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Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in  
Regard to Teacher Retention

by

Jerold C. Osbourn

September 2018

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in  
Regard to Teacher Retention

by

Jerold C. Osbourn

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Lindenwood University, School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Jerold C. Osbourn

Signature: Jerold C. Osbourn Date: 9-18-18

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the understanding of teacher retention by researching factors that influence veteran teachers to remain in Missouri's K-8 school districts. School districts all across the nation face the daunting task of improving student achievement in the face of teacher shortages, especially in rural areas and in hard-to-staff content fields such as math and science (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Harrington, 2017). Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the researcher sought to articulate the core perceptions of superintendents and veteran teachers that lead to longevity and retention in the K-8 school environment and to identify the factors that influence retention of teachers in Missouri K-8 districts. Research participants included Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. Through interviews and surveys, perceptions regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts were identified and analyzed for statistical differences. Interviews were conducted, responses summarized and categorized using open and axial coding, and similarities and commonalities identified. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to provide summaries to test the null hypothesis and report comparative data. The survey data analysis included use of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test to determine whether two uncorrelated groups differed significantly. Survey data findings indicated no significant differences between K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions regarding retention factors. Interview and survey data conclusions revealed common retention factors such as culture/climate; administrative and community support and recognition; salary; working conditions (small class sizes/autonomy); and making a difference, or the work itself.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Teacher recruitment, development, and retention, especially in rural schools, need to be researched because problems such as overcrowding and lack of properly trained teachers only add to concerns about educational quality (Gallo & Beckman, 2016). As Goodpaster, Adedokun, and Weaver (2012) explained, “Rural teacher attrition can have deleterious effects on the quality of education in rural schools” (pp. 9-10). For instance, in Alaska’s rural districts, the high number of teachers leaving impacts the operation of schools and the “ability to deliver a quality education to students” (Kaden, Patterson, Healy, & Adams, 2016, p. 140). Quality education and student achievement are linked, as Gillard, Gillard, and Pratt (2015) explained:

Our education system continues to be increasingly regulated, students are being made to fit into political, cookie-cutter expectations. At every level of education, demands for outcomes such as higher scores on standardized tests and higher attendance, retention, and graduation rates are forcing administrators to micromanage the teachers under their charge, who, in turn, are micromanaging the students in his or her classroom. (p. 1)

Adnot, Dee, Katz, and Wyckoff (2017) stated, “Having an effective teacher can dramatically alter students’ educational and economic outcomes” (p. 54). This study was designed to elicit the perceptions of veteran educators to determine the factors that positively impact teacher retention and decrease attrition in Missouri K-8 school districts.

In this chapter, the background of the study is detailed with a focus on the factors that influence veteran educators to remain employed in Missouri K-8 school districts for extended periods of time. The theoretical framework, which guided the study, is

introduced and explained in detail. Fredrick Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory (also known as Herzberg's two-factor theory) was used as the theoretical framework. The statement of the problem is addressed, and as Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) recommended, is "carefully worded and narrower than the research problem" (pp. 17-18). The essential purpose of this study was to focus on the perceptions of veteran educators and why they continue to teach in Missouri K-8 school districts. The purpose of the study is outlined and the research questions are clearly stated in this chapter. Also included in Chapter One are the significance of the study, necessary terms and definitions, and the limitations and assumptions.

### **Background of the Study**

According to Hussar and Bailey (2014), between 1997 and 2011, total school enrollment increased by 5%, and by 2022, it is expected to increase by 6%. Furthermore, Hussar and Bailey (2014) stated, "The annual number of new teacher hires is projected to be higher in 2022 than in 2011 in both public and private schools" (p. 11). This makes sense, because "almost half of the teaching workforce is made up of Baby Boomers who are at or near retirement" (Carroll & Foster, 2010, p. 7). Additionally, it is not just the retirement of Baby Boomers that should be cause for concern, but as Clandinin, Downey, and Schaefer (2014) pointed out, "The best educational research supports what we have witnessed in schools: new teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates" (p. 2). Watts (2016) indicated:

With high teacher turnover rates in rural areas, it is all the more important that rural school districts actively produce and implement programs to successfully

attract and retain new school teachers, particularly school teachers who are gifted in generating maximum student achievement. (p. 8)

Ingersoll (2001) stated, “Teacher turnover is a significant phenomenon, and a dominant factor behind the demand for new teachers and the difficulties schools encounter adequately staffing classrooms with qualified teachers” (p. 501). In the “new millennium,” the problem of teacher retention has not improved (Friesen, 2016, p. 2).

