Abstract

Teacher attrition is a widespread problem in all schools whether public or private. This study investigates the factors that cause teachers to leave residential schools at alarming rates. Even though there are numerous studies on attrition in the public school system, there is a significant gap in the literature on teacher attrition in different educational placements such as a residential facility. This instrumental single case study was designed to examine a residential school’s climate in an effort to determine residential educators’ perceptions of why teachers stay versus leave this profession. The study found that working with students that have special needs requires additional training beyond what teachers are typically prepared for, the teachers believed that they were working in a supportive welcoming environment and this supportive environment started with the principal.

Key words: Residential educator attrition, job satisfaction, residential schools and residential school climate
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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Teacher attrition is a widespread problem in all schools, public or private. An estimated 25% of beginning teachers in the United States leave teaching before their third year and almost 40% leave the profession by the end of their fifth year teaching according to Chang (2009). Ingersoll (2001) suggested that, “School staffing problems are primarily due to excess demand, resulting from a revolving door where large numbers of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement” (p. 501). While all schools experience teacher attrition, the topic in this study that was researched and reviewed focused on a secondary residential school.

Defining a residential school. A residential school is a type of educational setting that serves youth that have had educational and behavioral difficulties within public school. Residential schools are comprehensive therapeutic educational settings where students have 24-hour monitoring and their social, emotional, and educational needs are addressed (Kauffman & Smucker, 1995). Residential education is an academically focused, out of the home placement that integrates both home and school life (Lee & Barth, 2009). These schools serve youth that have not been able to have their needs met within their own school district and need more intense services due to their diagnosis of emotional and behavioral disorders. These services include medication and therapeutic services to ensure student safety.

Public schools provide services such as inclusion in which special education students are in classes with general education students, whereas a majority of the students within a residential facility are labeled as special education students and have
individualized education plans (IEP). Residential classrooms have low student to teacher ratios so teachers can provide as much one-to-one assistance as possible. Low teacher to student ratios are in stark contrast to public schools that may have special education students in a class of thirty and one special education teacher. In addition, therapeutic services such as family therapy, individual therapy and group therapy with their peers are provided in the place where they reside. These services would be referred to an outside agency if a student were still attending a public school. Even though the concept of residential education is appealing, this small school environment can cause teachers to feel emotionally exhausted and eventually to leave this type of employment.

All residential schools are not the same. These schools serve a wide variety of student populations with various needs. Initially, I wanted to study a residential school that served EBD students. Quay (as cited in Gumpel & Sutherland, 2010) noted, EBD is a broad term used to describe five characteristics of EBD which include: conduct disorders, anxiety disorders, withdrawn behavior, immaturity, and socialized aggression. However, I was not granted access to the site. Instead, I conducted the study at a residential school that served students with a unique medical condition. Students require specialized care from staff and educators at the school due to the condition and other related behaviors that the students exhibit.

The school in this study is the Monteverde School. It is a residential school that has 24 hour monitoring, students who reside in cottages on campus and who need more

\[1\] I do not reveal the medical condition to help protect the privacy of the school and the participants.

\[2\] Monteverde is a pseudonym created to protect the identity of the school and participants.
intense services in order to be successful educationally. The Monteverde School is different than other residential schools because the students served have a complex genetic condition with medication considerations and other behaviors and needs that impacts their education as well as their health so they have to be monitored medically.

The Topic

Teacher attrition rates in residential schools are higher than at other types of schools. Ingersoll (2001) collected data on preretirement turnover within special educators in residential settings and found:

The data show that teacher turnover is, numerically, a sizable phenomenon … for instance, about 190,000 teachers newly entered the occupation for the 1990-1991 school year. However, in the following 12 months, about 180,000 teachers-equivalent to 91% of those just hired-left the occupation altogether. In 1993-1994, 3 years later, about 193,000 teachers newly entered the occupation, but in the following 12 months, about 213,000-equivalent to 110% of those just hired-left the occupation (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 514).

Teacher attrition is an issue in a residential facility where students thrive off of structure, more so then in a public school setting (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Gagnon & Leone, 2006; Roberts, Vernberg, Biggs, Randall, & Jacobs, 2008). Although there is literature on the awareness of teacher attrition within the public school settings (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan, 2010; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004; & Friedman, 1991), there was a gap in the literature in terms of this issue with teachers who educate EBD students, especially in a setting such as a residential facility. The attrition rate of teachers in residential settings is a problem that I witnessed as a teacher in this type of setting.
The research problem. In my experience, teachers at residential schools leave quickly, causing administrators to continually look for replacements; therefore students are not getting the consistency and structure within the classroom that they require to be successful in school. The constant turnover of teachers causes administrators to regularly look for replacements which results in added stress on remaining teachers within the school. Furthermore, other teachers in the school who remain are required to take on additional responsibilities due to a limited amount of teacher personnel. Overall, the teacher turnover rate in residential schools is a problem because the focus of the school is on staffing the building and not attending to the needs of the students.

Justification

High teacher turnover has troubling implications for student learning. Persistent turnover means that experienced teachers are regularly replaced with less experienced colleagues who also tend to be less effective. According to Borman and Dowling (2008), students are losing an entire grade level of learning due to being taught by an inexperienced teacher. Special education students who are placed in a residential school are already grade levels behind and need to increase their learning. In order to increase student learning, the literature also suggests that we need to understand and improve the conditions in which teachers work. In 2001, The Council of Exceptional Children conducted a national survey with over 1,000 special educators and found, “Poor teaching conditions contribute to a high rate of special educators leaving the field, teacher burnout, and substandard quality of education of students with special needs” (Cancio & Johnson, 2007, p. 512). In other words, teaching conditions cause attrition, burnout, and impact the quality of learning for special education students.
The researchers also found that the issue of teacher attrition is even more dire within teachers who work in residential educational settings teaching EBD students. Data from the literature noted that the population that is most needed in education is EBD teachers. In a national survey of special education directors, George, George, Gersten and Grosenik (1995) stated, “Only about half (53%) of those surveyed indicated that all their teachers were fully certificated in behavior disorders. Estimates of the number of staff holding emergency certification, or less than full certification, in the area of behavior disorders ranged from 25% to 33%” (p. 227). In the special education field, where students are already behind, a limited amount of qualified teachers could be a major deterrent in an EBD student’s education. Furthermore, teacher attrition is costly, as schools and districts are forced to spend limited financial resources on recruiting, hiring, processing, and training new teachers. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) estimated that replacing teachers who leave the profession or transfer elsewhere costs the nation $4.9 billion annually.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** Even though there are numerous studies done evaluating special educators and attrition in the public school system, there was a significant gap in the literature when looking at teacher attrition in different educational placements such as a residential facility. Few articles explored the topic of teacher attrition in residential settings of EBD students. In the limited articles, the data concluded that stress contributes to teacher attrition within a residential setting. Within the literature, teacher attrition in a residential educational facility is not the main topic of these articles. The researchers (Cancio & Johnson, 2007; Carmen, Dorta, Kon, Martin & Zarrili, 2004; & Roberts, Jacobs, Puddy, Nyre, & Vernberg, 2003) focused on level
systems within a residential facility and how to therapeutically treat the students with mental health services while they are in school. What was unknown was why a significant amount of residential educators leave the profession annually.

**Relating the discussion to audiences.** In conducting this study the beneficiaries of the data are administration within residential school settings, educators who worked within these types of facilities, department of mental health, department of child services, school districts, as well as parents and EBD students. If these results of this study are taken by these professionals to improve teacher conditions then maybe there could be less teacher turnover in residential educational placements and students will benefit from a more productive and fulfilling learning experience.

**Significance of Research Problem**

The teacher attrition crisis is seen on the local, state and global level. Locally, this researcher’s place of employment is a prime example of teacher attrition. This residential facility has a population of twenty-seven emotionally disturbed, developmentally delayed, behaviorally-challenged adolescent boys and girls who could not be served in other settings. Within the residential school I work in, there are a limited amount of veteran teachers. Teachers are inundated with duties and administration is ignoring the facts that lead to burnout. “The teaching pool keeps losing water because no one is paying attention to the leak” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 200).

This lack of attention towards teacher attrition is also seen on the state level. The growing shortage of qualified teachers in the northeast in special education is also evident from an ever-rising fraction of teachers in special education who have waivers. Owens (2010) noted:
Over the past six years, special education has accounted for the largest, and an ever growing, share of all waivers in the state. Fewer than 30% of all waivers in 2003-04 were in special education, but by 2008-09, this field accounted for more than half (p. 17).

Teachers who are on waivers are working towards their license. This means that they continue to take classes and are still in the process of learning about being a teacher and are teaching in a classroom due to a vacancy that can’t be filled in a school by a licensed educator. As noted previously, students have been found to lose a full grade level of achievement with an inexperienced teacher. If half of the special educators are on waivers, students are not getting the necessary education that they require due to the lack of academic knowledge of teachers who are still attending school for education.

Also, waiver requirements need to be continually worked on by a potential licensed teacher. If teachers don’t keep up with the specifications of the waiver it expires. Once the waiver expires, teachers are not allowed to teach, therefore losing their position. These teachers who let their waivers expire and no longer teach contribute to the teacher attrition problem on all education levels.

The national level of teacher attrition follows the pattern of what is occurring at the local and state levels. The most needed teachers within the United States are educators who teach EBD students. This is not just a national crisis but its occurring throughout the world according to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011). Teacher attrition in special education settings is a problem that affects student learning. Understanding teachers’ reasons for staying and leaving residential school settings will provide information that can be used to help create settings to retain teachers.
Positionality Statement

As a history teacher in a residential school, I have witnessed the problems that arise within my school once a teacher resigns. The residential school that I work in consists of four content teachers and two vocational teachers. At the beginning of the 2013 school year, our math and science teachers left the program. This caused the English teacher and I to take on the work of the previous teachers while administration interviewed and rehired for the positions.

The stress from having to do two jobs in the first month and a half of school was at times unbearable. I had to come in early in the morning to get lessons together for the substitutes as well as complete the paperwork that needed to be done by the absent math and science teachers. Additionally, I saw our students struggle behaviorally due to the teachers leaving which made my day even harder. I had to constantly put fires out in classrooms where there were staff members who are trying to be substitute teachers.

Replacement teachers were hired, but were not trained until two months after they had already been in the classroom teaching. Due to this lack of training, they could not be left alone in class. This caused stress on the residential staff that had to constantly stay in their classrooms. If a behavioral incident occurred, the teachers were left to respond to the crisis, which put learning as a secondary focus to behavioral issues. The English teacher and I expressed our concerns to the principal but he had just received his position in August of 2013 and was still learning what the job entailed. The director of the facility didn’t seem to think that there were any issues, the building was safe, and we should be able to handle the workload until the new teachers were trained and could teach within the classroom.
My place of employment in a residential facility is a prime example of the lack of support contributing to teacher attrition and burnout. This lack of support is a big problem in residential school settings of EBD students where a majority of the teachers lack experience and have the highest attrition rates of any educators. I am entering my sixth year teaching in the special education field where, “In addition to length of time teaching, length at a single school is an important variable that provides for continuity and program consistency within exclusionary schools” (Gagnon & Leone, 2006, p. 54). In addition, Cancio and Johnson (2007) note that EBD teachers have the highest attrition rate among special educators. During my six years of employment, four out of the six teachers have left the field. Within the context of my school, teachers are inundated with paperwork and have to handle discipline problems with students. All of these stressful events contribute to possible burnout and teachers leaving the field. In other words, the challenges that my school faces are common nationally, indicating a larger problem that warrants study.

As a scholar-practitioner, I explored the causes of teacher turnover as well as the administrative response to teacher turnover. This study allowed me to collect data that revealed why teachers leave and stay, as well as collect data from two residential educators and a residential principal regarding their response to teacher turnover. My goal with this study was to learn about ways to support practicing teachers in residential settings and to learn how to provide prospective teachers with support before beginning to work in this type of setting.

Based on my experience as a teacher in a residential setting, I have my own experiences and beliefs related to why teachers resign. For instance, I believed that
teachers do not feel that they have the support needed in order to be an effective teacher. However, I learned that teachers in this residential experience have a completely different experience than I did at my school. Conducting this study allowed me to step back from my current context to study organizational climate and teacher retention at a residential school. What I found was that residential schools can have a positive and supportive environment and I found that this school had a specific support system in place.

**Research Central Questions**

I began this study following research questions: What factors do educational stakeholders (current and former teachers, as well as administration), within a secondary educational residential program, perceive lead to burnout and what factors influence a teacher within a secondary educational residential program to stay within the profession? However, what I found in this study at the Monteverde School was a supportive climate and none of the participants I interviewed felt like burnout was a major issue at the school. More specifically, these teachers were not burnt out. They were happy and engaged in their profession. As such, the findings of this study answer the second research question related to factors that influence a teacher to stay in a residential setting.

**Theoretical Framework**

Organizational climate theory provides framing for this study. The concept of organizational climate has its roots in Lewin’s studies of experimentally created social climates (Lewin, 1951 & Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939) and qualitative observations of natural organizational settings (Likert, 1961). Benjamin Schneider took these concepts and began his own work on social climate in organizations in the 1970’s. In 1987, Schneider viewed organizational climate theory as employees being the main influence
on the climate and practices of the organization. Schneider’s (1987) main thesis is “attributes of people, not the nature of the external environment, organizational technology, or organizational structure are the fundamental determinants of organizational behavior” (p. 437). In other words, he believed that people influenced the organization, not outside influences, technology or the structure that resides within the organization. He took these beliefs within the organizational climate theory and created a framework for understanding organizational behavior.

**Attraction-selection-attrition.** In 1987, Schneider created a framework based on organization climate theory and entitled it the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) cycle (see Appendix A). The framework notes that the three processes of attraction, selection, and attrition that occur within an organization determine the type of people who are employed and define the nature of the climate within the organization (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). Schneider (1987) believed that “the people make the place” (p. 451) and the ASA framework place the causes of organizational behavior on the characteristics of people within the organization (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). All three pieces of the cycle impact whether a member fits into an organization or does not blend into the environment and chooses to leave. Further, attraction, selection, and attrition describe the process of socialization into an organization.

**Attraction.** Within the attraction piece of the model, people are differentially attracted to careers as a function of their own interests and personality (Holland, 1985). An example of this is someone who enjoys spending time with children may be attracted to the field of education. Other signs of attraction are researched by Tom (1971) and Vroom (1966), who noted that people search for environments that fit their personality
and that people would like to select a specific organization based on characteristics that are attractive to that specific person.

**Selection.** The second piece of the model, selection, is when organizations select people who they think are the best fit based on the person sharing a common vision and goal similar to the organization. In that way, organizations choose people who share many common personal attributes, although they may not share common competencies (Schneider, 1987). This selection process begins as soon as a company decides to recruit new employees. Visions and goals will be explained to potential employees by interviewers and they can select if this person will fit into the environment. If this person is hired they will both fit into the environment and conform to their values and goals or they will struggle to maintain job satisfaction and eventually could leave the job.

**Attrition.** The final piece of the model is attrition, which Schneider (1987) describes as “the opposite side of attraction” (p. 442), and states that that when people do not fit in an environment they tend to leave it. When people leave the environment a more homogenous group stays than those who were initially attracted to the organization. The sameness of people within an organization can cause problems such as an inability to change and a lack of competitiveness through making decisions that are unchanging (Schneider et al., 1995). Organizations then may experience dry rot as termed by Argyris (1976). When this occurs, organizations die and need someone new to alter the direction of the company.

Again, Schneider (1987) posits that “people make the place” (p. 451) and this was the case for the educators at the Monteverde School. In other words, the experiences of the people in an organization directly influence the climate. In this study the teachers at
the Monteverde School created a positive environment which made the school climate welcoming and contributed to an overall positive atmosphere. I interviewed two educators and the principal of the school to obtain information on the organizational climate of the Monteverde School and the experiences of each participant that helped them form their perceptions of the climate and why they wanted to stay in the profession at the specific school. Consequently, I learned about how people have made this into a positive, supportive climate for teachers through the institution of specific initiatives designed to help students in a residential setting.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Teacher attrition is a widespread problem in all schools whether they are public or private. Although there are numerous studies on teacher attrition within the public school setting, gaps exist in the literature on teacher attrition in residential settings. First, the review will begin by looking where the most research was found on this topic, teacher attrition within the public schools in the general student population. Then, literature focuses on special education teacher attrition within the public school system. Third, the few articles found on teacher attrition of special educators in a residential setting will be reviewed. Finally, it is important to note that the initial direction of this study was shifted due to lack of residential emotional and behavioral disordered (EBD) schools that were willing to participate. The residential school that did volunteer for this study has a population of students with a complex genetic condition with medication considerations and other behaviors and needs that impact their education. After looking at the various studies and settings that teacher attrition occurs in, the review will delve into what the missing pieces of teacher attrition are within a residential setting as well as what needs to be known about teacher attrition in this setting.

Teacher Attrition in Public Education

Teacher attrition within public education is a problem. There have been many studies done within the general education population of the public schools within the United States. Five studies were found that discuss various factors that contribute to teacher attrition and how it impacts a teacher’s decision to leave the profession.
Stages of teaching and perceptions throughout each stage. The first study on teacher attrition within the public school setting reported on by Keigher (2010) in which the data was administered by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This is the federal organization that collects, analyses, and reports data about both public and private schools within the United States. During 2007-2008 the NCES asked elementary and secondary school teachers to participate in the organization’s school and staffing survey (SASS) to inquire about teacher attrition and mobility through the schools systems in America. The following year after the SASS was given; The Follow-up Survey (TFS) was administered to teachers who left the year after taking the SASS, as well as teachers who continued to work within the profession.

The data found included what former and current teachers believed to be the most important factors deemed by K-12 public school teachers that contribute to teacher attrition. According to the results of the survey, teachers left for personal life factors, other career factors, school factors, the lack of contract renewal, salary and other job benefits, student performance factors and assignment and credential factors (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). The findings also indicated out of the teachers who left the occupation, they took another job at a private company or non-profit business, became state, federal, or government employees and were self-employed (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09).

Former teachers were then asked if their current job characteristics were better than their former teaching position. Former teachers reported that job characteristics were better in their current position in the following factors: salary, opportunities for
professional advancement, professional development, learning from colleagues, administrator recognition, safe environment, influence over workplace practices and policies, work autonomy, professional prestige, performance evaluation, managing workload, ability to balance work and life, available resources, general work conditions, intellectual challenges and sense of personal accomplishment (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). There were only two findings where former teachers rated characteristics as better in the teaching profession than in their current job. These were job security and opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others. While this study viewed teachers having similar views on the aspect of teacher attrition, the next study looked into teacher attrition and how it was viewed throughout the various stages to becoming a teacher.

Hong (2010) explored the concept of teacher attrition and how it related to different perceptions adults have of professional identity throughout their journey to becoming a teacher by breaking down professional identity into six factors: value, efficacy, commitment, emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and micro politics. In other words, Hong (2010) suggested that the future and current teachers identified themselves as a teacher by what they valued in education, how competent they felt in their teaching abilities, how committed they were to learn about their core subject, emotions that they experienced while teaching and the amount of content knowledge known about what they were teaching and school politics. The 84 participants in the study were broken down into four groups: college students in a teaching program, student teachers, teachers who had taught less than five years and then left the profession and current teachers. Five
different survey questionnaires, in addition to interviews were given to participants and included questions on the six factors of professional identity mentioned by Hong (2010).

