TEACHER ATTRITION: A CASE STUDY OF A TITLE I SCHOOL

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Abstract

Over the past century, it has become increasingly difficult and costly to schools and students to retain teachers in the classroom. Many schools nationwide struggle with retaining quality teachers, including North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school. Based on the annual school report cards from 2008-2011, an average of 30% of teachers have not returned to the school. The purpose of this research was to investigate teacher attrition at North Anderson High School and the influences that cause teachers to extend or terminate their contracts, such as: job satisfaction, teacher recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs. It also seeks to understand how North Charleston High School can increase its retention of teachers.

A case study was utilized to thoroughly examine teacher attrition using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires and individual interviews were analyzed through the lens of burnout and human capital theories to fully understand why teachers at North Anderson High School are choosing to pursue other professional opportunities. It was found that a lack of administrative support and those in leadership positions had the largest impact on teacher attrition at North Charleston High School, while students, co-workers, and personal achievement were the main factors that retained North Charleston High School teachers.

Key Words: Teacher attrition, Teacher retention, Teacher burnout, Human Capital Theory, Job Satisfaction, Teacher Recruitment, Teacher Mentoring Programs
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Chapter I: Introduction

Problem Statement

In the past century, it has become increasingly difficult to retain teachers in the classroom, as teacher turnover and migration affect schools across the country (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010). In particular, public school teacher attrition (teachers leaving the classroom voluntarily) has become such a critical issue that it has come to the attention of policymakers and administrators (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Each year, approximately 500,000 educators leave their schools (Boyd et al., 2010) at a cost to the nation of approximately $4.9 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Regardless of the school, society needs to understand that teacher attrition in today’s classrooms is slowly causing damage to the quality of education (Wang, 2007). Ingersoll (2003) noted that teacher attrition can cost a school at least $8,000 per teacher. When a teacher leaves a school, the school not only loses a teacher, it also loses the investments made in them, including workshops, in-service training, and teacher socialization activities (Dworkin, 1987).

Research has also shown that a teacher is the most important factor in determining student performance (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). If quality teachers are leaving the classroom, then student performance will ultimately suffer. Unless schools, specifically administrators, begin to take a more proactive approach in supporting their new and veteran teachers, teachers are going to continue to leave the field, and all schools and children nationwide will suffer (Brown & Wynn, 2009). American public schools need to be able to recruit, train, retain, and fairly compensate teachers in all schools (Lynch, 2012).

Among the most affected institutions are high-poverty, Title I schools. The U.S. Department of Education defines Title I schools as those that receive additional funding due to a high number of students from low-income families (2011). Concerns related to teacher staffing
and retention are particularly troublesome in schools that serve large portions of underprivileged students where high poverty and insufficient access to academic resources are often the norm (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Donaldson, 2009; Ingersoll, 2004; Jacob, 2007; McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008; Smith & Smith, 2009; Siwatu, Frazier, Osaghae, & Starker, 2011; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009). During the 2000-2001 school year, 17% of teachers in high-poverty (more than 75% of student body living in poverty) Title I schools had less than three years of teaching experience and an 8% teacher attrition rate (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Long (2011) stated that high poverty schools have fewer veteran teachers because of the potential burnout in a high-stress environment. This is a growing concern because students in high poverty schools are in dire need of high quality educators (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Evidence also indicates that new teacher attrition rates are higher if a teacher begins his/her career in a high poverty, low performing school (DeAngelis & Presley, 2010). Ultimately, high poverty schools tend to employ the greatest number of teachers with the least experience, the lowest average achievement scores, and the least qualifications to teach (Eckert, 2013; Jacob, 2007; Siwatu, 2011). This has created an unequal distribution of available teachers, with the most experienced and qualified teachers seeking employment in more affluent schools. Donaldson (2009) noted that “the unequal distribution of teacher quality to schools and students across our nation is one of the largest social justice issues in the United States today” (p. 347). This indicates that the root of the problem of teacher attrition in underprivileged areas must be uncovered in order to facilitate necessary changes that can begin to close the growing achievement gap.

Research on teacher attrition has revealed numerous reasons why teachers are leaving the classroom. Some researchers have pointed out the significant impact of school- and district-
Based factors in teacher attrition (DeAngelis & Presley, 2010). Several studies have examined poor remuneration and benefits, as well as difficult working conditions (Wang, 2007) as reasons why educators are leaving the field, especially in Title I schools. Other studies have examined the importance of mentoring during the first two years of teaching, and its impact on retaining quality teachers (Parker, Ndoye, & Imig, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Lambert & Lashley, 2012; Smethem, 2007; Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007). More specifically, current research has focused on the lack of administrative support, classroom management, school culture and climate, and job satisfaction as reasons why educators are leaving the classroom (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

This study examined teacher attrition at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school. Over the past six years, roughly 20% of North Anderson High School teachers received emergency certification because of the high teacher attrition rate (Annual School Report Card, 2008). Based on the annual school report cards from 2008 - 2011, an average of 30% of teachers have not returned to North Anderson High School each year. The South Carolina State Report Card also notes that schools similar to North Anderson High School (high poverty, Title I schools) have an average teacher attrition rate of approximately 20% across the state (Annual School Report Card, 2012). Thus, North Anderson High School’s teacher attrition problem is even greater than similar schools in the state.

Teacher attrition at North Anderson, like many other schools, has affected its school report card, enrollment, administration, and the community. Teacher retention is particularly critical to school stability because it has been a failing school for the last ten years. Thorough research can provide North Anderson insight into how to retain high quality teachers and create a more stable institution for the future.
The purpose of this case study was to understand teacher attrition at North Anderson High School and the influences that cause teachers to renew/terminate their contracts, such as: teacher satisfaction, teacher recruitment, and teacher mentoring. By examining teacher attrition influences, the outcomes of this case study would offer teachers and administrators in high-poverty Title I schools like North Anderson High School, a possible solution to the teacher attrition problem.

**Significance of the Problem**

The occupation of educator is a vulnerable profession because of teacher attrition rates (Dworkin, 1987). Teacher attrition at North Anderson, like many other high-poverty, Title I schools, affects all aspects of the school. It not only affects the school report card, but enrollment, student achievement, administration, faculty and staff, and the community as a whole. Teachers who leave a school because the no longer want to teacher there send a message to the students that the school is not worth fighting for, that the difficulties outweigh the rewards. This message is damaging to student populations, especially in high-poverty areas where consistency is a major problem in students' daily lives; school needs to be a place of consistency for these students, a place that can provide hope amid hopeless circumstances. High levels of teacher attrition may also create a snowball effect for the remaining teachers (Dworkin, 1987); if one teacher leaves, others may follow.

Teacher flight also places a heavy burden on teachers who stay because they are left to pick up the pieces while trying to advance student achievement. Those teachers who stay are sometimes left with larger class sizes, additional workload, and comforting students who feel abandoned. These advances are challenging because of the repetitive work needed as new teachers fill vacancies and establish themselves as teachers, learning from their mistakes and taking specific actions to correct them. High levels of teacher attrition combined with the need
to fill excessive teacher vacancies lowers the overall quality of teaching (Dworkin, 1987), which in turn lowers student achievement.

Goals

The goals of this study are to understand why teacher attrition at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, are higher than that at other Title I schools, and to explore the factors that make North Anderson High School teachers leave more often than their counterparts. In order to further examine the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson, a case study will be employed and will provide analysis through school documents, interviews, and questionnaires. The information found in this study can help North Anderson High School and other Title I schools decrease their teacher attrition rate and improve retention.

Research Questions

1. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, how can North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, increase teacher retention?
   a. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are causing teachers to leave the school?
   b. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are enabling teachers to stay at the school?
   c. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what plans can be put into place to increase retention?

Theoretical Framework

For this study, human capital theory, along with Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) burnout theory will be the primary lens, while exploring why teachers at high-poverty, Title I schools,
North Anderson High School in particular, leave the classroom. Once defined, the burnout and human capital theories will help to uncover the reasons why teachers leave a specific school or classroom, and help to create a possible solution for keeping these teachers in their schools.

**Burnout theory.** Maslach & Leiter (1997) define burnout as a type of job stress that involves a lingering response to chronic interpersonal job stressors. While burnout is a problem in many professions, it is significantly higher in education because of the added burden of responsibility for students (Dworkin, 1987). Additionally, teacher burnout has increased over time because of changes within the educational system that have led to an increase in the intricacy of the teacher’s role, as well as the school’s role within society (Manassero, Garcia Buades, Torrens, Ramis, Vazquez, & Ferrer, 2006). The increased pressure has in turn, led to occupational dissatisfaction among educators (Manassero et al., 2006). Truch (1980) suggests that teacher anguish through absenteeism, attrition, and poor performance, costs billions of dollars annually and of those, roughly one-quarter of all teachers, at any given time, feel burned out (Dworkin, 1987).

Burnout theory asserts that teacher burnout is comprised of three stages: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 2000), which eventually lead to teacher attrition. Emotional exhaustion refers to teachers feeling frustrated and emotionally overwhelmed (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). Leiter & Maslach (2000) suggest that the main factors of emotional exhaustion include personal conflict with co-workers and/or students, and excessive work. While emotional exhaustion may be easily covered up in other professions, in the educational setting, it directly affects a teacher’s ability to perform and truly enjoy their job. When a teacher has no motivation to improve their performance, they either level off and lower their performance levels, or leave teaching (Kaiser, 1982).
Depersonalization is a direct cause of emotional exhaustion and refers to a negative disconnected response to those around one (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). In education, depersonalization can severely impact a teacher’s relationship with co-workers and students, which affects their own achievement and self-worth. Lastly, feelings of reduced personal accomplishment refer to one’s sense of competency and productivity at work, which leads to a low sense of self-efficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). If a teacher’s productivity in the classroom suffers, not only is the teacher affected, but the students are affected as well. The students would not be receiving a quality education from that teacher and could potentially cause that teacher more disciplinary problems. Understanding how emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment play into the mind-set of teachers of high-poverty, Title I schools, specifically at North Anderson High School, could help to reveal why these teachers are leaving the classroom.

In addition to Leiter & Maslach’s (2000) belief that burnout can be broken down into three stages, Manassero et al. (2006) suggest that factors such as constant personal interaction with students and co-workers, the need for patience, the idea of being evaluated by others, salaries, personal expectations, and student motivation exacerbate teacher burnout. Within those factors, individual and situational variables need to be examined (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988).

Burnout often takes place when a worker experiences work overload, lack of control, and/or lack of reward (Maslach & Leiter, 1997); this issue is more documented in education than in other professions. Work overload in education takes place when teachers feel that they have too much to accomplish in a short amount of time with limited resources. Work overload can take place in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, teachers may feel rushed when trying to teach all of the required standards in a specific period of time. Outside of the classroom,
teachers, especially at *Title I* schools, are often given additional duties to perform during their short daily break, which can also lead to a sense of overload.

Lack of control is another precursor to teacher burnout. Teachers can control what they teach and how they teach, but they cannot control student outcomes. Students choose to study, pay attention, and/or complete the assessments upon which teachers may be evaluated. Lastly, a lack of internal and external rewards can lead to teacher burnout, but “most devastating…is the loss of the internal reward that comes when a person takes pride in doing something of importance and values to others, and doing that job well” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p.13).

Burnout occurs in education when teachers no longer feel rewarded, whether it is in the form of praise from co-workers, administration, students, or even themselves.

**Human capital theory.** While Leiter & Maslach’s (2000) burnout theory fits the problem of teacher attrition, human capital theory is another way to examine teacher attrition in order to better understand why a teacher decides to leave a school or the profession. Human capital theory provides a framework for analyzing one’s choice of occupation (Rickman & Parker, 1990) and the shift that occurs when they no longer feel invested in the career. It suggests that individuals weigh the pros and cons of staying in a chosen profession prior to making a final decision (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). Understanding the pros and cons in education, is essential to understanding the problem of teacher attrition.

Individuals assess monetary and nonmonetary benefits associated with their profession. In education, human capital theory suggests that teachers not only consider salary when deciding whether to leave a school, but they also consider a variety of other nonmonetary variables associated with teaching such as: working conditions (Wang, 2007; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Greenlee and Brown, 2009), job stressors (Andera and Bullock, 2010; Perrachione, Peterson, and
Rosser, 2008), teacher preparation programs (Mastekaasa, 2011; Cochran-Smith, Cannady, McEachern, Piazza, Power, and Ryan, 2010), mentoring programs (Oliver, 2009; Thompson, 2008; Corbell, Osborne, and Reiman, 2010; Leimann, Murdock, and Waller, 2008; Parker, Ndoye, and Imig, 2009), and the type of school where they teach (Shen, 1997).