School districts that serve student populations characterized as low-income, non-white, and low-achieving also have higher teacher turnover rates and lower student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). According to Ingersoll and May (2016), minority teachers have a higher attrition rate than nonminority teachers, and the gap has increased the past 10 years. When interpreting the condition of rural America, Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) noted, “Moreover, the demographic characteristics of the rural student population continue to shift, with rural schools becoming increasingly diverse and serving larger populations of student that schools have historically not served effectively” (p. 28). *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary* (2018) defined rural as “of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture” (para. 1). Lichter and Johnson (2007) discovered rural students, especially the rural minority who exhibit poverty rates well above the national average, may be more disadvantaged than the rest of the nation’s students.

According to Han and Yin (2016), school administrators must find ways to attract quality teachers and also keep them from leaving. Administrative support is critical to reducing teacher attrition and improving retention, especially in hard-to-staff schools (Hughes, Matt, & O’Reilly, 2015). When studying the relationship between

administrators and teachers with regard to trust, support, and job satisfaction, Trace (2016) concluded:

In order for the “revolving door” of teachers in the United States to cease, principals need to fully embrace the idea of building trust within a school and providing support to teachers, while recognizing the importance of teacher job satisfaction and the impact that it has on teacher turnover and student achievement. (p. 60)

Dou, Devos, and Valcke (2016) contended principal leadership exerts “a tremendous yet indirect influence on teacher outcomes through school and teachers’ self-efficacy, which are in line with previous studies” (p. 13). Lewis, Asberry, DeJarnett, and King (2016) defined school climate as “the collective sentiments of individuals within a school in regard to a variety of school contextual factors” (p. 58). Malinen and Savolainen (2016) found that school climate has a positive effect on job satisfaction for teachers. The attitudes of teachers toward their jobs are strongly influenced by principal leadership (Saleem, 2015). Lack of administrative support leads to job dissatisfaction, and ultimately, teacher turnover (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

In addition to lack of administrative support, insufficient teacher salary or compensation has a negative impact on teacher satisfaction and retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). To reduce the negative impact of low teacher salaries on attrition, school districts can improve working conditions by providing effective principal support and mentoring programs and by allowing for effective use of time for teachers to meet their instructional and non-instructional responsibilities (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Pratt & Booker, 2014). Rodgers



and Skelton (2013) offered, “Staff training and development provides an interactive forum of communication allowing novice teachers to team with experienced teachers” (p. 5). Professional development and professional learning communities focused on team building, shared responsibility, and student learning and achievement can have a positive effect on teachers and principals in a school (Guskey, 2014; Lewis et al., 2016). Shaw and Newton (2014) found that it takes several years for a beginning teacher to become a high-quality teacher. Woods (2016) established, “Early induction and mentoring programs were extremely successful in certain urban districts, reducing attrition by more than two-thirds in districts in Ohio and New York” (p. 3). Location of a school district can also have an effect on teacher turnover and retention (Lytle, 2013). However, there are many states in America, such as West Virginia, where the teacher and administrator workforce is relatively stable with retention of teachers at 90% and administrators at 88% (Lochmiller, Adachi, Chesnut, & Johnson, 2016).

### **Theoretical Framework**

For this study, Frederick Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory was utilized to analyze and better understand educator attitudes and motivations for retention of teachers in K-8 school districts. For an additional reference and to support Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory, Daniel Pink’s (2009) research on motivation was utilized. Retention of experienced or veteran teachers has been a concern not just for K-8 school districts but also for K-12 school districts for decades, especially in the hard-to-fill content areas of technology, math, and science (Goodpaster et al., 2012).

Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory, also known as two-factor theory, details the many factors of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace (NetMBA,

2010). Herzberg described motivators as the intrinsic factors that lead to job satisfaction and hygiene as the extrinsic factors that lead to job dissatisfaction (Larkin, Brantley-Dias, & Lokey-Vega, 2016). The top factors impacting job attitudes, are shown in Figure 1 (Herzberg, 2003).