The results indicated that former teachers had significant differences in their answers compared to the other groups. They complained about the lack of interaction and support from administrators and the lack of power they had within teaching, which made them frustrated. Former teachers had the lowest scores on the survey, which attest to the fact that they had negative feelings with professional identity such as, “low commitment, weak efficacy belief, more burnout, low value and negative perceptions of power relations” (Hong, 2010, p. 1534).

The findings also indicated that out of all factors, value had the highest scores and emotions had the lowest scores, but within each factor there were stark differences between teachers within the profession and future teachers. Hong (2010) found current science teachers believed that teacher value was seen as improving student’s knowledge of scientific literacy, were committed to lifelong learning, were confident in their teaching abilities, could manage their classroom with minimal issues, and felt burnout at times but the feelings were manageable. Additionally, current teachers expressed their strong knowledge of the content that they teach and the importance of a student’s role in learning. They acknowledged that respect is felt from their colleagues and even though current teachers may not be satisfied with their administrator relationship, they did not let this impact their teaching and tried to minimize the issue.

Those views of professional identity teachers were in stark contrast to future teachers who continued to learn about the profession. These students viewed their own personal satisfaction when asked about values, viewed commitment as finishing their
own program and expressed lack of confidence in their teaching abilities and classroom management. They also believed that they would experience burnout while teaching, that they had weak content knowledge and that they would gain respect from colleagues once they began to teach. This study illustrated that teachers’ years of experience made a difference in perceptions of their work and that the naïve thoughts by beginning teachers could lead to attrition. Not only do teaching stages and perceptions impact attrition, but external and internal factors contribute to teachers leaving the profession.

**Administrator support.** One factor that was a common theme throughout the topic of teacher attrition was how much administrator support contributed to a teacher staying or leaving the profession. Sass, Seal and Martin (2010) conducted a study on the interrelationships between variables related to teacher stress and support and how it could predict job dissatisfaction and intention to quit. These variables included: a teacher’s effectiveness within the classroom or teacher efficacy in engaging students, student behavior stressors, social support from superiors and colleagues, workload stress, role conflict, and job dissatisfaction and intent to quit (Sass et al., 2010). The findings indicated that all models suggested that it was important for a teacher to have a supportive stress-free environment. Additionally, results indicated the more confident the teacher was in their abilities to teach affectively, the more students would contribute and be engaged in class. If students are engaged then the teacher will have a calm classroom and be less stressed, therefore decreasing the chance of a teacher leaving the profession. Results also found that teachers who felt that they had more administrative support had faith that they could make a difference in their students’ lives. If teachers don’t have this
support from their superiors, the study found these stressors to be the strongest predictor of dissatisfaction (Sass et al., 2010).

Similar to Sass et al. (2010), Tickle, Chang, and Kim (2011) conducted a study that examined the effect that administrative support had on a teacher’s job satisfaction and their desire to stay within the profession. The researchers utilized a United States database and the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which collected national data on public schools. The sample size included 5,437 public school districts where there were over 10,000 school districts and in these over 53,000 public school teachers participated (Tickle et al., 2011). The findings of the study indicated that administrative support was the most significant predictor of a teacher’s job satisfaction and a significant factor in their intent to stay in teaching. Also, a teacher’s job satisfaction was found to be the most significant predictor to a teacher’s intent to stay in the profession. The overall impression from the study is that administrator support did impact whether a teacher was satisfied in their job and if they choose to continue teaching. In addition to external factors (administrator support) contributing to teacher attrition, internal factors also caused a teacher to leave the job.

**Self-efficacy.** One internal factor that was found throughout the literature that contributed to teacher attrition was self-efficacy. Pas, Bradshaw, and Hershfeldt (2012) conducted a study in which they wanted to determine if teacher and school factors contributed to the development of teacher efficacy and burnout. In other words, the authors wanted to find out if school factors influenced a teacher to feel confident in their teaching abilities or led to a teacher feeling overwhelmed and burnt out. To find these answers, they examined how teacher efficacy and burnout changed and grew over time.
Data was collected three times over a period of two years from 600 elementary public school teachers at 31 schools in Maryland. Teachers responded to a survey on teacher efficacy, burnout, demographics and the overall health of the school. The study’s results indicated that both teacher efficacy and burnout significantly increased over time. This meant that the longer a teacher worked within the profession the more they gained confidence in their teaching abilities, but also increased their level of stress and burnout. The findings also suggested that teachers who reported being prepared to handle classroom management and instruction reported higher teacher efficacy and lower burnout levels.

When analyzing the results of teacher perception of the school environment, the findings indicated that parent and student involvement was not significantly related to self-efficacy, meaning that family involvement in school did not influence whether a teacher felt competent in their teaching abilities. Parent and student involvement was found significant in lower levels of burnout in teachers. This signifies that the more parents and students were involved in education, the less stress a teacher had.

The results on teacher perception of school-level contextual factors (overall health of the school climate, principal turnover, and general disorder of the school climate) implied that good leadership was significantly associated with lower levels of teacher burnout and higher levels of efficacy. Consequently, if a school had a positive leader then it contributed to the overall good health of the school climate.

Teacher demographics and experience were not significantly related to growth of teacher efficacy and burnout. These findings suggested a teacher’s ethnicity, race, number of years teaching and academic degrees did not impact teacher efficacy and
burnout. Teacher affiliation, meaning positive relationships among peers as well as a teacher’s strong bond to the school (Pas et al., 2012) were also not found to significantly impact a teacher’s burnout level and efficacy.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the review of the literature one apparent theme recognized was teacher attrition is a major problem within the public schools in the United States. As a college student begins an education program they develop idealist views of what teaching will be and once this student reaches the teaching stage they experience factors that can lead to teacher attrition. Some of these factors include: self-efficacy, student behavior, administration and colleague support, burnout, school context, values, salary and job satisfaction (Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). Hong (2010) noted that a new teacher will either adapt and become resilient to such factors or they will leave the profession. Even though teacher attrition is a problem for all types of teachers and schools, teacher attrition is especially high for special education teachers (Dillon, 2007, as cited in Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013).

**Teacher Attrition of Special Educators within the Public Schools**

According to Dillon (2007) (as cited in Cancio et al., 2013), “Almost one third of new special education teachers leave the profession after three years in the field” (p. 72). This percentage of special education teacher attrition is higher compared to one fourth of beginning general educators leaving the profession after only three years in the field (Chang, 2009). Five studies were reviewed that found both many similarities and some
differences between the factors that contribute to teacher attrition in general education as to special education.

**Teacher working conditions.** Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) examined what contributed to teacher attrition and retention by analyzing how factors such as job satisfaction, commitment to the field, and various aspects of job design impacted a special educator’s ability to stay or leave. A survey was given to over 800 special educators within the public school system to determine important aspects of working conditions that contribute to teacher attrition or retention. Results found by Gersten et al. (2001) indicated several factors that contributed to retention and commitment of a special educator. These included building level support from the principal and teachers, professional development and observing fellow teachers, teacher autonomy, role dissonance and a clear job design. Strictly speaking, this meant that special educators wanted to be supported, learn more through classes and watching other educators, have the freedom to make decisions, and understand their role as a special educator clearly, instead of being confused about what was expected of them. If these factors are missing Gersten et al. (2001) found that stress and isolation could develop and lead to teacher attrition. While this study focused on a large number of respondents, the next study by DeMik (2008) utilized a narrative inquiry of five respondents to uncover what working conditions contributed to teacher attrition.

DeMik (2008) examined the attrition of special education teachers through case studies of current and former teachers using narrative inquiry. The participants included five teachers at different stages of teaching; one was a novice special education teacher, two had over five years experience within this specialized field and two had been in the
field for less than five years and then left to pursue other opportunities. Each of the respondents participated in an audio-taped interview twice. The second interview occurred one month after the initial interview.

The results demonstrated that there were problems disclosed by all participants with their job as a special educator. In the category of working conditions, teachers expressed their frustrations with too much paperwork, lack of planning time and difficulty with meeting individual student needs (DeMik, 2008). All respondents stated that they also struggled with the lack of collaboration with general education teachers and felt that the education of special education students needed to be a collaborative process. Special education teachers also had concerns over standardized testing and advocacy issues. One interesting finding was that four of out the five respondents reported feeling supported by administration which contradicts the experience of teachers generally, who feel that they are unsupported by administration (Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). DeMik’s (2008) study may not be a reliable source of data on administrative support, due to the limited number of respondents. DeMik (2008) addressed that in the limitation section when she stated if more stayers and movers were included in the study more attributes towards special education attrition might have been evident. While this study focused on the stages of actual teaching and what they felt contributed to teacher attrition, DeMik (2008) did not analyze the first stage of becoming a teacher, college students studying to be educators. Two studies were found in the literature that did focus on pre-service teaching and these were conducted by Connelly and Graham (2009) and Lee, Patterson and Vega (2011).
**Pre-service teachers.** Connelly and Graham (2009) contrasted the effects of pre-service student teaching received counteractive to other variables that existed within the prep program such as coursework, a graduate’s competence, the presence of a mentor, and demographics when predicting if a beginning special educator will stay in the field the next year (Connelly & Graham, 2009). In other words, the researchers wanted to determine if student teaching is as important as other variables in determining if a beginning teacher will stay in the field for the next year. Connelly and Graham (2009) gathered data from a study done by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in which this organization conducted a study on over 42,000 teachers in the United States in the years 1999-2000. A year later another study was given to the same teachers to determine who stayed and left their positions. Connelly and Graham (2009) took the information gathered and identified over 4,000 special educators who noted special education as what these respondents mostly taught. These 4,000 special education teachers then responded to the original survey (SASS) and from these teachers, Connelly and Graham (2009) identified 456 special educators and had 156 beginning special education teachers respond to the survey one year later.

The findings suggested that beginning special educators with more than 10 weeks of experience in student teaching were more likely to continue to teach one year later compared to special educators who had less than 10 weeks of student teaching. Additionally, none of the characteristics listed (coursework, a graduate’s competence, the presence of a mentor, and demographics) had an impact on the number of weeks of student teaching and how this affected teacher attrition of beginning special educators.
In a similar study, Lee et al. (2011) collected data on pre-service special educators but focused on how self-efficacy is perceived by special education interns who were in a teacher preparation program in addition to teaching for California school districts. The researchers developed a survey that asked questions pertaining to topics such as demographic background, perceptions on self-efficacy, level of knowledge and skills in behavior management, content knowledge and assessment, level of support from their college and the school district as well as how they viewed special education issues.

The results of the study revealed that in terms of demographics a majority of the respondents were white, while other ethnicities included Hispanic, African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders with an average age of about 39 years old. The intern teachers displayed a high level of confidence in their teaching abilities as well as their content knowledge and skills in behavior management and assessment. When these teachers were asked about the support received, it was disclosed that the highest level of support was from college intern supervisors followed by the college intern program and gave low ratings of support to the school districts that they work for as well as the student’s families. The intern teachers described challenges that occurred with being a special educator and grouped them into three categories: working conditions, support and student related issues. Lee et al. (2011) concluded that if a teacher lacked support from school districts, had limited resources and heavy workloads it could weaken a beginning teacher’s self-efficacy and the success of a teacher staying in the profession.

Thus far, the literature on teacher attrition of special educators within public education focused on how working conditions and the various stages of teachers could impact their decision to stay or leave the field. Whether a special educator is in the
classroom teaching or just beginning the journey by student teaching, teachers need the support of the administration to stay in the field (Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09).

**Administrator support.** In a study focused on support, Cancio et al. (2013) examined the perceptions of special educators who taught students with EBD to find out the extent of administrator support given as well as how special educators believed this support or lack thereof contributed to a teacher’s longevity in the field. In other words, did the support of an administrator contribute to a special educator staying within the field? A survey was sent to over 1,000 special educators who were members of the Council for Children and Behavioral Disorders through e-mail.

The results indicated that certain characteristics of administrator support significantly affected the longevity of a special educator. Some of these characteristics included: opportunity growth, strong support for special educators, appreciation and trust, job satisfaction and positive view of their school. These teachers surveyed believed that if an administrator provided a teacher with the ability to develop their teaching skills, supported a teacher’s decisions, appreciated and trusted a teacher, was satisfied with their own job, and viewed their school in a positive light then that would influence a special educator to stay within the profession. In addition to these characteristics, an administrator’s behavior could impact how long a special education teacher will stay in the field. Long-term special education teachers rated higher job satisfaction and positive views about the school compared to special educators who intended to leave the field before they retired.
Administrator support is a must in a field where children require more attention and services. This is evident by the responses of special educators and how the job impacted their well-being. Special educators were asked about their health and 60% stated they felt tired often or almost always and 31% reported sleeping issues, yet only three percent stated they missed work frequently due to these issues (Cancio et al., 2013).

**Conclusion**

There is a consensus within public school educators that the issue of administrator support and pre-service training for beginning educators are important factors that can lead to teacher attrition (Cancio et al., 2013; Connelly & Graham 2009; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). All public school teachers expressed their frustration with the lack of time that administrators were involved in the school climate (Cancio et al., 2013; Connelly & Graham 2009; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). While general educators knew what was expected from them as teachers, special educators within public schools expressed their frustration with lacking a clear job description. In terms of training, teachers expressed their discouragement with a lack of specialization in experience with student teaching in preparatory programs and a lack of college courses towards different special education student disorders. Many experienced teachers felt that this lack of preparation left novice teachers without the appropriate knowledge to teach the special education population and this led to attrition.
Students who struggle to adapt to special education classes within public school may be referred to a residential setting where they can receive 24 hour intensive therapeutic and medical services while residing and attending school in this environment. Due to the fact that residential schools enroll students that have more severe challenges, they represent a vastly different setting than traditional schools.

**Teacher Attrition of Special Educators in a Residential Setting**

**Student population.** The students residing in residential settings display challenges that require more intensive services than provided by public schools. When public schools determine that they cannot fully accommodate the student’s needs, referrals are sent to settings such as a residential school facility. Many of these students present with severe mental health and behavioral needs that are not being met in the community. Zelechoski et al., (2013) stated, “It is well-established that the prevalence of particular psychological disorders in youth in residential treatment settings far exceeds the prevalence found in youth in the community” (p. 641) and Gagnon and Leone (2006) noted residential care accounts for 80,000 students that are diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders. EBD students display external behaviors such as hyperactivity, verbal and physical aggression towards self and others, non-compliance, delinquent acts, and other uncontrollable behaviors (Cuthbert et al., 2011; Kalberg, Lane, Driscoll, & Wehby, 2011; & Lane, Kalberg, Lambert, Crnabori, & Bruhn, 2010). Students with EBD might also have internalizing behaviors such as depression, somatic complaints and anxiety (Kalberg et al.; & Lane et al., 2010). Many students even have co-morbidity, which means that a student has two or more disorders or illnesses. Some of the behaviors seen in the classroom include fighting in class, assaulting staff, uncontrollable tics,
anxious movements (tapping and biting pencils, shaking legs) constant health complaints, inability to sit in their seat, talking out loud, depressed students sleeping in class and cursing at teachers and staff. Students’ behaviors are usually evaluated upon admission and their medication is adjusted to help alleviate some symptoms of these behaviors.

Many of the students that arrive in this type of setting have two or more psychiatric diagnoses and have active prescriptions for psychotropic medications (Zelechoski et al., 2013; & Griffith et al., 2012). In addition to students having EBD, a majority of students have experienced multiple severe traumatic events in their short lives. Many students have been sexually, physically or mentally abused, neglected, experienced a traumatic loss or bereavement, exposed to violence, have family that has been incarcerated and they have been taken out of their home. How can these students focus on school with all these issues? A residential setting provides the best environment for a student with multiple mental and education difficulties.

**Defining a residential setting.** A residential educational setting is described by Lee and Barth (2009) as an out of home setting that integrates both home and school life and provides safety, structure and stability in an educational setting. This type of program attempts to integrate a home environment into the facility. In these facilities, meals are eaten as a group with staff and students and decisions on community activities are usually chosen as a group. Many of the residential settings are organized around a medical model and focus on treating mental health symptoms (Lee & Barth, 2009).

In my own facility, this medical model is followed by having students attend individual and group therapy to improve such student behaviors as social skills, sexual education and anger management. Additionally, students attend meetings with a
psychiatrist as well as various doctor appointments to make sure that the strong medications that they take are not creating toxicity in their body. All of these services are integrated throughout the day and if a student struggles in class a nurse, therapist, or staff member can be called to provide assistance and support for the student. This is something that these students need in order to maintain their own safety. Even though there is support for the students, educators can struggle teaching in this type of environment. Teachers are in a difficult position to try and educate students with multiple mental health issues as well as academic difficulties. Many times, residential educators tend to focus more on behavior management and less on instruction due to student behavioral disorders (Ramsey, Jolivette, Puckett Patterson, & Kennedy, 2010) and these severe student disorders can add to extreme stress more so than in public school. This stress has been found to contribute to teacher attrition.

There is a limited amount of literature that has been written on attrition of special education teachers in residential school settings. Most of the literature found on teacher attrition in alternative settings focused on juvenile detention centers, catholic schools, charter schools and children in foster care (Houchins et al., 2010; Norman, 2010; Torres, 2012; & Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010). Only two studies were found were found on EBD students in residential schools. One focused on elementary day and residential schools children with emotional and behavioral disorders and looked into characteristics of teachers, principal, and students within these settings. The other study by Kindzierski, O’Dell, Marable, and Raimondi (2013) focused on determining what current teachers in residential schools viewed as important or lacking in beginning teachers and how this contributed to teacher attrition. This study was the closest resemblance of data gathered
that pertains to how educational stakeholders (current and former teachers, as well as administration) within a secondary educational residential program perceive attrition.

**Perception of novice teacher skills.** Kindzierski et al. (2013) conducted a study to uncover how current residential teachers of EBD students viewed the knowledge and skills of novice EBD teachers or lack thereof and how that lack of skills played into teacher attrition. An open-ended survey was given to 88 EBD teachers in three residential and day treatment schools; a majority of whom had five or less year’s experience in the field. Some of these teachers did not have an undergraduate degree and over half were under 30 years old. The findings suggested that EBD teachers believe that best practice is the most important prerequisite to being a successful novice teacher and having an effective classroom. EBD teachers reported that strong pedagogy and differentiated instruction could minimize student behaviors. In other words, if a teacher displayed strong knowledge of the subject taught and can differentiate or create lessons based on each student’s level then behaviors will decrease. More than half of the teachers reported they needed more in depth training in differentiated instruction and all teachers reported that they needed additional literacy training (Kindzierski et al., 2013).

Teacher preparation and management skills were ranked second as essential to being a successful novice teacher. The EBD teachers felt that classes within teacher preparation programs should instruct students in crisis intervention, implementing IEP’s, behavioral intervention plans, as well as understanding special education laws. In terms of management skills, current EBD teachers emphasized how important consistency was with the population of EBD students in residential and day treatment schools. Many of
the respondents noted what was lacking in management skills in novice teachers was their ability to de-escalate a crisis situation and knowing how and when to hold a student.

A teacher disposition or state of mind that is appropriate to working with this population of students was found to be the third most essential aspect to beginning teachers. Current teachers reported that novice teachers needed to display characteristics such as kindness, imagination, flexibility, patience and a sense of humor (Kindzierski et al., 2013). In addition to these characteristics, teachers need to display resilience in working with this population and attend to their own well-being. If a teacher is sick and burnt out, chances are they will leave the profession. Current EBD teachers also reported that if a novice teacher lacked patience and empathy then they might struggle with working with this population and leave for another job. There was a small sample of EBD teachers who responded by saying that novice teachers needed collaboration and experience with this student population to be successful. In addition to knowledge and skill set that contribute to retention or attrition, teacher characteristics determine whether a residential school educator leaves or stays within that type of program.