In order to examine teacher attrition and its variables through a human capital lens, one must recognize the two types of human capital: generic and specific. Generic capital can be transferred to most occupations; specific capital focuses on a particular profession (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993), such as teaching. Based on specific capital, Shen (1997) suggests that teachers with less experience in life and in their profession are more likely to leave the profession than their counterparts because the experience ultimately keeps teachers in the classroom. Experience teachers have not only made more of an investment in the profession, but they are also able to use their life experiences to help them through certain situations. New teacher attrition has become a major problem, especially among those who begin their educational career in high-poverty, high-minority, and/or low-performing schools (DeAngelis & Presley, 2010).

Kirby and Grissmer (1993) point out that teacher attrition occurs when a teacher’s original reason for entering the field shifts. Most teachers do not stumble upon education as a field; education is a chosen profession. If one wishes to enter the field of education, one must take a specific educational path. Thus, exploring teacher attrition through a human capital lens allows for a closer examination regarding why a teacher’s original decision to enter education (or a particular school) shifts, and the monetary, nonmonetary, individual or situational factors that account for that shift.

Summary
Teacher burnout theory and a human capital theory analysis provide a lens through which teacher attrition of high-poverty, Title I schools, such as North Anderson High School, will be viewed. All of the studies researched discussed teacher attrition, mobility, and/or retention, which indirectly referenced Maslach-Leiter’s (1997) framework on teacher burnout. Teacher attrition and mobility can be directly linked to the definition of teacher burnout, along with the idea that teachers considered their decision before making it (human capital theory). Maslach (1997), a pioneer in the field, was embedded throughout every study examined and would only be supported through a human capital analysis of teacher attrition. Understanding when and why the shift in a teacher’s thinking occurs will provide additional insight into the problem of teacher attrition.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Literature Review Questions

The previously mentioned theories, burnout and human capital, lay the foundation for the exploration of teacher attrition through the literature guided by the following questions:

1. How have the history of American education and the way educators have been perceived affected teacher attrition?
2. According to the literature, what causes teacher attrition?
3. How does job satisfaction, recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs, or lack thereof, affect teacher attrition?

The first question relates to the history of American education and the perception of teachers throughout the years. The second question examines the literature on teacher attrition. The third question relates to the possible causes of teacher attrition, including job satisfaction, recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs, or lack thereof. All three questions will examine
the literature through either a human capital lens or the theory of teacher burnout. In order to properly answer the above questions, the literature will be broken down into the history of education and teacher attrition, and the causes of teacher attrition.

**The History of Education and Teacher Attrition**

The past 100 years provide a deeper insight into how public education and those who lead the classrooms have changed, as well as greater understanding of the current teacher attrition problem. “In 1900, the public school was one of the most treasured public institutions in the United States” (Bernard & Mondale, 2001, p. 64). Americans not only financially supported their free public schools; they also celebrated them (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). Teachers were viewed in the same category as professionals such as doctors and lawyers, because education was considered the pathway to the future (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). The value of a free public education and appreciation for the educational process appear to have declined significantly in the United States as compulsory education has become more of a “problem” than a means to obtain a better life.

During the 1940’s, although teachers were optimistic about their success, the nation’s population was growing and they wanted to be able to reach those who lacked educational motivation by revising the curriculum (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). Educators weren’t emotionally exhausted or feeling a lack of personal accomplishment - they were given a voice and were seen as experts in their field. Giving educators a voice made them feel invested in the development of the American public school system. During the 1950s, people began to criticize the quality of U.S. public education (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). Critics of the public school system blamed “schools’ failing on education professors and their abiding hostility to substantive academic courses” (Bernard & Mondale, 2001, p. 69). This blame of educators, combined with
the rise of young women teachers caused turnover rates to soar in the 1950s and 1960s (Dworkin, 1987). Dworkin (1987) suggests that during this time, many young women chose to leave the teaching profession in order to have families and raise children. The Cold War of the 1950s foreshadowed what was to come in American public education during the next few decades, as America quickly lost many non-violent battles with the USSR and began to feel inferior (educationally) after the 1954 launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik. As such, the National Defense Education Act sought to quickly improve America’s math and science programs in order to be able to compete for the title of “global superpower” - putting more pressure on teachers. Americans experienced a paradigm shift from the power of education to transform and impact an individual life, to the necessity of a successful education to assert American dominance in the global sphere.

While teacher retention began to increase with the hiring of more diverse teachers during the 1970s and early 1980s, the mid 1980s and 1990s brought teacher attrition problems back to the forefront (Dworkin, 1987). At that time, politicians’ voices began to overpower those of educators. A U.S. “learning crisis” was supposedly occurring according to politicians and the press. This so-called crisis would forever change how Americans viewed the public school system and its teachers (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). A steady decline in teacher earnings, combined with the devaluing of teaching as a career began to push many people away from the teaching profession (Dworkin, 1987). Along with the devaluing of teaching, schools were no longer seen as educational facilities, but as businesses expected to compete like businesses (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). Businesses have even come to control entire schools through the charter title. Many charter schools are named after businessmen and businesswomen who have taken control of them. Schools with the highest scores soared to popularity, much like
America’s top businesses today. In addition, teachers were no longer being supported and respected like past educators; they were being treated like employees of a Fortune 500 company that competed to run others out of business. This business model has sought to reward the top performing schools, while punishing and permanently closing schools that underperformed according to federal and state governments.

In treating education like a big business, when financial cuts need to be made, public education was one of the first “businesses” on the chopping block. Yet, when the media seeks to blame someone for the nation’s current shortcomings, they tend to point to American education and those “businessmen” who run it. In 1991, John Akers, Chairman of IBM, stated that “education isn’t just a social concern, it’s a major economic issue.” This statement shows the business-like nature associated with many American schools today. This supports the 1950s belief that education is a means to maintaining a strong nation, and is no longer about serving individual children. Instead, we are expected to show increased growth and success, or face repercussions such as increased oversight, reconstitution, or permanent closure. During the past decade, economic problems have caused many states to severely cut their expenditures on public education (Guarino et al., 2006). This has had a detrimental effect on retaining highly qualified teachers in the classrooms who, though young and often inexperienced, typically have high levels of enthusiasm and innovative ideas. Although the low salary level is not the only reason why teachers are leaving the field of education, the lack of funding provided to teachers to supply, decorate, and generally improve their classrooms could be another factor for teacher attrition. Many states, including South Carolina, provide each teacher with a one-time payment that is expected to cover all classroom expenses each year. For any teacher, especially a new one, this small payment barely allows this person to supply their classroom with basic needs, and
fails to help them create a truly effective learning environment. Cutbacks in budget go much deeper than classroom supplies, and represent a major difference from the goals of American public education in the early 1900s.

When blame is cast in education, much attention focuses on failing production and achievement in American schools. A decrease in funding leads to an increase in teacher accountability in high-stakes testing, which is the basic concept behind supply and demand in the business world. This increased pressure has in turn, led to increased occupational dissatisfaction among educators (Manassero et al., 2006). In essence, more is being demanded of the teachers, but are provided with less and less, causing many of them to leave the field. The issue behind teacher attrition is viewed as a disparity between supply and demand (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). There is a greater demand for highly qualified teachers, yet with so many teachers vacating the profession, the supply is not provided. In any other business venture, this would cause a severe rise in the price of the good sought, but this is not the case with today’s current economic crisis. Instead, teachers are in greater demand, but little is being done to financially incentivize people into the field.

It has been reported (Smith & Kovacs, 2011) that the idea of standards-based reform and high stakes testing is a movement affecting the American public school system, which is driven to increase economic efficiency. “Throughout the 1990s, states mandated the curricular and performance standards, new tests, and accountability of principals, teachers, and students for test scores” (Bernard & Mondale, 2001, p. 177). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act mandated highly qualified teachers in the classroom, and placed more emphasis on closing the achievement gap among diverse populations of students in the United States. “Critics warned the legislation could exacerbate achievement gaps and actually drive quality teachers out of the
field” (Smith & Kovacs, 2011). The emphasis on closing the achievement gap based on high stakes testing only exacerbates teacher stress, forcing many to leave the classroom. “A focus on learning as achievement also assumes that test scores are always accurate and complete reflections of learning, or that tests actually promote learning” (Nieto, 1991z, p.1).

Teachers used to be held accountable for student achievement in a less invasive way than test scores. Educators were well respected and received input on how to teach their students. Now, teachers are told what and how to teach, and are given little-to-no freedom in the classroom while being held accountable for their students’ overall achievement, causing many teachers to abandon the classroom.

**Causes of Teacher Attrition**

Darleen Opfer (2011) stated that the efforts of recent educational reform in the United States have focused on improving schools by retaining high quality educators; however, high teacher attrition is becoming more critical in schools across the country. Chapman & Hutcheson (1982) estimate that approximately 25% of post-secondary students who complete a teacher education program never enter the field of education, or leave within the first five years (as cited in Przygocki, 2004, p. 524). Lynch (2012) noted that, excluding those who retire from the field, 500,000 teachers leave their jobs annually, costing the country approximately $4.9 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). That cost does not include the undocumented cost of the school’s non-monetary investment and the student’s investment in those teachers.

Of those half a million teachers, educational researchers have investigated how working in a particular school, or with a particular co-worker, can influence one’s decision to leave or remain in the profession (Hancock & Scherff, 2010). Lynch (2012) argued that the location of a school, along with certain positions, can greatly impact teacher attrition. He adds that this is the
case because research has shown that urban schools have higher attrition rates than their suburban and rural counterparts. Teacher attrition is also found to be highest in the areas of science, mathematics, and language (Macdonald, 1999), which has a major impact when those positions are in high poverty urban schools.

Another factor of teacher attrition is the population of students. Urban schools have higher teacher attrition rates, as do schools with high percentages of minority students (Guarino et al., 2006). Teacher attrition is higher in schools with high percentages of minority students because teachers in those schools often leave for more appealing educational opportunities (Guarino et al., 2006). Teachers need to feel comfortable with their school in terms of ethnicity, traditions, customs, and/or languages; if not, they can become less satisfied with their job, leading them to seek employment elsewhere (Macdonald, 1999). If a teacher feels out of place, uncomfortable or burned out, he/she will leave for a more appealing job, in education or another field.

While the racial makeup of a school is one indicator of teacher attrition, Lynch (2012) also stated that teachers of low achieving students tend to have higher attrition rates than their counterparts. Teachers of low achieving students have major challenges regarding student achievement, which could make the school less appealing than one where students are already achieving on or above par. In essence, teachers of low-achieving students have more ground to cover with their students than those whose students are performing at or above grade level. Teachers of low-achieving students and urban schools have the potential to burn out much more quickly than their counterparts. Manassero et al. (2006) suggested that student motivation, personal expectations, and the idea of being evaluated can intensify teacher burnout.
Schools with induction and mentoring programs, especially collegial support, tend to have fewer problems with teacher attrition than schools without these programs (Lynch, 2012). Research has shown that effective induction and mentoring programs are essential to retaining teachers in the classroom. Parker, Ndoye, and Imig (2009) found that teachers are more likely to stay in the classroom if they are part of an induction/mentoring program and have consistent contact with their mentor.

Additionally, many research studies have cited specific job-related factors that contribute to the significant teacher attrition in high-poverty schools (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2004; Jacob, 2007; Smith & Smith, 2009). Certo & Fox (2002) noted that, “Researchers have linked a number of job aspects of job satisfaction to teacher retention, and there is general agreement that all of these aspects are a part of the teacher retention puzzle” (p. 58). Among the predominant problems cited are: insufficient salaries for the demanding work to help impoverished students succeed academically (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2004), lack of administrative support (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2004), inadequate planning time as educators take on “extra” tasks to help students achieve (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2004), and student behaviors that impede the teaching and learning process (Ingersoll, 2004; Smith & Smith, 2009). These factors need to be addressed for high-poverty, Title I schools to make significant improvements in recruiting and retaining teachers. Jacob (2007) noted that, “In fact, problems in both recruitment and retention contribute to disparities in teacher characteristics” (p. 136).

Many researchers have also blamed working conditions (Lynch, 2012; Wang, 2007; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Greenlee and Brown, 2009) as the most compelling elements of teacher retention, along with job stressors (Andera and Bullock, 2010; Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser, 2008), teacher preparation programs (Mastekaasa, 2011; Cochran-Smith, Cannady,
McEachern, Piazza, Power, and Ryan, 2010), recruitment (Thompson, 2008; Cherubini, 2007; Corbell, Osborne, and Reiman, 2010; Madkins, 2011), and mentoring programs (Lynch, 2012; Oliver, 2009; Thompson, 2008; Corbell, Osborne, and Reiman, 2010; Leimann, Murdock, and Waller, 2008; Parker, Ndoye, and Imig, 2009), or lack thereof.

**Job satisfaction.** Although job satisfaction can be defined in a variety of ways, Weigi (2007) found that leadership and administration support, work achievement, working conditions, salaries/compensation, and other job stressors are the underlying factors of job satisfaction with the most effect on teacher attrition. A main factor of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction in education is the amount of available administrative support. Research has shown a direct relationship between job satisfaction and the amount of administrative support (Baker, 2007). Educators who feel that their administration is supportive are more likely to be satisfied with their school. Baker (2007) conducted research on job satisfaction and found that nearly 14% of educators surveyed were leaving education because of job dissatisfaction. Of the 14%, the main aspects of job dissatisfaction were a lack of administrative support and general job stressors. These findings stress the importance of leadership and/or administrative support and the role they play in a teacher’s decision to stay or leave education, specifically through human capital theory. These findings support the need for further examination of how to effectively increase administrative support in order to encourage teacher retention.

