for me. And then as the year has come to a close, some more students have really shown some intense things. They've been very supportive of me and not questioned me as a teacher, but more so helped me figured out, "okay, what can we do for the betterment of the child and for the classroom?" So that's been super awesome.

A suggestion that Mia would have liked to have shared with her assistant principal was her desire to "have more pop-in observations." She felt that having additional administrative presence in her classroom may have been beneficial to her for dealing with the extreme and unexpected student behaviors. Mia shared,

She's like the kindergarten guru; she taught kindergarten for a long, long time. And so, I think especially because I was really kind of asking for support behavior-wise, and there's not a perfect answer to things. And there's so many things that have to take place before a behavior is necessarily changed or modified. But I kind of wanted her to come in more

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and just see me, see what I was doing wrong or right in a situation. But you can't always depend on a behavior to happen in the moment and then a response to happen.

Another area that Mia would like to address with her principal is effective discipline for severe behaviors. Mia felt it would have been beneficial to know what the expectations are for being able to discipline kindergartners when the behaviors create an unsafe space for the learning environment. She shared,

Management of behaviors has been pretty intense within my first year. That was kind of a shock at the beginning just to kind of work through that and still try to figure out the content area that I was teaching as well as managing behaviors. I've had three pretty major behaviors in my classroom related to students having extreme outbursts. One was extreme violence such as throwing chairs, threatening to stab others with scissors in hand. Another was emotional outbursts due to trauma; he would run from class and throw things across the room (computers, chairs, etc.) The third one was also emotional outbursts; he did not want to do work, so he destroyed my classroom (threw all of the books from the classroom library, threw chairs, screamed at the teacher). I just wasn't expecting to have three intense, much less one student with intense behavior that I was not expecting and didn't know how to deal with completely.

Julia felt somewhat supported by her Administration Team. She cited poor communication, lack of advocacy, and corporate public chastisement as the reasons. Julia said, There were times that the admin did not advocate for us, ask us opinions on things that impact us directly, and public-lectured us without trying to resolve the issues with the ones who were involved. When I needed support, a lot of time it was with the behavior, especially the first couple months. The harder parts of this year came from the lack of



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discipline that I was allowed to give. But also when I would pass off the responsibility to the higher powers, it felt as though nothing was done. And I think that kind of falls back on - I had an experience with the principal that really reinforced this - I felt like the lack of advocacy for me as a teacher, a professional, an adult, a part of the school family - I just felt like there was no advocacy. When something occurred, it was my fault every time. It was not apparent, but that was definitely the undertones. When I went to certain administrators, it was like, "well, have you done all that you can?" Well, maybe, but I also am new, so I don't know all that I can, which means nobody's provided me with the A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Whereas my veteran teachers across the hall, they have A through Z plus some other resources to use. So, there was a high expectation especially for us new teachers which I think is good, but then there was never any effort to model that - to tell us what that excellence should look like - how we should help these certain situations.

Julia elaborated on how the lack of administrative support for disciplining students' severe behaviors compromised the safety and security of her classroom for her and her students. She recounted,

The lowest point in my year was I had a student - and I cry every time I talk about this because it was so scary - I've never met anyone like him. He and another boy got into a fistfight, which isn't unusual. Then the student put the other boy in a choke hold, and he wasn't letting go. I grabbed the teacher next door, and she somehow got them apart.

When the boy being choked fell to the floor, his face was purple. It was so scary. And then both of those boys were back in my room the next day.

The following is another example that reinforces the lack of discipline support and demonstrates how Julia's personal safety was put in jeopardy:

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On another occasion, the same student threatened to kill me; he threatened to shoot me in the face. And this was heard by the whole class. I told the administration, and they conducted interviews with the other students; and they said, “Yeah, we all heard him,” like, “he said it.” Then the next day he was back in my room. When he finally did get expelled, I went to the dean of the students’ office, and I started crying. I told him, “I can’t tell you how relieved I am not to have him anymore, because I was scared. That was just terrifying.” I couldn’t discipline him because sometimes he would just snap. The intimidating part was nobody would really know when that was. And I think back. Would this kid have brought a gun to school? Probably if somebody had made him mad enough. From hearing how he talked with friends, he had access to weaponry and violence is just part of their everyday life. It’s heartbreaking, but it put me in a position that when I saw that particular student in the hallway, I didn’t want to teach him, because I was scared. And he should have a teacher that wants to teach him. But that was the only time I felt intimidated or scared -overwhelmed, I felt overwhelmed a lot.

Julia indicated that she felt let down by the administration’s inconsistency when executing the Tier 1 behavior plan where the standard of excellence was not upheld by the school leadership. She expressed,

I think that having a standard of excellence, top tier work is important. I also think that they failed me and everybody else in the school because they gave the standard never backed it up with examples, what it looks like. They gave us a behavior flow chart. And then more than once I’ve gotten in trouble for going through these steps like it is on this chart - making phone calls home and they’re like, “well, you didn’t do it right.” What should I have done? It’s laid out. But it was never taught how to get to that point. So, then

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we got in trouble for not meeting those expectations. And it's like, well, I mean, I'm fresh. I'm new. I don't know how to get to those steps. And even my veteran teacher friends were really frustrated because it's like, "how does this look? How do we implement?" You gave us this and then not the A, B, and C to get there. So that was difficult.

Lisa also felt somewhat supported by her Administration Team. She indicated that her struggles began immediately upon being hired. She said,

I was hired late in the summer, just 3 weeks before school started. I went into this position with limited time, not knowing what my classroom was like and what materials were available to me, and no access to the curriculum. I had less than a week before school started before these things were available to me and most of that time I had no access to the building. I feel like I was set up for failure at the start.

Her main concern was the lack of follow-through on the limited support she received. She stated,

I know that my admin was available for support, but I am someone that does not know what they need. One thing that I felt was a downfall is that I know that the administration knew that I was having difficulties in my room, and there was some conversation of, "Hey, we're going to come up with a plan for you." And then nothing ever happened. And I just kind of felt like I was a loner, that they weren't caring as much. Maybe the district could've supported better by just following through. If you know that you have a teacher that's having trouble, really taking more time to be in their classroom and seeing, "okay, how can we come up with a plan together?" Admin was aware of the problems in my classroom and never brought me any solutions and targeted support.

Lisa's sentiments about needing targeted classroom support extended to her instructional math coach as well. She continued,

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There was a point in the year where I know one of the instructional coaches in my school was saying, “Hey, you need to get more control of your classroom. You need to figure out your consequences.” And I’m like, “can I have some more guidance on that?” And I never got any more guidance in that area. I do remember one specific piece of support that helped all year which was to choose my top 3 expectations and stick to them. However, I had minimal support from the math/science instructional coach in my building. In the 3rd quarter I was put on a Performance Improvement Plan, and I was told by her that on a certain day she would be co-teaching in two of my three classes and then plan with me in the afternoon. The planning happened most of the time, but the co-teaching never happened, and I do not know why. I received lesson planning support. The main support I got was planning which problems from the textbook would be most beneficial for my students. I got some support with determining possible misconceptions and the best way to teach a certain concept. The lack of available staff to cover my class also kept me from being able to observe my experienced content partner.

Lisa demonstrated that lack of support from administrators also manifested in the position of the Dean of Students. She said,

I got a little enthusiastic in the spring semester when our Dean of Students was working on a new system to empower teachers and told me that he was working on a plan for me, but I never received any plan to help with my classroom management issues.

Lisa was looking to school leadership to provide her with support for ongoing classroom challenges.

Isabel is another participant who felt somewhat supported by her Administration Team. She expressed satisfaction with her school leadership’s availability to meet upon request. She

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stated, "I do appreciate admin's willingness to meet whenever I have requested a meeting. I also very much appreciate their open-door policy and allowing us to drop in on them when they're available." However, Isabel was not satisfied with the level of communication in general; she contributes this weakness to the team being short-staffed. She said,

I understand that admin is extremely busy and very understaffed. With all of the issues at our school, we could really use a much larger admin team, and an SRO officer. It must be very difficult for them to find the time to do all that is required of them, but the communication from admin has been minimal. There have been many times when emails will go unanswered altogether. Sometimes we will get a response, but many days later. There have only been a few times that we got a prompt response, but that has been the exception.

Isabel also indicated that she is disappointed by the minimal contact new teachers receive from the administration. She expressed,

It would be really nice to feel a bit more seen by admin. I feel like admin would have had no idea whatsoever if new teachers are drowning, unless they take the initiative to ask to meet with them, which many new teachers probably shy away from. It would be great if admin had the time to seek out the new teachers to check in on them. Also, if there were a way that admin could make more time to observe teachers more often, most of us would really appreciate more input and feedback, or at least appreciate feeling a bit more seen in that way. We put a lot of hard work and energy into teaching so when the only thing admin gets to see of us are a few minutes of our teaching (which always happen to be at the worst moments possible of course), it can give a very inaccurate picture of what we normally do in our classrooms on a regular basis.

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Isabel also expressed that her greatest disappointment was in relation to the seriousness of not having adequate administrative support for student behavior issues. She commented,

The area in which I, and many other teachers, have felt the least supported is with behavior. I do not think that the admin has taken their behavior seriously enough to cause any change. Students at this school have gotten away with so much because there are rarely consequences for poor choices. Unfortunately, here it's almost like a culture of a look the other way. Even when referrals have been written, many times you get no response whatsoever. Those things need to be dealt with immediately. If they go a few days or a week or however long, it's just extremely ineffective. Students will continue on with bad behavior if admin does not start to implement any real consequences. I feel like instead of taking a different approach and cracking down in certain areas, they've gotten more lax because they can't handle the sheer volume of discipline referrals. The level of disrespect that is tolerated is saddening to say the least. I honestly do not know whether or not I will be able to continue this teaching career long term, or possibly not more than just one more year, unless there are some major changes soon. I want to be one of those people who sticks it out. It's been extremely frustrating, discouraging, and hard. The amount of stress and the types of behaviors teachers are asked to not only put up with, but are asked to condone or ignore, are not healthy for any human being to endure. If admin does not start taking behavior more seriously, public schools will continue to lose more and more good teachers.

Kara is the lone participant who felt hardly supported by her Administration Team. Kara shared that she followed the classroom improvement recommendations given by her school leadership but felt their abandonment when the desired results were not produced. Kara noted,

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“Throughout the year, I listened to and implemented the strategies given by the principals and instructional coaches. When those strategies did not improve the classroom issues, I feel that the administration became less helpful.”

Kara continued to express her frustration with the lack of support provided by her administrators. In describing her feelings of abandonment, she said,

To support the learning environment, I think there needs to be a clear set of rules and consequences recognized by the school. Then those (particularly the consequences) need to be upheld 100%. I've spent the majority of the year without any real authority because it's clear that the administration will rarely deal out meaningful consequences. I think one of the biggest struggles was consequences for students for their actions. Almost every day, there are instances where students are interrupting the lesson and either I just didn't have it in my toolbox or really know what to do for them. Or whenever I tried doing something, it wasn't a good enough punishment because the discipline only stayed in the classroom. There wasn't always help from administration or from parents at home. I think starting off at the beginning to middle of the year, I did, to some degree, do some working with my instructional coach, but I feel like, when I started having issues in the classroom, it felt like they were putting it all on me and it was just my problem. And so, I feel like with my instructional coach as the year went on was kind of just brushing me off, and she focused more on the other teacher for lesson planning and stuff like that. While I feel like it was good for the first semester, it kind of just weaned off after that, so I felt a little bit in a sense abandoned.