Intrinsic Satisfaction Factors (Motivators)	Extrinsic Dissatisfaction Factors (Hygiene)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Recognition</li> <li>• The work itself</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Advancement</li> <li>• Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company policies</li> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Relationship with supervisor and peers</li> <li>• Work conditions</li> <li>• Salary</li> <li>• Status</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>

*Figure 1.* Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory factors impacting job attitudes. Adapted from *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?* by F. Herzberg, 2003, Copyright 2003 by Harvard Business Review.

Blackburn (2016) explained extrinsic motivators, or rewards, create temporary results, but intrinsic motivation has long-term impacts. Bogler and Nir (2015) stated:

In examining teacher job satisfaction (both intrinsic and extrinsic), perceived fit between job demands and one's abilities was found to play a vital role. Teachers are more satisfied with the profession and the school once their placement at work is perceived as the right and suitable decision. (p. 14)

Pink (2009) outlined three intrinsic motivators more important than the traditional extrinsic reward and punishment structure. The first intrinsic motivator is autonomy, or

the ability to be self-directed; the second is mastery, or the desire to take the things most important to oneself and improve them; and the third is purpose, or the sense one is contributing to something bigger than oneself (Pink, 2009). Pink (2009) stated, “Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives” (p. 71). Furthermore, Karabiyik and Korumaz (2014) explained, “Job satisfaction, progress at personal work goals, and positive affectivity were predictive of teachers’ life satisfaction” (p. 829). Several intrinsic motivators are common to both Herzberg (2003) and Pink (2009) and are shown to impact job satisfaction.

There are many reasons for teacher attrition, as Lytle (2013) concluded; however, the majority of reasons are tied to job dissatisfaction with a teaching position. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) suggested, “Job dissatisfaction leads to stress and ultimately to burnout if allowed to continue unabated” (p. 40). Simply put, “working as a teacher can be very stressful” (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016, p. 145). Sanford (2017) remarked, “Qualitative and quantitative data support the existence of burnout as a factor that has an impact on teacher quality of life and teacher decisions to leave the profession” (p. 45).

Youngs, Miller, and Perrone (2017) stated, “Teachers’ age, years of experience, and effectiveness have been found to predict turnover” (p. 3). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found, “Teachers of different ages or at different stages in their careers reported the same sources of job satisfaction and stress. However, coping strategies and consequences differed with age among the respondents” (p. 181). It is interesting to note that Guarino et al. (2006) found the highest teacher attrition rates occur during both the beginning years of teaching and in the years just before retirement. As Ingersoll and

Smith (2003) wrote, “The data suggest that after just five years between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers have left the profession,” and the number one reason beginning teachers are dissatisfied is poor salary (p. 32). What is startling, as Davis (2013) found, is that today’s employees are willing to take a cut in pay as long as the job aligns with their passions and goals.

Deciding whether to stay and continue in the teaching profession or to leave and pursue other career options can be greatly influenced by the school environment (Guarino et al., 2006). However, as Kaden et al. (2016) concluded, numerous factors and conditions impact job satisfaction and educator retention. These factors include salary and benefits, school facilities, school and district leadership, teacher workload, and parent and community support, just to name a few (Kaden et al., 2016). Indeed, according to Karabiyik and Korumaz (2014), teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy, or one’s ability to succeed or accomplish a task, have a significant and positive connection.

According to the United States Department of Education, as reported in the *School and Staffing Survey*, over a three-year period, nine out of 10 teachers reported they were satisfied in their jobs (Sparks & Malkus, 2016). Goodpaster et al. (2012) found three key factors related to rural teacher retention include community interactions, professional development, and rural school structures. Indeed, retention rates of highly effective teachers are higher when certain working conditions, such as sufficient time for instructional and non-instructional responsibilities and consistent and objective teacher performance feedback, are present (Pratt & Booker, 2014).