While Baker (2007) related job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and teacher attrition with the amount of administrative support given to teachers, Przygocki (2004) related job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and teacher attrition with salaries. He found that teacher attrition is more problematic in Catholic schools than public schools because of the disparity between salaries; historically, Catholic school teachers are paid significantly less than teachers in public,
charter, and magnet schools. On the other hand, Chubb and Moe (1988) reported that Catholic school educators are generally more committed and mutually respectful than public school educators (as cited in Przygocki, 2004, p. 532). Although educators in Catholic schools may be dissatisfied with their salaries and choose to leave the Catholic school system, many of them are satisfied with their jobs in other ways. Job satisfaction seems to be based on each educator’s perception of what is important to them. If a Catholic school teacher believes that salary is the most important aspect of his/her job, then this will become the defining factor of their job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction/dissatisfaction differs from educator to educator, school to school. While Catholic schools are very different from traditional high-poverty, Title I schools, job satisfaction regarding salaries is similar. Among the problems cited most often in high-poverty urban schools with low performing students, is the insufficient salary for the demanding work to help impoverished students succeed academically (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll, 2004), highlighting the fact that compensation is not only an issue of job satisfaction in private schools.

Leadership also directly affects working conditions and job satisfaction. Although leadership may not be in a teacher’s control, it has one of the strongest impacts on teachers’ intention to stay in/leave their current school (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010; Prather-Jones, 2011; Gonzalez & Stallone Brown, 2008). Ndoye, Imig, and Parker (2010) suggest that teachers need a strong, supportive leadership team, especially during their first few years. When this element is lacking, teachers feel less satisfied with their job and more inclined to seek greater support and more effective leadership elsewhere. As previously stated, a teacher’s first few years are crucial, and should be viewed as an intense learning period (Friedrichsen, Chval, & Teuscher, 2007) with supportive administration to help them along the way. Ultimately, effective administrative
leadership provides the support that many teachers seek to confirm that their efforts are worth the time they invest.

Teachers want/need administrators who are willing to help them solve problems and listen to their concerns (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010). Every teacher, especially those new to the profession, needs support in order to become the best educators they can be. If a teacher feels defeated or discouraged, they are more likely to find satisfaction elsewhere, especially in other schools that are capable of filling their needs. Positive encouragement from peers and administrators is essential for teachers to feel successful, and to lower teacher attrition (Smethem, 2007). In addition, teachers feel that ineffective leadership sends a strong message about a school’s competence. Schools without effective leaders often have severe problems concerning academic achievement. Teachers need an encouraging environment that allows educators and administrators to share ideas and practices (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Teachers want to be heard so their concerns matter. Administrators who help guide teachers and listen to their concerns are more likely to retain teachers (Ndoyde, Imig, & Parker, 2010). Teachers feel that they have a vested interest when their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed. After all, teachers spend more time in the classroom than any other professionals in the building, and therefore, can find some weaknesses or areas in which administrative actions may be warranted.

**Teacher recruitment.** All schools want to recruit the best and brightest educators; however, recently, schools are “settling” to fill vacancies as a direct effect of teacher attrition. “Schools and districts must struggle to maintain standards for teaching quality while continuously recruiting bright new teachers and seeking to retain their most effective existing teachers” (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006, p. 173). Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006)
related the recruitment of teachers to supply and demand in the business world. They suggested that demand is greater than supply, and many schools are forced to hire teachers just to fill vacancies – teachers who may not be highly qualified. This situation impacts student achievement adversely and increases the pressure on schools from the top, down. Ingersoll (2004) commented that, “most of the hiring of new teachers is simply to fill spots vacated by teachers who just departed. And most of those departing are not doing so because of gray hair” (p. 5).

Schools need to be strategic about who they hire in order to give students the best possible education.

Statistically, schools hire more women than men; however, women also have the highest attrition rate (Gaytan, 2008; Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley, 2006). Since men are less likely to leave, schools and districts need to take that into consideration when recruiting educators. Among those who enter the workforce, Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) noted that minority teachers are less likely to leave education and have lower teacher attrition rates than whites. Based on research, minority males would be the group of educators with the lowest attrition rate. Schools and districts should narrow their focus when trying to recruit educators from those groups with lower attrition rates, while keeping in mind the need to find highly-qualified teachers.

Also, among those most likely to leave the field of education are teachers in the fields of mathematics and science and teachers who have higher academic ability (Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley, 2006; Mastekaasa, 2011). Although teachers who graduate with higher academic ability are less likely to enter the field of education, if they do, they are more likely to leave than their counterparts. Even more startling is the fact that alternatively certified teachers are less
likely to leave the field than university-prepared teachers (Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley, 2006). If teachers with higher measures of academic ability are less likely to enter the field of education, what does that say about current teachers? Are teachers generally unintelligent? Are university teacher preparation programs better suited for students with lower measures of academic ability? These questions have yet to be answered, but could potentially change the way schools recruit future educators.

While examining recruitment, schools may also want to observe the path one took when entering education. Studies conducted on institutions and programs with a strong focus on preparing teachers for high-poverty urban settings show hope that all is not lost for teachers willing to accept positions in such settings (Bleicher, 2011; Freedman & Appleman, 2009), while many more indicate that teacher candidates are inadequately prepared to serve underprivileged students in high-poverty urban settings (Anderson & Stillman, 2010; Donaldson, 2009; McKinney et al., 2008; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009). Donaldson’s (2009) analysis of Harvard’s graduate-level teacher education programs found that students who graduated after the program incorporated an urban focus were actually more likely to leave the field of teaching than former graduates.

Additional research shows that urban student-teaching internships can be ineffective (McKinney et al., 2008) and can lead to creating negative perceptions of teaching in high-poverty urban settings (Anderson & Stillman, 2010; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009). These findings are noteworthy, as they indicate a fundamental need to reconsider not only the methods, courses, and curricula currently utilized to train teacher candidates, but also the schools that provide the backdrop for this training. This is true for all teacher training programs, including those with an emphasis on high-poverty settings. Therefore, school administrators, particularly
those working in high-poverty, *Title I* schools, must examine all aspects of a teacher’s education prior to hiring.

**Teacher mentoring programs.** Research has found that teacher attrition is highest during a teacher’s first few years and even higher in schools with low-achieving, poor, and minority students (Gaytan, 2008). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggest that approximately 50% of educators leave the field within their first five years of teaching (as cited in Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010), making it imperative to support new educators through mentoring and buddy programs. Parker, Ndoye, and Imig (2009) found that teachers who were part of a mentoring/buddy program, received support, and met with their mentee/buddy at least once a month, were more likely to remain in the classroom longer than those who were not part of a mentoring/buddy program.

Based on research on job satisfaction and recruitment, teachers are more likely to stay in the field of education if their needs are met. Mentoring/buddy programs allow teachers to express their needs to someone who has been in their situation. Speaking with a co-worker is often easier than speaking with a boss. Effective mentoring programs make new teachers feel comfortable and welcomed. Oliver (2009) goes even farther than just suggesting that mentoring/buddy programs play a role in teacher retention, and suggests that teachers paired together by subject area are even more likely to stay in the field. She found that this has even more success in the areas of mathematics and science. Leimann, Murdock, and Waller (2008) examined a successful mentoring program in Wicomico County Public Schools and discovered three main components contributing to its success. They found that Wicomico County Public Schools provide their new employees with a summer workshop prior to entering the classroom to learn the rules and procedures of the county. Throughout the year, new employees were required
to attend monthly professional development sessions. These sessions were offered to any teacher with less than three years of teaching experience. Lastly, each new employee was paired with a highly qualified mentor. Wicomico County Public Schools show the power of effective mentoring programs in reducing teacher attrition. Schools and districts need to provide the appropriate support to new educators during those first few crucial years.

Summary

Understanding the causes of teacher attrition can help to retain quality teachers in the high-poverty, Title I schools that so desperately need them. This study examined the literature that surrounded the problem of teacher attrition. The literature reviewed for this study focused on answering three guided questions that encompassed the history of teacher attrition and the causes of teacher attrition, specifically the affect job satisfaction, recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs played on teacher attrition. Reviewing the literature on the history of teacher attrition and the factors that influenced teachers to either leave or stay in the classroom, specifically in high-poverty, Title I schools could only help to aid this case study.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Questions

1. Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, how can North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, increase teacher retention?
   
a. Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, what factors are causing teachers to leave the school?
   
b. Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, what factors are causing teachers to stay at the school?
c. Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, what plans can be initiated to increase retention?

The first question is the overarching research issue and relates directly to human capital theory. This question investigates the idea that individuals weigh the pros and cons of staying in, or leaving a profession based upon one’s investment shift prior to making a final decision (Kirby and Grissmer, 1993). With the goal of increasing the school’s teacher retention rate, the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers will be examined to better understand why NAHS teachers decided to leave or stay at the school.

The three remaining questions enable teachers to expand on their perceptions of North Anderson, and the factors that led them to their retention/attrition decisions. The first two sub questions can be related to burnout and human capital. Understanding the mindset of a teacher prior to making a decision regarding their choice of placement, and the role of burnout are crucial to understanding why a teacher decides to stay or leave a school. The third sub question, although not directly related to any particular theory, seeks a solution to the aforementioned questions on burnout and human capital theory. Allowing current and former teachers to reflect on their experiences at North Anderson High School and offering a solution to problems that may change their final decision may help to retain future NAHS teachers. Therefore, after all of the research questions have been answered, this study will hopefully assess why North Anderson High School teachers decide to stay or leave the school. In addition, the study aims to compile a list of ideas to potentially increase future teacher retention at North Anderson High School.

**Methodology**

**Rationale for a qualitative approach.** A qualitative research approach examines multiple layers of an existing problem (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) also suggests that a
qualitative research approach should be considered when there is a natural setting in which the researcher plays a vital role in data collection through pictures and words. Once the data has been thoughtfully collected, the researcher not only analyzes the data for trends, but also analyzes for the participants’ meaning (Maxwell, 2005). Focusing on the participants, the first step of this study was to identify the current and former teachers of North Anderson High School and the type of qualitative research that best fit the aforementioned problem. After the intended outcome was clearly established, a case study was selected as the type of qualitative research that made the most sense. Creswell (1998) states that a case study is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources” (p. 61). Yin (2003) states that “data for case studies can come from many sources of evidence” (p. 83). Employing a case study allowed for multiple sources of data collection including questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and school documentation. Yin (2003) states that interviews in a case study can be created as a formal survey/questionnaire if deemed necessary. While the survey/questionnaire would produce quantitative data, it would not be analyzed as an actual measure for the research, rather it would serve as only one component of the case study (Yin, 2003).

After the type of qualitative study was chosen (a case study) and the teachers were identified, a questionnaire was employed with open and close-ended questions, as well as several Likert scale items. The individual face-to-face interviews provided a much deeper understanding into a complex problem. While this study involves multiple sources of data collection (school documentation, questionnaires and interview data), it truly seeks to understand participants’ meaning of the problem in a natural setting by developing a larger picture of the issue of teacher
attrition at North Anderson High School. The following sequence was used in order to gain deeper understanding into the issue of teacher attrition at North Anderson High School:

Figure 1 represents the pathway taken in order to efficiently identify ways in which to increase teacher retention at North Anderson High School. Creating a systematic approach was essential for this study in order to truly understand the problem of teacher attrition and to present possible solutions to the issue. The questionnaire sought to uncover basic demographic data and lay the foundation for future individual interviews. The questionnaire contained open and close-ended questions, and was particularly useful as the issue of teacher attrition and its possible causes are potentially sensitive topics. Phellas, Bloch, & Seale (2011) suggest that using a questionnaire in a case study may alleviate stress on the participant if a topic is felt to be embarrassing in a face-to-face interview. After the questionnaire was complete, anyone who was comfortable discussing their views on the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School was asked to participate in the face-to-face interview section of the study.
Pathway to increase teacher retention

The reason behind the structure of this study closely follows Creswell’s (1998) four reasons for employing a qualitative research approach:

1. To answer research questions that begin with how and why.
2. To recognize a topic that needs to be examined.
3. To present a detailed view in order to present a problem.
4. To study subjects in their natural settings.