All the participants expressed receiving some level of support from the Administration Team in their schools. Some participants indicated that their school leadership provided

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appropriate availability and communication to support them professionally and personally. Other participants indicated that they would have benefited from a stronger presence from their school leadership team and a more hands-on approach with ongoing support.

### New Teacher Coach

The New Teacher Coach provides the following job-embedded support for elementary and secondary levels to early career educators across the district: observation and feedback sessions, side-by-side coaching and modeling of classroom management strategies and effective student engagement practices, 1:1 planning and goal setting conferences, professionalism and wellness supports, district-wide procedural guidance, and coordination of district resources.

In Table 8, the participants in the study indicated the impact they felt the New Teacher Coach support had on their first year of teaching (See Table 6). Four participants felt extremely supported, one felt sufficiently supported, and three felt somewhat supported.

**Table 8**

#### Perception of New Teacher Coach Support

Participant	Perception of New Teacher Coach Support	Rationale
Bonnie	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Left notes and made short visits</li> <li>• Felt seen, not forgotten</li> <li>• Partnered in Professional Developments</li> </ul>
Farah	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent visits</li> </ul>
Hallie	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the moment assistance</li> <li>• Provided a listening ear</li> <li>• Willing to advocate for me to administration</li> </ul>
Isabel	Extremely Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended encouragement and prayer</li> <li>• Received input and feedback</li> <li>• Provided a listening ear</li> </ul>
Julia	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubled as my instructional coach</li> </ul>



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings were not very helpful</li> </ul>
Kara	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsure of the school's new teacher coach</li> </ul>
Lisa	Somewhat Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized available support, but did not request services</li> <li>• Promised support by administration was not received</li> <li>• Large case load impeded rendering of needed support</li> </ul>
Mia	Sufficiently Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received encouraging notes and treats</li> <li>• Felt free to request additional support as needed</li> </ul>

Note: Table 8 represents the participants' perceptions about the impact they feel the support they received from the New Teacher Coach had on their first year of teaching with a rationale included.

Bonnie indicated that she felt extremely supported by her New Teacher Coach who she viewed as "someone in the district being available." She said she found it helpful for the New Teacher Coach to always be "cheering you on. It was a good feeling."

Farah too felt extremely supported by the New Teacher Coach. She expressed how much she "always loved her visits!" She also appreciated receiving monthly encouragement cards and timely resources. She said,

Then you sent me a bunch of stuff to focus on and here's an inspirational quote. And it felt like it always got it when I needed it. And I was like, yeah, I do need to give myself grace and oh, I do need to do this. So, it was nice to get those little inserts of inspiration, help, and understanding.

Farah expressed that she would have liked to have had consistency of support from the New Teacher Coach, "particularly early on. I was drowning at the beginning but gained support throughout the year. I think that something like early, early, early help would've been very

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helpful. I remember talking with you about that when you came one time and you're like, "I was trying to get in here earlier." And I was like, "yeah, I've been drowning."

Hallie is another participant who felt extremely supported by the New Teacher Coach. She describes a few of their 1:1 interactions that she found beneficial.

On one day where I was behind in planning, the new teacher coach sat down with me and helped me prepare for my lesson that day. When I was crying, she listened. When I was concerned about a passive aggressive email, she offered to go in front of admin with me with her physically there to support me. I feel like she was there cheering me on when I couldn't even cheer for myself. I believe that God sent her down when in the strangest of moments, but not so strange, I would get a message of "oh, I just missed you" or a visit of "I've come in just to say hi." I would always wonder how did she know to just be that someone who was going to just swoop in and check on me.

Isabel felt extremely supported as well. She mentions how the amount of time and attention she received throughout the school year provided her with vital resources and encouragement to overcome times of being discouraged. Isabel reported,

I am amazed that she has been able to do all that she has with the sheer number of new teachers under her care. We very much appreciate her support and encouragement. With her busy schedule, she still somehow managed to observe me for more than an entire class period (which is much more time than our entire admin staff have observed me combined). Her input and feedback have been invaluable. She has given of her own personal time to offer listening ears and a "shoulder to cry on." Especially since she was a high school Spanish teacher herself, her expertise has been much appreciated. More than anything, being able to pray together with a New Teacher Coach has been the most

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encouraging and supportive thing that has helped me to keep going. The county could use about 20 more new teacher coaches like her!

Mia felt supported sufficiently by the New Teacher Coach through periodic check-in visits throughout the school year and the monthly encouragement cards. She indicated that she was “encouraged and motivated along the way with notes and other sources of encouragement.” Mia commented that she felt support was readily available as needed. She continued, “I know that if I have a question or need extra support in any area, I can always find help in the New Teacher Coach.” Mia also said she wished she had reached out to the New Teacher Coach more and made self-referral requests for immediate support to assist her with preparation, procedures, and prioritizing. She stated,

I feel like the resources have always been out there. I think just for me at least, I did not reach out as much as I probably could have or should have. I just felt like I didn't have the time to, especially at the beginning. Cause I was setting up my classroom and then realized, “Oh, I need to get this. I need to make this; I need to do this. I need to make my skills station. I need to do this.” So, I knew it was there. I didn't use it as much as I probably could have. So, the only thing I would say is maybe having somebody sitting down and just saying, “Okay, here's your resources that you're going to really need, especially in your grade level” or “if you're looking to do this in your classroom, or make your skill stations, or you need to look at this in the district.”

Mia mentioned that it would have been helpful to have had more direct contact with the New Teacher Coach at the very beginning of the school year. She explained,

I would say maybe at the beginning of the year, I struggled with setting procedures and following through on them enough to where it stuck with my kids. Because I think I hit it

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a few times, and then I know they got it for the first little bit, and then when it was not correct, I didn't correct it right away. And then that's when we all kind of fell apart a little bit. So, I think I could have used a little bit more support just at the beginning, because now at the end of the year as I'm looking back, I feel I could have really done a better job of hitting that at the beginning. And so, if I were to go back, I would maybe want someone to walk me through, maybe teach a procedure and then follow through maybe, and then be able to take over and do another procedure and so forth. I think that's definitely my struggle area.

The remaining participants, Julia, Lisa, and Kara felt somewhat supported by the New Teacher Coach. All three of these participants teach in the same middle school. Based on the responses they provided in the perception survey questionnaire about their thoughts about the supports they received from the New Teacher Coach, each teacher seems to have some confusion about who the New Teacher Coach is and what the responsibilities are for this coaching role. Kara said, "I am not entirely sure who the 'New Teacher Coach' is at my school." Adding to the role clarification notion, Julia responded, "The meetings were not super helpful, but it did help that she doubled as my instructional coach." However, when meeting with Julia for the 1:1 interview, she said she shared excitement with Lisa "that the New Teacher Coach was coming." Julia said,

Lisa lit up. And I feel the same way. Whenever I see you, it's always encouraging, it's always beneficial, whether it's at the Supply Hub store, wherever it is. I don't know exactly what your job entails. I know I've enjoyed all the interactions, and I feel like all of them have been very beneficial and great, but I don't know what you do here.

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Lastly, Lisa's comments indicate that she knew how to request new teacher coaching support; however, the confusion about the responsibilities of the various types of support from the multiple coaching positions also extended to the school administrators' understanding of the new teacher coaching role. She replied,

I know my New Teacher Coach would be there for me if I needed her, but I neglected to reach out for support. I know that's a personal downfall for me, that I graciously accept help when it's offered, but sometimes I just get overwhelmed by everything else going on that I don't seek out the help. Even though I realized later, "Oh, I should have been asking this person for help." My principal also requested that my New Teacher Coach take me and another teacher in my school in as her residents in the Spring semester, and that did not happen. I was told I would get help with SEL in my classroom to help curb unwanted classroom behavior, and I did not receive that support. I believe that she just had too many new teachers assigned to her to be able to give each of us the support that we need. However, I do regret not reaching out to her more this year.

All the participants expressed receiving some level of support from the New Teacher Coach. Some participants indicated they benefited from the direct new teacher coaching support provided in person, in writing, and in telecommunications. Other participants indicated that the availability of new teacher coaching supports through the self-referral process in place sufficiently met their needs. The remaining participants were less satisfied with the new teacher coaching support due to the need to clarify the new teacher coaching role and responsibilities to the participants and their administration.

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### **Summary : Research Question Two**

The HRSD utilizes a multi-tiered system of school-based new teacher support. Lead Mentors, Support Mentors, Administration Teams, and New Teacher Coaches are tasked with meeting the diverse needs of first-year teachers striving to navigate the unknown factors of a new career in education. Participants recognized that establishing a favorable rapport and the developing of positive relationships with their human elements of support increased their mental and physical capacities to persevere through the challenges of teaching. Mentorships, planning sessions, and monthly meetings created a space for communicating, networking, collaborating, and problem solving. However, when mutual trust and respect are compromised within the school community affiliations, the development of new teachers as successful practitioners is diminished, and new teacher retention is reduced.

### **Overlapping Findings**

The mission of the HRSD Induction program is to ensure that every new teacher feels connected, knowledgeable, and valued. Every instructional support initiative and human element of support is designed to achieve that purpose. The following comments reveal the motives of the study's participants for remaining in their current position with HRSD for the coming year, leaving the school district to teach elsewhere, or leaving the teaching profession altogether:

Bonnie has chosen to stay in her position as an elementary school Special Education teacher at her school. However, based on the difficulties teachers face, she understands any new teacher who chooses not to stay. She expressed,

If I didn't have the support, I don't think I'd be able to. But I love my school. It's hard. It is very hard. I will say I don't blame anyone for leaving the profession. Any person that is deciding to leave after their first or second year, it makes sense. It is not easy.

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Farah is also returning to her position as a CTE Health Sciences teacher at her school. She said she is motivated by her faith in God and the level of personal and professional growth she has experienced within the last year. She shared,

I've learned too much to leave. Also, it is still a calling for me. It was the path that God showed me was the right one. This is where I've been led to teach, and I feel that very strongly. And that's really what I held onto when it was really tough. So now it just feels like such a confirmation. This past year has been difficult, and it's had highs and lows. But in terms of work/life balance, it's been the best work/life balance I think I've ever had. Which is so surprising because people say that teachers have terrible work/life balance, but it's like I feel like I've been able to come in and be very intentional with it and say no when I needed to and say yes when I needed to and create that. So, for me, in my life and with my family, this is where I'm supposed to be location wise. It's where I'm supposed to be career wise. And until that changes, I'll be here pretty much.

Hallie plans to return to her position as an Art teacher at her school. She attributes her decision to stay to the positive end-of-the-year evaluation she earned as well as the professional growth she was able to recognize in herself. She expressed,

I appreciated the way the principal approached the summative review. She focused on attainable goals and what I could work on and do better. She didn't put it in a way where I was like, here's what you're doing wrong. So, I really appreciated that, and I did really grow. So, I'm going to say that's the key. If I can grow, I'm going to stay. If I have hope, I'm going to stay. I told my students this. I'm a human being, and as a human being, if I can grow and if I have hope, I'm going to stay.