**Teacher, principal and student characteristics.** The study by Gagnon and Leone (2006) was the first national picture of students, teachers and principals that were in day treatment settings and residential schools for elementary students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The researchers wanted to find the various characteristics of students, teachers, and principals in elementary day treatment and residential schools with EBD students. A mailed survey was given to 480 residential and day treatment schools and within each school one principal and one teacher were asked to respond to
As previously mentioned, this study shifted because of access to site and no longer includes a focus on EBD students. However, many key points are similar regarding this study of students with special needs. First, the students have various behaviors and needs associated with their complex medical condition. Therefore, the
school functions differently than a traditional educational setting. Second, all adults in the school including teachers must receive special training to work with not only the students, but also other professionals in the school in order to coordinate the care needed for students. Overall, there is a specific approach that must be taken in this residential school for special needs students. The approach to care and learning that takes place in this school looks different than what you would see even in a self-contained classroom in a traditional school. In other words, working in the school requires more than a general knowledge of special education.

Even though studies on factors contributing to teacher attrition in residential settings were limited, studies on various residential student issues and literature on the care of students in the environment of the residential setting gave a glimpse into the climate of a residential facility/school. In the two studies found on teacher characteristics and novice teacher skills, current residential educators had a good grasp on teaching within this type of environment. Even though a majority of the teachers within this setting had worked in this field less than five years they had keen insight into what kept a novice teacher in the field. They described admirable teaching skills, differing lessons based on each student, class management, good teacher preparation, consistency and training in crisis intervention as qualities that novice teachers should strive to develop.

In addition, having a reputable state of mind is important in this field according to current teachers in this setting. If a novice teacher displays kindness, flexibility, resilience and a comparable sense of humor than chances are they will stay in the classroom. A good state of mind seems to also be a quality that teachers within the public schools system need. Studies by Keigher, (2010) and Hong (2010) also discussed
the importance of displaying a sense of well-being and resiliency and if this is not the case then the chances increase for teacher attrition.

Even though there were some similarities, more differences were evident between public school and a residential setting. In the public school setting teachers focused more on school factors that contributed to teacher attrition. These included: overall school climate, teacher salary, lack of contract renewal, student testing performance, assignment and credential factors, administration and colleague support and workload stress. The literature found on teacher attrition within residential schools was minimal and what was discovered did not focus on school factors but more on teacher demographics and current teacher’s perceptions of what novice teachers lack. It would be beneficial to find out if these school factors within a residential setting impact teacher attrition.

The Missing Pieces of Teacher Attrition within a Residential Setting

There are several aspects to teaching in residential care that have not been studied and need to be in order to uncover why teacher turnover in this field occurs annually. The factors that need to be studied are school climate, including what occurs inside the classroom, job satisfaction, and teacher stress in this profession.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been found to contribute to teacher attrition in public education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Cancio et al., 2013; Gersten et al., 2001; Sass et al., 2010; Tickle et al., 2011) but there is no literature that points to job satisfaction contributing to special educators in residential settings. Teachers have one of the most important jobs in the world, educating our youth. If residential school teachers are not satisfied with their job, chances are their dissatisfaction will be displayed when teaching in the classroom. This dissatisfaction could lead to teachers taking out
frustrations on students and lead to a dangerous environment with students that are behaviorally and emotionally unstable. Residential schools are small environments with small student to teacher ratios and within this small setting dissatisfaction could put pressure and stress on the whole school.

**Stress.** Stress is something that all educators have but in terms of stressful environments a residential school is probably the most stressful educational environment to be in due to the nature of the student population. The students in residential care have been mistreated, experienced trauma, and have multiple mental health issues that require intense services. These students have experienced things that most people will never experience and require constant attention in class to keep them focused and on-task. In addition to their mental deficiencies, students struggle academically and research indicates most EBD students in residential schools are grade levels behind their same aged peers in all subject areas (Ramsey et al., 2010).

Almost all of the students in residential schools have an individual educational plan (IEP) that sets out an individual goal and benchmarks that students are supposed to meet by the following year. Due to the individual needs of each student, residential teachers have to differentiate lessons and assignments to each student. This means that teachers will take a topic that they are teaching and fit the lesson to the student’s academic levels. For example, a residential teacher could be teaching a lesson on Egypt and have some students who are stronger academically, so they develop an assignment that is more challenging than what they give other classmates. In contrast, a teacher could have a student that can’t read so they work with them one on one on the assignment or provide a visual assignment for the student (Youtube clip) on the same topic as the
other students. The residential students having multiple academic limitations in the classroom can add to the stress of teaching, in addition to the after school stressors of completing paperwork and meeting with clinicians and other professionals.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the literature few studies were found on teacher attrition within a residential school. There were some studies found on residential schools but did not focus on teacher working conditions, job satisfaction and the stress that these teachers experience on a daily basis. With all the stress that is put on residential teachers in this setting they could benefit from a supportive environment and proper training. Trainings could provide teachers with the ability to learn resiliency in the classroom and how to handle stress without it impacting their teaching.

**What Needs to be Known About Teacher Attrition in a Residential Setting**

**Teacher support.** A common theme found through the literature on teacher attrition was that teachers felt unsupported by administration (Cancio et al., 2013; Hong, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Sass et al., 2010; & Tickle et al., 2011). Even though there was no literature found on support given to residential educators, they require support just like public educators. It would benefit administrators to support residential school teachers in any way possible due to the difficult student population and high attrition rate. If more support was given, it could keep teacher turnover to a minimal. If administrators do support their teachers, what needs to be found out is how they support them.

**Pre-service and in-service professional development.** Another aspect of teaching in residential schools that needs to be uncovered is the type of training these teachers receive before they enter this field. Most teachers hired for these positions have
never worked with this population. Consequently, these teachers are not prepared to educate these students. Once residential teachers are working in the field they need to keep up with the current medication and educational trends. Another question that needs to be answered is: What trainings do current residential teachers receive to assist them with handling behaviors in the classroom, improving their teaching skills, and handling their own well-being in order to be the best teacher possible for these students?

Conclusion

The major point of the literature review was to show teacher attrition in a variety of settings and what was found on teacher attrition in a residential setting was minimal at best. Many themes that were discussed within public education were not found when looking at the literature on teacher attrition in residential schools. Specifically, information was lacking on residential school climate, job satisfaction, stress and how this can impact a residential teacher’s decision to leave the field. Also, what should be explored is how administrators support educators and what types of training do residential teachers have before and after they take a job in this field to limit their stress and decrease their chances of leaving the job.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand why residential educators leave the field to pursue other occupations. One goal of this study was to determine the various factors that contribute to burnout, which eventually can lead to teachers leaving the field. Another goal was to educate administration on the issues that contribute to attrition so that they can improve school climate. The research questions created include what factors educational stakeholders (current teachers and the principal) thought lead to teacher attrition, as well as what factors influenced a teacher to stay in the field. I was immersed within a residential school setting and conducted a case study where I utilized a holistic approach to collect data. As Creswell (2007) explained, "Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants’ experience the issue or problem under study” (p. 37). For this study, I wanted to make sense of residential teachers’ experiences and beliefs that cause them to stay or leave a school. Therefore, the qualitative approach was best for this study. The central questions for the study were as follows:

- What factors do educational stakeholders within a secondary educational residential setting perceive lead to burnout?
- What factors influence a teacher within a secondary educational residential program to stay within the profession?

Research Justification

The constructivism-interpretivism paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005) fit best with the topic and research questions pertaining to this study on teacher attrition because I conducted interviews with current teachers and the principal of a residential school who...
understood these lived experiences of teaching in this setting on a daily basis. Schwandt (as cited in Pontoretto, 2005) noted, “Proponents of constructivism–interpretivism emphasize the goal of understanding the lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it day to day” (p. 129). The residential educators were the experts within the field and gave a clear picture of their lived experiences and why they might choose to leave the field. This paradigm encouraged me, as the interviewer, and interviewee to work together to establish a comfortable relationship so that the findings were genuine. In this study, I became acquainted with the participants through numerous interviews and each participant became comfortable answering questions. Consequently, each interviewee gave open and honest answers to the questions asked. Ponterotto (2005) reiterates these thoughts by noting, “The researcher and her or his participants jointly create (co-construct) findings from their interactive dialogue and interpretation” (p. 129). This paradigm fit well with the case study approach taken on teacher attrition because this scholar-practitioner thoroughly interacted with participants through interviews.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research was utilized to complete this study. This type of research design is when the researcher studies a problem that calls for an exploration, relies on views of participants, asks broad general questions, collects participant data, describes and analyzes words for themes, and conducts an inquiry in a subjective and reflective manner (Creswell, 2012). As a scholar practitioner conducting this study, I analyzed the problem of teacher attrition and attempted to locate an answer to it based on participant interviews and observation. Then, I gathered data and looked for patterns in the answers creating themes on factors that contributed to teacher attrition and retention. This is the
most appropriate approach given this study included interviewing teachers and an administrator in order to obtain their views on why teachers stay or leave a school.

**Research Tradition**

A case study examines real life events that occur in a setting in which the topic being studied takes place naturally in the environment without being manipulated. This method is similar to a crime scene in that an investigator goes into the setting to solve a problem, gathers and collects primary data and studies the problem within the context or location of the crime. Then, they will use a variety of methods to collect data such as observing the scene, going over records and interviewing witnesses. The investigator will collect data from all different kinds of sources and perspectives to piece together what happened to cause the crime. A case study researcher does the same as an investigator except that they are not trying to solve a crime but attempting to solve a problem within an environment.

Within this study, I utilized an instrumental single case study. This fit best with my study in that an instrumental study gives a general understanding of the topic but it can look at unusual cases that may have been overlooked (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this study, secondary special education residential schools have been omitted from the literature on teacher attrition. While teacher attrition has been studied in depth (Connelly & Graham, 2009; DeMik, 2008; Dillon, 2007, [as cited in Cancio et al., 2013]; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09), there has been scant attention to residential settings (Kindzierski et al., 2013). This single case study provided a rich description of the setting along with
teacher and administrator perspectives. I gave a detailed explanation of the residential school and added descriptions of various areas of the school that was observed on my tour. By utilizing multiple data sources such as interviews, observations, and physical artifacts I enriched my descriptions of the data collected.

**Participants**

For this study, I interviewed two current special education teachers and the principal in a secondary residential education program. Special education teachers within this setting educate students with a complex genetic condition with medical considerations and other behaviors and needs who have been unsuccessful in public schools. In many cases this serves as a student’s last chance for an education. These types of programs serve youth with individual education plans that have not been able to have their needs met within their own school district and require more intense services, such as medication and therapeutic assistance to ensure the safety of the student. These residential schools are comprehensive therapeutic educational settings where students have 24-hour monitoring and their social, emotional, and educational needs are addressed (Kauffman & Smucker, 1995). Residential education is an academically focused, out of the home placement integrating both home and school life (Lee & Barth, 2009).

Participants from this study are all educators at the Monteverde School. The Monteverde School is located in the northeastern United States. It serves between 45-50 students. Eight teachers are employed there along with many other support staff including a speech therapist, clinicians, nurses, a psychiatrist, and residential counselors. Even though this is a school, it is a residential facility of students with medical issues who display cognitive and behavioral deficiencies; therefore, teachers have the primary
responsibility of maintaining the safety of the students. Some safety functions of a teachers’ duties include: being aware of each student’s behavioral status and plans to ensure that students who are not safe are closely monitored within the classroom, assisting clinicians in creating intervention plans for students if needed in the classroom, making sure the classroom is safe in order for the children to learn as well as be mobile due to their physical limitations, supporting all efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of residents, staff and the program and providing emergency coverage for the program when needed.

In addition to maintaining safety within the classroom, they also are expected to educate students. These educational functions include: serving as a member of the treatment team for assigned residents, completing educational assessments, writing the content curriculum and making recommendations for an IEP. Some of the functions differ from public school in that students reside at the facility and therefore these teachers providing educational preparation and instruction in activities of daily living skills, language skills, socialization and community skills. All these functions are in additional duties besides educating each student in the context subject that the educator teaches to all students.

There is one principal at the school who is responsible for administering assessment testing to students, assisting educational staff in assessing learning styles and multiple intelligences, making educational recommendations for IEP’s, researching student’s former transcripts to determine grade level and high school credits, developing a schedule for all school activities, compiling quarterly reports, and working as a team member to ensure compliance with regulations and standards established by the
Department of Education and Secondary Education. He is also responsible for being a leader of the educational department, supporting teachers if there are problems with students or staff and making sure that teachers are educated about the students that are enrolled in the school as well as new students that come into the school.

Teachers were selected through homogeneous purposeful sampling strategy due to the fact that subjects were selected because of similar characteristics (Patton, 1990). Creswell (2012) reiterated this in his own definition of homogeneous purposeful sampling in which subjects “possess a similar trait or characteristic based on membership in a subgroup” (p. 208). The similar trait in this study was that they were all special educators in a residential alternative setting. Through having special education residential teachers describe their own experiences within this setting it gave a clear description of what factors contribute to attrition versus retention in teachers.

**Recruitment and access.** The principal and two secondary residential educators were recruited from the Monteverde School. This correlates with Creswell’s (2007) suggestion of multiple cases which “should provide ample opportunity to identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis” (p. 128). I gained access to research sites by emailing various administrators of residential programs within the northeast to inquire about participating in this study (see Appendix B). Many residential schools I contacted were unwilling to be participants in the study but after several efforts, John the principal at the Monteverde School agreed to participation in this study.

Once a site was determined, a meeting was arranged with John, the principal at the Monteverde School to inquire about possible participants of the study. I asked John to suggest names of residential teachers that displayed the following characteristics: self-
confidence, had been at the program for several years and was educated with this population of students. I inquired about interviewing novice residential teachers, as well as a veteran teacher, and John suggested two teachers whom I could interview. During the initial meeting with John, I asked him to sign a consent form giving me permission to interview each residential teacher (see Appendix C). After participants were chosen, I explained the study and gave each teacher an informed consent form (see Appendix D) to read and sign. Additionally, the participants were given an incentive (Ten dollar gift certificate to Café Alfresco) for participating in this study.

Data Collection

I was able to learn about the experiences of residential special educators and what possible factors led them to attrition through the use of a case study using three data collection approaches: interviews, physical artifacts and observation. By utilizing three data collection approaches, I gained a better understanding of teacher attrition within a residential treatment program from the perspectives of various educational stakeholders’ (administration, former teachers, and current teachers). As discussed previously, a relationship with the gatekeeper of the school, the principal, was established which led me to places within the school to document my various observations within the school environment. This researcher was able to observe the Monteverde School and kept field notes of the observations seen throughout the school day. Some of these observations included describing the campus, the interior of the school and teacher and student interactions throughout the day. The observations were used to describe the context of the school, and to triangulate the findings from the interviews.
To prepare for the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted with a fellow special educator. This was recommended by Yin (2009) in order to refine data collection plans and develop relevant lines of questions. After this pilot interview, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with residential educators Lisa and Lori and the principal John were conducted. The length of both the pilot and official interviews were 30-45 minutes.

I interviewed the teachers and the administrator of the Monteverde School by utilizing the one-on-one interview approach (Creswell, 2012) with open-ended questions. There were two interviews conducted with residential educators, Lisa and Lori. The first interview’s questions focused on their previous work experience and educational background as well as what type of training they received in their teacher preparation courses in order to work in this setting. The second interview focused on their experience working at the Monteverde School and the questions were geared towards professional development, school climate, burnout, student behaviors, factors that contributed to burnout and what kept a teacher in this facility (see Appendix E). Some questions were based on the organizational climate. For example, what attracted them to the position within this organization and influenced them to select this organization. I interviewed John, the principal, only once and within that interview discovered why the administrative team selected a particular teacher and what the organization perceived teachers experience when they decided to leave the environment (see Appendix F).

As Yin (2009) recommended, my major objective was to collect data about actual human events and behavior. By utilizing three sources of data collection, I was able to gather evidence in various ways on how educational stakeholders (teachers and administration) describe teacher attrition. By using these approaches, it gave me, as a
scholar-practitioner, a chance to obtain data that might not have otherwise been received from just one data collection approach.

**Data storage.** After data was collected and gathered, confidentiality was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to participants and the school. I, then conveyed to participants that they were participating in a study, explaining the purpose of the study and that this researcher would not engage in deception about the nature of the study. I only presented general information about the study and did not share information with others. My advisor was the only other person who had access to the data, so that she could read the study over for suggestions on how to improve the thesis. In order to make sure that I did not lose data, I made backup copies of any files that were stored on my computer. I also made a list of the type of information gathered as well as a list of how I could locate and identify the data that I have gathered over the course of data collection. Creswell (2007) advised that all information is kept confidential and organized so that one does not lose any important material. Through the use of recruiting, gathering the appropriate participants and collecting data through a variety of strategies I was able to develop a thorough study that protected the confidentiality of my participants.

**Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, I reviewed each interview separately and then combined them to look for themes. The plan for analyzing data is consistent with Yin’s (2009) approach, which he notes the best approach to data analysis is to have a general strategy. Yin (2009) said, “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to draw empirically based conclusions” (p. 126). Observation data was analyzed using open and provisional coding (Saldana, 2013).
**Analysis of interviews.** After each individual interview, I found a quiet place to work and wrote down field notes on nonverbal behaviors and my initial thoughts about the interview in a journal. This method was suggested by Yin (1994) and includes case study field notes and narratives or notes compiled by the researcher during data collection which integrate or interpret some or all of the evidence collected to date as the basis for the case study database. These notes were beneficial because I could reflect on my thoughts and remember key comments made that led to important pieces of information once I began to code the data. I also reviewed interview answers and highlighted anything of importance. This is termed precoding and within this activity the researcher can highlight, bold, and underline codable moments (Saldana, 2013).

I began my first cycle of analysis by utilizing open, in-vivo coding. This process included coding the interview line by line and, capturing themes that emerge from the data in the participants’ own words. I analyzed each interview individually. After coding all participants’ entire interviews, I looked at all codes to determine the general themes that emerged throughout the study and analyzed all interviews before moving onto the second coding of the material.

The second round of coding is called provisional coding. This is described by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) as beginning with a start list of generated codes based on preparatory investigations suggesting what might appear in the data before it is collected and analyzed. In other words, this is when you use codes already determined to find what themes emerge from the data. In the current study, I took the framework themes, which were based on the organization climate theory and Schneider’s (1987) attraction selection and attrition model (see Appendix A) and analyzed the data using the
themes of attraction, selection and attrition to code the data. This process was repeated with each interview and only after analyzing all interviews did I move onto categorizing the themes in a table.

Once all codes were created for each interview, a table was created with a column for each teacher’s themes that were found in each interview so that I could compare and contrast their experiences and perceptions. I analyzed this information and wrote down my thoughts within my journal. After analyzing the teacher themes, an additional column was added to the table so that I could write down principal’s themes and compare and contrast these themes to the teachers’ themes. This allowed me to find how similar or different teacher’s thoughts were compared to the principal’s thoughts on teacher attrition and retention.

**Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness within the study, the current study employed triangulation which is “a process involving corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) to establish trustworthiness and verification within the researcher's study. In other words, I utilized a variety of ways to collect data, such as interviewing teachers, observing the school environment and looking at physical artifacts. These multiple sources were gathered within a case study approach in which the data collection obtained followed Yin's (2009) six sources of evidence to collect in a case study. Data collection included archival records, audio-taped, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with administration and current teachers, observations and reviewing physical artifacts. Another method, which ensured that trustworthiness was established within the current study, was having
prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell, 2013). In my own experience working in this field, the more that an outsider is engaged in the field the more an educator will feel comfortable. Comfortability of respondents was necessary to gather genuine answers to the interview questions.