This study seeks to examine the issue of teacher attrition at North Anderson High School, a high poverty, Title I school. While examining the NAHS teacher attrition problem, this study’s main focus was on how North Anderson High School can increase teacher retention. This study also examined the specific factors that led teachers to stay or leave the school. Through a qualitative approach, the questionnaire and face-to-face interview questions focused on: (1) the meaning of the events to those involved; (2) the influences of context on those events; and (3) the process by which the events occurred (Maxwell, 2005). Following Creswell’s (1998) four main reasons to employ a qualitative research approach was the most logical for the aforementioned problem of practice.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was the first part of this case study. It was used to gather demographic data of the participants, and to gather participants’ perceptions of North Anderson High School and its teacher attrition problem. In order to collect all possible data, the questionnaire included open and close-ended questions and a Likert scale. While the questionnaire could be considered quantitative and qualitative, the key questions were structured to be qualitative. The key questions throughout the questionnaire were open-ended, allowing the participants to express their true feelings. The Likert scale allowed the participants to rate the
degree of influence certain common educational elements had on their decision to leave/stay at North Anderson High School. Additionally, demographic data provided by the questionnaire offered descriptive statistics of participants who remained at North Charleston High School and those who left.

The questionnaire was analyzed through descriptive statistics in order to uncover any themes and/or trends among the current and former North Anderson High School teachers. The study analyzed common themes and trends of perceptions between the two groups of teachers, and provided a detailed outline of the aforementioned problem. The purpose of identifying common themes and trends among the two groups was to determine the role of teacher burnout and human capital theory on their decisions to leave/stay at North Anderson High School, ultimately, seeking to uncover ways in which North Anderson High School could improve its teacher retention rate.

**Interview.** In order to truly uncover the factors that may have influenced teachers to leave/stay at North Anderson High School, one-on-one interviews were conducted. Yin (2003) points out that interviews are viewed as “essential sources of case study information” (p. 89). Conducting one-on-one interviews allowed for the researcher to delve deeper into the themes and trends of the questionnaire.

While one-on-one interviews in this study seek to gain deeper understanding of the aforementioned question and are somewhat structured, the interview was meant to “appear as guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin, 2003, p. 89) in order to allow participants’ true feelings to emerge. This study includes eight preset interview questions with two of the questions asking basic demographic information. The other six questions were used
as a guide to help participants expand on their perceptions of North Anderson High School and its teacher attrition problem.

**Site and participants.** This case study examines the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, *Title I* school. The study was conducted with current and former North Anderson High School teachers. North Anderson High School is a small “At-Risk” (AA) school (roughly 500 students) in a district with approximately 44,000 students. It has been labeled “At-Risk” for the last decade, and has even become a school that students often quit. With the “At-Risk” label, students are eligible to transfer to surrounding schools with a high absolute rating.

While student retention has been quite a problem, teacher attrition has been even more of an issue. Over the past six years, the state report card estimates that an average of 30% of teachers fail to return to North Anderson High School each year, a rate 10% higher than schools similar to NAHS across the state. Additionally, over the years, roughly 20% of North Anderson High School teachers received emergency certification because of the high teacher attrition rate (*Annual School Report Card*, 2008).

In order to truly understand the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, this study focused on current and former teachers. Criterion sampling was used to identify former teachers to participate in the study because of their possible reasons for leaving North Anderson High School. This study did not include former teachers who retired or relocated for family. Random sampling was used to identify current teachers to participate in the study. Both current and former teachers participated equally in both parts of the study.

Prior to data collection, North Anderson High School current and former teachers received a recruitment letter asking if they would be willing to participate in the study. After
participants were selected and consent forms were distributed, the questionnaire was the first instrument disseminated to the participants (15 current North Anderson High School teachers and 15 former North Anderson High School teachers). The first three questions of the questionnaire provided basic demographic information about the participants:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Ethnicity

Of the 15 current North Anderson High School teachers and 15 former North Anderson High School teachers, the majority (80.0%) of the current teachers were between the ages of 22 and 30 years of age, while the majority (66.6%) of the former teachers identified themselves as being between 26 and 35 years of age. As for the gender of the participants, of the current teachers, 73.3% were female, while only 66.7% of former teachers were female. Lastly, the third question asked participants the race that they best identified with. While 100.0% of former teachers identified themselves as Caucasian, only 80.0% of current teachers identified themselves as Caucasian, with 13.3% classifying themselves as African American and 6.7% identifying as “other.”

Table J1

Response to Question 1

This question was intended to collect basic demographic data (age) from the participants (15 current North Charleston High School teachers and 15 former North Charleston High School teachers). N=30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your age?</th>
<th>Percentage of Current NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
<th>Percentage of Former NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table J2
Response to Question 2
This question was intended to collect basic demographic data (gender) from the participants (15 current North Charleston High School teachers and 15 former North Charleston High School teachers). N=30

What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Current NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
<th>Percentage of Former NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table J3
Response to Question 3
This question was intended to collect basic demographic data (race) from the participants (15 current North Charleston High School teachers and 15 former North Charleston High School teachers). N=30

What race do you best identify with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Current NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
<th>Percentage of Former NCHS Teachers (n=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were then asked if they wanted to participate in the interview portion of the study in order to elaborate on possible questionnaire responses. The first four former teachers and the first four current teachers who responded were then invited to participate in the interview
portion of the study. Of those teachers participating in the interview portion of the study, 75.0% of the current teachers were female, while the former teachers were evenly split (50.0% female and 50.0% male).

North Anderson High School was chosen for the study because the researcher has worked there for eight years and currently serves as an assistant principal. The researcher also developed relationships with current and former teachers based on her previous positions. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, the researcher was a teacher at North Anderson High School, and served as a department chair and an instructional coordinator.

An investigation into North Anderson High School’s teacher attrition problem was chosen for this study because the researcher had seen the impact of teacher flight on teachers who remained at North Anderson High School, and on students.

**Data Collection**

In order to adequately answer the aforementioned research questions, a variety of instruments were used in this case study in order to collect appropriate data. Yin (2003) suggests that the six most commonly used sources of evidence when employing a case study are: documentation, interviews, archival records, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. While all six sources of evidence have their strengths and weaknesses, the researcher of this study chose to collect data using documentation, interviews/questionnaires, and direct observations.

Data from the questionnaire was collected, analyzed and coded for common themes in relation to the previously stated research questions. After the questionnaire was analyzed, the researcher recruited eight individuals for interviews (four current North Anderson High School teachers and four former North Anderson High School teachers). All individuals who
participated in the questionnaire were asked to take part in the interview section of the case study.

In order to examine the research questions in depth, after completion of the individual interviews, the researcher had them professionally transcribed, and then personally analyzed them for common themes. After analysis of the questionnaires and interviews was complete, the researcher referred to the school’s State Report Cards for years 2008 through 2012 and examined them for trends. The State Report Card was examined for trends among teacher make-up/demographics and the school history of teacher retention and attrition.

Table 1

Percentage of Teachers Returning

![Percentage of Teachers Returning](image)

Note: Data from SC Annual School Report Card Summary 2008-2012

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was the first part of data collection. Responses to the questionnaire helped to provide basic demographic information and insight into the reasons for teacher attrition at North Anderson High School and the possible steps that could be taken to
increase teacher retention. The questionnaire was completed by 30 North Anderson High School teachers, 15 current and 15 former teachers.

After extensive research of the literature on teacher attrition and retention, the questionnaire was developed to identify the reasons for the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, while focusing on job satisfaction, teacher recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs. The questionnaire began with general demographic questions asking participants their age, gender and race. Participants were also asked about their college experiences and the number of years they taught at North Anderson High School. Additionally, participants were asked about previous teaching experiences and if they had a mentor when they began teaching at North Anderson High School. These general questions helped to lay the foundation for the rest of the study, and explore trends among certain types of participants prior to entering the interview section of the study.

The second part of the questionnaire focused on job satisfaction. In order to uncover possible factors of job satisfaction or lack thereof, a five-point Likert scale was employed. It asked participants to take a human capital approach and rate the influence of certain educational elements on their decision to leave/stay at North Anderson High School. The five-point Likert scale asked participants to rate the following educational elements:

1. Leadership (people in leadership positions and their competence)
2. Administrative support (support provided by administrators)
3. Personal work achievement (experiencing personal success)
4. Working conditions (facility conditions, available material, work load in/outside of the classroom)
5. Salary (compensation for responsibilities)
6. Job stressors - (e.g., dealing with students/parents, paperwork, time)
7. Students (dealing with student issues, discipline, ability levels)
8. Co-workers (relationships with colleagues)
9. Additional responsibilities (IEP meetings, LRPs, lesson plans, meetings, TCTs, paperwork, lunch duty)
10. Accountability (being responsible for, and judged on student performance)

In addition to the five-point Likert scale, an open-ended question was included in the job satisfaction section. Teachers used the open-ended question as a platform to identify any additional educational elements that may have influenced their decision to stay /leave North Anderson High School that were not a part of the five-point Likert scale.

The first two questions in the third section were related to general teacher recruitment, asking participants which path they took when entering education, and how they were recruited to work at North Anderson High School. The last two questions were open-ended and asked participants to elaborate on the following:

1. The interview process and how prepared they were from the interview to teach at North Anderson High School (e.g., were they aware of the student population, the school history, successes and failures).
2. Their overall preparedness to teach at North Anderson High School (e.g., their schooling and previous teaching experiences or lack thereof).

The open-ended questions in this section allowed the participants to express true feelings rather than being confined to a few possible answers. These two questions helped to guide the conversation in the interview section of the study.
The last part of the questionnaire focused on teacher mentoring programs. The first two questions focused on participants who received a mentor; the second two questions focused on participants who served as mentors. Individuals who received a mentor or had no experience with teacher mentoring programs were asked if they believed a mentor would have changed their experiences at North Anderson High School. Participants who served as mentors were asked if they believed that the teacher mentoring program at North Anderson High School was successful, and if any of their mentees remained at North Anderson High School.

**Interview.** The questionnaire provided the foundation for the interview portion of the study. Four current and four former North Anderson High School teachers participated in the interview section of the study which, according to Yin (2003), provided essential information in a case study. The interview questions were based on the questionnaire topics, and provided a deeper exploration of factors regarding teacher attrition and possible solutions. All eight interviews were recorded and transcribed using Rev, an audio transcribing service; they were subsequently analyzed for trends.

**Data Analysis**

Maxwell (2005) cautions researchers to be careful throughout the research process. He adds that “one of the most common problems in qualitative studies is letting your unanalyzed field notes and transcripts pile up, making the task of final analysis much more difficult and discouraging” (p. 95). It was imperative for the researcher to collect and analyze all data in a timely manner in order to avoid the dreaded “pile up”.

In order to compare and rearrange qualitative data into categories, not simply counting data as in quantitative data analysis (Maxwell, 2008), the researcher first listened to the interviews and perused the questionnaires prior to analysis in order to seek common themes. Yin
(2003) suggests that although the questionnaire/survey will produce quantitative data, it is only one component in the case study or qualitative approach. Maxwell (2008) suggests that the first step in analyzing qualitative data, specifically interviews, is to listen to the interview tape prior to transcribing. He suggests that the researcher should take notes during this time in order to begin to consider themes, relationships and possible categories. After the researcher listened to the interviews and read the questionnaires, she created tentative substantive categories based on reoccurring themes in the interview and in questionnaires. The idea of substantive categories comes from Maxwell (2008), and is identified as usually being descriptive and “taken from participants’ concepts and beliefs” (p. 97). He adds that substantive categories in data analysis “can be used in developing a more general theory of what’s going on” (p. 97). After common themes were identified in substantive categories, the researcher interpreted the data (Saldana, 2009) in order to answer the previously stated research questions.

**Validity and Credibility**

In order to ensure an effective, credible case study, Creswell (1998) states that “it is important for the researcher to have contextual material available to describe the setting for the case” (p. 39). He states that “the researcher needs to have a wide array of information about the case to provide an in-depth picture of it” (p. 39). Creswell (2009) advises researchers to use multiple strategies to validate the accuracy of his/her findings. Based on Creswell’s (2009) suggestions, the researcher used the following strategies to check and validate the accuracy of her findings:

1. **Triangulation** – The researcher used a variety of data sources, including questionnaires, individual interviews, and school documentation.
2. Member checking – The researcher met with each of the participants from the individual interviews and gave them a copy of their transcribed interview. This allowed the interview participants to take an active role in reviewing their own data.

3. Rich thick description – The researcher described her data to properly convey her findings.

Gibbs (2007) states that transcripts should be checked with audio to avoid mistakes. Stake suggests that the researcher should allow participants to examine rough drafts containing any of their own words (as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 213). In this study, the researcher made sure that she had properly recorded all individual interviews, and then played back the interview for the participant, and allowed the participant to view the transcribed interview and the part of the draft featuring their words. Since the researcher worked as a teacher at North Anderson High School, this technique allowed for the participants’ feelings to be heard and any researcher bias to subside.

Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that all participants were protected in this study, the researcher created unsigned consent forms for the questionnaire participants and signed consent forms for the interview participants. The consent forms were approved by Northeastern University’s Internal Review Board (IRB) and informed participants of their rights throughout the research and the objective of this study. Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants could have withdrawn at any point during the research. Individuals who chose to participate were informed that their identity would remain anonymous throughout the write-up of the study.