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Isabel is the last of the participant who is staying in her position as a high school Spanish teacher at her school. She attributes her decision to stay to the valuable support she has received throughout the year. She states,

I feel like in general, HRSD has been very intentional to try to provide support for new teachers. Having the Whole Teacher=Well Teacher sessions, our quarterly PD days, the new teacher meetings, the one-on-one mentor, our school lead teacher, and the new teacher coach have been invaluable. To have that connection time, to have a team to work with - every piece has been helpful in a certain way. I don't know if I would be continuing on if it were not for all of these supports in place this past school year. It's all been very helpful.

Julia is not staying in her position as eighth grade ELA teacher in her school. She is getting married and relocating to another state. She has not decided if she will seek another teaching position or if she will pursue a different career altogether. Julia revealed that the inadequate support she and her colleagues received from the administration in her school this past year influenced her to consider leaving her school even if had decided to continue teaching. She said,

I think that even if I stayed in education, I would probably not return to this school. I don't appreciate how the administration decided to run its system this year. I think that all the teachers were treated very poorly. And I think that that is also apparent in the number of teachers that are leaving this school for this upcoming year. Even our administration, most of them are leaving. So, I probably wouldn't return for that reason. Cause I think support is key and that wasn't something that I feel like I received a ton of.



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Kara also indicated that she was “not likely at all” to return to her position of sixth grade mathematics teacher at her school. Based on the difficult student behaviors she encountered in her first year, she has opted to take a year off at least to reconsider a future career in education. She explained,

It was a rough year. I feel like I need a break and need to kind of reevaluate and maybe do some more research about other schools. I think I'm going to end up substitute teaching in a different district just to get a feel for what schools I think might be a better fit. Then that'll make a decision for what school I want to apply to next. Not this school year coming, but the year after. As for returning to teaching in the future, I just think it's 50/50. I know it's not all schools, because whenever we do PD and we go and watch a lesson, I'm like, these kids can behave. These kids do want to learn. They are engaged. I think it just depends on where I move, what the schools are like there. If it's like this school, I don't want any part of it.

Lisa is the third participant who will not be returning to her position as an eighth grade mathematics teacher in her school as her contract was not renewed. She has expressed interest in continuing to teach in another school within the district if possible. She will also consider teaching in a different school district. Lisa likes the prospect of being able to use the new knowledge she acquired this year and grow professionally as an educator. She announced,

It's official that I'm not returning to my current position next year. I was provisional this year. I was hired three weeks before school started, and I reapplied for my position and was not considered for it. I am considering teaching somewhere else. I've tried applying to jobs and trying to get a position somewhere else, and it just hasn't worked out. For me, that's a little bit of a sign that maybe this isn't for me. Maybe this isn't the right career

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path for me. But if given the opportunity, I'll stay and give it another shot. I'm willing to try again. Overall, I am looking for a school that the behaviors are easier to manage. I've learned a lot this year about classroom management, but that's been my biggest struggle in being able to grow as a teacher, which is more what I went into teaching for - I feel like I have knowledge to share. Having trouble sharing that knowledge has been really difficult. I'm quieter and not as tough. I've learned to toughen up a little bit more. But I'm just trying to find something that fits my personality a little better.

Mia is the final participant who is not returning to her position as Kindergarten at her school. She is getting married and relocating to another state. She is actively pursuing a teaching job in elementary education or in Spanish. Mia indicated that although she experienced unexpected challenging behaviors from her young students, she would return to her school if she were not moving away. She admitted,

Honestly, the main problem I've had this year is just dealing with the behaviors enough so that I can teach. That's been the main thing. I definitely could have grown a lot more content-wise this year if I would've been able to nip those behaviors in the bud at the beginning. It's the outside of the actual teaching part, all the other things that encompassed being a teacher, I kind of lacked it like behavior management, classroom management is a big struggle area for me. I know that's common within first year teachers. It's just something you're thrown into, and you just have to kind of figure out what's your style. Some things that'll work with one class won't work with another class. I think my main area of weakness is just not knowing logical consequences for students and what I can do as a teacher and what I should do as a teacher when a student is presenting me with some adverse behaviors. I did not expect some of the behaviors that I

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have received this year. Although, I love my school so much. If I were not moving, I would not be leaving this school. I love the school, so I'm very sad to be leaving.

**Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the participants' perceptions about the effectiveness of the instructional supports they received during their first year of teaching and how the impact of those supports determined their decision to continue teaching or leave education. The participants were able to access in person and virtual versions of professional learning from the robust Induction Program of HRSD designed to follow the progressive stages of the first-year teacher. The two principal themes that emerged were the instructional support initiatives (RQ1) and the human element of support (RQ2) that the participants perceived as effective and considered a factor in their decision to stay in teaching or leave. Participants were provided the choice to attend the variety of learning opportunities that promoted research-based practices for the development of and improvement in classroom management, authentic teacher wellness, curriculum and instruction, and general teacher operations. Participants also experienced a school-embedded team of support provided by mentors, coaches, and administrators on a regular basis through formal and informal classroom observations, self-referral to request support, or referral by school leadership to initiate a coaching cycle as needed. After a year of receiving support by choice, some participants felt connected, knowledgeable, and valued, while others felt partially connected, knowledgeable, and valued, if at all. The varying degrees of job satisfaction were linked to relationships forged within the school buildings among the new teachers, their mentors, coaches, and administrators. In general, the first-year teachers who felt part of a team also felt seen and heard; they expressed a greater sense of support and a desire to keep teaching at HRSD. The first-year teachers who felt

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isolated also felt chastised and belittled by their school leadership; they expressed a greater sense of defeat as a teacher and an inclination to stop teaching at HRSD. Four participants will return to their same position at their school next year; they feel adequately supported by their administrative team. Four participants will not return to their same position at their school next year; three are relocating and have expressed mixed emotions about whether they would have returned to their same school had they not been moving. The fourth participant not returning would have liked to continue at her same school had her contract been renewed. The findings of this study have highlighted areas to reinforce while simultaneously exposing areas to refine within the support plan in general as a means to improve the retention rate for new teachers in LC3 of HRSD.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Chapter five is a discussion of the most significant research findings that emerged from the study data. The aim of this final chapter is to accentuate key factors of necessary support that impact new teacher retention as connected to teacher leadership and outline future research.

#### **Implications for new teacher retention**

Evaluating instructional support for new teachers in Learning Community 3 (LC3) of Honey Roch School District (HSRD) provides several implications for new teacher retention. The first finding is that new teachers need administrative support when dealing with excessive disruptive behaviors. According to Tickle et al. (2011), administrative support was a predictor of job satisfaction as well as a new teacher's intent to continue in the teaching field. The findings from this study suggest that new teachers who perceived receiving adequate administrative support chose to stay in education while those who perceived receiving limited administrative support chose to leave. As evidenced by the participants' narratives shared in chapter four, the lack of administrative support resulted in the escalation of extreme out-of-control behaviors and intensified the risk of harm to both teachers and students. However, participants were willing to remain at their school after experiencing unsafe behaviors when their administrators responded expeditiously and in a supportive manner with consistent discipline measures.

When school administrators implement their Tier 1 behavior plan with fidelity, new teachers feel safe, which meets their need for safety and security represented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) and connects to the following school organization characteristics that support new teacher retention: teacher workload, collaboration, teacher leadership, professional learning, induction, and mentoring (Nguyen et al., 2019). The findings in

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the study support that in the schools where the Tier 1 behavior plan is explained, modeled, and followed by the school leadership, new teachers are better able to endure challenging classroom behaviors and are willing to attend training sessions designed to equip them with effective behavior management techniques in order to establish and maintain classroom control. The training sessions on classroom management and de-escalation of difficult behaviors do not have to be led by the top administrators of the school. To support the growth of teacher leadership, experienced teachers can share their valuable knowledge, expertise, and insights with new teachers by serving as mentors, instructional leaders, and on-site resources (Hunzicker, 2017). This opportunity to connect with and learn from a peer can positively impact new teacher retention.

Another finding is that the significance of the relationship between administration and their new teachers is vital to new teacher retention. When new teachers have established trust with their administration, effective communication occurs through open dialogue (Halawah, 2005). This finding suggests that work environments, where new teachers feel secure enough in their relationships with administrators to communicate their needs and challenges, result in higher job satisfaction and make teacher retention more probable. Despite the small sample size of this study, research supports the essential role the administration plays in creating a work environment and culture that will retain new teachers (Jacob et al., 2012).

According to Uribe-Zarain et al. (2019), school administrators, who effectively lead first-year teachers, are leaders who communicate clearly, openly, consistently, and who follow through. Engaging in professional development regarding the phases of a first-year teacher (Moir, 1990) in conjunction with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) theory are two areas of research that may prove beneficial to administrators. According to Moir (1999), the

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novice teacher experiences the following sequence of attitudes throughout the first year from anticipation to survival to disillusionment to rejuvenation to reflection then back to anticipation (Figure 3). The effectiveness of this research is evident by its incorporation into the intentional design of the Induction Program currently implemented in the HRSD.

### Figure 3

Phases of the first-year teacher



Note: Figure 3 is a visual representation of the sequence of attitudes the first-year teacher may experience (Moir, 1990).

When administrators are able to connect their interactions and feedback with new teachers through the lenses of Moir's (1990) phases of the first-year teacher along with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007), new teachers feel valued, seen, and heard. This finding meets their physiological needs along with safety and security, belonging, and self-esteem as represented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) and connects to the following school organization characteristics that support new teacher retention: work environment, teacher workload, collaboration, teacher leadership, and mentoring (Nguyen et al., 2019). This approach

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in turn establishes a sense of trust and mutual respect that are likely to influence a new teacher's decision to keep teaching.

A third finding signifies that attending professional development specific to the needs of new teachers can enhance new teacher retention. Professional development (PD) opportunities provide new teachers with the chance to cultivate their teaching skills, acquire new knowledge, and gain confidence in their abilities (Wong, 2002). The finding from the study indicates that new teachers are more willing to engage in PD that is tailored to their needs and connected to their grade band or content area. However, when the PD is structured in the format of an interdisciplinary large group, the novice teachers considered the learning sessions less engaging, the content less meaningful, and therefore their attendance in future learning sessions unlikely.

New teachers are more likely to attend ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and support customized to their preferred learning styles where they feel valued, supported, and encouraged to grow. When new teachers receive relevant and high-quality PD, they are better equipped with the tools and strategies needed to navigate the challenges of being early career educators. Aguilar and Cohen (2022) state that when teachers use their learning to transform their practice, the PD is considered successful. The increase in skill development and in confidence as a teacher can contribute to greater job satisfaction and to a sense of competence which, in turn, align with the self-esteem and self-actualization needs in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) and connects to the following school organization characteristics that support new teacher retention: teacher workload, work environment, collaboration, teacher leadership, professional development, induction, and mentoring (Nguyen et al., 2019). As new teachers continue to engage in professional learning, Keedy et al. (2001) says that the new teachers' acquired knowledge and skills can empower them to take on leadership roles eventually



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within their schools or school district, where they can share their expertise, secure their own continuous improvement, and support the professional growth with their colleagues. New teachers who experience a sense of purpose and direction are more likely to commit to the teaching profession.

The final finding from this study is that new teachers value having access to a quality support mentor for their first year. Positive relationships with other staff members foster the development of a collaborative work environment where teachers freely share materials, ideas, and good teaching practices (Easton, 2011). Having a quality mentor increases a new teacher's chances to grow, mature, and thrive in the teaching profession while reducing their frustration and feelings of isolation (Mulvey & Cooper, 2009). When new teachers receive positive feedback and encouragement from their mentors on a regular basis, their morale improves, and the significance of the mentorship increases in value. However, if a mentor relationship is lacking in sustainability, the new teacher may not wait around indefinitely.