Another way to establish trustworthiness in a study was having members review the data collected through interviews to make sure that their statements are accurate. This is called member checking (Creswell, 2003). Each interviewee was given a copy of the interviews and encouraged to contact me if they had any questions about the transcripts. By working with the interviewees to verify my data, I increased the validity of my study (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2009). I also wanted the participants in this study to feel that they were part of the process. My topic was teacher attrition within a secondary educational setting and there could have been a possibility of researcher bias creeping into the results because I am a teacher within this field who has had thoughts of leaving the profession. I could foresee bias occurring in the transcription process because transcriptions are selective according to the transcriber. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted, "Transcribers may gloss over important parts of their behaviors and perceptions, and the researcher may not be aware of this" (p. 56).

**Protection of Human Subjects**

I maintained ethical conduct and ensured the protection of human subjects in this study by protecting the anonymity of the participants who were the teachers and the administrator at the Monteverde School. This began during my initial meeting with the teachers by obtaining a consent form from each interviewee and explaining that all information would be kept confidential. Also, I explained all aspects of the research
process and did not hide aspects of the study from the participants. Creswell (2007) suggested that a qualitative researcher should “convey to participants that they are participating in a study, explain the purpose of the study, and not engage in deception about the nature of the study” (pp. 141-142). Additionally, I ensured the protection of subjects by explaining the participants' rights to withdraw from the research. This is a core requirement of the IRB according to Rubin and Rubin (2012) and they suggested, “it ensures that the requirements understand the nature of the research, are aware of its risks it poses, and are not found either covertly or overtly to participate” (p. 91).
Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this single-site, instrumental case study was to describe factors leading to burnout and retention in an educational residential program. An understanding of educators’ perceptions and the reasons why they chose to stay in a residential school context could help school leaders implement ways to better support and retain teachers in a high turnover environment. This chapter provides a description of the context based on interviews and presents the findings obtained from observations and interviews with participants. The chapter describes teacher emergent themes from the teachers and principal, as well as findings related to the theoretical framework. Overall, the participants described a professional experience that was maintained by a purposeful, support system that was put in place at the school. In this chapter, I will describe the support system from the perspective of the teachers and the perspectives of the principal. I will conclude by presenting findings related to all the participants through the lens of the theoretical framework.

Context of the Monteverde School

Description of the setting. The Monteverde campus is located in an affluent seaside community. The four acre grounds are well maintained. The grass is freshly cut and near all three gray cottages there are numerous flowers planted. Each cottage looks to be fairly new and it appears that the maintenance crew takes care of them, as shown by the newly installed windows. Besides each cottage is a picnic table and a bicycle rack with numerous bikes attached. There is plenty of room for the students to enjoy outside activities such as kickball and soccer nets set up outside for the students. The sidewalks are wide so the students can use their bicycles as well as walk throughout the facility.
There is a playground near one of the cottages with numerous apparatuses such as swings, a seesaw, monkey bars and all of this equipment is installed on foam padding to provide safety to the children. Additionally, a track is located between the school and the cottages so students can practice track and field events in addition to an open field.

The inside is also well maintained. The classrooms are brightly colored rooms with numerous decorations on the walls stating motivational quotes as well as academic posters to remind students of various strategies to use when completing assignments. Additionally, bulletin boards are arranged by each classroom and decorations for National PII Day, as well as pictures of students working in jobs out in the community. The school’s mission statement, student rights and behavioral conduct code are posted in the waiting area. There is a huge circle posted on the wall entitled, “circle of courage” and within the circle it states, “belonging, mastery, independence and generosity”.

The principal gave me a tour of the school and we went into each classroom. Each room had a smart board and an iPad and many sensory tools throughout the class. If a student was feeling overwhelmed and stressed they could use a tool to lower their stressors, while staying in class. If the student was having difficulty in the classroom and needed a break, there were sensory rooms in each class that are very comforting. The students painted the top half of the room themselves and the bottom portions of two walls were painted in chalkboard paint so the students could use chalk on the walls. There were also many sensory tools within the room and black sensory material on the other two walls of the room. If a student was having major behavioral issues they had two empty rooms where students were directed to deescalate and then could return to class after maintaining behavioral control.
Welcoming community environment. As an outsider to the school it was a welcoming environment. A pleasant woman greeted me at the door and brought me to the other building to meet with the principal. On the walk, she was extremely friendly and explained that a majority of the children were diagnosed with a medical condition so there are special policies put in place to help the students with this condition. I arrived during the transition time from breakfast to the student’s first class. During this time teachers were outside of their classrooms welcoming students in and they were extremely responsive to the students. An assistant was working with a student individually on an iPad and she was very involved with the student lesson and attentive to the student’s needs. Throughout the tour of the school each teacher was receptive to any questions that I had about anything that involved the school or the population who they served.

Supportive principal. John presented himself as a supportive principal who went into detail about how he supported his personnel. For example, he explained that if a teacher is struggling in any aspect of the job he encourages the teacher to come to him for support. Additionally, if teachers do not feel comfortable coming to him there is a mentoring program in place where novice teachers are observed and paired up with a more experienced teacher who helps them with any questions that they have. John supports the teachers and also works hard to support other personnel, such as the clinicians, nurses and the residential staff. John noted that all staff at the Monteverde School are quite supportive of each other and there was much effort by both residential administrators and John to work towards establishing a quality working relationship. I have worked in the residential/school environment and in my own experience the residential department and education department can be at odds. Before he received the
principal position, John said that there was tension between the two departments but he and the residential director have worked hard to minimize this and bring the two departments together.

**Focus of school.** A majority of the students on campus are diagnosed with a medical disorder\(^3\) that influences their behavior, speech, language, and learning style. This condition also can cause developmental delay, mild intellectual disability, environmental, and physical challenges. Since the school specializes helping students with this syndrome, a specialist came in and changed things for the betterment of the students. The specialist suggested that these students display strong food seeking behaviors therefore no food is allowed on campus except for in the school cafeteria. Additionally, these students can lose control of emotions and becoming over stimulated, have rigid thinking and run away from situations that they can’t handle.

Not only do these students have to be monitored behaviorally, but teachers need to adjust their teaching styles to accommodate these students’ limitations. These students' learning weaknesses include: expressive language, poor fine and gross motor skills, poor short-term memory skills and difficult understanding abstract concepts. Teachers need training in how to differentiate lessons based on these student weaknesses and modify their practices to give these students a chance to be successful in school.

**Behavioral modifications.** There are several behavioral modification techniques in place at the Monteverde School to assist the students if they are struggling behaviorally. If the student is having difficulty in the classroom and needs a break, there are sensory rooms in each class that are very comforting. There are also many sensory

\(^3\) The disorder is not named in order to protect the privacy of participants
tools within the room and black sensory material on the other two walls of the room. If a student is having major behavioral issues they have two rooms with nothing in them where students are directed to, so they can de-escalate, get in control and then go back to class. If a student gets too out of control the school personal are restraint trained and will use their training as a last resort to maintain overall safety of students and staff. The Monteverde School personnel are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) which was created at Cornell University (2014):

The purpose [of the training] is to provide a crisis prevention and intervention model for residential child care organizations that will assist in, preventing crises from occurring, de-escalating potential crises, effectively managing acute crises, reducing potential and actual injury to children and staff, learning constructive ways to handle stressful situations and developing a learning circle within the organization (http://rccp.cornell.edu/tcimainpage.html).

In other words, TCI training provides staff with tools to prevent a crisis from occurring, which includes de-escalating the tension in a stressful situation. If a crisis occurs the restraint techniques taught to the Monteverde staff can reduce the likelihood of injury to both the student and staff.

Lisa: A Secondary Residential Teacher at Monteverde School

Background. The first interviewee, Lisa grew up in the area and as a kid expressed that she struggled in school and was in the title I program, a program were the government gives schools districts money for students based on the poverty level within that district (Gordon, 2004). Within this funding, money was allocated for title I reading specialists who utilized traditional reading resource programs which consist of pull out
reading sessions with students (Broaddus & Bloodgood, 1999). Lisa’s school qualified for title I funding and due to her reading struggles she participated in the title I reading program. Even though Lisa struggled with her reading capabilities, she began to love school once she did a work based program in high school working in an inclusion classroom and continued this love of working with children onto college where she went to school for education.

**Educational background.** Lisa struggled throughout her K-12 experience and it impacted her decision to become a teacher. During our interviews, Lisa expressed that she struggled in school, especially with reading in class. She noted, “I was always the student who if they were reading out loud I’d count which paragraph I’d have to read and practice and practice.” Once she reached high school Lisa found her passion for children by participating in work-based learning. Work-based learning is “characterized by high school students working in jobs within the adult workplace (e.g., administrative offices, hospitals, etc.) that provide socialization, further educational opportunities, and an experiential means of connecting school to future work” (Kenny, Walsh-Blair, Blustein, Bempechat, & Seltzer, 2010, p. 205). In other words, the learning takes place for students out in the community, where they can learn about a job that they may be interested in pursuing as a career in the future.

During her work based learning experience, Lisa was in an inclusion classroom. She said, “I found school difficult and I never thought I’d be a teacher but I did work-based learning in high school and I absolutely loved the early childhood program.” During high school, she worked in a kindergarten class as well as a second grade
inclusion class and enjoyed it. As a work-based student she helped the students with early socialization skills as well as learning their alphabet and numbers.

**College experience.** Lisa continued her interest in education at college where she expanded her knowledge by being trained with other potential special education teachers in a cohort and participated in student teaching. Lisa stated that she was involved in classes called the block where a group of college students majoring in education student taught and got together each week to debrief about their experiences. Additionally, they all took classes together on how to teach various subjects which include English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. “I was in the block and I did my student teaching there and I ended up doing my student teaching in middle school in an inclusion and a pull out classroom and I liked my experience.” Once Lisa graduated from college she searched for a job and was hired at the Monteverde School, where she currently teaches. Even though she did have training, Lisa still didn’t feel that her college training prepared her to teach in a residential school. She stated, “I didn’t know exactly what I was getting into but…classes in school can only teach you so much.”

**Years of experience.** This is Lisa’s first job as a teacher and she has been at the Monteverde School for three years. This is her first teaching job and her first experience working in a residential placement. Lisa stated, “I’ve been in a residential facility going on three years. This is my first position at a residential facility.” She chose this job because she had just moved back home and said, “It was the one that was available at the time.” Due to her not having worked in a residential facility previous to her current job, she had many questions and much to learn about the special education population. Lisa commented, “I had a lot of questions because it was my first residential job.”
Climate of the Monteverde School. Lisa described the school climate as supportive to teachers. She felt this support as soon as she arrived on campus for her interview and continues to feel supported as a teacher at the school. Within the interview, Lisa stated that there are various supports put in place to encourage teachers to stay in their current position and these include numerous trainings, professional growth, scheduling, and staff support. Even the mission statement is written towards supporting each other as a team.

Staff impressions. On Lisa’s interview at Monteverde she found staff to be very welcoming. She described her first impressions of staff on campus as, “really accepting and open-minded and full of ideas.” During her interview she was given a tour of the school and observed staff interacting with each other during breaks and sharing ideas about how to educate various students. She had many questions for the teachers, due to not having worked in a residential environment previously, and Lisa noted that “they were very helpful and took me under their wing.”

Student impressions. Lisa’s first impressions of the students were that they are pleasant, from what she observed before getting into the classroom. When she toured the school students came up to her, were friendly and asked her questions about herself. Once Lisa arrived in the classroom she admitted to being scared of the students’ behaviors at first. Lisa also described herself as being “shell-shocked” with the behaviors at first. Some of these behaviors included students running away, hearing voices, and hoarding food. In addition to her adjusting to the students, the students had to adjust to a new teacher and Lisa described them at first as “standoffish and very distant.” They missed their previous teacher and would say comments such as “The former teacher did it
this way.” Lisa reported that the students warmed up to her pretty quickly and once she became accustomed to student behaviors at Monteverde she found herself loving this population of students. Lisa noted, “You just get so attached to the students and they have their behaviors but they are so sweet and you just develop a relationship with the students and it’s great.”

**Trainings.** According to Lisa there are numerous training opportunities for teachers to be prepared to correctly manage student behaviors. She said that they are trained every quarter in how to conduct a proper restraint, which is “a physical restriction of movement” (Moh, 2006, p. 1329). This can be in the form of placing individuals on the floor and holding their limbs or restraining them chemically by giving them medications to calm down their behaviors. There are also trainings on how to properly supervise students. Teachers are also encouraged to ask about trainings that they are interested in and the Monteverde administrative team then attempts to find a trainer that can come to the school and train all staff. Lisa said, “Recently, we had training on sexualized behaviors and it was great and very helpful.” Lisa noted they have trainings monthly on various subjects and it is helpful with student behaviors.

**Schedule.** Lisa described what the schedule consists of on a typical day at the Monteverde School. Teachers begin their day by having breakfast with the students and then class starts around 8:30 am. Lisa noted that her class size is usually seven students and sometimes, “I usually have a couple of stragglers that come in late” but class begins with Reading at 8:45 am and lasts for 45 minutes. Sometimes they split up depending on their academic levels. After this class they split and some of them go to Performing Arts and Math. Lisa then said that after the second class they have a mindfulness exercise for
15 minutes. She described mindfulness as “students relaxing and being aware of their surroundings.” Lisa also teaches students a finance class and she reported constantly working on social skills with the students. Additionally, Lisa commented that she gives the students free breaks where they can do fun activities “like watching a little video, crafts and just hands on activities” to keep them involved and to give them a break from sitting down for long periods of time. Lisa reported that she does not have the class all day and the students attend physical education and have a vocational skills class.

**Staff support.** Lisa expressed that staff at The Monteverde School support each other throughout the day. One way that the staff supports each other is having open communication between all departments. She commented, “The thing I love about this job is the communication. We have amazing communication through residential, the teaching staff, the clinicians, nursing. I just love the staff and talking to them and just the environment.” Lisa described the staff as, “there for each other” and when they have staff meetings they do team building activities, which makes the group even closer. Lisa noted, “We are very close as a people and I am very lucky.”

**Mentor program.** Another way that staff members are there for each other is through a mentoring program. This program is described by Lisa as a new teacher is assigned a veteran teacher to help and just be there if a new teacher has any questions or just needs to vent. A new teacher is observed teaching and the administration match them with a teacher that they feel is strong in an area that the new teacher may need some assistance in. This mentor is there for them and they are assigned a certain amount of time to meet and discuss any concerns or thoughts that the new teacher might have. Lisa found her mentor to be extremely helpful and provided her with some sociability within
her new job environment. She said, “If I was feeling stressed or I had a question about something this person was very helpful, had many ideas and was just there to talk about the day.”

**Mission statement.** The supportive school climate is incorporated within the school mission statement and the words written describe this support. Even though Lisa did not know the mission statement word for word she stated that one part of it said, “We work together creating a better student and getting students to where they need to be.” Working together sums up what type of support the Monteverde School offers, working together as a team to support both the students and staff. This was evident by statements that Lisa reported in her interview.

**Behaviors and teacher demeanor.** Throughout residential education teacher burnout is evident (Kindzierski et al., 2013). Even though Lisa has only been a teacher for a short time she has witnessed burnout by teachers. Within Lisa’s interview, she described behaviors of burnt out teachers, teacher struggles and negative aspects to working in the environment. Lisa commented that teachers that she has seen, who are burnt out displayed behaviors of being very short with students, which means that they have little patience. Within this setting she noted that staff have to “pick their battles and you let go of an issue with a student and those teachers do not pick battles.” Lisa also said that a teacher’s demeanor is affected when they are burnt out in that “they look drained and they don’t look happy.”

**Teacher struggles.** Lisa reported that she has not experienced burn-out in her career as of yet but has struggled with aspects of working in a residential school. One aspect she struggles with is holding a child in a restraint. Lisa reported, “There are
moments where you question yourself, like the days where you are in holds and you have
tried your best to keep that from happening.” She described an incident that occurred
when a student ran away from staff out in the community and she was not sure what to
do. “You feel helpless at that moment, especially when you are with other students and I
wasn’t sure if we had to put her in a hold. ... you feel like you are abusing the child and
you have the police going by and the situation was very stressful.”

Another struggle Lisa described in the interview is getting days off. Lisa noted
that in a residential school they do not have summers off. This is because many students
are behind academically, so they need to make up classes. They do get some weeks off
in the summer but because students live on campus teachers are required to work on the
major holidays. “We have to ask for Christmas off and Thanksgiving off and that’s
difficult and we do get double time for them but those are special days.” They can
request them off but she finds this frustrating. Lisa noted that these days may influence a
teacher to go to public schools. “I think that’s what tends to get at us and leads teachers
to kind of go towards public school for that break at times.”

An additional struggle that Lisa found difficult is that teachers cannot stay at work
after 3 pm unless they get permission, due to their union contract. Lisa found this weird
because in public school a teacher can get much work done after school but she said that
they really don’t enforce this rule. Also, teachers in public school can meet after school
and discuss a particular student. If Lisa has to stay after school she has asked the
principal and he has had no issues allowing her, thus far.

**Qualities needed to thrive as a teacher.** There are certain qualities needed to
stay and thrive in a residential school. Lisa reported that one of these qualities was
having “never ending patience” and stated that she feels that is engrained from your home environment and something that cannot be taught in a classroom. Some people have it and others do not. These students have several behavioral and emotional issues and Lisa noted that they “tend to push your buttons and you kind of want to pull your hair out at times.” Due to the various emotional and behavioral disorders that the students have, Lisa expressed that a teacher needs patience.

In addition to patience, Lisa felt that teachers need to be open minded and flexible with how they teach. These students have difficulties learning and due to this they may respond to other ways of learning, such as more concrete explanations of academics and hands on activities. Lisa expressed the teachers at the Monteverde School display this behavior daily and stated that she taught students in a variety of ways and one way was using many hands on activities so that the students could use their senses to learn.

**Things that keep teachers in this setting.** In addition to the qualities that teachers need to stay and thrive in this setting, there are also activities and actions taken in residential schools that can keep a teacher in this type of setting. One thing that Lisa reported that keeps teachers in this setting is the open communication with all members of the school. “We have amazing communication throughout residential … I just love the staff and talking to them and just the environment.” She also reported that the staff are also close and will spend time out of the school together because they enjoy each other’s company. “I really have developed a relationship that’s so good with the staff. … just having that helps.”

Lisa said another thing that keeps a teacher in this setting is when things are going so well in class. “The moments where everything is actually working. Your lesson is
going very well and you get your academics in and you feel like you are really getting somewhere with the kids.” Finally, she reported that what keeps her in this setting are those special moments that she has with her students. This reminded her of how much she loves the job. “Those little moments where you feel really important.” Lisa described one of these special moments with a student. On a trip to the beach with her students Lisa had a student who kept raving about a seashell that she found on the beach and that is all that she talked about all the way to the school. The next day, Lisa reported that the student came up to her and said, “I really want you to have it” and gave her the shell. Lisa was touched and said, “Awe … that was my first really awe … moment.” These moments she felt keeps her in this environment.