Conclusion
Over the past century, it has become increasingly difficult to retain quality teachers in the classroom in certain types of schools. This study was designed to examine the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, *Title I* school. In order to truly understand the issue of teacher attrition, this research was guided by Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) burnout theory and human capital theory.

While research on teacher attrition reveals numerous reasons why teachers are leaving the classroom, this case study was intended to focus on current and former teachers at North Anderson High School. This researcher hopes that the information found throughout this case study will help to improve teacher retention at North Anderson High School and other similar schools.

**Chapter IV: Report of the Research Findings**

**Introduction**

As previously stated, the purpose of this case study was to examine and understand the challenge of teacher attrition at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, *Title I* School, and the influences causing teachers to extend or terminate their contracts. In order to uncover the factors behind the teacher attrition problem, this chapter has been divided into three sections: (1) a history of North Anderson High School; (2) an analysis of research questions; and (3) a summary of findings.

**The History of North Anderson High School**

The school chosen for this study was one high-poverty *Title I* high school in the South Carolina Lowcountry located in a crime-ridden neighborhood that serves a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged minority youth. As one of the lowest achieving high schools in South Carolina, North Anderson High School serves a predominantly impoverished,
transient, urban population, many of whom rely on social welfare services in order to survive. Locally, the school is known for its prolonged history of underachieving students and excessive attrition of both teachers and administrators. The school has never met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation and has been historically labeled “at-risk” under the South Carolina Annual Report Card Summary (“The State of South Carolina 2012 Annual School Report Card”, 2012).

According to *The State of South Carolina 2012 Annual School Report Card*, the school typically performs below the average of South Carolina high schools with similar populations in nearly every category. The 46.2 composite score index the school earned on the Federal Accountability Rating System resulted in a failing (F) letter grade. Alarmingly, the rate of senior-level students graduating on time (in 4 years) was 47.3%, compared to the 62.5% average of South Carolina schools with similar populations. Additional data from the 2012-13 academic year warrants serious concern for the future of the school as well as the students it serves:

1. 11.7% of the out-of-school suspensions or expulsions were for violent and/or criminal offenses
2. 8.2% of the student body officially dropped out of school; (c) 21.6% of the students were older than usual for their current grade level
3. 26.5% of students who took the South Carolina High School Assessment Program (HSAP) standardized test in English/Language Arts scored below basic
4. 34% of the students scored below basic in the Mathematics portion of the HSAP exam.

Surprisingly, the data reported here with regards to graduation rate and HSAP scores are *improvements* from years past.
Figures reported on the school’s 2012 Annual School Report Card (no data was available for the 2013 Annual School Report Card) from state-designed teacher surveys may, in part, begin to illustrate factors related to the school’s high teacher turnover (69.5% of teachers returned in 2012, 71.1% in 2013), especially taking into account that:

1. 54.5% of teachers were unsatisfied with the school’s learning environment
2. 32.5% of teachers were unsatisfied with the social and physical environment
3. 90.7% were unsatisfied with home-school relations (“The State of South Carolina 2012 Annual School Report Card”, 2012).

Collectively, these statistics necessitate an examination into the possibility that some of these job-related factors may, in some way, be connected to the school’s teacher attrition crisis.

With increased pressure to improve student achievement at the federal, state, and local levels, North Anderson High School has been a revolving door of rookie and veteran teachers, as well as administrators. Over the last seven years, North Anderson High School has endured eight changes in administrative leadership. During the interview portion of this study, one former teacher stated that during his four years at North Anderson High School, he worked under four principals.

While North Anderson High School has had significant challenges (academics, enrollment, administrative turnover, and teacher attrition), this case study focuses on the issue of teacher attrition with the hope that all four challenges are intertwined, and that by improving one challenge, all will eventually improve.

Research Question #1: Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, how can North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, increase teacher retention?
Through in-depth analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses, along with an examination of responses to the sub-research questions, the following themes emerged with regard to how North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, can increase teacher retention:

1. Effective/supportive leadership
2. Preparing teachers

**Effective/supportive leadership.** Throughout this study, concern about leadership/administration was a common theme. Teachers spoke candidly about the lack of administrative support and the lack of respect for those in leadership positions. The findings of this study indirectly show that having administrators who are capable, competent, and supportive will ultimately keep teachers at North Anderson High School.

The administration needs to have the tools to put additional support measures in place, such as a cohesive school-wide discipline plan, enforced by all staff members, and an effective mentoring program. As one teacher stated:

There were some years where we didn’t even have a school-wide discipline plan…then even if we did; it wasn’t necessarily enforced on any level. Some teachers did it, some teachers didn’t…everybody was on different pages.

While interviewees commented that not having the entire staff on the same page is a problem, effective leadership could help to solve that problem. They stated that a cohesive school-wide discipline plan, followed by and enforced by all the stakeholders of North Anderson High School could support teachers dealing with discipline. Many complained about the inconsistency among the administration when it came to discipline and not being supported by some administrators; a school-wide discipline plan could help solve that problem.
Many interviewees reported that another support measure that could be put into place at North Anderson High School would be an effective mentoring program. One teacher stated that an effective mentoring program would have changed her experience at North Anderson High School, but she was quick to note that she did have great colleagues to go to if she needed help. Another teacher stated “mentoring would be really supportive if it were done correctly with a strong mentoring program, not sporadic and unchecked.” Although North Anderson High School has a one-year mentoring program for teachers who have never taught before, teachers need to be supported for more than just a year at North Anderson High School. North Anderson High School needs a leader who will provide adequate support for teachers no matter the experience of the teacher.

**Preparing teachers.** While the backgrounds of the participants varied, no one felt that they were prepared to teach at North Anderson High School. One teacher stated that North Anderson High School teachers aren’t “adequately prepared to teach…they’re struggling significantly…they expect one thing going into this job and they experience something different.” Whether the teacher took a traditional university program or an alternative route into education, nothing could truly prepare them to teach at North Anderson High School. One teacher stated that “I was aware this school was challenging, but I don’t think anyone would be able to explain/prepare me to teach at North Anderson High School.” Another teacher, who was hired via a phone interview, stated “some background of the school was discussed, but it did not prepare me.” While this may be the sentiment of many current and former North Anderson High School teachers, North Anderson High School could take steps to better prepare its teachers prior to the beginning of their classes.
One teacher suggested that North Anderson High School could try to give new teachers extensive professional development on classroom management prior to the start of school. Allowing those new teachers to observe summer school classes and having classroom management workshops led by successful North Anderson High School teachers could potentially better prepare new teachers to teach at North Anderson High School. Leaders of North Anderson High School need to understand that not all of their teachers have teaching experience, and some lack degrees in education. For some teachers, such as those participating in Teach for America (TFA) or South Carolina’s Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE), North Anderson High School is their first classroom experience and they need as much preparation as possible prior to their first day on the job.

One teacher stated that her classroom was only made available a week before school started. North Anderson High School has to give its teachers ample time to prepare for their students. Another teacher stated that she “lacked appropriate materials” for the first day of school and that she had to make do with what she had. Having classrooms ready for teachers to begin working in and providing teachers with appropriate materials needs to be a priority for North Anderson High School leaders.

The teachers at North Anderson High School are asking for help to be better prepared and they need someone to listen. Help can come in the form of professional development sessions on classroom management, meetings with teachers who have been successful at North Anderson High School and the tools to be properly prepared for the first day of school.

**Research Sub-Question #1: Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are causing teachers to leave the school?**
Following a thorough examination of individual interviews and questionnaire responses, these themes emerged as factors causing teachers to leave North Anderson High School:

1. Lack of administrative support
2. Leadership

**Lack of administrative support.** The teachers spoke candidly about the lack of administrative support at North Anderson High School. On the questionnaire, 93.3% of former teachers rated administrative support as a factor influencing their decision to leave North Anderson High School. All of the teachers said something about a lack of administrative support, whether in reference to discipline, class preference, or additional tasks asked of the faculty.

A lack of administrative support related to discipline was the most common theme. Teachers reported that they were not prepared for the discipline problems prior to entering North Anderson High School because student behavior was never addressed in the interview process, and their post-secondary educational experience never taught them classroom management strategies. After teachers began to work at North Anderson High School, they were given their students and metaphorically told “good luck.” Teachers noted that it would have been more helpful to have extensive professional development on classroom management techniques prior to the onset of the school year. While discipline was brought up throughout the research, most teachers did not specifically state discipline as a factor; rather, they identified the lack of support by administrators when dealing with discipline. Teachers at North Anderson High School want to address discipline problems in their classroom correctly and have administrative support for their decisions. One former teacher even stated that the greatest factor causing teachers to leave the school is:
a lack of support with discipline, 100%, especially among new teachers who really struggle with classroom management…You feel like you are doing everything that you’re supposed to and it’s all for nothing…the kids are walking out, slamming the door, and they’re (teachers) writing kids up, and nothing’s happening to them. They just come back the next day and the behavior is repeated or eventually it even gets worse because the kids know nothing’s going to happen to them.

When asked why she believes student behavior is like that, the teacher stated:

I think it’s a product of their environment. It’s hard because it’s obviously a product of their environment, but one of my schools that I’m at now is our (North Anderson High School’s) feeder middle, and these kids don’t act like that there. It’s weird, actually this is the first year I’ve seen how that school’s run and what is expected of those kids, and I’m not saying that they’re perfect, by any means. They still…there are issues there…but the behavior as far as being disrespectful and just thinking they can get away with anything is like night and day.

That same teacher felt as though a lack of administrative support regarding discipline allowed the students to act any way they wanted.

Teachers feel that they are not being “backed up” when it comes to discipline. If a teacher writes a student up for a discipline infraction, he/she wants to know that the student is going to be reprimanded for their behavior, not just put back in class. One teacher stated:

There were some years where we didn’t even have a school-wide discipline plan, which is insane for a school like this. Then even if we did, it wasn’t necessarily enforced on any level…Then the teachers that did enforce it…the administrators wouldn’t back that teacher.
Whether or not North Anderson High School has a school-wide discipline plan, the teachers wanted to know that the rules for individual classrooms were supported by the administration. If not, the teachers would continue to struggle in their domain.

While administrative support with discipline was a common thread throughout all of the interviews, some teachers felt that they were not supported when teaching in their subject area. One former band teacher stated that “being a Title I school, the importance of core classes and the precedence placed on students passing standardized tests” impeded students from enrolling in his elective classes. Struggling students were placed in remediation classes for tested areas and lacked the time for elective classes. With no administrative support for students enrolling in elective classes, the non-core subject area classes had little to no enrollment, which doesn’t help to grow a program.

Teachers of elective classes were not the only ones who stressed the lack of administrative support. One science teacher said that her main reason for leaving North Anderson High School was “being ripped away” from her seniors to teach freshman when she has a master’s degree in marine science. The administration no longer allowed her to teach marine science classes for which she was originally hired because they said they needed her to teach freshman physical science classes. Hired to teach one subject by one principal and moved without notice because a new administration came in forced this teacher to leave the school. When asked who eliminated her marine science seniors, she stated “the new principal.” She added that the new administration never discussed teachers’ past experience or what they were originally hired to teach, they just assigned people as they pleased. When she stated her concerns to the administration, she felt that they neither cared nor supported her. Many of the
North Anderson High School teachers felt they lacked an administrative team that cared about what they wanted or were able to teach.

Many respondents also pointed out the lack of administrative support regarding additional tasks. Telling the teachers that something is due or a meeting will take place at the last minute was an example of a lack of administrative support for teachers’ personal time. Teachers felt as though they were experiencing work overload at the hands of the administration. In addition to discussing not being “backed up,” one teacher stated that “sometimes we (the teachers) are taken for granted. We’re told at the very last minute about things after school that we are required to attend.” When a teacher’s time is not viewed as important by their superiors, they feel a general lack of support.

**Leadership.** Ninety-three percent of the former North Anderson High School teachers stated that people in leadership positions influenced their decision to leave North Anderson High School. Of that 93.4%, 46.7% of former teachers said that people in leadership positions significantly influenced their decision to leave, while only 20% of current teachers stated that people in leadership positions significantly influenced their decision to stay at North Anderson High School. While that may not sound profound, 60% of the current teachers have served under one principal in the last three years, while those at the school prior to the last three years have experienced an influx of administrators.

Due to the lack of administrative stability over the past decade, there is a “general lack of quality leadership” at the school. Having multiple principals in one year can seriously impact the effectiveness of school leadership. Although only one principal left voluntarily, the rest were named and replaced by the district office because of the continuous school failure. Some teachers felt that certain principals were “doomed” from the start because of their lack of
experience, and others could have succeeded if they were given adequate time on the job.

Another teacher stated that there were “different rules, different principals. Each principal had their own policies and procedures and the teachers, although constant, had to follow the leader.”

Another teacher said that North Anderson High School’s main weakness was the administration. She stated:

Administration. Constant turnover of administration with…constant changing of policies and an altogether lack of cohesion. A lot of times there was very poor communication…by the time it reaches the teachers, it seems like there’s a lot of stuff that’s lost in translation.