New teachers self-select a mentor within their schools when a relationship with their assigned mentor does not successfully pan out. As demonstrated by some of the participants in the study, the first-year teacher may seek out a colleague as mentor for a variety of reasons such as a coworker in close proximity to their classroom, within the same content area or department, share common interests or common planning, or have an established rapport for no apparent reason. By replacing the unhealthy mentoring relationship with a prosperous one, new teachers recognize the importance of developing collegial relationships that create a sense of connectedness and belonging. The new mentoring relationship meets the new teacher's needs for belonging and self-esteem as represented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2007) and connects to the following school organization characteristics that support new teacher retention:

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teacher workload, collaboration, teacher leadership, professional learning, induction, and mentoring (Nguyen et al., 2019). Finding a mentor for oneself demonstrates the teacher leadership quality of self-advocacy. According to Gul et al. (2019), “mentoring is a vital component of teacher leader development, which is a continual process of capacity building requiring time and patience.” Teacher leaders who may not be an identified support mentor can support new teachers within and beyond the classroom by establishing year-long mentoring and coaching relationships that require time for conversing, planning, problem solving, and learning together. Having a reliable support network can positively impact new teacher retention.

The results of this study confirm the findings of the literature review that when new teacher’s needs are met in the areas of school organization characteristics, job satisfaction is increased and new teacher retention is improved. The findings from the study indicated that new teachers who regularly accessed and applied the learning from the instructional support initiatives found the support to be effective and to have a favorable effect on their decision to stay in teaching. The findings indicated that established relationships of trust, respect, and care were instrumental in new teachers being willing to seek out professional development for continuous growth even in challenging work conditions because they felt valued and therefore willing to remain in the classroom. The findings from the study indicated that life events outside of the teaching profession impacted some first-year teachers’ decisions to leave teaching regardless of their perception of the effectiveness of the new teacher support received.

### **Recommendations**

The following section contains practical recommendations for the HRSD leadership to consider for the improvement of the Induction Program that supports new teachers with the aim of increasing first-year teacher retention. The participants in the study identified instructional

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support initiatives and the human element supports that they considered to be most effective to their overall development as a first-year teacher. The participants also shared their perceived drawbacks of why they determined some supports to be less effective. The recommendations, taken from the rationales the participants provided in the focus group session during data collection, highlight how to enhance or expand the Induction Program as a whole to better uphold the program's mission of ensuring that all new teachers feel connected, knowledgeable, and valued as employees of HRSD.

Increasing attendance at the various professional development opportunities is an important factor to consider. The number of participants in attendance at most PD sessions is favorable; however, attendance is optional. Even with systems in place to expedite requesting a substitute for day-embedded sessions, some new teachers choose to stay at school with their students. Almost every PD option is stipend eligible. A new teacher can earn \$1,320.00 for attending all of the stipend-eligible PDs for the year. These monetary incentives are advertised well, but they do not seem to entice some new teachers to attend more professional learning. The appeal of the stipend may be leveraged more if new teachers were paid out in a lump sum at the end of each semester instead of in small increments that may not register in their paycheck in general. The accrual of the small amounts can be verified by providing the new teacher access to a spreadsheet that keeps an account of the total the new teacher can expect to receive at the semester's end, making the amount more meaningful.

For the weeklong New Teacher Academy (NTA) held in the summer, some sessions like instructional technology and classroom management could be offered with an extended time option to meet the needs of attendees who feel the 50-minute time allotment per session is not enough. To increase the waning attendance on day five, add some topics that have not yet been

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included like classroom set up labs, how to speak HRSD – deciphering acronyms, an online escape room competition featuring facts about the school district, and lunch with the leadership team from each learning community. Drawings for significant door prizes provided by HRSD community donors may also incentivize the attendees who must be present to receive the reward.

For the Quarterly New Teacher Academy (QNTA) sessions, attendance can be increased by asking the school administration, Lead Mentors, and Support Mentors to prioritize QNTA over all other site-based trainings. In addition, mentors can assist new teachers with preparing for an absence on training days by ensuring they have submitted a request for a substitute teacher as well as create sub plans together. Finally, mentors can intentionally follow up with their mentees to discuss the benefits of the PD and converse about the major takeaways from the new teachers' perspectives. For accountability of the mentoring relationship, mentors should keep a log of their meetings with mentees that can also serve as an artifact for both teachers' summative evaluation. To ensure that mentoring relationships are established early in the school and maintained regularly, new teachers can answer a question on the exit survey at QNTA about their perception of the mentoring supports they are receiving. The results can inform the Induction Program team about any necessary interventions to improve the support.

For the New Teacher Academy Dinner and PD sessions, participation can be increased by scheduling the biannual socials at centrally located schools within the district and change the start time to 30 minutes later to accommodate the new teachers and their mentors coming from a late dismissal school. Another suggestion is to offer a virtual option for the convenience of those whose schedule may not be able to accommodate in person participation. An attendance competition by school or learning community may also increase attendance with a reward as an incentive.

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For New Teacher Network (NTN) monthly meetings, attendance can be improved by holding the Lead Mentors accountable for the creation and facilitation of the meetings. The content of the meeting should be relevant to the current phase that the first-year teacher is in and based on the needs identified on the exit slip from the previous month's meeting. The Induction team can support the NTN sessions by offering to present timely topics, monitor the meeting content designed by the Lead Mentors, confirm the meeting schedule by school, and check the meeting attendance logs each month to ensure that mentors and mentees are participating together. In addition, school administrators can be informed or reminded of the program's practices so they can lend their support for proper program implementation. Currently, there is no consequence when Lead Mentors and Support Mentors do not attend the required yearly training. To increase accountability and to accommodate potential schedule conflicts, an online training option with a summary quiz at the end can be made available and checked off by the Induction Program team and/or a school administrator for compliance.

All support personnel can influence participation in the various support opportunities like Whole Teacher=Well Teacher (WT=WT), Quarterly New Teacher Academy (QNTA), and Things to Know Thursday (TTKT) by mentioning them as often as possible when new teachers are their audience. This intentional repetition of new teacher support availability will serve as a reminder to new teachers to prioritize time for them in their schedule. Support personnel should emphasize to new teachers how consistent participation provides the maximum benefit from the various forms of PD and keeps new teachers knowledgeable of school district information and updates in a timely manner.

Classroom Set up Labs (CSL) should be scheduled in July instead of June to increase attendance. To make CSL accessible to more new teachers, sessions can be added to NTA and an

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online module can be created and offered virtually as often as needed. These additional offerings will better accommodate the new hires later in the summer. In addition, CSL can be made available to second-year teachers who are more keenly aware of their needs after finishing their first year of teaching.

For COMP (Classroom Organization and Management Program) training to provide maximum benefit, basic components like classroom management strategies and classroom set up inventories can be introduced to all new teachers in the first quarter of QNTA. This introduction to COMP at this early stage of the school year can serve as precursor to the complete training program and identify participation interest from first-year teachers. Training sessions can be scheduled earlier in the year so that novice teachers can implement the techniques immediately upon completion. All new teacher support personnel should also be COMP trained so they can recognize the application of the program's components and provide accountability and feedback for its usage when conducting formal or informal observations for new teachers.

Since participants indicated that they struggle with the insurmountable number of emails they receive daily, it is difficult to know how many are accessing the Things to Know Thursday (TTKT) newsletter. To assess the value of this resource, new teachers can be surveyed to determine their interest in continuing this mode of communication for school district information and updates, upcoming PD offerings, as well as relevant topics and tips for the first-year teacher. In addition, a request can be made to the Information Technology (IT) department to inquire about how to include a way to verify that the TTKT email was opened.

For the administration leadership team, school-based orientation programs should provide a comprehensive training session on their schools' Tier 1 behavior plan with clear instructions on the expectations of its implementation. Interactive activities like role-playing and problem-

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solving strategies can be used to assist all teachers with understanding how discipline is handled effectively and what the consequences are for certain behaviors. Teachers should be assured that they will be supported with discipline issues and that the training will be on-going throughout the school year. Another recommendation is for school administrators to set a school-wide goal for new teacher retention each year that outlines an action plan for each stakeholder's involvement to achieve the goal along with an accountability element so that the goal is attempted in earnest. In addition, administrators and coaches should attend training on the phases of the first-year teacher. Knowing these various stages would assist school leaders with understanding the roller coaster of emotions the first-year teacher experiences. Recognizing where in the phase cycle the new teachers may be when support is being offered improves the likelihood that their specific needs may be met.

The New Teacher Coach can better serve first-year teachers by communicating more frequently with all stakeholders. Having an assigned point person on the administrative team for relaying information during building visits will provide a connection with someone in leadership, especially when the principal is not available. Regular communication with the principals of each school can be increased through email as well as intentional conversations at meetings, drop-in visits, and extra-curricular school functions. When meeting new teachers at NHO, the New Teacher Coach will be more intentional about communicating with new teachers within the LC3, providing a business card with contact information and making a tentative date to meet at school site before the start of the school year as feasible. The New Teacher Coach will attend the CSL and the Supply Hub, opportunities earmarked for new teachers, to make additional connections with novice teachers in the learning community. To combat the identity and role confusion with other instructional coaches that serve the school, a one-page flyer will be distributed that

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delineates the responsibilities of each coaching position and how each supports the new teachers. In addition, the New Teacher Coach will create and hand deliver a “Get to Know Your New Teacher Coach” infographic as another form of being introduced to new teachers for easy access to professional and personal information. Communication with first-year teachers will encompass multiple modalities beyond email. To meet the immediate needs of new teachers, more 1:1 meetings will be scheduled with them instead of doing periodic check-ins, which will allow both parties to take advantage of the visit.

### **Areas for further research**

Additional studies on new teacher retention are needed in the HRSD. Internal data to date from the school district indicate that teacher retention for LC3 this past school year is at 90% which is an increase of six percentage points over the previous school year. While this information can be considered an impressive statistic, the results may be deceiving as many new teachers transferred to other teaching positions across the district and are counted as retained even if they are to no longer remain in LC3. The data representing a true depiction of the number of vacant positions in LC3 have yet to be released. However, based on the number of newly hired teachers in years zero to three who have attended New Hire Orientation since May, the new teacher caseload for the New Teacher Coach serving LC3 is likely to rival this past year’s numbers. Therefore, future work in new teacher retention in the HRSD is merited.

Future research on new teacher retention in LC3 entails repeating this case study. Further examination in the same learning community would authenticate the transferability and applicability of the current findings. Given the limited number of participants and the lack of diversity within the sample population, another study with more participants whose demographics more accurately represent the first-year teacher population of LC3 is warranted.



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The second study should be conducted sooner in the school year than in May; the month of April is recommended as the earlier completion gives the first-year teachers an opportunity to experience almost a full academic year of support on which to report. Waiting until the last month of the school year for the original study proved to be a hectic time for both the researcher and the participants. Scheduling data collection at that time was met with a great sense of urgency with the school year coming to a close. The number of available days was limited and at times encumbered with unexpected end-of-the-year responsibilities for both the researcher and the participants. The repetition of this case study in LC3 would also provide additional information about new teachers in Title I schools with a focus on adequate teacher preparation from educational institutions or from alternative teacher certification programs.