Working conditions are listed in Herzberg’s theory as hygiene factors that can lead to dissatisfaction (NetMBA, 2010). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) stated about 29% of

beginning teachers left the teaching profession due to dissatisfaction with teaching as a career. Guarino et al. (2006) found:

The most important reason for turnover seemed to be job dissatisfaction, and the most frequently reported causes of job dissatisfaction both for migrating teachers and teachers who left the profession were low salaries, lack of support from the school administration, and student discipline problems. (p. 193)

Although raising salaries might be an effective way to stem the loss of beginning teachers, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) pointed out:

The field of education is a relatively large occupation and represents four percent of the total civilian workforce. For instance, there are twice as many K-12 teachers as registered nurses and five times as many teachers as lawyers .... simply increasing all teacher salaries would be very expensive. (pp. 31-33)

Increasing teacher salaries alone will not stem the tide of attrition in schools or expand the availability of top college graduates (Hanushek, 2016). According to Rodgers and Skelton (2013), “Lower resources and salaries force many teachers to transfer to higher paying districts or quit teaching; [therefore], increasing teacher salaries comparable to doctors, lawyers or politicians could change the social view of teaching as a high-level occupation” (p. 3). Mertler (2016) discovered 85.2% of teachers reported an increase in salary was one of the contributing factors that enticed them to remain in the profession.

Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) stated, “Qualitative data indicated three things that most influenced teachers’ decision to remain in the profession: student success, subject matter taught, and the art of teaching” (p. 227). Springer, Swain, and Rodriguez (2016) found that in Tennessee, retention bonuses tied to teacher effectiveness

showed promise to improve the quality of teachers retained and to impact teacher turnover. When discussing intrinsic motivation factors, Pink (2009) stated, “We leave lucrative jobs to take low-paying ones that provide a clearer sense of purpose” (p. 26). Increasing salaries is certainly justifiable, but a more effective focus, as Ingersoll and Smith (2003) pointed out, would be to improve the working conditions new teachers have identified as positive, including mentoring, additional resources, and administrative support.

Aside from teacher salaries, support from administration is paramount and can make a difference in retention of teachers and improvement of job satisfaction (Lytle, 2013). Minority public school teachers reported dissatisfaction with administration as the highest-rated reason for turnover (81%) (Ingersoll & May, 2016). Hughes et al. (2015) concluded a supportive and involved principal can make a difference in the retention of teachers by ensuring regular classroom visits and recognizing teachers for a job well done. Additionally, Mertler (2016) found:

Teachers value important aspects of the job such as professional development opportunities, preparation time, and collegial collaboration .... Specifically, the teachers in this study indicated with majority agreement that these things are important to them and serve as work incentives. (p. 44)

This important implication for teacher retention is that recognition and interaction with peers both ranked high in Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory as intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting job attitudes.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Teacher attrition is an ongoing problem that impacts countries all over the world (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, & Prescott, 2015). There exists extensive research and literature associated with early career teacher attrition, and depending on how the problem is framed, there are various solutions or outcomes (Burke et al., 2015; Clandinin et al., 2014). If educational leaders are going to address the issues associated with teacher retention and attrition, in which nearly one-third of qualified teaching candidates leave the profession within three years, they need to adapt and change to meet the needs of students as well (Foster, 2016). Carroll and Foster (2010) forecasted, “Now we are facing an unprecedented wave of teacher retirements, on top of beginning teacher attrition that has grown worse over the past 15 years” (p. 9). Simply hiring more teachers is not the answer to teacher attrition and shortages, especially if there is a constant and consistent loss greater than the available pool of teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

McNeill (2016) recommended further research to explore teacher job satisfaction, to look at teacher demographics to determine commonalities for job satisfaction, and to expand research on teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. According to Foster (2016):

The continued chronic teacher attrition and shortage problems tell us that we must be more strategic about how we recruit educators; we must invest in robust teacher preparation programs that include practice (at least a full year of teacher candidates working with supervising teachers, who model excellent teaching with diverse students); and we must provide all beginning teachers with high-quality induction and mentoring programs. (p. 2)

In the Caribbean region, Joseph and Jackman (2014) asserted an additional examination of the personal and contextual factors for men leaving the teaching profession needs to be undertaken to provide suitable support and resources within the school environment.