With an influx of administration come new rules and protocols. Each administration brought their own rules and ideas for “fixing” North Anderson High School which greatly affected the remaining teachers. North Anderson High School has only recently stabilized in terms of administration, with a principal who has served the school for three years.

In-depth analysis of the data from the interviews and questionnaires indicated that leadership (people in leadership positions and their competency) and administrative support were the biggest factors influencing teachers to leave North Anderson High School.

Research Sub-Question #2: Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are enabling teachers to stay at the school?

Current and former North Anderson High School teachers noted that several factors are retaining teachers at North Anderson High School:

1. Students
2. Co-workers
3. Personal work achievement
**Students.** Through deep analysis of the questionnaire data and interviews, one common theme emerged when discussing why teachers continued to stay at North Anderson High School: the students and the relationships the teachers built with them. While the issue of administrator support with discipline came up as the most common factor regarding why teachers leave North Anderson High School, the relationships teachers built with their students seemed to overpower the lack of administration support for current teachers. Overall, 73.4% of current teachers felt that their relationships with students influenced their decision to stay at North Anderson High School. One teacher stated that the most important “draw at North Anderson High School for me are the relationships I’ve built with students in my classroom… I know that a major factor in students success/failure is stability and I feel as a teacher, part of my job is to provide a stable environment for my students.”

The overwhelming love for their students was apparent throughout each interview, specifically for one former North Anderson High School teacher. During the interview, this teacher discussed his interaction with one student during the school’s reconstitution. During this time, every teacher had to reapply for his/her job and it was unclear which teachers would be offered a job. He stated:

One particular student I can remember telling me the day I informed them that I may not come back and that it wasn’t my choice. She was upset and she said “well I thought you were just another skinny white guy who was going to leave after one year,” as the teacher before me had done. I said “No. I want to be here.” I felt obligated to the kids that they needed somebody who was consistent; who would be there for them and take care of them….I stuck it out and persevered.
The teachers made it known throughout the interviews and the questionnaire that the students pulled at their “heart strings,” and the school’s strength was its students, not the administration. One teacher even stated that “when you have a great day at North Anderson High School, there’s no job in the world that could give you a better feeling.” The teachers overwhelmingly stated that once they “got through” to the students and the students believed that they cared about them, unbreakable teacher-student relationships were built. The students had to believe that the teachers were there to stay and not going to abandon them like so many previous teachers. One teacher noted that “although discipline problems arose, you bent over backwards to give them (the students) what they didn’t have outside of school. School was their safe place.” Another teacher stated that the only reason teachers stay at North Anderson High School is “the kids. That’s the only reason anybody would stay there. That’s it.”

**Co-workers.** While the impact of the student-teacher relationships was apparent throughout the data collection process, the relationships built among co-workers was another common theme. Overall, 73.3% of current North Anderson High School teachers said that their co-workers influenced their decision to remain at the school. Forty percent of current North Anderson High School teachers said their relationships with co-workers significantly influenced their decision to stay. One teacher stated that “overall, the relationships I’ve built…are the best…life-long friends.” Knowing that co-workers/friends were going through the same experiences allowed the teachers of North Anderson High School to connect faster. One teacher noted that “you have a common bond that you taught at North Anderson.” Many of the teachers discussed the unbreakable friendships were formed among their co-workers and how meaningful each relationship was. Another teacher stated that the North Anderson High School faculty is “on this journey together and they understand what they’re going through.”
It was apparent that the teachers at North Anderson High School loved the people with whom they worked; one teacher stated that she gets inspired to stay at North Anderson High School when she hears about some teachers’ longevity at the school, but she gets very discouraged and thinks about leaving when colleagues leave North Anderson. The majority of current and former teachers discussed the important role their co-workers played in keeping them at North Anderson High School, even if it was only for a few years.

**Personal work achievement.** Personal work achievement was the third theme to emerge while investigating which factors kept teachers at North Anderson High School. While lack of personal accomplishment is one of Leiter & Maslach’s (2000) three stages of burnout theory, personal accomplishments/achievement was one factor that kept teachers at North Anderson High School. Of the current North Anderson High School teachers who chose to participate in this study, 73.3% said that personal work achievement or personal success stories influenced their decision to remain at North Anderson High School. During the interview process, one teacher stated that he set personal goals for himself while at North Anderson High School and wanted to accomplish them, even when all of his colleagues were leaving. Once he reached those goals, he felt that nothing else was keeping him at North Anderson and it was time to move on to another school.

I set goals for myself. I set goals for five years. I wanted to stay for five years. A lot of that came from my first year. They reconstituted the school and the teachers I started working with were removed, but I set goals for myself to stay and accomplish. I was able to accomplish just about all of them in the four years I was there.

The feeling of accomplishment and making a difference kept teachers at North Anderson High School.
Research Sub-Question #3: Based upon the perception of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, what plans can be initiated to increase retention?

Through thorough exploration of questionnaire and interview responses, current and former North Anderson High School teachers noted only one common issue that could help increase retention at North Anderson High School: increased administrative support.

**Increase of administrative support.** None of the participants claimed to have the answer to fix the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, but all believed that an increase of administrative support would improve teacher retention. While each participant’s definition of administrative support was different, the overarching theme was the same. One teacher identified administrative support as recognition:

Simple recognition would go a long way. My first year I got a little thank you note from one of the assistant principals. I think that went a long way. That first year…was rough, but getting that note was one of those things. It was a push, the encouragement to keep going, that what you’re doing is noticed and seen as important, seen as beneficial. That teacher believed that what he did “wasn’t necessarily respected” and a little thank you note gave him the encouragement to continue on. North Anderson High School teachers need to feel valued by their administration. One teacher stated that the administration needs to treat teachers as though they are valued educators. Another teacher stated that in order to increase teacher retention at North Anderson High School, the administration needs to treat the teachers like professionals. She stated:

Treating teachers like they are valued, not just saying it, not just saying we’re good teachers, not just saying were cared about, but showing it. Treating us like adults,
allowing us to take a day off if needed, giving us the courtesy and telling us ahead of time when we’re needed to do something.

One teacher said that having the administration support the teachers would boost morale at North Anderson High School. She added that the administration didn’t have to buy her anything, but to support her decisions in her classroom. She stated that “just to know that if you write a kid up…something should happen to that child.” The job of administration is to support teachers and to make them feel that they are not alone. That teacher stated that it’s “just an issue of somebody doing their job.” She went on to say that just having the administration support her in the classroom would keep teachers at North Anderson High School, especially new teachers.

The teachers made it clear that they wanted the administration to be there for them, whether in the form of a thank you note, positive feedback, giving the teachers the courtesy of letting them know ahead of time when something is due, or supporting them with dealing with discipline.

Summary of Findings

A total of 30 teachers participated in this case study. Of the 30 participants, 15 current and 15 former teachers participated in the questionnaire. Four of the former and four of the current teachers volunteered to take part in the interview portion of the study. The data collected through the questionnaire and interview responses, along with information from the Annual School Report Card, provided the researcher with the opportunity to uncover the factors that were causing teachers to leave and stay at North Anderson High School. After exploring the factors that cause teachers to extend and terminate their contracts at North Anderson High School, the researcher was then able to identify how North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, could increase its teacher retention.
As a result of extensive, in-depth analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses given by participants, along with the public school documentation, the researcher found the following:

1. The factors that are causing teachers to leave North Anderson High School are a lack of administrative support.
2. The factors that are enabling teachers to stay at North Anderson High School are the students, co-workers, and personal work achievement/accomplishments.
3. If administrative support improved, teachers believed that teacher attrition at North Anderson High School would be less of a problem.

As a result of the findings and analysis of data from current and former North Anderson High School teachers, the school and school district can initiate several proactive steps to advance teacher retention. If the school wants to improve teacher retention, the administration needs to be more effective and supportive, and the teachers need to be better prepared prior to their first day at school. The school district needs to examine who they place in leadership positions at North Anderson High School and review the background of each administrator. Also, those administrators need to make sure that the teachers’ needs are being met prior to the beginning of the school year. Giving teachers their schedules before the end of summer, providing requested professional development, and making sure that all classrooms are ready for instruction prior to the first day of school should be a priority of the North Anderson High School administration and staff.

Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

This chapter reviews the problem of practice and the methodology implemented throughout this study. Discussion of the researcher’s major findings, along with the findings as
they relate to the previously stated theoretical framework and literature review are also presented. In addition, this chapter discusses the significance of the study, its limitations and validity, as well as conclusion and recommendations for future research.

**Review of the Problem of Practice**

Throughout the last century, teacher attrition has become a major problem especially in high poverty settings. Concerns related to teacher staffing and retention are particularly troublesome in schools that serve large numbers of economically underprivileged students, namely in urban settings, where high poverty and insufficient access to academic resources are typical (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Donaldson, 2009; Ingersoll, 2004; Jacob, 2007; McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008; Smith & Smith, 2009; Siwatu, Frazier, Osaghae, & Starker, 2011; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009). While teacher attrition can cost a school roughly $8000 per teacher (Ingersoll, 2003), it costs the nation approximately $4.9 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) and is causing severe damage to the quality of education (Wang, 2007). As these teachers abandon the schools most in need of highly-qualified, committed, caring teachers, student achievement hangs in the balance.

The purpose of this study was to investigate attrition at North Anderson High School and the influences that cause teachers to extend or terminate their contracts. By examining the teacher attrition influences, this study could offer teachers, administrators, and district personnel a possible solution to North Anderson High School’s teacher attrition dilemma.

**Review of Methodology**

In order to understand the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, *Title I* school, and find a possible solution for the school’s future teachers, this study was structured to answer the following research questions:
1. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, how can North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, increase teacher retention?
   a. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are causing teachers to leave the school?
   b. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are enabling teachers to stay at the school?
   c. Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what plans can be put into place to increase retention?

To further examine the teacher attrition problem at North Anderson High School, a case study was employed to provide analysis through school documentation, face-to-face interviews, and questionnaires. This case study focused on 30 North Anderson High School teachers (15 current and 15 former). After the 30 teachers participated in the study questionnaire, eight teachers (four current and four former) volunteered to take part in face-to-face interviews. The responses were analyzed for the emergence of common themes, and were subsequently interpreted in order to address the aforementioned research questions.

**Discussion of Major Findings**

The following themes emerged through in-depth analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses:

1. The current and former teachers of North Anderson High School desired a supportive administration.
2. The current and former teachers of North Anderson High School sought a consistent and competent administrative team.
3. The current and former teachers of North Anderson High School believed that the students and their co-workers significantly influenced their decisions to stay at North Anderson High School.

**Yearning for a supportive administration.** The current and former North Anderson High School teachers spoke often and openly about a lack of administrative support. Nearly all of the teachers who participated in this case study mentioned the impact of poor administrative support on their decision to leave or consider leaving North Anderson High School. Administrative support was mentioned among class preference, workload, and most notably, discipline.

Current and former teachers suggested that administrators were not open and honest about student behavior during the teachers’ interviews. Although many teachers knew the student body of North Anderson, they felt that they were not prepared, or even informed of the student behavior issues they would encounter on the first day of school, onward. Some teachers even stated that they felt as though they were “left out to dry” when it came to student discipline. The teachers yearned for the administrators to support them in and out of the classroom. When a teacher wrote a discipline referral, the teachers wanted to know that the administrators were taking the infraction seriously and giving consistent, appropriate punishments as necessary. The teachers wanted administrators who were going to implement and follow a school-wide discipline plan; however, many noted that such was not the case.

**A consistent, competent administrative team.** Although administrator support, and the lack thereof were discussed in-depth by many of the teachers, some also stated that school leaders influenced their decision to leave North Anderson High School.
Leadership has been a major topic at North Anderson High School in recent years. Over the last decade, North Anderson High School has had an influx of administrators. Some administrators have left on their own accord, while most were forced to leave for their inability to change the school. The attrition among the administrators failed to ease the minds of teachers who already believed that the administration lacked competence. While no principal was directly identified, some teachers believed that a few principals were “doomed” from the beginning due to their lack of experience. The teachers often noted that they sought an experienced administrative team to guide them through their experiences, although few believed this would happen.

**Relationships with students.** While discussing why teachers stayed or considered staying at North Anderson High School, many current and former teachers stated that students and their relationships with them inspired them to consider staying at the school. The North Anderson High School teachers clearly asserted that they were not pleased with the school leadership, but made sure to note that students were the school’s greatest strength. Although the teachers expressed concern about the lack of administrative support regarding discipline, it was evident that the relationships with students were positive influences encouraging teachers to consider remaining at North Anderson High School.

Both current and former North Anderson High School teachers overwhelming loved their student unconditionally. Many of them stated that they would have bent over backwards to give their students anything they needed. The teachers had so much love for their students that many considered staying at North Anderson High School simply because they wanted to provide their students with the stability they lacked at home; they wanted to fill the void in their students’ lives because they saw a true need for love and support.
**Relationships built among co-workers.** Relationships built with students were not the only relationships that teachers of North Anderson High School cherished. North Anderson High School teachers stressed the importance of their co-workers and the role that they played in each others’ lives.