**Lisa: lesson learned.** Lisa began her educational journey struggling just to read, never imagining that she would teach students who struggle just like she did. She worked hard in college and gained experience as a student teacher but found that her educational background could not prepare her for working in a residential school. Although her first impressions of the school climate were welcoming and supportive, according to Lisa she still was shocked by the behaviors that she saw from some students and had never experienced working with students like this. Lisa was able to ask questions about students in her residential setting and the teachers at the Monteverde School were very receptive to helping her. She received so much support from everyone at the school. She was able to learn through verbal encounters from teachers, as well as observing teachers in action, and attended numerous trainings to prepare herself for handling various behaviors. Eventually, Lisa began to adjust to working with this population and reported that she loves working with the students.
Lisa’s first impressions of the school as welcoming and supportive turned out to be true for her. According to Lisa, the Monteverde School supported her throughout the process of getting used to working with the population of students. Additionally, Lisa would receive support from staff, teachers and administrators with anything that she needed. Lisa said that the support and the mentor program have continued since her hire and now she provides the support that she received. At first glance, I found Lisa to be a lucky teacher who found a school that gives full support to their novice teachers. However, luck did not provide Lisa with the support she needed to thrive in this school. Instead, Lisa was supported through learning about student behaviors in trainings, having open interdepartmental communication, participating in team building activities in staff meetings, having her questions answered and having someone to talk to through her mentoring program. Even though she had all this support, Lisa still struggles with the limited amount of days off, participating in student restraints, and the lack of time she can spend doing work after school.

**Lori: Secondary Residential Teacher at Monteverde School**

**Educational background.** The second interviewee, Lori, grew up in on the west coast of the United States. She reported that she had a great childhood and had no real academic issues in school. Her community was a very small, rural farming community where everyone knew each other, but there were little resources at school. Due to this, Lori was not able to take advanced placement (AP) courses until the University of California incorporated a pilot program in her school that allowed her to take AP courses online. Once Lori graduated from high school she decided to move and go to school in Washington D.C. for international affairs and global public health. After graduating from
college, she found a job in New York City working for a non-profit organization in the management field.

**Work and years of experience in the field.** Lori began her career working in social and recreational programs in hospitals, then educational management and eventually decided that she wanted to teach instead of trying to implement programs for students. In New York City, she managed recreational programs for non-profit hospitals in New York City and managed a vocational program for students that were infected with or affected by HIV. Through managing these programs she found herself enjoying the company of the students so much that Lori decided to switch careers and go into teaching. She said, “With my background in health and my love for fitness and sports I kind of went down the PE path.” Lori was able to pass the teaching test and because of her various experiences she did not have to do student teaching. Once she was licensed, Lori decided that she wanted to move to a beachside location in the northeast to look for a job. Lori began her teaching career at a behavioral hospital, then spent three years teaching, managing teachers and being an assistant director for an education program within all the behavioral hospitals in the northeast. Additionally, she managed tutoring programs in hospitals and substance abuse centers for students. She came to the Monteverde School about three years ago and she has been teaching for a total of about six years. Lori acknowledged that her path to teaching was different than many of her current colleagues. She commented, “It was kind of a very different introduction to teaching then most people got that just started in public schools.”

**Types of children taught.** Due to her varied experiences in different settings, Lori has worked with a variety of different types of students. In the behavioral hospital,
she worked with students that were impacted by crisis in their lives. Lori noted, “It was a locked facility and the students were affected by some crisis situation … some were suffering from depression, psychosis, or were there for medical reasons or substance abuse.” Lori commented that students in the hospital would stay a couple of weeks and then leave. She described it “as a revolving door.” At the Monteverde School, it is a little bit different because the children live there and they are placed longer than at a hospital. Additionally, Lori reported that all of her students at the Monteverde School have had disabilities of some sort. She said, “… the range of disabilities is physical, health, emotional, and behavioral.”

**School and staff impressions.** On Lori’s first visit to the school she found the school to have a warm atmosphere where people were very creative and it seemed to be an exciting place. In terms of the staff, Lori reported that the staff seemed to really care for the students. “You could tell that the kids were in an environment where people cared about them and wanted them to thrive and succeed.” she said. Lori chose the job due to this environment as well as the type of facility the school was and what she could teach for physical education, and the proximity of the school to where she lives. Once hired, Lori said that staff seemed excited to have her as part of the team. The teachers talked about community and being there to support each other. She felt good about her new job and reported that, “I got a really good vibe right at the beginning you know …. I really felt supported from the get go.”

**Trainings/professional development.** According to Lori, The Monteverde School provided many trainings and professional development days throughout the year. She noted that there are trainings every month for everyone that works at the school.
Additionally, the teachers have weekly staff meetings where possible professional development topics are discussed. All departments will “collaborate on ideas for trainings when they are trying to figure out what to do with certain re-occurring behaviors.” Teachers will also go out in the community and have full and partial days off from school to attend conferences. “We attend conferences and trainings and have a variety of consultants and experts come in and present to us.”

**Schedule.** Lori is a physical education (PE) teacher and in addition to her classes teaching students various aspects of keeping fit she also has to complete paperwork. In addition to teaching students throughout the day, at times Lori will volunteer to do overtime on the floor. Lori begins her day at the cottages and helping the staff to get students ready for the day. Then she has breakfast with the students. On a typical day Lori reported that she teaches PE to six classes. Lori keeps to a schedule when teaching her classes and she finds that it works well and said, “My classes always consist of some sort of introduction or warm-up activity down into shorter 10-15 minutes segments in order to keep interest.” She finishes off the class with a closing activity and incentives at the end of class to keep the students motivated. In addition to teaching, Lisa noted, “We have to do administrative documentation, report on behaviors, IEP’s and quarterlies.” On top of her normal day, Lori volunteers to work overtime on the floor for extra money. When talking about extra shifts she mentioned, “I pick up a lot. Some teachers don’t pick up any. It’s just kind of a personal preference.”

**Staff support.** The positive support given at the Monteverde School is something that was evident in Lori’s remarks from her interview. She reported that, “I felt really supported from the get go.” One way that they support each other is through keeping
open lines of communication throughout the program. Lori noted that in many programs that she has been in this is a difficult process to be able to communicate with all departments but it is something that they really work on at the Monteverde School. At the school, they have weekly meetings with all the department heads to make sure that most things are communicated program wise. Lori commented, “We have constantly been revamping our system to make it better on all sides of the program, so if something’s not working in terms of getting communication across we bring up other ideas. We try them out. If that doesn’t work we go onto the next thing.” The school also keeps a data base where day shift workers will enter data on each student form the day and the residential staff can read it before they start their shift to see what types of behaviors have occurred with students on the morning shift.

Additionally, teachers and staff offer support to each other within the building. She said, “We are one big family … we hang out outside of work because we enjoy each other’s company … people are very supportive. If there’s anything that happens in your life or in school people are generally concerned.” In addition to being there for each other the teachers protect each other and look out for one another. Lori noted, “If something happens to somebody the whole team instantly jumps in… I’m never worried that somebody’s not going to be there to have my back if needed.” In addition to feeling protected, Lori felt that she can go to anybody and discuss struggles that she may be having. She stated, “I can go to almost anybody and get help or just be able to vent or talk through ideas.”

**Mentor program.** Lori described the mentoring program as thorough with novice teachers having to attend mentor groups and being assigned a mentor. In terms of
assigning a mentor, Lori said, “Administration have people come in and observe them and then they’ll match them up with somebody who’s really strong in an area of need … and they really try to do everything they can to help people succeed here.” In addition to mentoring, new teachers are given time off of the floor to be planning and preparing. The veteran teachers make themselves available for the new teachers, especially if it is their mentor. Lori stated, “We meet and discuss on a regular basis things that are going well, things that we need help with and things that are really hard for us… and are there for feedback if needed”. Lori reported that in addition to being there for novice teachers they are willing to share ideas and resources for the betterment of the new teachers. She noted, “We all share our resources, materials and ideas … the Monteverde School and staff really try and do everything they can to help people succeed here.”

Mission statement. The final piece to school climate is the school’s mission statement and how it connects to the overall positive environment within the Monteverde School. According to Lori, the overall mission statement is “we provide high quality educational services to students with complex special needs in order for them to live the most successful live independently as possible.” Lori emphasized that it is important to get her students ready to live independently out in the community. “We are trying to prepare them for life after school”, she explained. One way that they prepare students for life after graduating is teaching them skills other than academic skills. Lori stated, “We’re really looking at the whole student when we educate. I do a lot of social skills and conflict resolution in my PE class … helps them think about life and what they need in order to build up those skills to succeed when they leave later on.” Lori also reported
that she tries to teach her students about health and taking care of themselves once they leave the Monteverde School.

**Observations of burnout.** Lori has witnessed several occurrences of teacher burnout in her career. On her first interview she expressed just how much she has seen burnout and felt it important to discuss the topic of teacher burnout. She commented, “I’ve been in the field for over five years and I see so many teachers leave, so this is a good topic.” In the hospital setting she said that the kids aren’t in the environment long and it puts stress on the teachers. This constant revolving door of students impacted the teachers and many left as a result of that. In her experience working at the behavioral hospital she observed numerous teachers leave the profession and found it concerning, due to her love for the kids that she worked with. Lori noted, “I saw a lot of teacher burnout and teacher turnover … every year people not even staying for a year and for me personally this is a population I love.”

**Signs of burnout.** There are numerous signs of teachers have difficulty and getting burnout out from working in a residential school. Lori noted that one is a lack of patience with the students. Another is a teacher having much anxiety and stress, which causes them to become very reactive to situations. Due to being so reactive, Lori felt that they missed seeing certain issues and struggles that the students were having. Lori observed teachers who start to isolate themselves if they struggled with signs of burnout. “I think a lot of teachers tend to kind of start to focus more inward and start to separate from other teachers because they start to feel really overwhelmed,” she stated. Lori noted that these teachers may first seek out help but if the feelings become too overwhelming she noticed that burnout teachers tend to stay to themselves.
Struggles with residential students. In addition to Lori noticing other teachers’ signs of burnout, she noticed some signs of burnout within herself. She first began to notice her frustration and burnout when working at the behavioral hospital. This was due to not being able to help the students because of their attendance in and out of the hospital. She would make progress only to have a student get discharged. Lori stated, “I love it but it’s very tough … I know that there is burnout but for me if I feel I’m getting burned out I have to make some sort of change because I know I love it here and I have to adapt to that change.”

Lori also described her struggles with being a physical education teacher at the Monteverde School. One struggle is having all different students with various behaviors and physical impairments, which cause stress. She noted, “I have different students who I sometimes have a hard time reaching, a hard time getting to participate or being engaged, as well as just you know reoccurring behaviors or interruptions in class where I can’t get anything accomplished.” Lori also finds herself exhausted at the end of the day, from participating in physical activities with these students for most of the day. Many of the students need assistance with physical activities. Lori noted that after helping students she is physically drained stating, “The students are not going to be engaged unless you are fully doing it as well, so doing it for six classes a day is exhausting. You know when I feel myself getting tired, bitter or in a bad mood then I know to take time for myself.” Lori realized that taking time out for herself is important to continue working in this profession, which she loves so much. She said, “This is something that I’m passionate about, so I have to be proactive in order to stay fresh in my profession.”
Qualities of good teachers. There are certain qualities that make a good teacher within a residential school. Lori commented that teachers who are successful within this setting need to be patient, flexible and able to not take anything personally. She noted, “I’ve had everything said to me that can hurt or comments that don’t make sense and you can’t let any of that faze you.” Additionally, students can try to physically hurt you and threaten you and you need to maintain control throughout these incidents. Lori noted, “You have to be able to care for the student even if they threaten you or have physically hurt you. You have to be able to turn around and continue to provide good care for them and show that you will not abandon them … you have to be able to focus on the whole student.” Lori believes that these qualities are something that a teacher has innately, but in time, if they stay in the field and only have a little bit of these qualities a teacher may develop them more through experience. She commented, “If you don’t have part of them to start then it’s hard to develop, patience, flexibility, genuine care, but I think that the more that you get to know the students the more quality experiences you have, the more successes you will see and you can build these qualities up.”

Factors to keep a teacher in the classroom. There are numerous factors that keep a teacher in the classroom. First, Lori commented that a teacher in a residential school has to have a sense of value in terms of teaching and said, “It’s so hard as a teacher if you’re not feeling valued. As an employee, you won’t stay.” In addition to feeling valued, a teacher has to feel a sense of accomplishment with the students. Lori noted, “If you feel that you’re not doing enough good then it’s hard to stay working in a residential facility.” Another factor that has to do with feeling valued is having a positive sense of community throughout the school. Lori described the Monteverde School as a
good example of a positive sense of community and said, “That’s one of the reasons why people stay here is the support that teachers receive from the other teachers and administration.” Lori reported that she felt a sense of community right from the moment that she was interviewed. “Staff were very excited to have me on board and talked a lot about community and being there to support each other,” she shared. Part of this sense of community is recruiting teachers and keeping teachers that have a sense of passion for working with these students. Lori reiterated this when she said, “You need to have a real passion for working with this population because you have to be happy … you can’t make yourself get up every day unless you are truly committed and feel like this is the place where you belong and you make a difference.”

**Strategies to retain teachers.** Strategies can be put in place so that teachers will stay in a residential classroom. If Lori was a principal she described strategies that she would put in place to keep quality teachers. One would be to give positive feedback to teachers. Another would be to give support to all the staff at her school. Lori noted, “I would be available to my teachers if they needed support or had questions about anything… I would just take that initiative to let them know that I’m there for them.” In addition to providing support to her teachers, Lori would also make sure that each teacher had enough resources so that they could teach their students and be successful. She stated, “I would provide them with enough resources to make their job better and enjoyable… make them feel supported just as a regular would be.”

The teachers need internal support and they also need time out of school through vacation time. Lori reported that vacations are a valuable time when teachers can re-energize and get themselves refreshed. One aspect of residential schools that is different
from public schools is that they have to go to school longer than public schools and this can cause teachers to be deterred from staying as a residential teacher. Lori commented, “There are so many benefits that public schools have that residential can’t offer. It’s tough to keep teachers … if I were principal I would try to give more time off for my teachers just to step away and be excited to come back.”

**Success that keeps her in the classroom.** Lori reported what keeps her within the Monteverde School. First, she said that it was just the people she works with in general from “the administration to the students.” The school also provides her with so much opportunity for creativity that she has never experienced in any other job. She noted, “I have so much flexibility in what I teach and how I teach.” In addition to this creativity, Lori said that the administration at the school put much trust in her. She explained, “They put so much trust in me and I can propose new ideas … and they’re going to let me try it and let me run with it and if I think something’s going to work they fully support me.” Lori also noted that she receives positive and encouraging feedback and that helps her. She said, “If I feel like I’m having a rough time or I’m not doing my best it is reassuring to know that I’ve got other people there.”

**Lori: lessons learned.** Lori began her educational journey in a rural farming community in California and moved to the east coast to attend college for global public health. She did not plan on becoming a teacher, but instead to work in global management. Throughout her varied work experiences as a manager in behavioral hospitals Lori realized that she wanted to have a direct impact on students, so she decided to become a teacher. Lori had experienced numerous behavioral occurrences at her
previous jobs at behavioral hospitals so teaching in a residential school for students with behavioral issues was not shocking to her.

Lori’s first impression of the Monteverde School was that it was a warm and exciting atmosphere, full of creative staff. She reported that she felt a good vibe from the moment that she toured the school and was interviewed. The Monteverde School provided her with a strong foundation to help her be a successful teacher at the school. She said that they have numerous trainings and attend conferences and that staff members are very supportive towards each other. Lori described the staff as one big family who generally have concern for each other and said that has not been the case in some other environments that she has worked in. She also noted that because she feels so supported she has felt comfortable enough to branch out and get involved in leadership positions in the school. Lori has taken on the job as the coordinator of the Special Olympics program at the school, works on the floor with the students at night and has been trained as a floor supervisor. According to the answers Lori gave in her interview, her first impressions of the school as a warm, exciting atmosphere that is full of creative staff proved true.

Even though Lori shared similar views as Lisa, she did share some different perspectives of the Monteverde School. Lori reported having feelings of burnout while Lisa did not report this. As a physical education teacher with students who have physical limitations, Lori has to exert more energy to assist the students with completing activities and reported this physical work is causing her to feel burnout. Lori has learned to cope with these feelings and reported that she takes time to herself so that she can relax and unwind. Due to Lori’s variety of experiences working with his population, she displayed confidence in her teacher abilities while Lisa struggled to adapt to working in this
environment but gained that confidence through the support that she received. Both teachers discussed factors that led to teachers staying in the field. While Lori focused more on teacher factors such as having a sense of value, having a positive sense of community, and having a passion for students, Lisa focused on the importance of having open communication, lessons going well, and having special moments with teachers.

John, the Principal and Leader of the Monteverde School

**Educational background.** John grew up near the Monteverde School, reported that he had a typical childhood and played sports but did have some difficulties in school. The struggle encouraged him to become a teacher, so he could help students who struggled like he did. John noted, “I struggled mightily with Math and I had a couple of teachers that didn’t seem to care and I felt that I could help others in the area that I struggled with, Math.” Sports played a big role in his life. John noted that he liked to have a good time and this impacted the grades he received in high school. He did graduate from high school and ended up going to a local community college so he could raise his grades. John said, “I was at the community college for a year and a half and had a 4.0 grade average and then I went to a state university.” After graduating with his degree in teaching, he went back to his school district to teach but was not there long. Due to budget cuts, he was let go. John decided to go back to school for special education and got a job as a teacher at The Monteverde School.

**Path to being a principal.** John worked as a teacher at the Monteverde School and loved his experience teaching at the school. When he began the job as a teacher he noticed a difference right away from the public school environment to the environment at the Monteverde School. John stated, “The public setting doesn’t allow for creativity or
community building among teachers. I mean it was very cliquey. Your colleagues become more the ones you become friendly with because those are the people that you plan with.” John noticed that there was a bond with the staff at the Monteverde School that he didn’t notice at the public school and stated, “There’s a closeness at the Monteverde School that I wouldn’t change for anything. They always say the grass is greener on the other side at public school but in my experience there is nothing like the camaraderie here.”

After being a teacher for three years, John decided to go back to school for his administrative license, so he decided to enroll at a state university in the northeast. John reported that he had a great experience educationally at the university and noted, “Really the program just helps you in regards to really understanding the paperwork aspect of the job which is pretty big.” John said that his mentor was the principal at the time of the Monteverde School. She was great and really helped him learn the job. He stated, “I shadowed her and she really helped me.” After graduating he was an assistant principal for a year and half and has been principal at the Monteverde School for about nine months. This deep knowledge of the context due to being a teacher himself, helped John understand and be compassionate for the roles that residential teachers have at the Monteverde School.

**Responsibilities.** John reported that there are numerous responsibilities that he has to handle everyday as principal of the Monteverde School. One of his responsibilities is to attend meetings. He commented, “I have supervision meetings with the teachers every day based on their schedule and I supervise all the teachers one to one for 30 minutes each week … we have meetings that I have to attend on students where
department heads get together to discuss behavioral issues that a students may have.”

These meetings that that occur about student behaviors are called behavioral support plan meetings (BSP). John noted, “A BSP typically is for when a teacher is struggling with a particular kiddo and the supervisors, clinicians, and the teacher will meet on Wednesday and communicate and form a plan of action for that student.” In addition to meeting with teachers and students, John also has meetings with the heads of each department to make sure that each leader knows what is happening in the other aspects of the program, so they can pass the information along to the staff. He stated, “We have multi-disciplinary meetings between all departments and that occurs every Tuesday.” All these meetings occur each week, in addition to quarterly student meetings with the social workers, lawyers and educational advocates.