Wixom (2016) found, “Providing leadership opportunities to teachers can be an effective strategy to recruit and retain them” (p. 1). Watts (2016) stated since teacher retention is highly influenced by school leadership, “it is vital that school and district leaders in rural districts understand reasons for teacher retention in order to meet the needs of the teachers they serve and recruit” (p. 138). Various forms of support from the administration impact a teacher’s decision to stay or leave (Hughes et al., 2015).

Trace (2016) suggested further research into either administrator dispositions that impact teacher job satisfaction or other factors beyond just school administration. Gallo and Beckman (2016) stated:

With a deeper understanding of the characteristics and qualities of the rural communities, teachers will be better able to successfully teach and meet the local needs of the communities, moving us closer to the goal of ensuring quality education for all. (p. 4)

Since educator attrition is a challenge in America, an increasing body of research indicates principals are vital to influence working conditions in schools (Burkhauser, 2016).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study was to contribute to the understanding and knowledge base of the factors that influence veteran teacher retention in Missouri’s K-8 school districts. An additional purpose of this research study was to communicate



results, conclusions, and recommendations and to inform (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

Carroll and Foster (2010) wrote, “Absent well-designed workforce development plans, schools and districts will continue to face chronic and staggering rates of teacher turnover-churn that consumes vast amounts of precious public resources” (p. 19). This research study was designed to determine commonalities between superintendents and veteran teachers and their perceptions on why teachers remain in K-8 school districts.

The research study was designed around two basic objectives:

1. To articulate the core perceptions of veteran Missouri K-8 educators that lead to longevity and retention in the K-8 school environment.
2. To identify the factors that influence retention of veteran K-8 teachers in Missouri.

**Research questions and hypotheses.** The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are perceptions of K-8 superintendents regarding factors that influence veteran teacher retention in K-8 districts?
2. What are perceptions of K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts?
3. What is the statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention?

*H<sub>30</sub>*: There is no statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention.

*H3<sub>a</sub>*: There is a statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention.

### **Significance of the Study**

This mixed-methods study was designed to fill the gap in available research with regard to retention factors for veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts (de Feijter, 2015; McNeill, 2016; Trace, 2016; Watts, 2016). Burkhauser (2016) concluded when deciding to stay or leave their schools, working conditions influence teacher perceptions. The available research does not delineate or focus on K-8 school districts, although much research and data do exist in relation to urban and rural schools.

Examination of data from the survey statements and interview questions for both superintendents and veteran teachers indicated the reasons veteran Missouri teachers stay employed in K-8 school districts and can provide possible strategies and policies to help with retention (McAtee, 2015; Trace, 2016). Missouri K-8 school superintendents and boards of education will be able to use the information gathered through this study to develop their own procedures and policies to retain veteran educators and have a positive impact on reducing turnover and increasing student achievement. Hanushek and Woessmann (2017) concluded international evidence suggests teachers impact student achievement as much or more than “quantitative measures of expenditure and class sizes” (p. 168). Furthermore, the results of this study could be posted to the Missouri K-8 Association website to help K-8 districts struggling to retain veteran educators by providing insight into the issue and possible solutions. This research study has the

potential to introduce new data and implications specifically geared toward K-8 school districts.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were defined:

**Small rural school district.** For this study, small rural school districts were defined as districts that have a total average daily attendance (ADA) of “fewer than 600” students; districts that serve schools located in counties that have a “population density of fewer than 10 people per square mile;” and districts with all schools in the local education authority (LEA) with a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) “locale code of 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote)” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 1; United States Department of Education, 2016, para. 4).

**Veteran teacher.** For this study, veteran teachers were defined as those who have completed over 10 years of teaching (McCoy, Wilson-Jones, & Jones, 2013).

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

The following limitations were identified in this study:

**Sample demographics.** The demographics of veteran K-8 teachers and superintendents who responded to the survey statements and interview questions are a limitation. The sample consisted of Missouri K-8 district superintendents and veteran teachers in those districts. However, since the sample was only selected from Missouri, there is a high likelihood multiple limitations may exist in data and conclusions. Sample size was a limitation, so diligence was paid to obtaining samples from various Missouri K-8 school districts across the state. Since this study was limited to K-8 school districts

in Missouri, different regions or states may produce results with various or no differences.