North Anderson High School teachers weren’t just co-workers; they were “lifelong” friends. Many of the teachers experienced similar trials and tribulations - commonalities that led to deep bonds. Teachers stated that they built these friendships with their colleagues because they understood how each other felt and they did not feel so alone in their experiences.

**Findings Related to Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) burnout theory and human capital theory. Both theories provided a framework from which to examine why teachers at high-poverty, Title I schools, in particular, teachers at North Anderson High School, choose to leave the classroom.

**Burnout theory.** Burnout, as defined by Maslach & Leiter (1997), is a job stress that involves a lingering response to chronic job stressors. They believe that within the burnout theory, there are three stages: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). Only two stages were evident throughout this case study.

Stage one of Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) burnout theory focuses on emotional exhaustion. Many of the teachers stated that they felt frustrated and overwhelmed while teaching at North Anderson High School. They were frustrated with the lack of administrator support in general. Teachers felt discouraged within their own classrooms because of this lack of support. If a teacher needed assistance with classroom management or to remove student due to a discipline
issue, the teachers wanted to know that they were supported in their decision to remove a student, but this was rarely the case. Instead, students were sent back to the classroom and teachers felt that their authority was undermined. Instead of feeling supported and continuing to improve their classroom management, some teachers began to feel helpless and discouraged.

Stage two of burnout theory involves the concept of depersonalization. Depersonalization is a direct cause of emotional exhaustion and occurs when there is a disconnection from others (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). After the teachers felt they were not being supported by the administration, many noted that they were no longer able to trust or respect their leaders. When respect and trust are no longer components in a relationship, a true relationship ceases to exist.

The third stage of burnout theory involves a lack of personal achievement. A loss of one’s sense of competency and a lack of productivity at work lead to a decrease in personal achievement (Leiter & Maslach, 2000). Although teachers experienced the first and second stages of Maslach & Leiter’s (1997) burnout theory, none stated that they experienced a lack of personal achievement. In fact, teachers stated that personal accomplishments kept some of them at North Anderson High School longer than they wanted.

**Human capital theory.** The framework for analyzing one’s choice of occupation, in particular where one chose to work, was also examined through a human capital lens. This approach suggests that individuals weigh the pros and cons of staying in a chosen job (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). When choosing a place of employment, or a change of employment, research shows that teachers consider working conditions (Wang, 2007; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Greenlee and Brown, 2009), job stressors (Andera and Bullock, 2010; Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser, 2008), preparation programs (Mastekaasa, 2011; Cochran-Smith, Cannady, McEachern, Piazza,
Power, and Ryan, 2010), mentoring programs (Oliver, 2009; Thompson, 2008; Corbell, Osborne, and Reiman, 2010; Leimann, Murdock, and Waller, 2008; Parker, Ndoye, and Imig, 2009), and the type of school (Shen, 1997). Throughout the research, participants stated a variety of factors that influenced their decision to leave North Anderson High School. Many teachers stated that they were not properly prepared to teach at North Anderson High School, through insufficient teacher preparation programs or inadequate information provided by the administrators prior to their employment. The teachers also mentioned the stresses of not feeling supported by administration and of the issues related to student discipline. Although all of the teachers understood that they applied to work at North Anderson High School, many lacked precise knowledge about what that meant. For some, after they experienced the school on their own terms, they decided that it was not a good fit.

**Findings Related to Literature Review**

The literature reviewed for this case study provided insight into the last 100 years of public education and the possible causes of teacher attrition as seen by others across the country, including job satisfaction, recruitment, and mentoring.

**The history of public education.** In the early 1900s, public education was viewed as a treasure, and teachers were respected and honored (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). That slowly changed as education was treated more like a business. Teachers were no longer being supported or respected like educators of the past, but felt the devaluing of education (Dworkin, 1987), and were soon being treated like business employees (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). The teachers in this study followed past educators’ feelings as they discussed how they felt a lack of respect and support from their administrative team. The teachers wanted to feel that they were doing a good job, and were not all alone. They wanted to feel valued.
Causes of teacher attrition. While educational researchers have investigated the link between working with particular co-workers and one’s decision to leave or remain in the profession/school (Hancock & Scherff, 2010), the teachers in this study only strengthened that notion. Seventy-three percent of current North Anderson High School teachers stated that people with whom they worked influenced their decision to stay at the school. Of the 73%, 40% of the current North Anderson High School teachers stated that their co-workers significantly influenced their decision to remain at North Anderson. A mentor or a co-worker providing support and friendship played a significant role in the lives of the teachers at North Anderson High School. Throughout this study, it was apparent that current and former North Anderson High School teachers valued their relationships with co-workers and considered those relationships when determining whether they wanted to continue teaching at North Anderson High School.

While this study found that co-workers helped to keep teachers at North Anderson High School, the participants made it clear that job dissatisfaction ultimately pushed teachers away. Weigi (2007) stated that leadership and administrator support was a key element in job satisfaction. This study found that many of the current and former North Anderson High School teachers didn’t believe that individuals in leadership positions were supportive. An overwhelming 93.3% of former North Anderson High School teachers stated that the lack of administrative support influenced their decision to leave the school. The teachers of North Anderson High School yearned for an administrative staff that would support them in all aspects of their career.

While the need for administrative support was apparent throughout all aspects of this study and was a clear influence on teacher attrition, recruitment did not play as large a role in
whether a teacher decided to leave or stay at North Anderson High School. While many teachers in this study felt as though they were not adequately prepared for their first day of school at North Anderson High School, the educational route one took into education did not make a difference in one’s preparation. Whether a teacher completed a traditional university program or an alternative academic route, many participants believed that no educational training could have prepared them to teach at North Anderson High School. Some teachers suggested the importance of a more in-depth and authentic interview process, while others suggested intensive professional development led by master North Anderson teachers prior to the first day of school.

**Final Analysis**

This case study sought to understand the teacher attrition problem at one high-poverty, Title I school and uncover possible solutions to increase teacher retention. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the aforementioned problem, the researcher answered the following four questions: (1) Based on the perceptions of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, how can North Anderson High School, a high-poverty, Title I school, increase teacher retention? (2) Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are causing teachers to leave the school? (3) Based on the perceptions of North Anderson High School teachers and former teachers, what factors are enabling teachers to stay at the school? (4) Based on the perception of current and former North Anderson High School teachers, what plans can be initiated to increase retention? In order to answer these questions, a questionnaire and individual interviews were conducted to gather data from 30 current and former North Anderson High School teachers. After the data was collected, it was and used develop “a more general theory of what’s going on” (Maxwell, 2008, 97).
After all of the data was collected and analyzed, the researcher concluded that a lack of administrative support and those in leadership positions significantly influenced the teachers of North Anderson to pursue other jobs. The data also shows that co-workers and students played a large role in retaining teachers at North Anderson High School. Overall, the researcher concluded that if North Anderson High School wants to increase teacher retention, leaders need to become more supportive of their teachers. The leaders need to better prepare their teachers for the first day of school, support the teachers in and out of the classroom, and make them feel professionally respected.

Significance of the Study

While the current study is unable to make generalizations applicable to the larger U.S. education system, it retains value in the context of the specific school in which it took place. The findings of this study will be shared with the school leadership team and district officials in order to consider individual and collective ways in which the school can seek to improve teacher retention for the greater good of the student body it serves.

At the very least, a serious discussion needs to ensue in which the administration and other members of the leadership team consider ways in which the school can support and retain quality teachers in order to improve the overall academic achievement of students. This study will be used to encourage the leadership team to reflect on the job-related factors that teachers indicated as impacting their decision to continue or abandon their teaching positions at the school.

Limitations

The findings presented in this study offer a beginning point for a much larger analysis and discussion regarding the teacher attrition dilemma facing high-poverty, Title I schools across
the United States. Many considerations need to be taken into account before any broad generalizations can be suggested that would fundamentally change the way we think about retaining teachers in high-poverty, Title I schools.

In hindsight, the research design presented in this case study was limited as a descriptive analysis of the data. Additionally, the research tool (questionnaire) could have been revamped to focus on the factors most relevant to current and former North Anderson High School teachers. As stated previously, this research design did not consider the notion that some job-related factors would be positively correlated to teachers’ decisions to continue or vacate their teaching positions in the school, while others would be negatively associated with teacher retention. As such, a research design that includes further analysis of these factors is certainly pertinent.

In order to consider far-reaching implications for high-poverty high schools across the U.S., a much more encompassing study would need to be completed. This study served as a single case of one high-poverty Title I high school in South Carolina, and therefore, cannot imply that the findings could apply to any other high-poverty Title I high schools, or any high-poverty Title I elementary or middle schools that feed into the high school used for this study.

Validity

Throughout this case study, the researcher made sure to follow Creswell’s (2009) advice for ensuring an effective, credible case study. The researcher checked and validated the accuracy of her findings using Crewell’s (2209) suggestions of triangulation, member checking, and rich thick description. The researcher also followed the beliefs of Gibbs (2007) when she checked the transcripts with audio to avoid any mistakes. Overall, the researcher made sure that she properly recorded all of the individual interviews and then played them back to the participants to ensure that the participants fully understood their own words.
Future Research

Teacher attrition is, and has been, a significant topic in education over the past several years. Much of the research on teacher attrition focuses on job satisfaction as a whole and not on administrators. Future research needs to focus on those in leadership positions and the support they provide. In particular, it is this researcher’s hope that the findings of this study will address the need for further focus on leadership and administrative support when discussing teacher attrition. Research on the roles leadership and administrative support play in teacher attrition is needed in high-poverty, Title I schools in order to draw generalizations between this case study and other similar schools throughout the country.

Conclusion

Teacher attrition is a widespread problem in the U.S. educational system. Schools that serve high populations of disadvantaged youth have a seemingly endless revolving door of teachers, all while working tirelessly to close the all-too-familiar achievement gap that exists across racial and socioeconomic divides. As schools are pushed to do all they can to improve academic achievement to ensure that students will be properly prepared for post-secondary learning and competing in the global economy, widespread systemic change must be initiated in order to improve the retention of highly qualified teachers. Nowhere is the issue of teacher preservation more problematic than in schools serving large populations of at-risk youth, those most in need of committed, competent educators.

With the teacher attrition dilemma, there is widespread documentation to warrant future concern. Additionally, with numerous variables at play, there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be applied to improve issues related to staffing effective teachers. The literature points to job satisfaction, teacher recruitment, teacher mentoring programs, and individual job-related
factors as strong predictors of a teacher’s likeliness to choose to remain in, or leave their teaching position at a high-poverty school.

Individual schools and those leading them are not absolved from accepting their share of the blame in the teacher attrition dilemma. When considering job-related factors associated with teacher attrition, schools have an ethical responsibility to improve the retention of effective teachers by controlling those variables within the context of the job they are able to manage. This study found that leadership, administrative support, co-workers and students are the top four factors impacting teachers’ decisions to remain/vacate their teaching position at the school chosen for this study. If the leadership does not make a genuine effort to further investigate and address those factors impacting teacher retention, no realistic systemic change can be expected.

**Afterword**

When I first began writing my thesis, I was a classroom teacher seeking to understand why my colleagues and friends were leaving the school where I taught. My research sought to understand the teacher attrition problem at my school and the factors that caused teachers to leave. Throughout my research, I found that most teachers left the school because of the people in leadership positions and an overall lack of administrator support.

During the last three years writing, researching and collecting data for my thesis, my career changed drastically, largely in part to my own research. At the end of my first year of research, my principal promoted me to Instructional Coordinator (a position I thought I would be in for a while) to help support teachers to become more effective in their own classrooms. By the time I finished collecting all of my data, I was given another opportunity to put my research into practice. The principal asked me to become Interim Assistant Principal until I finished my principal certification, at which time I would officially become the Assistant Principal.
Scared out of my mind, but excited for a new journey, I humbly accepted the Interim Assistant Principal position and decided to take what I had learned through my research and apply it to my new position. I needed to understand that the teachers wanted an administrator whom they could trust and knew would support them no matter what the circumstances. Every day as assistant principal, I try to imagine myself back in the classroom and think about how I would have wanted my administrator to handle each and every situation. Since I am now one of the factors that may have caused teachers to leave in the past, I make it a top priority to try to become a reason for teachers to want to remain at the school.

Although I don’t see myself as an assistant principal forever, I do hope that while I am in this position I can make my teachers proud. Eventually, I hope to take my research and experiences in and outside of the classroom to the collegiate level to help guide those who wish to teach in high-poverty, urban schools. I believe that this will afford me the opportunity to impact more teachers in the long run. It takes a special person to teach, especially at a high-poverty urban school where the cards are already stacked against the students and the teachers, and I hope to help effectively prepare teachers to meet the challenges and opportunities they will face.
References


doi:10.3102/00028312033001233


http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1133&context=gse_pubs


Appendix A: IRB Approval

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: June 4, 2013
IRB #: CPS13-05-08

Principal Investigator(s): Sara Ewell
Colleen Knauer

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: Teacher Attrition of a Title I School: A Case Study

Participating Sites: Permission letter on file-Charleston County Schools

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form
One (1) unsigned consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: JUNE 3, 2014

Investigator's Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.