The findings from this study indicate that the study should also be replicated in the other four learning communities of HRSD. This replication can be done simultaneously or by selecting one learning community at a time as is feasible for the school district leadership. Conducting the study using a different sample size and a different context can help determine if the results from the original case study hold true in other settings with varying conditions. Replication can also address any concerns with the methodology. Firstly, simultaneously collecting, coding, and analyzing the data under a time constraint was a challenge. Secondly, how to overcome the limitations of sample size and participant diversity of the present study is to be considered. The consistency of results from the replicated studies compared with the results from the LC3 study will provide support for the original findings and broaden the body of literature about new teacher retention as well as inform future new teacher retention practices within and beyond the HRSD.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this dissertation study was to identify the instructional support initiatives that novice teachers perceived as effective techniques and strategies for their professional growth as first-year teachers while exploring the impact the support had on their decision to remain in teaching or leave the profession. By examining the multiple levels and variations of support provided through a comprehensive Induction Program, participants who experience positive relationships and open communication with their school administration and colleagues are likely to remain in the classroom. First-year teachers who receive adequate preparation and on-going support from their administration with the school discipline plan that addresses perpetual disruptive behaviors are prone to continue teaching. In recognition of the value of a mentoring relationship, novice teachers will self-select a colleague as a suitable replacement for the non-supportive assigned mentor. Additionally, new teachers are more likely to attend professional learning opportunities that are convenient, relevant to their content area and grade level, and tailored to meet their growth and development needs. The new teachers in this study indicated that they were well-informed about the availability of the various options of instructional support provided by the HRSD even when they did not participate. The participants who accessed more support initiatives and felt supported sufficiently by their school leadership were the new teachers who chose to stay in teaching. While there are many reasons why beginning teachers choose to leave the education profession after their first year of teaching, it is the aim of the HRSD that lack of new teacher support not be one of them. As the researcher of this project and the New Teacher Coach in LC3, I am committed to continuing research on new teacher retention to best serve the new teachers, not only in my learning community but across my school district.

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By doing so, I hope to continue to inform new teacher retention efforts plaguing our national education system.

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## Appendix A

### Open Letter from Former HRSD Teacher

#### Why I Am Leaving Teaching

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

An Open Letter from a Honey Rock School District (pseudonym) seventh grade math teacher who has decided to stop teaching after five years. The letter was sent to the superintendent and the members of the School Board:

To Whom It May Concern,

After five years of teaching in Honey Rock School District (pseudonym), I have decided not to return to the classroom next year.

Teaching was a lifelong dream of mine, so I am not exaggerating when I say that this decision has left me completely heartbroken. It is no secret that teachers across the country are quitting in droves. We are concerned and completely overwhelmed by how the public education system seems to be deteriorating at a rapid pace. We feel helpless, at the mercy of policymakers who have no idea what is actually happening in our classrooms. What frustrates me the most is that many of our concerns have pretty simple solutions. I ask that you please read through this letter and take my worries and suggestions to heart. Our education system is broken and you have a responsibility to try and make it better.

I have tried to keep my explanations as general as possible but note that I have only taught 7th grade math for the entirety of my career. So, everything that I say is going to inevitably be through that lens.

#### Accountability for Behavior

One of my top concerns is a lack of accountability when it comes to student behavior. I know that there are always going to be behavior problems when you are working with kids. However, as adults, it is our responsibility to respond with appropriate disciplinary action. Over the past two years I have noticed an increase in behavior problems that I believe is directly correlated to a decrease in disciplinary follow through.

Here are several examples to illustrate my point:

1. I had a student steal a piece of my property. It was caught on video tape, yet our Dean of Students said it was “questionable” and since the student denied it, he claimed there was nothing he could do.
2. I also had a student take the name plate off of the wall outside my door and break it. This, too, was caught on camera, but the student was not disciplined.
3. The same student from the previous incident brought an airsoft gun to school. It looked like a pistol and, since I am not a gun expert, I would have assumed it was a real gun had he pulled it out in class. Luckily, because another student reported it, our administration was able to

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apprehend the gun before anything happened. Since an airsoft gun is a weapon that can cause real physical harm, I assumed this offense would be 365 days of suspension. This was not the case. From my understanding, employees at the central office level told my school's administration that the maximum suspension was 10 days because it was not an actual weapon and could not actually harm someone. Anyone who has experience with airsoft guns will tell you that is just not true. That student returned to my classroom and I would be lying if I said I did not get nervous every time they reached into their backpack.

4. Another student of mine assaulted a teacher and vandalized that teacher's property. This was after they had already sexually harassed their classmates, threatened to stab another teacher, fought multiple peers, etc. Again, I felt like this behavior warranted a 365-day suspension. Instead, this student was sent to spend some time at Hickory Valley Alternative School (pseudonym), and we created yet another behavior plan. Recently, however, I found out that their mom had quickly removed them from alternative school because she felt that it was too strict for her child. She kept her student at home for the duration of their suspension. That student returned to school and had to be escorted from class to class because they were a threat to others. After being back at school for only two days, the student was already threatening other students and was caught trying to skip class multiple times. So much of my time and energy was taken away from my other students because I have had to manage this child.

These are just some of the behavior incidents that I have personally experienced. There are countless more just like them and I know plenty of other teachers who have experienced far worse. It is important to note that when major discipline problems like these are not handled appropriately, consequences for smaller infractions like cell phone usage in class, dress code issues, vandalism, etc. become nearly nonexistent. My school has discipline policies regarding all of those things. Yet, when teachers try to enforce the rules, higher-ups refuse to follow through. There have been multiple times this year where administration has made sweeping threats such as "if you vandalize the school we will press charges", "If you disrespect a teacher during the last two weeks of school, we will suspend you", or "if you are out of dress code, you will be sent to ISS." Very rarely are these threats actually enforced. More often than not, a teacher will send a student to the office for breaking one of these rules and then the student will come right back to class with only a simple warning as their punishment. Our students are not dumb. When they realize that their teachers have no authority over them, they feel entitled to do anything.

I have also sat in many meetings where I was asked to tell "my side of the story" in front of misbehaving students and their parents. To put me on the same level as a child and suggest that there is a "my side of the story" that differs from the truth is beyond patronizing. Teachers' disciplinary authority has been consistently diminished over the past few years and, as a result, student behavior problems have drastically increased. Every teacher I know is beyond frustrated at the lack of clear consequences for seemingly obvious disciplinary actions. I am sick of coming home every day with some sort of story that shocks my friends and family. I am sick of simply shaking my head and rolling my eyes when the outrageous is deemed acceptable by our leaders. Until you are spending day in and day out in a classroom, you have no idea the danger and chaos that comes from having no consistent behavior policies.

The solution to this problem is simple. Follow through with consequences. Expel students for



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violent crimes that put their classmates' and teachers' lives in danger. Allow schools to handle their discipline problems as they see fit. When school administrations' hands are tied because central office staff members reprimand them for (or even forbid them from) suspensions, expulsions, etc. our schools' learning environments are no longer safe or stable. Believe teachers and respect their authority to discipline appropriately. When teachers or schools are not disciplining appropriately, handle it on a case-by-case basis. I am someone who always advocates for students and is often quick to forgive, but I know that there must still be clear consequences for poor (and even dangerous) behavior. How is it fair for teachers and children to sit in classrooms with students who are repeatedly violent and disrespectful? What are we teaching all of the students who watch their classmates act wildly inappropriately and then return to class with no consequence at all? Why do we have rules and policies if nobody lets us follow them?

### **Accountability for School Work**

I know that there are a lot of different educational philosophies when it comes to things like grades, late work, test corrections, etc. However, I also know that nearly every teacher out there believes that students should be held accountable to some sort of standard. During COVID, the district released some policies regarding late work and overall student grades. These policies have stuck around long past the early days of COVID and essentially require teachers to pass students regardless of their actual content knowledge. These policies completely undermine our efforts to instill a sense of accountability in our students. For example, I am not allowed to give grades lower than 59% even if a student did not turn in the assignment. I have to raise every student's quarterly averages to at least 65%, even if they did not complete any work. I have to allow all students to correct all of their assignments and turn them in whenever they want. This year we were told that we cannot retain students, even those students who have 11% averages in classes or have been absent 75% of the school year. While I do believe that some of these policies make sense in certain extreme scenarios, those situations are few and far between.

When every single student is promoted to the next grade, regardless of their abilities, we are setting them up for future failure. Even if it does not make a difference for the actual student being retained, it certainly makes a difference for the hundreds of students watching. How are we supposed to hold students accountable to actually learn the material? Many students are not intrinsically motivated. They need to know that there will be consequences for poor academic performance. If it were not for the threat of having to repeat a grade, a large portion of our student body would no longer feel the need to attend school or learn. I have spent all year telling my students and their guardians that the district policy requires them to pass both math and English in order to advance to the next grade. For students who fail and do not attend summer school, this new zero-retention policy has made me a liar. We want students to perform exceptionally well on rigorous standardized tests, yet we do not require them to meet simple deadlines or grade requirements? It does not make any sense.

### **Diminished Respect for Teachers**

Coming into this job, I assumed that I would get to create my own engaging, standards-based lessons because lesson planning is one of the primary responsibilities of a teacher. I was excited to bring my passion and love of learning into my classroom. My first few years of teaching, I was trusted to do just that; I had the opportunity to create a lot of my own lessons. There was still

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a district wide curriculum, but I had the freedom to modify the material and supplement it with outside resources as I saw fit. My fellow teachers and I had so much fun finding new ways to engage our students and I loved exercising my own creativity when building lessons. My school administration gave us the space to play to our strengths and do what was best for our students.

However, over the past couple of years it has become increasingly clear that this school district does not trust their teachers to 1) understand state standards, 2) find rigorous materials, or 3) discern what our own students need in order to succeed. Our freedom has been completely stripped away and our curriculum has become more and more restrictive. It is to the point where it feels like we are supposed to be robotically following a script. We are handed curriculum guides and told that we need to follow them to a T. All of our lesson materials must be county-approved. All assessments must come from the same source. Any type of creativity on the teachers' end is strongly discouraged. Every teacher has different gifts and passions, but there is no room for individuality under current district guidelines. It is no secret that the kids hate it as well. Many of these county-approved lessons are boring, too advanced, and simply not relevant to our students' interests and lived experiences. In their words, not mine, it feels like we are "sucking the joy out of learning."

To further illustrate my point, let me share these personal anecdotes:

This fall and winter, I participated in two different full day planning sessions with my content teaching partner. While this sounds like a wonderful idea in theory, we were essentially babysat by the district math lead. These meetings were intensely stressful and counterproductive for a number of reasons.

1. We were forced to go through Benchmark data that my partner and I had already thoroughly examined prior to the meeting. Even though I told the district math lead that we had already made a remediation plan based on the data, she made us walk through the data again with her. We spent roughly 1.5 hours of our "planning day" doing something that we had already done.
2. During that same meeting, we were explicitly told that we were not allowed to use anything other than grade-level material. Thirty minutes later, the district lead had us read an article that was all about utilizing resources from previous grade-levels in order to better differentiate grade-level content for our struggling learners. I pointed out the blatant hypocrisy there and the district lead refused to acknowledge how inconsistent their messaging was. It is incredibly frustrating to be told that I need to be doing something, only to turn around a little while later and say that I need to be doing the complete opposite. Unfortunately, that is pretty par for the course when it comes to district-led PD.
3. At one point, my teaching partner said that they were trying not to work outside of contract hours unless they were being paid. Our district lead laughed and said "Well you're a teacher. You have to." That mindset and attitude is demeaning and troubling because it implies that we do not deserve to be compensated for our work. I will speak more on that later.
4. At another meeting, we tried to plan a week's worth of lessons. The subject of the lessons was one that I was excited about; I had tons of ideas and materials from previous years of teaching the same topic. Let it be known that I was the only person in this meeting who had ever taught this standard before. Every idea that I suggested was completely ignored. When I brought up

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solution strategies that my previous students used, I was told “No, I really think students will solve it this other way.” Everything I contributed to the conversation was dismissed if it did not match up exactly with the textbook. My four years of experience teaching this exact same lesson (and doing it successfully, might I add) were not valued or respected.