In addition to attending meetings, John reported that he had a lot of paperwork to look over and complete on both students and staff. Even though he has many meetings and paperwork to complete, John feels it is his responsibility to check in with both teachers and staff to make sure that they are getting what they need. He stated, “I always make time in the day to stop by a classroom or talk to a couple of students. That’s something that I feel is really important.” In his interview, John felt that it is his responsibility to support the teachers in whatever they need. Even though there is much supervision going on John stated, “I will stop into a class and just check on the teacher and make sure that they have what they need in terms of student material and curriculum. That constant communication is important.” He also noted that teachers know he attends many meetings, yet if they need to talk to him he is available.
**Qualities seen in successful teachers.** There are several qualities that John has seen that make a successful teacher. A successful teacher is defined as someone who successfully navigates teaching academics, being compassionate and problem-solving for complex real-life situations (Lengyel & Vernon-Dotson, 2010). John noted that a teacher has to have passion and commitment towards this population of students. John advised, “first and foremost you have to have a love for the kids.” He also thought that this commitment and passion needed to come from the top and felt that if the people that run a school had these qualities then it will trickle down to the staff. John stated, “Myself, as the principal knows the importance of morale and it starts with me.” John also sensed that teachers have to be willing to open up to each other and get to know one another, so they have a support system to go to if they are struggling with an issue. He expressed that this closeness and support is evident at the Monteverde School. John explained, “I stress the camaraderie with staff. It’s typical on a Friday that they will all hang out with each other. … I know when I was in the public setting when teachers would get together they would bitch about the week and that doesn’t help the students or new teachers. At the Monteverde School teachers are genuine friends.”

**Observations of struggling teachers.** John saw qualities of successful teachers in his various educational positions and he also saw teachers struggle. In his former job as a public school teacher, John reported that he saw many teachers struggling and burnout, “I saw frustration in the public setting … those were the teachers on a Friday who would be complaining about every student.” In terms of John’s experience at the Monteverde School, he didn’t want to use the term burnout but the teacher was not a fit for this environment. John noted, “I don’t think that we have teachers that are actually burnt out.
I think that we have teachers that have left because it wasn’t a fit for them.” John described these teachers who lacked creativity and would just teach direct instruction. He explained, “There’s a lack of creativity and it’s not to say that they wouldn’t do well in a high school setting … with our students you have to be creative … you can’t just read out of a book.”

**Ways to support teacher struggles.** John described several ways that he supports a teacher in their time of struggle as a principal. When a teacher has struggled John reported that he provides as much support as he can and keeps the lines of communication open. Additionally, he encourages teachers to go to their fellow teachers and talk about their struggles. John commented:

I think what we do here is to constantly provide support. The communication among teachers holds plenty of meaning, where if I encourage teachers to vent … if they are frustrated about something let me know about it. … I feel that if a staff member came to me, or the day supervisor, with any type of issue we would sit down and try to brainstorm a way to help.

In John’s interview, he noted that his biggest success was that he had only one teacher leave since he has been the principal. This was within a month that she was hired and he decided to let her go because he felt that she was not a fit for the Monteverde School environment. He expressed:

You know that’s a big success, because we haven’t had turnover basically at all. I learned from our director of children’s’ services that establishing a communication among staff is a priority and we’ve made that our priority. Trying to hire the right teachers is something that I feel that we are good at. We had to
let that one teacher go but it was within a month. Other than that we have had pretty consistent staff here in my tenure.

**John: lessons learned.** John’s path to becoming a principal began as a student who struggled in math and then decided that he wanted to help students just like him. That is exactly what he is doing today. He began this journey as a student in high school, when his focus was more on sports and having fun than academics. He graduated from high school and went to a community college and excelled. Then he went to a state university, graduated with his teaching degree and began teaching at a public school but got laid off. He decided to go back to school for special education and after receiving his degree he found a job as a special education teacher at the Monteverde School.

Once at the Monteverde School, John realized that this was the environment that he enjoyed working in. He was a teacher for three years and then decided to go to school for his administrative license. His mentor at the school, the former principal guided and taught John to work with the staff and teachers and expressed how important it is to have a positive community. John took the lessons learned and utilized them as an assistant principal at the school. He had this job for about a year and a half and then became principal of the Monteverde School. In John’s job as an assistant principal and principal he has had numerous responsibilities that include completing paperwork, providing support for all staff, attending numerous meetings, making sure that teachers have all the resources that they need to teach, and making sure that he keeps the lines of communication open for both teachers and staff.

Throughout his tenure at the Monteverde School, John has been able to recognize the signs of a successful teacher and someone who is struggling. He reported that
successful teachers have passion and commitment towards this population of students, open up to each other and get to know one another so that they have a support system of teachers to go to if they struggle with an issue. If a teacher is struggling he provides support and keeps the lines of communication open. He also encourages teachers to go to their fellow teachers and talk about their struggles. This was John’s first year as a principal at the school. He reported that the biggest success thus far has been that he has had only one teacher leave their position and he let her go because she was not a good fit for the job as a teacher in a residential setting.

Overall, John believed that his role as principal is someone who supports his teachers, despite his other responsibilities and meetings that he attends. John encourages teachers to be creative and flexible in their teaching, supervises teachers each week, keeps each teacher informed of what is discussed in meetings and makes a concerted effort to walk around the school and check in with both teachers and students. John’s constant communication and meeting with teachers influence a teacher to stay within this residential setting.

**Lessons Learned from Open Coding Analysis**

The themes which emerged from observations and interviews with teachers lead me to three important conclusions related to the original research questions: what factors do educational stakeholders (current and former teachers, as well as administration) within a secondary educational residential program perceive lead to burnout and what factors influence a teacher within a secondary educational residential program to stay within the profession? The three interpretations of the data results are from open coding and are summarized as follows:
1. Working with students that have special needs requires additional training beyond how teachers are typically prepared. Lori and Lisa felt like they got the additional training needed at the school as in-service teachers.

2. The teachers, Lori and Lisa, believed that they were working in a supportive, welcoming environment.

3. The supportive environment started with the principal.

The coding based on the theoretical framework, organizational climate theory (Schneider, 1987), also revealed information related to the emergent themes and research questions. Next, the themes from the analysis based on the theoretical framework will be described and then the findings from the open coding and the theoretical framework.

**Themes Based on Theoretical Framework**

I began this study with a focus on organizational climate theory (Schneider, 1987) because of the connection between climate and employee retention or burnout (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Schneider posited that people have a greater influence on the organization, than external factors, such as technology, or the structures that resides within an organization. Schneider et al. (1995) deemed the three processes of attraction, selection and attrition that occur within an organization to determine the type of people who are employed and define the nature of the climate within the organization. In this study, characteristics of employee (teacher) influence, attraction, selection and attrition were analyzed and compared to answers from the interviewees to determine how teacher actions and behaviors affect the school climate.

**Employee (teacher) influence on climate.** A teacher’s actions and behaviors have a direct impact on a residential school climate. Interviewees, Lori and John, expressed that
the positive behaviors of the staff at the Monteverde School influenced them to take the job. Lori noted, “You could tell that the kids were in an environment where people cared about them and wanted them to thrive and succeed.” John, the principal, saw a difference right away from his former job in a public school. This favorable environment was influential to John’s taking the job at the Monteverde School. The exceptional first impressions of the Monteverde School experienced by Lori and John influenced the climate in that it encouraged great teachers to take a teaching job, thereby adding more positive pieces to an already impressive school environment.

**Communication as a climate influencer.** Another way teachers influence the climate at the Monteverde School is through keeping open lines of communication between all departments. Teachers, Lisa and Lori, reported constant communication throughout all departments within the Monteverde School. Lisa commented that the one thing that she loves about her job is the communication throughout all of the departments and believed that this open communication is what keeps residential special educators teaching at the Monteverde School. Lori stated that in her previous places of employment it was difficult to keep the lines of communication open. Despite this difficulty, the Monteverde School worked hard to keep open communication at the school and this reason is why they retain teachers.

John, the principal, reported that he attends many meetings to keep that line of communication open between all departments. These meetings can accumulate but he works hard to make sure that he is available for teachers and communicates with them often. By keeping communication flowing between all departments everyone is informed of what occurs throughout the school. This keeps the climate calm and controlled. When
things are tumultuous, teachers sense the tension and it could impact their behavior towards students. Additionally, students sense disorganization and become disruptive, creating an unstable climate.

**Mentoring as a climate influencer.** In addition to teachers impacting the school climate with the students, veteran teachers impact the climate of novice teachers. One way is through the mentoring program at the Monteverde School. According to Lisa, the mentor is there for a novice residential special educator to provide support and meet with the novice teacher to discuss any struggles that they may have. She said, “If I was feeling stressed or I had a question about something this person was very helpful, had many ideas, and was just there to talk about the day.” Additionally, Lori noted that she observed teachers who lacked this veteran teacher support in her previous job and these teachers left their position. These veteran teachers who work hard to help new teachers have a direct influence on the school climate in that they provide the guidance that a beginning teacher needs which can retain teachers in their position. This is especially important with a population of cognitive disordered children who thrive off of consistency and structure. The more teachers that the school can retain, the better it is for the students, and this will create a positive school climate.

**Negative climate influencers.** Not only are there positive employee influencers that can impact the climate, there can be negative employee influencers as well. When teachers are burnt out it can influence the school climate negatively. Lisa has observed teachers who are burnt out display behaviors of being very short with students, which meant that they had little patience. Consequently, these behaviors can get students aggravated and with students who have emotional issues it can cause a major classroom
disruption. Lori reported that she has witnessed teachers who are stressed and anxious, which causes them to be reactive toward students. Due to these teachers’ reactions, Lori felt that these educators missed certain issues that the students were having. This lack of awareness from the residential special educator can cause the students to behave out of control and negatively impact the environment.

John described his experience as a teacher in the public school and observed numerous teachers frustrated and burnt out. He said, “Those were the teachers on a Friday who would be complaining about every student.” These negative comments can make other teachers feel uncomfortable which could affect the way that teachers interact with each other. If there is a lack of teacher cohesion it can impact the school climate, causing a negative environment and perspective employees may not be attracted to a pessimistic environment.

**Attraction.** Another characteristic of the theoretical framework evident in the interviews was attraction. According to Holland (1985), people are attracted to careers as a function of their own interest in personality. In other words, people gravitate towards careers that they find interesting and are a fit with their own personality. In terms of special education teachers, they are attracted to working with children that require more assistance to decrease their behaviors so they can focus on academics.

In this study, two educators struggled as students and are attracted to helping children who struggled just like they did. Lisa expressed her struggles with reading and how she received extra help from a resource room teacher. More specifically, she said, “I found school difficult and I’d never thought that I’d be a teacher.” Once she began to
work with students in the inclusion classroom, she found the experience to be very rewarding and expressed satisfaction with helping students just like her who struggled.

John, the principal also reported difficulties academically and mentioned that his particular difficulty in school was Math. He stated, “I struggled mightily with Math and I had a couple of teachers that didn’t seem to care and I felt like I could help others in the area I struggled with.” John was determined to help students in similar situations, who struggled with a particular subject. Despite his difficulty in Math, John was able to overcome his deficiencies and turn them into becoming a successful principal, who took the lessons learned and now assists students with academic adversities. The third teacher did not mention what attracted her to the field of residential education.

Selection. A third characteristic of the theoretical framework that emerged in the interviews was selection. Selection occurs when organizations select people who they think are the best fit based on the person sharing a common vision and goals similar to the organization (Schneider, 1987). If a person is hired, he or she will both fit into the environment and conform to their values and goals or struggle to maintain job satisfaction and eventually leave the job. In John’s interview, he described the characteristics that he looks for in the hiring process at the Monteverde School.

Selection in hiring process. John, the principal, considers various characteristics in determining who he selects as a future educator at the Monteverde School. First, John determines if a teacher has the passion and commitment to work with the population served at the school. The students have varied behavioral and cognitive limitations and this can be difficult for educators. Additionally, he maintains that incoming teachers need to be willing to open up to veteran staff, ask questions and feel comfortable going to
someone if they are struggling with a classroom situation. This will minimize stress, especially for those teachers who are new to a residential school setting. The Monteverde School’s mission statement emphasizes that all school staff work as a team and this vision needs to be evident within a perspective teacher.

**Selection in teacher job search.** Not only do administrators select a teacher based on a common vision and goals of the school, the teacher being interviewed selects a job based on their own personal feelings and how they positively connect to the school environment. John began his career at the Monteverde School as a teacher and reported that he chose the job at the Monteverde School once he determined the environment would allow him to grow creatively and attempt new activities and lessons as a teacher. Also, he experienced a welcoming presence upon entering campus and that bond with staff was something that he had never experienced within the public school. John noted that the closeness of the staff at the Monteverde School positively impacts the whole environment making it much easier to handle a rough day teaching.

During Lisa’s interview the welcoming environment of the Monteverde School directly impacted her decision to select the teaching position even though she had never worked in residential education. On Lisa’s first day at the residential school she was leery and a little nervous. Despite the welcoming environment, Lisa admitted that she selected the school due to the fact that she had just moved back home and it was the only job available at the time. Unfortunately, this occurs many times for teachers who are recent graduates. Teacher employment is limited within public education and due to high teacher turnover within residential schools these jobs are more abundant. Fortunately,
Lisa was able to get accustomed to working in the residential school setting and she loves her job.

Lori selected the job because she could tell right away that the staff cared about the students and wanted them to succeed. She loved the environment as well as the type of facility, the fact that she could teach physical education, the job itself and the proximity to where the school was to her home. Even though the interviewees selected the school due to the positive environment, there were other factors that impacted their choice. It may have been the only job available, the job was close to home and the commute to work was short. Even with all the optimism in a secondary residential school, some teachers still have difficulties adjusting to the environment and will leave the field to pursue other occupations.

**Attrition.** The final characteristic of the theoretical framework, attrition, is described by Schneider (1987) as: when people who do not fit in the environment they tend to leave it. This turnover causes a more homogenous environment and this sameness can cause problems such as an inability to change and a lack of a competitive environment. Throughout all the interviews, each residential special educator observed teachers leaving the profession, some interviewees more than others.

Even though this is Lisa’s first job as an educator, she noticed the signs of burnout in some colleagues. She has witnessed three teachers leave the school in three years at the Monteverde School where the number of teachers at the school is less than ten. Lori also has been at the school for the amount of time and witnessed four or five teachers leave the school since she began. Lori commented that their teacher population is between eight and nine teachers and the population of students is around 50 students. In
other words, a teacher or two leaves the school every year. Due to the Monteverde School being so small, in terms of student and teacher population, one change of a teacher could have a big impact on student behaviors. These students have experienced constant change in their lives and to have one teacher leave can have a big impact to a school that is so small.

John, the principal, felt that the turnover of his school was something that was not a problem. In his nine months that John has been a principal, only one teacher left and he made the decision to let her go after one month. He determined that that teacher was not the right fit for the residential environment and would be best working at the public school. John considered the lack of turnover in his school as a big success, since becoming the principal at the beginning of the year. Lisa, Lori, and John saw attrition as an insignificant factor at the Monteverde School. Yet with such a small population of students and teachers, even if one teacher leaves, it may influence the environment. According to Lisa, Lori, and John, a majority of staff at the Monteverde School are very close, support each other and have the same vision and goals as the school. This closeness may be because the group is a homogenous group who has common beliefs and if someone does not fit within the residential setting they leave.

**Lessons Learned from Organizational Climate Theory**

Organizational climate theory (Schneider, 1987) suggested people influence the organization and after several conversations with Lisa, Lori and John they were able to determine special educators did influence a residential school. Some ways of influence included positive and negative teacher characteristics, teacher attraction towards working with students who have academic and behavioral deficiencies, teacher and principal
selection based on common visions and goals of the residential climate, and how teacher attrition can have repercussions for student behaviors within a residential school.

Kindzierski et al. (2013) found results that were similar to the interviewees’ statements, in that current special education teachers reported that novice teachers needed to display certain characteristics. These include kindness, imagination, flexibility, patience and a sense of humor. In addition to these characteristics, teachers need to display resilience in working with this population and attend to their own well-being. If a teacher is sick and burnt out, chances are that they will leave the profession. Current emotional and behavioral disordered teachers also reported that if a novice teacher lacked patience and empathy, then they might struggle with this population and leave for another job. If prospective teachers are hired that do not have many of these qualities, chances are that a school will experience teacher attrition.

I began this research questioning what factors contributed to a secondary residential special educator leaving the field and what factors keep them wanting to teach in this type of setting. In total, organizational climate theory suggests, “people make the place” (Schneider, 1987, p. 451). After examining themes that emerged from open coding and coding based on the theoretical framework, it appears that the climate of the Monteverde School is strongly influenced by the principal. However, regardless of how much a principal does to build a strong climate, it is not a strong climate unless employees buy-in and continue to support the environment. As Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith (1995) suggested:

The situation is not independent of the people in the setting; the situation is the people there behaving as they do. The structure, process, and culture are the
outcome of the people in an organization, not the cause of the behavior of the organization” (p. 751).

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the themes that emerged from the data, as well as the themes related to the theoretical framework. I have interpreted the themes and derived findings. First, working with students that have special needs requires additional training beyond how teachers are typically prepared. Lori and Lisa felt like they received the additional training needed at the school as in-service teachers. The students at Monteverde School have unique needs and the teachers who work there must be ready to help meet those needs in order to be what Lengyel and Vernon-Dotson (2010) terms a successful teacher. There is no assumption that teachers already know how to work with these students when they are hired. The school took responsibility for providing proper trainings, administrator support, interdepartmental communication, and mentoring from a veteran teacher. The teachers were already certified; however, there were additional skills sets needed that are specific to the Monteverde School context. The school had specific programs in place to prepare teachers for these needs. These programs and other aspects of the school contributed to the welcoming and supportive climate of the school that Lisa and Lori described.

The teachers, Lori and Lisa, believed that they were working in a supportive, welcoming environment. There were many aspects of the Monteverde School that helped create a welcoming climate. The well-kept grounds and brightly colored interior of the school were visuals which made one feel welcome and comfortable within the school grounds. The friendly office staff that greeted this researcher into the building offered a
welcoming demeanor and made a guest feel comfortable visiting the school. The welcoming environment was evident by observing staff communication throughout the school. On observations of the school, this researcher witnessed teachers interacting before school in class planning lessons. Mentoring was another aspect that helped create a welcoming climate, by offering a new teacher a veteran teacher to ask questions of, and collaborate with. The mission statement is written towards an inviting climate where the words emphasize “we” and “team”. Finally, the principal, John, was described by both of the teachers as being part of the support system. He provided support to teachers by offering them proper trainings, a mentor, opportunities to grow in their teaching through creativity and flexibility, and putting trust in his teachers.

The supportive environment started with the principal. The principal of Monteverde was key to creating the supportive climate that exists at the Montverde School. As Cancio et al, (2013), Seal and Martin (2010), and Tickle et al., (2011) noted, a principal drives school climate. At the Monteverde School, the principal sustains a supportive environment by offering to talk to teachers if they need to vent, encouraging teachers to go to their fellow teachers and talk about their struggles, providing proper trainings on student behaviors, communicating to teachers about what occurs at meetings that he attends, and making himself visible in the school through visiting classrooms and talking to both teachers and students. These findings will be discussed in the context of the literature on perception of teacher skills, administrator support, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher working conditions in the next chapter.
Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of educational stakeholders within a secondary educational residential school to discover factors that led a teacher to relinquish their position versus residing in the field of secondary special education in a residential school. Collecting the experiences and beliefs of residential secondary special education teachers, Lisa, Lori and the principal John provided insight into the climate of a residential school from the lens of special educators who experienced difficult student behaviors. Each educator was able to illustrate a clear picture of secondary special education residential teachers within the field that displayed signs of excellence in teaching, as well as indications that teachers struggle to handle the classroom. Given that there is scant information on teacher attrition and retention within secondary educational residential schools, this information is of vital importance.