2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.

3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.

4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.

5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.

6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix B: North Charleston High School Approval

April 17, 2013

Colleen Knauer
548 Flycatcher Drive
Goose Creek, SC 29445

Ms. Knauer,

In agreement with the Charleston County School District, North Charleston High School grants permission to conduct the necessary research requested by you regarding Teacher Attrition.

Please know the utmost attention must be paid to student and teacher privacy. At no time may a student or teacher be identified in this or any subsequent writings.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Grimm
Principal
North Charleston High School
March 22, 2013

Colleen Knauer
548 Flycatcher Drive
Goose Creek, SC 29445

Dear Ms. Knauer,

This is to inform you that your request to conduct your research “Teacher Attrition in Title 1 Schools” has been reviewed and approved.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

➢ Except in the case of emancipated minors, researchers must obtain signatures of parents or legally authorized representatives on a consent form prior to a student’s participation in the research study. All consent forms must contain the following sentences:
  o “I do not wish (my child) to participate.” (This must be an option on the form.)
  o The school district is neither sponsoring nor conducting this research.
  o There is no penalty for not participating.
  o Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

➢ Assent of children who are of sufficient age and maturity should be obtained prior to their participation in research. In all cases, students should be told that they have the right to decline participation.

➢ Parents or guardians of students participating in your research must be notified of their right to inspect all instructional materials, surveys, and non-secured assessment tools used in conjunction with your research. This notification should include details of how parents can access these materials.

➢ Student social security numbers should never be used.

➢ Data directly identifying participants (students, teachers, administrators), such as name, address, telephone number, etc., may not be distributed in any form to outside persons or agencies.

➢ All personally identifiable information, such as name, social security number, student ID number, address, telephone number, email address must be suppressed in surveys and reports. Reports and publications intended for audiences outside of the district should not identify names of individual schools or the district.

➢ Any further analyses and use of the collected data beyond the scope of the approved research project, and any extensions and variations of the research project, must be requested through CCSD’s Department of Achievement and Accountability.

➢ Researchers should forward a copy of the results of the research to CCSD’s Department of Achievement and Accountability.
Appendix D: Recruitment Email for Questionnaire Participants

June, 2013

Dear Teachers and Former Teachers of North Charleston High School,

My name is Colleen Knauer, and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University. As part of my thesis, I am conducting a case study on teacher attrition in Title I schools, specifically North Charleston High School.

I am seeking to understand why the teacher attrition rate at North Charleston High School is higher than others. In order to gather the necessary data, I am asking you to participate in my research by completing a short questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand why teachers of high-poverty, Title I schools are leaving the classroom. I plan on examining teacher attrition at North Charleston High School and the influences that cause teachers to extend/terminate their contract such as: job satisfaction, teacher recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs. The information learned from this study may help to increase teacher retention at high-poverty, Title I schools, in particular North Charleston High School.

The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes. Prior to beginning the questionnaire, you will be given a consent form that will explain the process of taking part in the research. The questionnaire will incorporate both general, non-identifiable, information along with questions pertaining to your experiences at North Charleston High School.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Additionally, the questionnaire is completely confidential and at no time does it require you to identify yourself. If you have any questions, please contact me at 631.466.8477 or through email at knauer.c@husky.neu.edu.

Thank you,

Colleen Knauer
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies
Appendix E: Recruitment Email for Interview Participants

June, 2013

Dear Teachers and Former Teachers of North Charleston High School,

My name is Colleen Knauer, and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University. As part of my thesis, I am conducting a case study on teacher attrition in Title I schools, specifically North Charleston High School.

I am seeking to understand why the teacher attrition rate at North Charleston High School is higher than others. In order to gather the necessary data, I am asking you to participate in my research by participating in a one-on-one interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand why teachers of high-poverty, Title I schools are leaving the classroom. I plan on examining teacher attrition at North Charleston High School and the influences that cause teachers to extend/terminate their contract such as: job satisfaction, teacher recruitment, and teacher mentoring programs. The information learned from this study may help to increase teacher retention at high-poverty, Title I schools, in particular North Charleston High School.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Prior to beginning the interview, you will be given a consent form that will need to be signed. The consent form will explain the process of taking part in the research. The interview will incorporate both general, non-identifiable, information along with questions pertaining to your experiences at North Charleston High School.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Additionally, for the purpose of the research, your identity will be recorded with a number and listed as “Teacher ______.” The only people that will have access to the interview recording will be me (the Student Researcher) and Dr. Sara Ewell (the Principal Reseracher). After the audio has been transcribed it will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality. If you have any questions, please contact me at 631.466.8477 or through email at knauer.c@husky.neu.edu.

Thank you,

Colleen Knauer
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies
Appendix F: Signed Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Sara Ewell & Colleen Knauer

Title of Project: Teacher Attrition of a Title I School: A Case Study

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a teacher at North Charleston High School, a high-poverty, Title I school that has had high teacher attrition rates in the past. Charleston County School District is neither sponsoring nor conducting this research.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this case study is to understand why teachers of high-poverty, Title 1 schools are leaving the classroom, specifically North Charleston High School. We plan on examining teacher attrition at North Charleston High School and the influences that cause teachers to extend/terminate their contract.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in an interview for questioning about your experiences at North Charleston High School and the factors that led to you extending/terminating your contract.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

The interview will be at a time and place that is convenient for you and will take approximately one hour.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

The only identified risk associated with your involvement in this study is the possibility that your participation, and only your participation, could be discovered by other people. To minimize this risk, your name will not be recorded on any of the materials in this study. Instead, your identity
will be recorded with a number and listed as “Teacher ______.” Thus, your identity and participation in this study should not be revealed to anybody.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Will I benefit by being in this research?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help to increase teacher retention at high-poverty, Title I schools, in particular North Charleston High School.</td>
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<th>Who will see the information about me?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your identity as a participant in this study will not be known. That means no one, not even the researcher, will know that the answers you give are from you. Your name will not be recorded on any of the materials in this study. Instead, your identity will be recorded with a number and listed as “Teacher ______.”</td>
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<th>If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.</td>
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<th>What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?</th>
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<td>No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of participation in this research.</td>
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<th>Can I stop my participation in this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.</td>
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<th>Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Colleen Knauer at <a href="mailto:Knauer.c@husky.neu.edu">Knauer.c@husky.neu.edu</a> or 631.466.8477, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Sara Ewell at <a href="mailto:s.ewell@neu.edu">s.ewell@neu.edu</a> or 857.272.8948, the Principal Investigator.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: <a href="mailto:n.regina@neu.edu">n.regina@neu.edu</a>. You may call anonymously if you wish.</td>
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<th>Will I be paid for my participation?</th>
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<tr>
<td>There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help to increase teacher retention at high-poverty, Title I schools, in particular North Charleston High School.</td>
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</table>
While there is no penalty for not participating, if you choose to take part in the study you will be given a $10 Starbucks gift certificate at the completion of the interview process.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

No costs that may be incurred by the participant for this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

You must have taught or currently teach at North Charleston High School.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

____________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part          Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above

____________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent  Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix G: Unsigned Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department of: College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Sara Ewell and Colleen Knauer

Title of Project: Teacher Attrition of a Title I School: A Case Study

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to participate in a questionnaire. The questionnaire is part of a research study whose purpose is to study the problem of teacher attrition at North Charleston High School. This questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete.

We are asking you to participate in this study because you are/was a teacher at North Charleston High School. You must be at least 18 years old to take this questionnaire.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the questionnaire, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about teacher attrition and may help to increase teacher retention at North Charleston High School.

As a token of our appreciation for completing the questionnaire, you will be given a $10 Starbucks gift card.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Colleen Knauer at Knauer.c@husky.neu.edu or 631.466.8477, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Sara Ewell at s.ewell@neu.edu or 857.272.8948, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Please complete this questionnaire by July 15, 2013.
By completing the questionnaire, you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please keep this copy of the consent form for your records.
Appendix H: Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to analyze the problem of teacher attrition in Title I schools, specifically at North Charleston High School. Your responses to this questionnaire will help to gain insight into why teacher attrition at North Charleston High School has been such a problem and the possible steps that could be taken to increase teacher retention. Your response to this questionnaire will contribute to data collection for the purposes of a dissertation. This questionnaire is anonymous and will be kept confidential. If you have any questions please contact Colleen Knauer at (631) 466-8477 or email her at Knauer.c@husky.neu.edu. Thank you in advance for your participation in this questionnaire.

Instructions: Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. The questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes.

General Questions:

1. What is your age?
   □ 22-25 □ 26-30 □ 31-35 □ 36-40 □ Over 40

2. What is your gender?
   □ Male □ Female

3. What race do you best identify with?
   □ Caucasian □ African American □ Hispanic
   □ Asian □ Other

4. What is your highest degree earned?
   □ Bachelor’s □ Master’s □ Doctorate

5. Do you currently teach at North Charleston High School?
   □ Yes □ No

6. How many years were you/have you been teaching at North Charleston High School?
   □ Less than 1 year □ 1 year □ 2 years □ 3 years □ 4 years □ 5 or more years

7. Did you have any teaching experience (not including student teaching) prior to beginning at North Charleston High School?
   □ Yes □ No

8. Had you ever taught in a Title I school before North Charleston High School?
   □ Yes □ No
9. Were you given a mentor when you began teaching at North Charleston High School?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  

10. Will you be employed at North Charleston High School for the 2013-2014 school year?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  

Questions about job satisfaction at North Charleston High School

On the following 5-point scale, please rate how influential the following educational elements were is your decision to leave/stay at North Charleston High School. Please select N/A if the element is not relevant to your experience at North Charleston High School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significantly Influenced</th>
<th>Influenced</th>
<th>Minimally Influenced</th>
<th>Didn’t Influence at all</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership (e.g., those people in leadership positions and their competence)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Administrative support (e.g., support provided to you by administrators)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal work achievement (e.g., experiencing personal success)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Working Conditions (e.g., facility conditions, available material, work load in/outside of the classroom)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Salary (e.g., compensation for responsibilities)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Job Stressors (e.g., dealing with students/parents, paperwork, time)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students (e.g., dealing with student issues, discipline, ability levels)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Co-workers (e.g., the relationships with colleagues)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Additional Responsibilities (e.g., IEP meetings, LRP’s, lesson plans,</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Are there any additional educational elements that may have influenced your decision to stay at/leave North Charleston High School? If yes, please explain.

□ Yes  □ No

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
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Questions about teacher recruitment at North Charleston High School

Please answer the following questions on teacher recruitment to the best of your ability.

1. What path did you take when entering education?
   □ Traditional University Program
   □ Alternative Route (PACE, TFA, etc)

2. How were you recruited to teach at North Charleston High School?
   □ Job fair
   □ Applied online to Charleston County Schools
   □ An individual recruited you
   □ Other: ________________________________

3. Did the interview properly prepare you to teach at North Charleston High School? (e.g., were you aware of the student population, the school’s history, the school’s successes and failures) If no, please explain.
   □ Yes  □ No

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
4. In general, do you think you were properly prepared to teach the students of North Charleston High School prior to your first day? If no, please explain.
   □ Yes
   □ No
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Questions about teacher mentoring at North Charleston High School

1. Have you ever been a part of a mentoring program?
   □ Yes
   □ No
2. Were you given a mentor at North Charleston High School?
   □ Yes
   □ No
3. If you answered no to question 2, do you believe a mentor would have changed your experience at North Charleston High School?
   □ Yes
   □ No

Please only answer questions 4-5, if you have ever served as a mentor at North Charleston High School.

4. Do you believe the mentor program at North Charleston High School is/was successful?
   □ Yes
   □ No
5. Did your mentee remain at North Charleston High School after the mentoring program ended?
   □ Yes
   □ No
Appendix I: Interview Questions

Those who are selected to participate in the interview portion of the study will be asked the following questions.

**Interviewer:**

*The purpose of this interview is to understand why teacher attrition in Title I schools, specifically North Charleston High School, is higher than that of non-Title I schools in the surrounding area and to explore the factors that make the teachers of North Charleston High School leave the school more often than their counterparts.*

**Questions:**

1. Tell me how long you taught/have taught at North Charleston High School.

2. Do you currently teach at North Charleston?

3. Describe your experience at North Charleston High School.

4. During your time at North Charleston High School, what would you say were some of its strengths?

5. During your time at North Charleston High School, what would you say were some of its weaknesses?

6. Based upon your own perceptions, what factors do you believe are causing teachers to leave North Charleston High School?

7. Based upon your own perceptions, what factors do you believe keep teachers at North Charleston High School?
8. What plans could be put into place to increase teacher retention at North Charleston High School? Is there something that North Charleston High School could create or change to improve teacher retention?