5. When I brought up the fact that teachers should be trusted to know their students’ needs and plan accordingly, the district lead told me that they place their trust in “the experts” who wrote our curriculum. I think it is foolish to believe that there is one single curriculum out there that will magically meet all of our teachers’ and students’ needs. Students across the country manage to learn the exact same concepts from tons of different resources; we as educators should be trusted to find suitable resources. The district lead continued to argue with me until eventually they admitted that we have to use this curriculum because the school district paid a lot of money for it. Money was the priority.

If you think I am being too harsh or that I am disproportionately outraged with the limitations of our curriculum, know that many teachers feel the exact same way that I do. They are sick of being put into boxes, they are sick of being treated like they are incompetent, and they are sick of people acting like every student and teacher is the same. We are trained professionals. We deserve to have the freedom to teach the way that our students learn best, with materials that we feel passionately about. We deserve the trust to plan lessons that are rigorous, engaging, and standards-based without someone micro-managing our every decision.

Now you might be thinking, What if teachers do not find rigorous enough materials? or What if teachers are not using their planning time wisely? To that I say it is our supervisors job to know what their staff is up to and to intervene when teachers are not performing up to standard. Notice that student performance data is taking a drastic turn for the worse? Step in and work with the teacher to identify the problem. Notice that a teacher’s lessons are not in alignment with state standards? Let the teacher know, help them identify quality lesson materials, and then randomly audit their lessons from time to time to ensure they are meeting expectations. Rather than punish all teachers for just a few teachers’ incompetency, recognize teachers who are doing a stellar job and remove those who are not. Assume that all teachers are operating with good intentions and that they are putting a great deal of thought into their lesson plans. When they are not doing those things, then you can handle these situations on a person-to-person basis. If teachers can diligently keep up with the strengths and weaknesses of their 100+ students, then school administration and central office staff can certainly do the same with us.

### **Lack of Compensation**

I cannot talk about why teachers are leaving without talking about compensation. It is no secret that teachers are not fairly compensated compared to other fields. We could go into a long list of reasons why this is the case: teaching is a female dominated field and females are typically paid less than men, teachers are not allowed to negotiate their salaries, teaching is a service-oriented profession, etc. I feel like this is all common knowledge and yet nobody is doing anything to fix it. We are screaming into the void, begging for help, and nobody is responding.

Let me share some specific issues that I feel could be easily improved.

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First of all, I would like to note that our salary scale does not account for differences in job expectations. Go to any school and you will see that there are different expectations for tested v. non-tested subject areas. Look even more closely and you will see that math and ELA teachers have an even heavier workload compared to other subjects. Whether it is intentional or not, tested subjects are monitored more closely. We have to attend more professional development sessions, we have more pressure from administration and the district, we have stricter pacing and curriculum requirements, the list goes on and on.

Additionally, at my school, ELA and math teachers are the only ones to lead RTI classes. Teachers in other subject areas just have to monitor students while they complete online assignments for RTI. ELA and math teachers are expected to prepare direct instruction lessons for their RTI groups. Those teachers are not, however, given more planning time or money to compensate for the extra work.

Additionally, it is well known that teachers work well outside of their contract hours. In order to properly accommodate all of my students' diverse needs, grade in a timely fashion, and adjust my lessons according to data, I have to work well outside school hours. I typically have to work 1-3 additional hours outside of my contracted time each day. Most of the teachers that I know have to do the same. It is unavoidable. There are years where I have done the math and, when I factor in those additional hours, my pay ends up being between \$10 and \$15 per hour. That is simply not okay.

Our salary also does not reflect the emotional toll that this job takes on us. So many teachers that I know, including myself, have had to take anxiety meds and go to therapy because of this job. Some teachers that I know have even been hospitalized. It has reached a point where the stress that comes with this job also comes with a financial burden as we try to care for ourselves.

I do have some suggestions for how people can begin to fix this problem. First of all, teachers should have the opportunity to negotiate their salary. These negotiations should not be based solely on testing data, because that would cause a slew of problems, but rather on a teacher's performance as a whole. Are they an exceptional teacher leader? Do they foster great student relationships? Are their students excited and engaged by the content? Are they putting in the time and effort to improve their practice? Do they have records of both qualitative and quantitative data that show student growth? Again, it is administration and the district's responsibility to know their teachers and to thoroughly evaluate teachers' performance as a whole. If teachers were able to negotiate their salary, then perhaps they would feel more motivated to stay in their field.

These extra funds could come from a number of places. One suggestion is to cut back on central office personnel. For example, you could eliminate the district content lead positions; put together a diverse group of teachers from each subject/grade level who will work together to create curriculum guides, professional development sessions, etc. Rather than pay one person to do that role, give raises to the group of teacher leaders. Similarly, you could eliminate other non-essential positions and leave those responsibilities up to each school. Because the schools in our district are so diverse, I feel that it makes more sense for there to be school-specific leaders (such as instructional coaches or department heads) who help their teachers navigate school-specific situations. Not only would it cut back on spending, it would also boost teacher morale. Oftentimes, teachers feel that central office leaders are out of touch with schools' needs. If

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leadership was coming from within the schools, their guidance would feel more relevant and personal; teachers would be more responsive to their suggestions.

**Testing**

I am also incredibly concerned about the amount of testing our students have to undergo and the mental toll that it is taking on them. At the middle school level, our students take three online diagnostic tests throughout the course of the year in both ELA and Math. Each one of these tests takes roughly three days to complete. Our students also take three benchmarks, one at the end of each quarter, as well as state testing at the end of the year. These benchmarks and state tests take roughly 1-2 weeks for our students to work through all core subject areas' assessments. I did the calculations and this year my students lost between 15-20 days worth of instructional time due to testing. That is almost a whole month of the school year that is replaced by standardized testing. On top of that, we are also expected to administer at least four regular classroom assessments each quarter.

Our students are anxious, frustrated, and completely overwhelmed by the constant pressure to perform. In the past month alone I have had several students admitted to residential mental health facilities because they were so stressed out. Standardized testing is killing our students' natural curiosity and is proving to be seriously detrimental to our kids' mental health. Test scores are also a huge source of anxiety for teachers because one of the only times that they receive recognition is when their students perform well on assessments. In my experience, nothing excites administration or central office more than good test scores. It is like everyone has forgotten the fact that we are supposed to be creating life-long learners who are capable of more than just bubbling in answers on a scantron. Our students and teachers have so many other wonderful accomplishments that go unnoticed because standardized testing is prioritized above all else.

To anyone who says that we need standardized testing data in order to measure student learning, I would like to remind them of a few things. First of all, competent teachers do not need standardized testing data in order to tell you their students' strengths and weaknesses because they are the ones working with their students day in and day out. Rarely have I looked at testing data and been surprised by what I saw. Second of all, student performance can be affected by so many outside factors. If students do not get enough sleep the night before, if they are preoccupied with problems at home, or if they do not see value in standardized testing, their scores will be lower than they should be. Similarly, a student could select random answers for the entire test, get lucky, and then end up with a higher score than they should. I would argue that the day-to-day data that you can collect by visiting classrooms and talking to students is far more valuable than any standardized test score.

Not only would decreased testing add back valuable instructional time, it would also improve our teachers' and students' overall wellbeing. Without the constant pressure to perform, students and teachers would have the headspace and motivation to engage in more enriching learning experiences. In order to cut back on unnecessary testing, I propose the following adjustments for middle schools in Honey Rock (pseudonym):

1. iReady diagnostic in August
2. Benchmark in December or March (either at the end of Q2 or Q3)
3. TNReady testing at the end of the year

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## 4. iReady diagnostic at the end of the year

I appreciate you reading through my concerns, and I urge you to start making some changes before things get worse. Every teacher that I know has already quit or is seriously considering quitting.

When you walk into schools, the tension is palpable, and everyone seems to be hurting in some way. Teachers are desperate for change because we know that our students will be the ones to suffer the most when there are staffing shortages. Students deserve to have experienced, passionate teachers in their classrooms. Unfortunately, many of those teachers are leaving the field. Last week I asked my students to reflect on the past couple of years. They said, “We wish that learning was fun like it used to be,” “We wish that there were consequences for when students do not follow the rules,” and “We wish that teachers were happy to be here.” Our students are not blind to the issues that plague our system. The good news is that these problems have solutions. Teachers know that. We just do not have the freedom to fix them on our own.

Leaving teaching has not been an easy decision for me. It has been utterly devastating to realize that my greatest passion in life is also the thing that causes me tremendous stress. I feel a great deal of shame when I think about leaving my students and coworkers behind. However, I do know that I deserve to work in a field where I am fairly compensated and am trusted to be a professional. Although I am leaving the classroom, I will never stop advocating for our teachers and our students. I encourage you to start having these deep conversations with teachers across the district so that you can get other perspectives as well. Teachers are smart and capable, and they deserve to be heard.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would like to have a more thorough conversation in person.

Thanks,

Teacher’s name withheld

## Appendix B

## Learning Community 3 (LC3) New Teacher Data By Schools

School	Number of new teachers with 0-1 years of experience	Number of new teachers with 2-3 years of experience	Number of new teachers new to HRSD in LC3	Total number of new teachers to the school	Total number of new teachers to the LC3
Elementary School #1	4	3	3	10	10
Elementary School #2	3	5	2	10	20
Elementary School #3	7	14	4	25	45
Elementary School #4	3	10	5	18	63
Elementary School #5	5	15	7	27	90
Elementary School #6	2	5	3	10	100
Elementary School #7	5	8	2	15	115
Middle School #1	5	14	3	22	137
Middle School #2	5	8	0	13	150

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<b>Middle School #3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Middle School #4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>High School #1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>High School #2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>High School #3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>Total # of new teachers</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>273</b>	



## Appendix C

### Participant E-mail Invitation

Greetings!

This is an invitation to participate in my dissertation research project on new teacher retention for our learning community. If you are interested, you will be asked to participate in the following ways:

1. Complete the [new teacher perception survey](#) questionnaire [here](#) within five (5) days . (10 minutes)
2. Sit for an individual interview (45 minutes) – this interview will be recorded and transcribed with your consent.
3. Participate in a focus group of 6-8 new teachers (60 minutes) – this focus group will be recorded and transcribed with your consent.

For more specific details about my research study, please read the letter of consent attached to this email. Your signature on the letter is required should you volunteer for this study. You are not obligated to be a part of this study, and your decision to participate or not to participate has no bearing on your employment with our school district. Your identity will be protected.

Please be assured that confidentiality will be maintained; neither you nor your school will be identified by me, or any other persons involved in this research in any way. The superintendent of Learning Community 3, Dr. Jason Vance, and the Accountability and Research Committee of the district have approved this research study. One of their stipulations is that I inform your building principal that you have agreed to participate in this study, but no additional information will be shared.