Moreover, this study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What factors do educational stakeholders (current teachers and a principal) within a secondary educational residential program perceive lead to burnout?

2. What factors influence a teacher within a secondary educational residential program to stay within the profession?

In this chapter, I summarize findings from chapter four and then I will discuss major ideas from the literature related to teacher retention in the context of those findings. Doing so will provide an understanding of the causes that contribute to the participants’ retention at Monteverde School. I will then discuss the implications of this
study’s findings. Finally, I will present my own action plan and recommendations for future research and implications.

**Summary of Findings Related to Teacher Retention**

Organizational climate theory (Schneider, 1987) suggested that people who become part of an organization and stay as a member of the organization do so because they have been socialized to fit in that organization. Attraction, selection, and retention are all part of that socialization process. The findings from the teachers demonstrate that they were indeed socialized into the organization in specific ways, such as training prior to becoming a classroom teacher, follow up professional development specific to the organization and support from other people in the school, such as mentors and the principal. In turn, the teachers also participate in supporting the organizational climate of the school by helping to socialize others through formal and informal mentoring. The socialization process at this school is specific to the needs of the school and the students’ complex genetic condition. The principal, as leader of the school helps initiate and sustain the socialization process. Overall, the Monteverde School seems to have employees who were attracted to the school, selected to stay, currently remain at the school and have no intentions of going elsewhere. The extant literature helps further explain this connection between the socialization into the school’s climate and the specific ways that the Monteverde School supports teachers.

Employees need to be socialized, or feel that they are a part of their environment. In this instance, teachers need to feel connected to their school and learn how to become a successful teacher (Lengyel & Vernon-Dotson, 2010) and the specific context of an individual school is part of that socialization experience. According to the participants in
this study, teachers who become part of the school environment and feel successful in their work want to continue teaching at Montverde. This is supported by the literature on teacher retention.

**Administrator support.** This study demonstrated that administrative support is an important factor in teacher job satisfaction at the Monteverde School (Cancio et al., 2013; DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; & Tickle et al., 2011). Likewise, in this study, administrator support, geared towards the needs of a residential secondary special education school was key to teachers’ satisfaction. Teachers Lisa and Lori reported a variety of supports were put in place by administrators to encourage teachers to stay in their position. These include constant interdepartmental communication, 80 hours of training, and a school mission statement that states that the school will work together as a team to support both the students and staff. Similar to teachers in traditional settings, residential teachers need guidance and encouragement from administrators to thrive in a residential educational setting (Cancio et al., 2013; Connelly & Graham 2009; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09).

**Colleague support.** At the Montverde School, not only does administrative support factor into job satisfaction but colleague support also contributes to satisfaction in settings within the teaching field. (DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010). In this study, colleague support was found to contribute to satisfied residential secondary special educators. On my first tour of the school, John explained that all the staff support and enjoy each other’s company
outside of school. This support was one major reason why he believed that the school functions well. He indicated that friendship and building relationships among the staff was important to the school climate. As Connelly and Graham (2009), Gersten et al. (2001), Hong (2010), Sass et al. (2011), and The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2008-09) explained, teachers need support from colleagues in order to maintain job satisfaction. Likewise in this study, teachers Lisa and Lori acknowledge that their colleagues are supportive and if they needed could go to anyone and talk about challenges that they were having and this contributes to their job satisfaction as a residential special educator at the Monteverde School.

Part of the residential teacher support system, is teachers protecting each other. The literature did not specifically address protecting each other but did discuss colleague support (Connelly & Graham, 2009; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Sass et al., 2011; & The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). In this study, residential educators gave a specific example of colleague support, protecting colleagues in crisis situations. For instance, Lori said, “If something happens to somebody, the whole team instantly jumps in. I’m never worried that somebody’s not going to be there to have my back if needed.” Teaching in a residential setting is difficult because the students who are served at residential school settings display external behaviors such as hyperactivity, verbal and physical aggression towards self and others, non-compliance, delinquent acts, and other uncontrollable behaviors (Cuthbert et al., 2011; Kalberg et al., 2011; & Lane et al., 2010) and these behaviors make it difficult to teach academics to these students. As Gersten et al. (2001) and Hong (2010) suggested, when teachers know they have the support of others teachers, it leads to teacher job
satisfaction in a residential school setting. The findings of this study indicate that the same occurrence is true in a residential school setting.

**Pre-service training.** Pre-service training or training before a teacher enters the field is another factor that contributes to a teacher’s job satisfaction in all settings (Connelly & Graham, 2009; DeMik, 2008; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). In this study, one of the teachers, Lisa, noted that she was not properly trained in college to address behaviors in a residential school and didn’t realize that until she began the job, “I didn’t know exactly what I was getting into but … classes in school can only teach you so much.” In other words, Lisa believed that her training as a student teacher within the public schools did not prepare her for teaching a residential classroom with students who have a myriad of emotional and behavioral disorders. The second teacher, Lori, did not go to college for teaching but did work in various behavioral hospitals, gained experience working with behavioral disordered students and eventually took the teacher’s test to become a PE teacher. This experience bolstered her teaching abilities. According to these teachers, pre-service training in college had minimal benefits when working as a teacher in a residential school environment. Similarly, Kindzierski et al. (2013) found that novice special educators who were teaching in traditional school settings were not prepared to teach in a residential school.

Overall, the findings from this study are similar to the literature in that student teaching in public schools does not immediately prepare future educators to teach in a residential educational setting. Therefore, the Monteverde School created their own extended version of pre-service training, which consists of 80 hours of workshops and
observations of other classrooms before a teacher is assigned their own classroom. This pre-training helped prepare the teachers (Connelly & Graham, 2009) to deal with challenges unique to the school and student needs.

**In-service professional development.** In-service professional development is a substantial factor in teacher’s job satisfaction in all fields of teaching (Gersten et al. 2001; Hong, 2010; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). In this study, professional development within a secondary residential school is a significant focus of emphasis in order for the teachers to be properly trained to work with behavioral disordered students. John said residential teachers receive 80 hours of training before they even enter the classroom, in addition to observing other veteran teacher’s classrooms. Also, novice residential educators are assigned a mentor with whom they can discuss any struggles that they might have. Due to the various behaviors that occur at the Monteverde School, all residential staff are trained in behavioral modification techniques to assist students who experience behavioral difficulties.

In this study, Lisa said there are numerous training opportunities at the Monteverde School to prepare teachers to correctly manage student behaviors. They are trained every quarter on how to properly conduct a proper restraint. This can be in the form of placing individuals on the floor and holding their limbs or restraining them chemically by giving them medications to calm down their behaviors. There are also trainings on how to properly supervise students. Teachers are also encouraged to inquire about trainings that they are interested in and the Monteverde administrative team will attempt to find a trainer that can train all staff.
Lori added that teachers have weekly staff meetings where possible professional development topics are discussed. All departments will “collaborate on ideas for trainings when they are trying to figure out what to do with certain re-occurring behaviors.” Teachers will also go out in the community and have full and partial days off from school to attend conferences. Lori noted, “We attend conferences and trainings and have a variety of consultants and experts come in and present to us.” The more knowledgeable secondary residential teachers are about their population of students, the more they will have job satisfaction. This differs from the literature on professional development, which describes that teachers in traditional settings receive professional development but does not detail the special trainings and meetings that these educators receive (Gersten et al.; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). Even though the literature differs from this study, all are in agreement that professional development increases job satisfaction for all educators.

**Working conditions.** Working conditions are factors that are found throughout the teaching field that contribute to teacher job satisfaction (DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). Comparably, within this study work conditions factored into how satisfied secondary special education teachers are in a residential school. All the residential secondary special educators interviewed at the Monteverde School reported that the school had a welcoming community environment where the teachers and the principal were extremely supportive and communicate on a constant basis. Lisa described the school climate as supportive to teachers and this support was evident as soon as she arrived on campus for her interview. Lisa continues to feel
supported as a secondary residential teacher at the school and stated that there are various supports put in place to encourage teachers to stay in their current position. These include numerous trainings and professional growth, scheduling, and staff support. Even the mission statement is written towards supporting each other as a team.

Lori remarked that the Monteverde school climate accentuates the togetherness of the environment by placing the word “we” within the mission statement to describe everyone working together for the betterment of the student. This connects to the overall positive environment within the Monteverde School. According to Lori, the overall mission statement is “We provide high quality educational services to students with complex special needs in order for them to live the most successful live independently as possible.” All of these positive factors at the Monteverde School contribute to teachers staying within the secondary residential school setting and being gratified as a teacher. Likewise, Gersten et al. (2001) and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, (2008-09), note that educators need to have supportive work conditions for educator job satisfaction. The literature differs from this study in that Gersten et al. (2001) and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, (2008-09) failed to detail what specific work conditions are needed for teacher job satisfaction.

**Perception of novice teacher skills and dispositions.** Veteran teachers believed that novice teachers need to obtain certain skills and display a positive disposition in order to be satisfied within all teaching fields (Hong, 2010; & Kindzierski et al., 2013). In this study, veteran residential secondary special educators expressed that novice
teachers need to obtain certain skills and exhibit a positive state of mind in order to be satisfied as a secondary residential special educator.

This state of mind was something that was mentioned throughout each interview conducted with the residential special educators. John commented that a secondary residential educator has to have passion and commitment towards this population of students. He expressed, “first and foremost you have to have a love for the kids.” John also inferred that teachers have to be willing to open up to each other and get to know one another so that they have a support system to go to if they are struggling with an issue. The passion and commitment described by John was lacking within the literature gathered on teacher attrition in traditional educational settings.

In this study, Lisa recognized that secondary residential special educators within the Monteverde School had a certain mentality and state of mind when touring the school. “Teachers were really accepting and open-minded and full of ideas,” she explained. Everyone was positive and focused on improving students’ behaviors. As Cancio et al. (2013) explain, teachers need a positive view of their environment to be satisfied in their job. Furthermore, Lisa stated that you need to have “never-ending patience, be open-minded and flexible with how you teach.” Similar to traditional school settings, residential schools need teachers who have a positive state of mind in order to achieve job satisfaction (Keigher, 2010; Hong, 2010; & Kindzierski et al., 2013).

Students in residential schools struggle academically and this can be displayed in behaviors within the classroom. A teacher needs to have patience and differentiate their lessons according to each student’s levels. Likewise, Kindzierski et al. (2013) advised teachers who are educating emotional and behavioral disordered students to differentiate...
lessons according to each student. This process of adapting lessons to each student can be difficult, especially for novice teachers, but something that is needed in residential educational settings for students to thrive academically. The literature from the traditional school settings with general education students did not correlate differentiation with job satisfaction.

Lori reported that teachers have to be in a state of mind where they are patient, flexible and be able to not take anything personally. She noted, “I’ve have everything said to me that can hurt or comments that don’t make sense and you can’t let any of that faze you.” Additionally, in this setting students can try to physically hurt you and threaten you and you need to maintain control throughout these incidents. Lori commented, “You have to be able to care for the student even if they threaten you or have physically hurt you. You have to be able to turn around and continue to provide good care for them and show that you will not abandon them … you have to be able to focus on the whole student.” Comparative to teachers in traditional schools, residential educators need a positive state of mind to be satisfied in their job (Cancio et al., 2013; Keigher, 2010; Hong, 2010; & Kindzierski et al., 2013).

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy or feeling confident in one’s teaching ability is a leading factor in teacher job satisfaction in all educational settings (Hong, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010). Moreover, in this study of secondary special educators at a residential school the interviewees reiterated that a residential secondary special educator needs to have confidence in working with the population of behavioral disordered students in order to be satisfied in the job.
Such confidence was apparent with all the secondary residential special educators interviewed at the Monteverde School. One of the teachers, Lisa, was scared and “shell-shocked” when she began the job as a secondary residential educator because of never working with a behavioral disordered population. The support received from many educators at the school and the various trainings attended helped build self-efficacy in her teaching abilities. Lisa reported that she has grown so much since first starting to teach at the Monteverde School. She stated, “I’m able to connect with the students. I know how to manage my classroom and I’ve really grown up… I feel like I can take on anything.”

As Hong (2010), Lee et al. (2011), Pas et al. (2012) and Sass et al. (2010) explain educators need confidence in their abilities to teach to have job satisfaction.

This self-confidence is apparent in Lori, another secondary residential special education teacher, who arrived at the Monteverde School with much experience with this population. Therefore her confidence was apparent with the students and her teaching abilities. One thing Lori did mention was that due to the support received from administration and her fellow secondary residential teachers her confidence has grown to the point that she has taken on leadership roles within the school. Lori expressed that her opinion is important and that she expresses her ideas frequently. This could not happen if Lori did not have the self-confidence in her abilities and this self-efficacy is something that is needed in all teachers whether public, private or residential schools (Hong, 2010; Lee et al. 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al. 2010).

**Management skills.** Management skills are the final factor in job satisfaction in all fields of teaching (Hong, 2010; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010). In this study, management skills are of vital importance when
working with a secondary residential school population of special education students, who have academic and behavioral struggles. The skill of managing a residential special education classroom was an element brought up by Lisa, Lori and John. Within residential care, behavioral modifications are put in place to assist a student if they are struggling behaviorally. Additionally, these modifications assist secondary residential teachers in managing the classroom. At the Monteverde School, there are sensory tools that students utilize in each classroom and sensory rooms that students can utilize to regain control of their behaviors. If a student gets too out of control the residential school personal are restraint trained and will use their training as a last resort to maintain overall safety of students and staff. Even though Hong (2010), Kindzierski et al. (2013), Lee et al. (2011), Pas et al. (2012), and Sass et al. (2010) mentioned classroom management, the findings were generalizable to managing a traditional classroom in the general educational setting and lacked the details that were found from the participant interviews at the Monteverde School.

In addition to having behavior modifications within the school, each secondary residential educator at the Monteverde School attends a training every month. According to Lisa and Lori, previous trainings have been on student behaviors and diagnoses, restraint trainings and how to supervise students and manage a classroom properly with this type of population. Lisa, a residential special educator, noted that these trainings are helpful for teachers to be prepared to correctly manage student behaviors. Similar to traditional educators, residential teachers need to be trained in recent policies and procedures so their classroom to be properly managed, therefore contributing to their overall job satisfaction (Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; & U.S. Department of
Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). Also, within the day each class participates in mindfulness, or relaxing and being aware of their surroundings. This activity can help a student who is struggling behaviorally and assist a teacher manage behaviors in their classroom by having students take time out of the busy day to relax and calm down. Mindfulness exercises were not mentioned within the literature.

Behavioral modification trainings and mindfulness were mentioned when discussing classroom management, and Lori commented that collaboration and support from the principal and other teachers helped with managing behaviors in the classroom. The mentoring program is something that Lori said assists a novice residential special educator to learn about various student behaviors from veteran teachers and how to control their classroom. As Connelly and Graham (2009) advise, teachers benefit from having supportive colleagues who mentor them. In addition to mentoring, the principal reported there are several meetings about students who experience behavioral difficulties and the whole school will create a plan of action to support the student and help the teacher manage the classroom. These meetings are called behavioral support plan meetings (BSP). John noted, “A BSP typically is for when a teacher is struggling with a particular kiddo and the supervisors, clinicians, and the teacher will meet on Wednesday and communicate and form a plan of action for that student.” All of this support contributes to a secondary residential teacher willing to put in their best effort to help this student and promote job satisfaction for teaching in this environment.

Revisiting the Research questions

Factors that lead to burnout in residential schools. The first research question asked: what factors do educational stakeholders (current teachers and a principal) within
a secondary educational residential program perceive lead to burnout? Based on the interviews with teachers I found that the educators at Montverde School believed burnout was not an immediate issue. However, the participants suggested that the lack of administrator (Cancio et al., 2013; DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; & Tickle et al., 2011) and colleague support (DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., Harniss, 2001; Hong, 2010; Keigher, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010), pre-service training (Connelly & Graham, 2009; DeMik, 2008; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09), self-efficacy (Hong, 2010; Lee et al. 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010), management skills (Hong, 2010; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010), and a negative state of mind (Hong, 2010; & Kindzierski et al., 2013) all influenced burnout in the residential setting. This mirrors what is known about burnout from traditional teachers.

The findings from the study confirmed that teachers need guidance and encouragement from administrators, training that is specific to the context and unique needs of the student population, pre-service training, a positive state of mind, teacher confidence and classroom management skills. The study showed additional factors that the literature did not address. More specifically, the extant literature did not mention teachers protecting each other within the school, the passion and commitment that teachers have, how teachers differentiate their instruction to each student and specific details of how a residential educator manages their classroom. These factors speak to the support and socialization that teachers receive at the Montverde School.
The emergent themes from this study demonstrate that the Monteverde School has a strong organizational climate. In this study, residential educators noted that employees influence the environment in positive ways and this lessens the burnout of educators within the Monteverde School. The factors that lessen burnout discussed within the interviews included good interdepartmental communication and a welcoming environment where teachers shared ideas and resources and an established mentoring program. Schneider (1987) believed that employees influence the environment and in this study this is evident from the educators at the Monteverde School who displayed positive attributes that have a positive impact on the climate and this positivity lessens burnout in the organization.

The second research question pertained to teacher retention and asked: what factors influence a teacher within a secondary residential program to stay within the profession? The educators all believed that a welcoming environment where teachers received support (DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09), proper trainings (Connelly & Graham, 2009; DeMik, 2008; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09) and intercommunication from all departments (Hong, 2010 & DeMik, 2008) in addition to feeling valued (Hong, 2010) and confident in their teaching abilities (Hong, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass et al., 2010) and strong classroom management skills led teachers to staying at a school (Hong, 2010; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2012; & Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2010). Based on the
literature, traditional teachers also thrive and stay in an environment that is welcoming, supportive and offers trainings and school wide communication between all departments.

I began this study planning to find out about teacher and administrator perception of teacher retention and attrition in a residential school of EBD students. Due to the lack of a participating EBD residential school, I had to change the focus of this study. The school that was willing to participate is a residential school, but the student population is not diagnosed as EBD. The population of students at the Monteverde School has a complex genetic condition with medication considerations and other behaviors and needs that impacts their education, as well as their health, so they have to be monitored medically. Organizational climate theory emphasized that people influence the environment (Schneider, 1987) and in the case of this study this is true. Teachers were supported from the administration through a variety of methods (training, mentoring, feeling valued, and interdepartmental communication) and this made the teachers feel supported and welcomed, which contributed to a positive climate.

Implications

Research. Additional research is needed on residential schools. Teachers in this school context have a positive and supportive environment. Based on this conclusion, more research is needed in a variety of residential schools, not just on this specific case and context (students who have complex genetic condition with medication considerations in this school). There are other contexts that would be important to study. For example, I originally wanted to study my own environment but was not granted access. I believe that if I had studied my own school, the findings related to climate would have been different. Therefore, it is evident that context is hugely important.
Additional studies are needed that examine the multiple contexts of residential schools. This study only analyzed one school. Studying more schools and interviewing more teachers to gather information would help determine if the findings related to teacher burnout and retention in a residential school are generalizable.

Additionally, I only interviewed teachers who currently worked at the school and were happy with the school environment. This study does not describe the perspective of burnout or unhappy teachers as well as other school personnel (clinicians, residential staff, and nurses). Future research would benefit from interviewing other school personnel, disgruntled teachers who are unhappy and thinking about leaving residential education, as well as teachers who have left residential education to determine why they are thinking about leaving the field or why they left the field. Furthermore, I was not able to review teacher records due to the administrator expressing that it was a confidentiality issue. Reviewing teacher records and how they contribute to teacher retention and attrition within a residential school would help determine the amount of assistance that they had received, as well as provide insight into teacher attendance and if this absenteeism correlated with teacher struggles. Not only do teacher records need to be included in the literature, but the role of the principal in a residential school need to be included in studies.