**Perceptions of veteran K-8 educators.** The perceptions of Missouri K-8 educators are a limitation, as they may or may not represent perceptions of superintendents or veteran educators in larger, urban districts in Missouri. The demographics of veteran educators were a limitation, since teacher demographics vary by school size (rural, urban, and inner city). Additionally, since the surveys were voluntary, there was a limitation in relation to the response rate and level of participation. The actual interviews were a limitation, since some were conducted in person and some over the telephone. The instruments utilized were a limitation, as they were created by the researcher for this study. Finally, the sample size for interviews was a clear limitation, as all members of the veteran K-8 educator population could not be individually interviewed in a reasonable amount of time.

**Instrument.** For this research study, two original instruments for both superintendents and veteran K-8 teachers were created to gather data. This mixed-methods research study included a Likert-type survey for both superintendents and Missouri K-8 veteran teachers including 17 statements. The two surveys allowed for quantitative data analysis using the Mann-Whitney *U* test to determine if any differences were present of statistical significance. For the qualitative data analysis, seven interview questions were asked of both Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. Perceptions were analyzed for similarities and differences. The use of interview questions and a Likert-type survey produced the data for analysis. The data analysis and outcomes revealed various factors affecting K-8 educator retention.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and without bias.
2. The Likert-type survey included directions and explanations to allow for impartial and open answers by participants.
3. The interviews were conducted in the form (by phone or face-to-face) that best met the needs and time constraints of the participants.
4. The perceptions of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers may or may not be representative of the entire Missouri K-8 population of schools or educators.

### **Summary**

Research indicates that beginning teachers are exiting the educational profession at ever increasing rates (Clandinin et al, 2014). There are many reasons for teacher dissatisfaction that lead to low retention such as low wages, lack of support, increased teaching demands, disruptive students, and uninvolved parents (McCoy et al, 2013). Mertler (2016) reported many studies indicate teacher dissatisfaction somewhere in the 20% to 30% range. Increasing teacher salary schedules alone will not solve the retention or attrition problem (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Woods, 2016).

The aim of this research study was to determine the retention factors that influence Missouri K-8 teachers to remain in their school districts. Educator turnover has many negative costs and concerns from the financial investment lost to the disruption of student learning and achievement (Foster, 2016). Educator turnover or attrition is higher for minority teachers than nonminority teachers according to Ingersoll and May (2016). Shaw and Newton (2014) concluded that for a beginning teacher to become a high-

quality teacher, it takes three to seven years of teaching. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) stated, “High rates of attrition have significant financial costs, which can exceed \$20,000 per teacher for replacing one who leaves in an urban school district” (p. 30). This research study included both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research data were used to determine if a difference exists between Missouri K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers in regard to factors that influence teacher retention.

Chapter One began with a brief introduction, background of the research study, and theoretical framework. Frederick Herzberg’s (2003) motivational-hygiene theory was used as the theoretical framework. This chapter included a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and research questions and hypotheses. Chapter One concluded with a discussion of the significance of the study, definitions of key terms, limitations, and assumptions.

Chapter Two begins with a review of the relevant literature focusing on prior research studies and information on teacher attrition and retention factors, especially in rural school districts. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), “The theoretical framework is one of the most important aspects in the research process” (p. 12). Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory was utilized as the framework, and more importantly, the foundation for this study. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence retention and attrition are detailed in Chapter Two, as are the challenges and benefits of small rural schools and K-8 districts.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

For decades, teacher motivation, retention, and job satisfaction have been topics of research studies (Mertler, 2016). When analyzing teacher job satisfaction, Lytle (2013) stated, “Every year a portion of teachers leave the teaching profession in search of a different career path, which creates the phenomena of the revolving door of teachers in schools” (p. 34). Ingersoll (2001) found, “Rather than insufficient supply, the data indicate 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). A major implication of the “revolving door” of teachers, as Ronfeldt et al. (2013) explained, is a negative or positive compositional effect on student achievement, “if leaving teachers are better (or worse) than the ones who replace them” (p. 5). The attrition of poor-performing educators can have a positive effect on student outcomes (Carroll & Foster, 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Thus, it is imperative during policy and procedure development that every attempt is made to keep a focus on teacher job satisfaction leading to increased student achievement (Lytle, 2013).