On the attached Participant Recruitment Letter and Consent Form, there is a space for you to sign your name informing me that you do wish to participate, understanding that you may withdraw from this study at any time without consequences to you personally or professionally as an employee of the Honey Rock School District as my role as New Teacher Coach is non-evaluative and non-punitive. Thank you for agreeing to be a volunteer for this important research whose aim is to improve your teaching experience and the learning for every one of our students.

Should you have any questions or would like to further clarification, please call, text, or email me at [msand100@studnets.kennesaw.edu](mailto:msand100@studnets.kennesaw.edu). Should you wish to request clarification or register any concerns regarding this research study or me as a researcher, please use the following contact information to do so:

- Dr. Miyoshi Juergensen, Dissertation Chairperson, Assistant Professor of Teacher Leadership, Kennesaw State University, [miuerge1@kennesaw.edu](mailto:miuerge1@kennesaw.edu)
- Internal Review Board, Kennesaw State University, [irb@kennesaw.edu](mailto:irb@kennesaw.edu)
- Your building principal ([lastname\\_firstname@hcde.org](mailto:lastname_firstname@hcde.org))
- Shannon Moody, Accountability and Research Office Coordinator, [Moody\\_s@hcde.org](mailto:Moody_s@hcde.org), 423-498-7972

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you!

MaryBeth Sanders, Researcher

Kennesaw State University

EdD Candidate in Teacher Leadership

423-304-8192

## Appendix D



## New Teacher Perception Survey

*Hello! Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study about new teacher support in our school district. Please answer each of the following inquiries and feel free to share your thoughts, ideas, and recommendations as you feel led. The estimated time of completion is 10 minutes.*

*Your responses **will not be seen nor shared** with anyone. All personal information will be redacted when the results are analyzed for trends for the research study.*

*Participants for this research study will be randomly selected. Thank you so much for your time and your thoughtful input.*

Name \*

Short answer text

22-23 HCS Work Location \*

1. Barger Academy
2. Bess T. Shepherd
3. Clifton Hills Elementary
4. East Lake Academy
5. East Lake Elementary
6. East Ridge Elementary
7. East Ridge High

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8. East Ridge Middle
9. East Side Elementary
10. Howard Connect
11. Spring Creek Elementary
12. The Howard School
13. Tyner Academy
14. Tyner Middle Academy

Position (i.e., 1st grade Teacher, ENL teacher, etc.) \*

Short answer text

Image title

## School-based Mentoring

- **Lead Mentors (Site Based Induction Liaisons)**
  - Coordination of the school-based New Teacher Network Program, including **monthly new teacher sessions**.
  - **Communication liaison** for the district Induction program
  - Supports **1st-3rd year teachers and their mentors** as well as supporting **teachers new to the building with more than 3 years** teaching experience.
- **Support Mentors**
  - **Novice** Teachers Matched 1:1
    - Monthly checklists to guide individualized supports
  - **2nd & 3rd Year Teachers** matched no greater than 1:3
    - Bi-Monthly or Quarterly checklists to guide individualized supports



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How supported have you felt by your Lead Mentor in your school? \*

- Not supported at all
- Hardly supported
- Somewhat supported
- Supported sufficiently
- Extremely supported

Please provide a rationale for your selection to the previous question. \*

Long answer text

---

How supported have you felt by your Support Mentor in your school? \*

- Not supported at all
- Hardly supported
- Somewhat supported
- Supported sufficiently
- Extremely supported

Please provide a rationale for your selection to the previous question. \*

Long answer text

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## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

How supported have you felt by the administration (principal, assistant principals, dean) and the support staff (instructional coaches, content lead coaches) in your school? \*

- Not supported at all
- Hardly supported
- Somewhat supported
- Supported sufficiently
- Extremely supported

Please provide a rationale for your selection to the previous question. \*

Long answer text

How supported have you felt by the New Teacher Coach in your school? \*

- Not supported at all
- Hardly supported
- Somewhat supported
- Supported sufficiently
- Extremely supported

Please provide a rationale for your selection to the previous question. \*

Long answer text

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

Please share additional information about the school-level supports you've received as a first-year teacher in HCS. What has gone well? What needs to be adjusted? What is not going well? \*

Long answer text

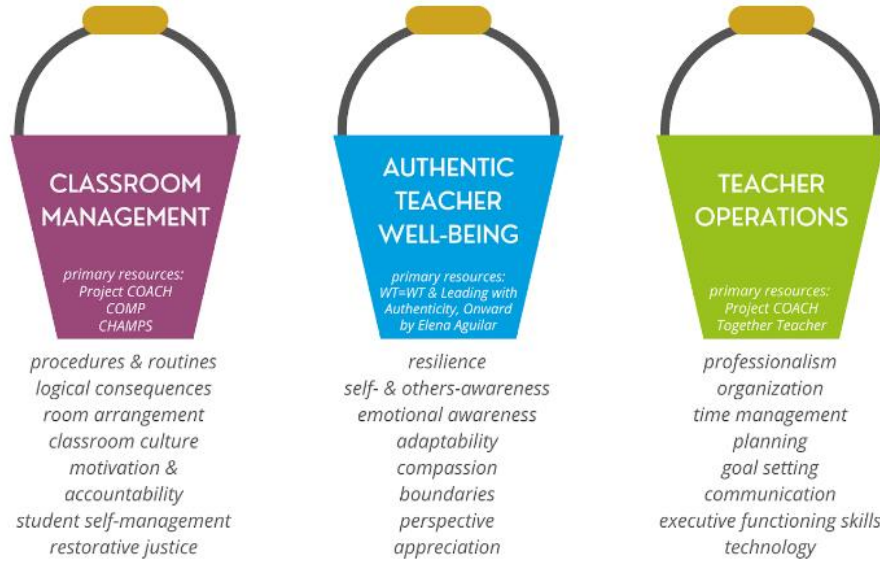
**New Teacher Supports and Resources** \*

Which New Teacher supports have you attended (live or watching recordings count) or utilized?

- Met with a New Teacher Coach
- Summer New Teacher Academy (NTA)
- Summer Classroom Set Up Lab
- COMP Training Classroom Management Workshop (NTA 2.0)
- Quarterly Novice NTA
- New Teacher Network (NTN): Dinner & PD (once per semester - district wide)
- Whole Teacher=Well Teacher Thursday sessions on Zoom
- NTN Sessions (monthly at my school led by the Lead Mentor)
- Features in Things to Know Thursday(TTKT) Email
- Features in Wellness Wednesday Email
- I have not been able to attend or utilize any of the supports offered

CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

District-Wide and School-Based Induction Support Topics



Based on the image above, please rank the following supports in order of your greatest needs <sup>\*</sup> or interests.

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice
Classroom Manag...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher Well-Bein...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher Operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum and Co...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

For the following question, in which area(s) below do you feel that you could benefit from extra \* support? **Curriculum and Content Support:** (Select as many as needed.)

- knowledge of available resources in the district
- knowledge of available resources outside the district
- reviewing policies and procedures of the district
- differentiating Instruction
- using effective teaching tools and strategies
- student assessment strategies (Mastery Connect, iReady, etc.)
- inclusion and mainstreaming of Exceptional Ed students
- planning for, organizing, and managing student work
- planning and pacing lessons

For the following question, in which area(s) below do you feel that you could benefit from extra \* support?

**Classroom Management:** (Select as many as needed.)

- establishing procedures and routines
- logical consequences
- room arrangement
- classroom culture
- motivation and accountability
- student self-management
- restorative justice
- developing relationships
- student engagement strategies



## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

For the following question, in which area(s) below do you feel that you could benefit from extra \* support?

**Authentic Teacher Well-Being** (Select as many as needed.)

- stress management
- developing resilience
- self- and/or others- awareness
- adaptability
- self-compassion and/or compassion for others
- establishing healthy boundaries
- perspective taking
- appreciation and joy

For the following question, in which area(s) below do you feel that you could benefit from extra \* support?

**Teacher Operations** (Select as many as needed.)

- professionalism
- digital organization of materials
- physical organization of materials
- time management
- planning
- goal setting
- communication with colleagues and/or student care givers
- executive function skills
- technology

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

What other topics would you like to suggest in terms of continued professional development and support? \*

Long answer text

In the space below please share any additional feedback about what has been helpful, what needs adjusting, or what is not helpful in terms of onboarding and induction at the district and school level.

Long answer text

Do you intend to return to teaching next fall? Please explain if you will return to your current position or what changes will occur

Long answer text

Thank you, again for your participation in this perception survey on HCS first-year teacher support. Please select the box below indicating your consent to use your responses from this survey in my research. \*

Yes, I consent.

Adapted from the internal survey instrument for new teachers in the HRSD

## Appendix E

### Interview Tool Protocol

Interview #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ***Script to be read to the new teacher:***

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is MaryBeth Sanders. I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my dissertation on teacher retention.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. There are fifteen (15) questions regarding any key experiences you wish to focus on in relation to your position as a first-year teacher.

With your permission, I would like to audio and video record this interview in order to accurately document the information you convey. You may choose to discontinue the use of the recording device or the interview itself at any time by informing me of your desire to do so.

All your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this research study.

At this time, I would like to ask for your verbal consent to participate in this interview and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you desire to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know.

You may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

With your permission, let's begin the interview.

#### ***Demographic questions:***

1. What is your name, school, title, and years of experience?
2. What is your race or ethnicity?
3. In what area did you earn your highest degree?
4. What is your content area in the classroom?

#### ***Predetermined questions:***

1. Describe your first year of teaching. Hit the highlights and the lowlights.
2. How did you choose the teaching profession?
3. What are the reasons for selecting the grade level you teach?
4. How has your teacher preparation program prepared you for teaching?
5. What are the district initiatives or strategies that you feel best support you as a new teacher and why?

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

6. In what ways could the district have supported you better in your first year?
7. How likely are you to return to your current position next year? Why or why not?
8. How likely are you to continue teaching but in a different position or school and why?
9. How likely are you to leave the teaching profession next year and why?

***Unstructured follow-up questions:***

1. Is there any previous question you would like to revisit or add anything to your response?
2. Do you have any additional information that you would like to share that I have not asked you already?

***Interview exit statement:***

This concludes the interview. Once I have transcribed the recording, you will receive an e-mail asking you to verify that these are your words and that the meaning you intended to convey are accurately reflected in the transcript. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact me using our school email.

Thank you so much for your time and participation today.

Adapted from:

<https://agecon.unl.edu/documents/2369805/16840067/Interview%20Protocol%20Initial%20survey.pdf/Interview-Protocol-Initial-survey.pdf>

## Appendix F

### Focus Group Tool Protocol

**Participants:** 8 first-year teachers from the same learning community who are new to the profession – 4 are staying and 4 are leaving

**Facilitator:** New Teacher Coach

**Location:** Teams

**Date:** May 23, 2023

**Time:** 5:00 p.m.

**Materials:**

- Laptop
- Teams app: invitation and recording device
- Participation consent form
- Written script
- Thank you correspondence

**Introduction:**

Hello, everyone. Thank you for being here. My name is MaryBeth Sanders, and I will be facilitating our focus group today. I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my dissertation on teacher retention.

This session is being recorded for transcription purposes so that your responses are captured accurately. When I say your name, please acknowledge that you give consent to your participation and to being recorded.