The principal in this school context is a leader who supports his faculty. Based on this conclusion, more research is needed to understand the variety of roles that principals have. Again, the themes that emerged from this principal are highly contextualized. It would be important to do more research to understand the principal’s role in a school where the climate is negative. However, the difficulty with that is typically principals
have to grant entry into a school to conduct research. If a school has a difficult climate, it may be difficult to gain entry into the school, as may have been the case for my own school and may be the reason I had such a hard time finding a residential school to participate in this study.

**Practice.** Based on the conclusion of teachers in this school context having a positive and supportive environment contributes to overall job satisfaction. A residential school in this context needs to offer teachers support, mentoring from veteran teachers, welcome new teachers into their environment, and trainings. The findings of this study and the literature indicated administrators need to incorporate these findings into practice. The findings of this study revealed the importance of how having a supportive environment for residential special educators contributed to retention in the field. A supportive environment is a significant factor in teacher job satisfaction (Cancio et al., 2013; DeMik, 2008; Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; Pas et al., 2012; Sass et al., 2010; & Tickle et al., 2011). Local residential school administrators should take time to visit their teachers on a daily basis to check in with them, give them positive feedback, and value their opinions. Moreover, they should make themselves available if a teacher has a concern and meet with residential special educators weekly. Within these meetings, the principal can discuss a teacher’s strengths, encourage their creativity, and discuss what they might need to work on to make them the best residential educator possible.

Not only should administration support residential special educators, but colleagues should support each other in this setting. The findings from this study illustrate residential special educators at the Monteverde School supported each other through a mentoring program, sharing resources and teaching abilities, and engaging in
time with each other outside of work to build camaraderie. This colleague support contributed to a welcoming climate at the Monteverde School. Comparably, the organizational climate theory by Schneider (1987) stated the “people make the place” (p.451) and if colleagues are positive and support each other this can create an overall supportive residential school community. Local veteran residential special educators in residential school settings should work with the principal of the school to arrange staff building activities, so all teachers can build relationships with each other, provide mentoring to novice teachers, and encourage residential special educators to talk with their colleagues and brainstorm ideas for academics and well as classroom management.

The residential special educators at the Monteverde School recognized that being properly trained to handle behavioral issues was essential to having job satisfaction and needs to be implemented in all residential schools. Local residential educators need to be trained in how to properly handle a crisis situation, due to a variety of behavioral difficulties that these students engage in. Local residential schools should require newly hired teachers to observe each teacher’s classroom and give them ample time to ask questions. Additionally, each novice teacher should be trained in behavior management techniques as well as student medications and diagnoses. This study indicated trainings should not only happen when a residential teacher is hired but continue throughout his or her tenure. The literature suggested that professional development contributes to satisfied teachers (Gersten et al., 2001; Hong, 2010; & U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008-09). Not only are teachers supported, properly trained and mentored from veteran teachers, but the principal in this school leads and supports his faculty. Based on this conclusion, it is important for principals to be a
support system, such as by maintaining a welcoming environment, having weekly teacher supervision with all faculty, making time in his schedule to meet with both teachers and staff, and establishing and maintaining positive morale.

**Personal Action Plan**

I believe the three findings of the study, working with students that have special needs requires additional training beyond what teachers are typically prepared for. The teachers, Lori and Lisa believe that they work in a supportive, welcoming environment and the supportive environment starts with the principal. The findings from this study will help the Monteverde School and my own school. Therefore, I plan to present the findings of this study to the Monteverde School. I will use these findings to work with additional school personnel (unhappy teachers, clinicians, nurses and residential staff) who weren’t involved in this study to find out their perspectives in the hopes that this will elicit additional perspectives. It is possible that all teachers do not feel like they have had adequate training, support, proper mentoring or work in a welcoming environment.

I will also present these findings to my own school. By presenting the findings from this study, I hope that it will encourage administrators to implement some of the findings that were successful at the Monteverde School (contextualized trainings, mentoring, and much administrative support). My goal would be to share the findings of another school (protecting their identity) hopefully opening up the conversations for ways that we can improve our own climate and support system.

**Research Limitations**

Upon reflection of this study, certain problems encountered limited the areas the study was able to cover. Initially, I had difficulty finding a residential school that would
participate in this research topic. Residential principals were hesitant, due to the topic of teacher attrition and retention. Once I found a residential school that would participate, I found out that the student population differed from what I originally wanted to study, EBD students. Also, the principal noted that I would be unable to review teacher records, which limited access to truly learning about the whole residential educator interviewed. Additionally, I had difficulty acquiring residential special education teachers to participate in the research due to sickness and being absent from school.

Eventually, I was able to acquire two teachers, but after reviewing my study I have determined that conducting a study on one school with a majority of one type of disability limited my results. Furthermore, I could have benefited from interviewing more residential educators. I would encourage future studies on teacher attrition within residential schools to expand their research, increase the number of schools and participants as well as utilize all six sources of evidence in a case study which included: “Documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and psychical artifacts” (Yin, 2009, p. 101).
References

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2005). *Teacher Attrition: A Costly Loss to the Nation and to the States (Issue Brief)*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.


http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/centers-programs/centers/rappaport/paes/owens_teachers.pdf


Appendices

Appendix A- The Attraction-Selection-Attrition Framework

The Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework, Schneider (1983)

The ASA model is a critical model on the current situational theories of organizations.

This model can help analyzing ‘common thoughts’ of organizations.
Appendix B- Participation Letter to the Principal

360 Huntington Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Dear John, principal at the Monteverde School,

This letter is an invitation to participate in a research study. I am currently going for my doctorate at Northeastern University. I have worked in this environment for over 7 years as a teacher and 3 years as a clinician. I have noticed that within this setting there is much turnover for teachers and I would like to find out why this occurs.

**Study overview**

Teacher attrition is a widespread problem in all schools whether they be public or private. An estimated twenty five percent of beginning teachers in the United States leave teaching before their third year and almost forty percent leave the profession by the end of their fifth year teaching according to Chang (2009). Ingersoll (2001) suggests, the early departure of teachers is what is called a revolving door where “a large flow of teachers are in through and out of schools each year” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 111). Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. While all schools experience teacher attrition, the topic that will be researched and reviewed will focus on alternative residential schools. Although there are numerous studies on teacher attrition within the public school setting, gaps exist in the literature on teacher attrition in alternate settings. Therefore, there is a need to do a study on teacher attrition in special education at an alternative residential school. The purpose of the study is to understand why residential educators are leaving the field and pursuing other occupations. One goal of this research is to determine the various factors that contribute to burnout, which eventually can lead to teachers leaving the field. Another goal is to educate administration on the issues that contribute to attrition so that they can improve school climate.

The research will consist of interviews with 2-3 teachers as well as an interview with you. The interviews will last about sixty minutes and are meant to explore factors that contribute or keep teachers in this alternative residential school setting. Once interviews are conducted I will code the data and write my draft report. Then, I will go back to the interviewees and review the report with them to make sure that what I wrote is accurate with their answers. A ten dollar gift certificate to Starbucks will be given to each participant for their time which I know firsthand is limited.

**Your Involvement**

If you agree to participate, I will follow up with you to review any questions or concerns you may have and to seek your advice about which teachers should be interviewed. All interviews will be conducted in person. The interview would be arranged at a time
convenient to your schedule. To ensure the accuracy of your input, I would ask your permission to audio record the interview.

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. You may decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without any negative consequences, simply by letting me know your decision. All information you provide will be considered confidential unless otherwise agreed to, and the data collected will be kept in a secure location and confidentially disposed of in five year’s time.

Your name and the name of your organization will not appear in any thesis or publication resulting from this study unless you provide expressed consent to be identified and have reviewed the thesis text and approved the use of the quote. If you would be interested in greater detail, an electronic copy (e.g., PDF) of the entire thesis can be made available to you.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information about participation, please contact me at (508-971-7836) or by email (d34lil@yahoo.com). You can also contact my supervisor Professor Corliss Brown Thompson by email at (co.brown@neu.edu).

I assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through The Northeastern University Ethics Committee.

Yours very truly,

Dawn Letourneau
Ed.D Candidate
Appendix C - Consent Form for the Principal

Format for Signed Informed Consent Document - Principal

Northeastern University, Department of Education, College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): [Dr. Corliss Brown-Thompson, principal investigator, and Dawn Letourneau, researcher]
Title of Project: Teaching in a Residential School: Understanding Perspectives that Lead to Teacher Burnout

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 special education teacher in a secondary residential school.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of the study is to understand why residential educators are leaving the field and pursuing other occupations. Understanding teachers’ reasons for staying and leaving alternative school settings will provide information for administrators that can be used to help create settings to retain teachers.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to take part in two interviews which will be 45-60 minutes long. In the first interview I will ask you questions about your previous experience as a teacher and the second interview will consist of questions on your experiences as an educator at your current school. The purpose is to get your perceptions of your experiences inside and outside of the secondary residential classroom.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
The interviews can take place wherever you feel most comfortable either at your school site or off of campus. The two interviews will last from 45-60 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help administrators. They could take the feelings and thoughts of the teachers expressed in this thesis and make accommodations to their own school climate to make life less stressful for teachers.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. The Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board will also be privy to the information but this is only to ensure that the participants right’s within the study are being followed. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project.

I will label participants by using made-up names within my documents to identify participants as well as the school. I will inform participants that they are participating in a study, explain the purpose of the study and that the researcher will not engage in deception about the nature of the study. Additionally, the school’s location will be generalized so that it cannot be identified.

In order to make sure that I do not lose data, I will have the data on a password sensitive computer and make backup copies of any files that are stored on my computer. I will also make a list of the type of information gathered as well as a list of how I can locate and identify the data that I have gathered over the course of data collection. After I have coded all the data and no longer need the audiotapes they will be destroyed. The signed consent forms from each participant will be kept in the locked filing cabinet for three years. After those three years they will be destroyed.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**

There are no other options if I do not want to participate in the interviews.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

No harm is possible in this study.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. You may decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without any negative consequences, simply by letting me know your decision.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the person mainly responsible for the research, Dawn Letourneau. You can reach me through email at Letourneau.d@husky.neu.edu or through telephone at 508-971-7836. You can also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Corliss Brown Thompson through email at Co.brown@neu.edu or call 617-637-6702.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

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: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.
**Will I be paid for my participation?**
You will receive a ten dollar gift certificate to Starbucks for your time which I know firsthand is limited.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
It will not cost you anything to participate in this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**
There is no other information that you need to know.

**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

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Depending upon the nature of your research, you may also be required to provide information about one or more of the following if it is applicable:

1. A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant) which are currently unforeseeable.
2. Anticipated circumstances under which the subject’s participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject’s consent.
3. Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.
4. The consequences of a subject’s decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.
5. A statement that significant new finding(s) developed during the course of the research which may be related to the subject’s willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.
6. The approximate number of subjects involved in the study.
Appendix D- Consent Form for Teachers

Northeastern University, Department of Education, College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): [Dr. Corliss Brown-Thompson, principal investigator, and Dawn Letourneau, researcher]
Title of Project: Teaching in a Residential School: Understanding Perspectives that Lead to Teacher Burnout

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 special education teacher in a secondary residential school.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand why residential educators are leaving the field and pursuing other occupations. Understanding teachers’ reasons for staying and leaving alternative school settings will provide information for administrators that can be used to help create settings to retain teachers.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to take part in two interviews which will be 45-60 minutes long. In the first interview I will ask you questions about your previous experience as a teacher and the second interview will consist of questions on your experiences as an educator at your current school. The purpose is to get your perceptions of your experiences inside and outside of the secondary residential classroom.

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

The interviews can take place wherever you feel most comfortable either at your school site or off of campus. The two interviews will last from 45-60 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information
learned from this study may help administrators. They could take the feelings and thoughts of the
teachers expressed in this thesis and make accommodations to their own school climate to make
life less stressful for teachers.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the
information about you. The Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board will also be
privy to the information but this is only to ensure that the participants right’s within the study are
being followed. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way
or any individual as being of this project.

I will label participants by using made-up names within my documents to identify participants as
well as the school. I will inform participants that they are participating in a study, explain the
purpose of the study and that the researcher will not engage in deception about the nature of the
study. Additionally, the schools’ location will be generalized so that it cannot be identified.

In order to make sure that I do not lose data, I will have the data on a password sensitive
computer and make backup copies of any files that are stored on my computer. I will also make a
list of the type of information gathered as well as a list of how I can locate and identify the data
that I have gathered over the course of data collection. After I have coded all the data and no
longer need the audiotapes they will be destroyed. The signed consent forms from each
participant will be kept in the locked filing cabinet for three years. After those three years they
will be destroyed.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
There are no other options if I do not want to participate in the interviews.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
No harm is possible in this study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to
participation in this study. You may decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to
answer. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without any negative
consequences, simply by letting me know your decision.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the person mainly responsible for the research, Dawn
Letourneau. You can reach me through email at Letourneau.d@husky.neu.edu or through telephone at 508-971-7836.
You can also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Corliss
Brown Thompson through email at Co.brown@neu.edu or call 617-637-6702.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
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: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if
you wish.
Will I be paid for my participation?
You will receive a ten dollar gift certificate to Starbucks for your time which I know firsthand is limited.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
It will not cost you anything to participate in this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?
There is no other information that you need to know.

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

Depending upon the nature of your research, you may also be required to provide information about one or more of the following if it is applicable:

7. A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant) which are currently unforeseeable.
8. Anticipated circumstances under which the subject’s participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject’s consent.
9. Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.
10. The consequences of a subject’s decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.
11. A statement that significant new finding(s) developed during the course of the research which may be related to the subject’s willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.
12. The approximate number of subjects involved in the study.
Appendix E- Interview Protocol for Teachers

Good afternoon. My name is Dawn Letourneau and I want to thank you for participating in my research. The purpose of the study is to understand why residential educators are leaving the field and pursuing other occupations. I have been teaching for some time in this setting and noticed that there is much turnover for residential teachers and I would like to find some answers to why this is occurring.

There will be two interviews on two separate days that will last for about 60 minutes. In the first interview I will ask you questions about your previous experience as a teacher and the second interview will consist of questions on your experiences as an educator at your current school. The purpose is to get your perceptions of your experiences inside and outside of the classroom. There are no right or wrong answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. You may decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without any negative consequences, simply by letting me know your decision. All information you provide will be considered confidential unless otherwise agreed to, and the data collected will be kept in a secure location and confidentially disposed of in five year’s time.

Your name and the name of your organization will not appear in any thesis or publication resulting from this study unless you provide expressed consent to be identified and have reviewed the thesis text and approved the use of the quote. Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read this consent form (read and sign form).

If it is okay with you, I will be tape recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report which will contain all comments without any reference to individuals.

Ok let’s begin. I’m going to start with basic questions to get you used to the interview process.

Interview #1

1. What is your name?

2. Where did you grow up?

3. Tell me about your own school experience growing up as a child?
4. How did you decide to join the teaching field?

5. Once this decision was made, tell me about your journey to arriving in the classroom?
   • college- teacher prep.
   • Student teaching

6. Tell me about the students that you have taught?

7. Tell me about the schools that you have worked for? Were they in public schools, private schools, residential schools?

8. What are some reasons why you chose to leave a school?

9. How could this experience at a former school have been improved?

10. If you were the principal at a former school what factors would you put in place in order to keep teachers in that school?

11. Do you have anything else you would like to share about any of your previous experiences on your journey to teaching?

**Interview # 2**

1. How long have you been in your current position and is this your first job in a residential facility of emotional and behavioral disordered (EBD) students?

2. Tell me about your first impressions of the school on the outside and the inside?

3. Tell me about your first impressions about the principal, the staff, and students?

4. What factors influenced you to take this job opportunity over other jobs?

5. Please describe what a typical day is like in your classroom?

6. What other duties are expected of you besides teaching?

7. Describe the support a novice teacher receives in the education department?

8. How would describe the education department in terms of togetherness?

9. Tell me about the communication between other departments and the teachers?

10. Tell me about the success you have had since starting this job?
11. Tell me about the struggles that you have had and if they have made you feel a sense of burnout?

12. Do you have anything else you would like to share about your current school?

Once all interviews are conducted I will code the data and write my draft report. Then, I will go back to the interviewees and review the report with them to make sure that what I wrote is accurate with your answers. There may be more contact with you if there is a need to clarify information and ask additional questions. If you would be interested in greater detail, an electronic copy (e.g., PDF) of the entire thesis can be made available to you. A reward (gift certificate) will be given to you for your time which I know firsthand is limited. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information about participation, please contact me at (508-971-7836) or by email (d34lil@yahoo.com).
Appendix F- Interview Protocol for the Principal

Good afternoon. My name is Dawn Letourneau and I want to thank you for participating in my research. The purpose of the study is to understand why residential educators are leaving the field and pursuing other occupations. I have been teaching for some time in this setting and noticed that there is much turnover for residential teachers and I would like to find some answers to why this is occurring.

There will be one interview that will last for about 60 minutes. In the interview I will ask you questions about your previous experience as a principal and your experiences as an educator at your current school. The purpose is to get your perceptions of teacher experience inside and outside of the classroom. There are no right or wrong answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. You may decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time, without any negative consequences, simply by letting me know your decision. All information you provide will be considered confidential unless otherwise agreed to, and the data collected will be kept in a secure location and confidentially disposed of in five years time.

Your name and the name of your organization will not appear in any thesis or publication resulting from this study unless you provide expressed consent to be identified and have reviewed the thesis text and approved the use of the quote. Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read this consent form (read and sign form).

If it is okay with you, I will be tape recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report which will contain all comments without any reference to individuals.

Ok let’s begin. I’m going to start with basic questions to get you used to the interview process.

**Interview #1**

1. What is your name?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Tell me about your own school experience growing up as a child?
4. How did you decide to get into the educational field?
5. Once this decision was made, tell me about your journey to arriving as a principal?
   - college- administrator prep.
   - Internship

6. Please describe how this training has assisted you in your current and former administrative positions?

7. Tell me about the schools that you have worked for? Were they in public schools, private schools, residential schools?

8. How long have you been in your current position and is this your first job in a residential facility of emotional and behavioral disordered (EBD) students?

9. Please describe what a typical day is like in your position?

10. Describe the support a novice teacher receives in the education department?

11. Tell me about how you support the teachers?

12. How would describe the education department in terms of togetherness?

13. Tell me about the communication between other departments and the teachers?

**Being that I work as a teacher in this field I know that it takes a special person to teach in this setting.**

14. What factors do you feel keeps a teacher educating students in this setting?

15. What factors do you feel lead to a teacher leaving this school?

16. How can a principal support a teacher who is struggling that could lead to a teacher to stay at the school?

17. Tell me about the success you have had since starting this job?

18. Tell me about the struggles that you have had since becoming principal?

19. Do you have anything else you would like to share about your experience/thoughts on working as the educational director of this school?

Once all interviews are conducted I will code the data and write my draft report. Then, I will go back to the interviewees and review the report with them to make sure that what I wrote is accurate with your answers. There may be more contact with you if there is a need to clarify information and ask additional questions. If you would be interested in greater detail, an electronic copy (e.g., PDF) of the entire thesis can be made available to you. A reward (gift certificate) will be given to you for your time which I know
firsthand is limited. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information about participation, please contact me at (508-971-7836) or by email (d34lil@yahoo.com).