The purpose of this focus group is to provide a safe space for you to discuss your experiences as a first-year teacher and the impact these experiences may have on your decision to remain in the field of education. In a few minutes, I am going to ask you some open-ended questions, and I would like for you to share your responses to them. Please share only information with this group that you are comfortable sharing. Your responses are strictly confidential. At no time will any information from this session be shared with any persons whose decision-making authority could negatively impact your professional future or your personal identity. Your real names will not be used at any time when reporting information collected from this research project. Please remember that you can leave at any time.

Are there any questions or concerns before we begin?

Again, I appreciate your participation here today. We will now begin. We will have approximately one hour to answer 5 questions. Each question will be placed in the chat room for reference.

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

**Questions:**

1. Which strategy or support impacted you the most this year that you would recommend to a new teacher coming in?
2. Which strategy or support was the least effective that you would not encourage a new teacher coming in to spend time on?
3. What was your proudest moment in teaching this year?
4. Where do you feel you grew the most this year?
5. What would you tell a new teacher coming in about how to improve your first year?

That was our final question. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add or any additional comments concerning what we have talked about here today?

**Conclusion:**

This concludes our focus group. Once I have transcribed the recording, you will receive an e-mail+ asking you to verify that these are your words and that the meaning you intended to convey are accurately reflected in the transcript. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact me using our school email.

Thank you for coming today and participating.

**Reference:**

Adapted from [Sample Focus Group Protocol - UNCG Student Affairs](https://sa.uncg.edu)  
<https://sa.uncg.edu>

## Appendix G

### Participant Letter of Consent Form

#### KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Study:** Classroom Teachers: Why the mass exodus?

**Researcher's Contact Information:** MaryBeth Sanders, 423-304-8192,  
[msand100@students.kennesaw.edu](mailto:msand100@students.kennesaw.edu)

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

#### **Description of the Project**

The purpose of this qualitative case study will be to discover new teachers' perceptions of the instructional coaching supports that they receive regularly from the various levels of coaching supports and whether the coaching strategies used will improve the retention rate in our learning community. Retention is defined as new teachers returning to the district in either their current teaching position or in a new role for the following school year. This topic is worthy of investigation because teacher retention across the United States is in crisis. There are more teachers leaving the profession than there are candidates to fill the vacancies. The results from this study have the potential to impact the future design of the current instructional supports for new teachers, the implementation of best teaching practices, and the improvement of student achievement within and beyond your learning community.

Your learning community was specifically selected as the focus of this project based on the number of new teacher vacancies for the 2022- 2023 academic year. Of the five learning communities for the school district, the highest number of new hires for years one through three was identified in this learning community at a total of 273. Currently, 34% of the teachers in your learning community have three years' experience or less; this statistic indicates that there is a greater need for an intentional effort to focus on and improve teacher retention within the 14 schools included in this case study. The decision to conduct a case study in your learning community is supported by Shuls et al. (2020) who advocated for future research to find out what district instructional leaders are doing to retain new teachers. My aim for this study is to explore the impact instructional supports has on teacher retention by addressing the following research questions:

5. What strategies are used by instructional leadership in Learning Community 3 (LC3, pseudonym) of Honey Rock School District (HRSD, pseudonym) to increase the teacher retention rate?
6. How do new teachers in LC3 of HRSD perceive instructional coaching support in relation to their desire to remain in the teaching profession?

Conducting this research study through the exploration of these research questions is significant because it seeks to discover how instructional supports for new teachers impact their decision to remain in the

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

classroom. The new teachers' perceptions of the value, quality, and relevance of the supports received throughout the year will provide invaluable insight to district and school leadership about the structures and strategies that novice practitioners feel best supported them to adequately do their job.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please read the additional information on the following pages, and feel free to ask questions at any point.

### **Explanation of the Procedures**

This study will be spread out over four (4) weeks. Your time commitment for this study is two (2) hours total if you are selected for all three phases of the data collection. By agreeing to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Phase One: Complete the new teacher perception survey questionnaire that was sent to all first-year teachers (95) in your learning community in the invitation to participate email. The time to complete the survey should take approximately 10 minutes. You will have five (5) class days to complete and submit your open-ended responses about your interactions with instructional support provided by your school and the district .

After completing the perception survey questionnaire, your continuation in the study will depend on your name being randomly selected from an online Wheel of Names generator based on your decision to stay or leave teaching for the next school year. The maximum number of participants for this study is 14 with half of the group in the "staying" category (no more than 7) and the other half of the group in the "leaving" category (no more than 7). You will be notified by email if you have been selected to continue to the next two phases of data collection – interview and focus group.

At this time or at any time during the study, if you no longer wish to participate, you may opt out of the study without penalty or loss of benefits to you.

2. Phase Two: For those randomly selected to continue, you will participate in a 1:1 semi-structured interview with the researcher. The time to complete the interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes for you to share more in-depth responses about the instructional support provided by your school or the district.

The interview will be conducted using a password-protected online platform like Zoom so that the recording and transcription features can be utilized to capture your responses accurately as well as provide you convenience of scheduling and location. If you prefer to be interviewed in person, a distraction-free location will be selected like an empty classroom, a district professional learning space, or a conference room. A recording device will be used for in-person interviews.

Whether conducted on Zoom or in person, you will be asked to give your consent to be recorded at the time of the interview.



**CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS**

At this time or at any time during the study, if you no longer wish to participate, you may opt out of the study without penalty or loss of benefits to you.

3. Phase Three: The same participants identified for the interview process will also participate in the focus group. There will be no more than 7 “stayers” and no more than 7 “leavers” for a maximum total of 14 participants. The time to complete the focus should take approximately 60 minutes.

The focus group will be conducted using a password-protected online platform like Zoom so that the recording and transcription features can be utilized to capture your responses accurately as well as provide you convenience of scheduling and location. This option will also allow you to change your name on the screen and turn off the video feature to protect your identity if desired.

Two focus group sessions may need to be scheduled - one on Zoom and one in person - to accommodate the participants’ preferences if necessary. The same protocol will be used for both sessions.

The purpose of the focus group is to provide an opportunity for each participant to interact with other first-year teachers in a group setting. Answering additional questions about the district’s induction program will allow you to expand on the responses from the initial interview conducted in Phase 2, thus providing greater insight into your first-year experience with the school district. In addition, this format may generate other ideas about new teacher support that you might not have thought about on your own.

A recording device will also be used for the in-person focus group. You will be asked to give your consent to be recorded at the time of the focus group whether on Zoom or in person.

At this time or at any time during the study, if you no longer wish to participate, you may opt out of the study without penalty or loss of benefits to you.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time; your decision to do so will have no impact on your future with the school district. As New Teacher Coach, it is my job to provide each new teacher in the learning community with first-year teaching support; therefore, my role is non-evaluative and non-punitive. You are free to share your honest responses without fear of professional or personal retribution.

**Risks and discomforts**

There are no physical, psychological, social and economic, nor legal risks associated with this study. The only potential risk is if data confidentiality is breached. There are safeguards in place to minimize that risk like the use of a password-protected laptop for data collection, analysis, and storage. Any documents containing your identity will be stored away from any schools in the learning community in a locked file cabinet. A pseudonym will be used when reporting your information and responses. There are no discomforts connected to this study.

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

### **Benefits**

A direct benefit that you may experience from taking part in this research is that you can have your voice heard by providing insight from your personal experience as a new teacher. The challenges you share as a first-year teacher that were not addressed well by the instructional coaching supports currently in place will inform how the school district will adjust the induction program for the future. By identifying which research-based strategies to keep while researching additional effective best practices to implement, short-term and long-term goals can be set for improving teacher retention within this learning community and across the district to the other four learning communities. You as a participant benefit directly because you will receive improved direct support tailored for your professional growth.

The findings from this study can help school districts across the United States examine their own issues with the decline in teacher retention in their schools. By addressing the various challenges new teachers face, there is potential for advocating for meeting the needs of all teachers, thus decreasing the teacher turnover rate, increasing their job satisfaction, and improving student achievement through teacher continuity. Achieving those goals would be a victory for education nationwide and for our society as a whole.

### **Confidentiality**

Throughout this study, your privacy will be protected. Your signature on the KSU informed consent form will indicate your desire to participate as a volunteer in the study. To reduce the risk of your information being disclosed accidentally to people not associated with this research, all of your personal identifiers will be removed; your name, your school's name, and the name of your learning community will only be identified by pseudonyms. The consent form revealing your real identity and the list of pseudonyms will be kept apart. All 1:1 interviews and the focus group will be conducted either in a password-protected online platform like Zoom or in a neutral, public space that provides adequate privacy with appropriate visibility for the protection and comfort of both the researcher and the participants.

Upon completion of the perception survey questionnaire, you will be given a pseudonym. The list of pseudonyms will be kept in an encrypted file on the password-protected laptop and separate from the list of participants' actual names. The survey results will be stored on a password-protected laptop. The audio files, video files, and transcripts from the interviews and focus group session will be stored on a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to the data files. The consent forms and any identifiable data will be kept in the locked file cabinet away from any schools in the school district. All paper and digital files will be destroyed or deleted upon completion of this research project. This information will not be used or distributed for future research.

The Accountability and Research Office of our district requires a final copy of the findings from this study. In addition, the approval of your participation in this study is contingent upon your building principal's signature at the bottom of this letter of consent. Your building principal will not have access to your responses.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, at Kennesaw State University, [irb@kennesaw.edu](mailto:irb@kennesaw.edu). You may also contact the following individuals who monitor the study's compliance with research accountability:

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS: MASS EXODUS

- Dr. Miyoshi Juergensen, Dissertation Chairperson, Assistant Professor of Teacher Leadership, Kennesaw State University, [mjuerge1@kennesaw.edu](mailto:mjuerge1@kennesaw.edu)
- Your building principal ([lastname\\_firstname@hcde.org](mailto:lastname_firstname@hcde.org))
- Shannon Moody, Accountability and Research Office Coordinator, [Moody\\_s@hcde.org](mailto:Moody_s@hcde.org)

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

---

Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative

---

Date

---

Signature of Building Principal

---

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

---

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR

## APPENDIX H

Table 4

Participants' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Instructional Support Initiatives

Participants Perceptions	Bonnie (stay)	Farah (stay)	Hallie (stay)	Isabel (stay)	Julia (leave)	Kara (leave)	Lisa (leave)	Mia (leave)
NHO	attended	organized thorough welcoming	attended	attended	informative support not alone	attended	attended	informative videos interactive
NTA	informative prior to teaching		positivity connections flexibility			attended		summer content-specific teacher panel Q & A
QNTA	interact/network with peers stipend Gen Ed focused	supported helpful connect with peers self-regulation not secondary	attended 1 session networking	collaboration	grab & go information networking community needed break autonomy	good material not applicable due to behaviors	middle school math focus	schedule conflict
NTN	only attendee good info bad timing	attended few inspirational not helpful in classroom	stipend enjoyed	helpful wanted more	attended	attended	attended	
DINNER/PD	attended		deepened mentor relationship problem solving wellness	attended				
CLS	attended							attended
WT=WT	helpful emotional wellness grounding techniques		self-care for teachers and students			accessed at QNTA only breathing techniques		attended
TTKT	accessed	accessed	accessed	great material				
COMP	attended		attended		requested to go admin not follow through	extremely instrumental too late	beneficial for classroom management too late	

Note: Table 4 represents the general perception of effectiveness of the instructional support initiatives according to the participants in this study. Participants who accessed more support are the first-year teachers who are planning to stay in teaching.