Just hiring more beginning teachers will not solve the teacher shortage concern, since today’s teachers do not stay on the job as did previous generations of teachers; from 1988 to 2005, teacher attrition increased more than 40% (Carroll & Foster, 2010; Malatras, Gais, & Wagner, 2017). Based upon data provided by the West Virginia Department of Education, Lochmiller et al. (2016) concluded, “On average 19.5 percent of beginning teachers who were initially employed in the West Virginia public school system during one of the four baseline years left the system after their first year of teaching” (p. 16). In a Washington state study, Elfers, Plecki, and Van Windekens

(2017) found that for the last 20 years, one-quarter of new teachers have left teaching after five years. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) asserted, “The data suggest that after just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers have left the profession” (p. 32). Equally startling, in a West Virginia study on teacher and administrator attrition and retention, the average attrition rates for teachers and administrators were highest in high-poverty school districts (Lochmiller et al., 2016).

Topics addressed in the literature review are focused on the retention and attrition of veteran teachers in K-8 school districts. Considerable research and data on beginning teacher attrition, educator retention, and rural issues and implications are available (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Brenner, 2016; Burke et al., 2015; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; Malloy & Allen, 2007; Watts, 2016). Whether beginning teachers or veteran educators, Ronfeldt et al. (2013) illustrated teacher turnover is harmful to student achievement. Lytle (2013) listed multiple factors that influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, such as salary concerns, professional development and mentoring programs, administrative support and relationships, teacher burnout, teacher assignments and duties, and various demographics.

Every attempt was made to focus this literature review on analyzing the available research and data on veteran educator retention and attrition as it relates to small rural schools, since many K-8 school districts fall into the defined category of a rural school. However, little qualitative research currently exists on veteran teacher and administrator retention and attrition for K-8 school districts. Chapter Two begins with a brief review of the theoretical framework, Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory (NetMBA, 2010). Herzberg’s two-factor theory includes intrinsic factors,



or motivators, that lead to job satisfaction, and extrinsic factors, or hygiene factors, that lead to job dissatisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016). The rest of the chapter is focused on synthesizing the empirical research related to retention and attrition, which includes salary and benefits considerations, mentoring and professional development, and administrative and parental support in rural schools.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Veteran teacher job satisfaction, as it impacts retention and attrition, were analyzed using Herzberg's two-factor theory. Creswell and Creswell (2017) explained one element of a literature review "is to determine what theories might be used to explore the questions in a scholarly study" (p. 49). Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory was used as the theoretical framework from which factors (both intrinsic and extrinsic) that influence educator retention in K-8 schools were researched and analyzed (NetMBA, 2010). Herzberg listed motivators as the intrinsic factors that lead to job satisfaction and hygiene as the extrinsic factors that lead to job dissatisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016). Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory addresses two distinct human needs, physiological and psychological (NetMBA, 2010).

Herzberg's (2003) two-factor theory was used to analyze and study attrition and retention factors such as salary, administrative support, stress, and demographic factors that impact job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Mertler (2016) addressed teacher job satisfaction:

I doubt that any teacher in this state (Arizona)—or anywhere in the country, for that matter—would turn down an offer for an increased salary. However, I would argue that, for many professional educators, it might not take a huge salary

increase to positively impact their levels of job satisfaction. In many cases, I would predict that many teachers would envision a salary increase not simply as additional income, but perhaps more so as a means of receiving some sort of recognition, valuation, and confirmation of the work they perform. (p. 44)

Davis (2013) indicated 48% of workers who are able to apply personal interests [such as personal passions and goals] in the workplace say they are very satisfied. Despite feeling stressed and exhausted, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found Norwegian teachers reported high job satisfaction.

For beginning teachers, an important and needed factor to keep them from leaving the teaching profession is support from administration and faculty (McCoy et al., 2013; Saleem, 2015). Teachers will continue in the field of education, despite certain factors, if the right workplace conditions exist (Burkhauser, 2016). In Herzberg's two-factor theory, work conditions are listed as extrinsic factors that lead to job dissatisfaction (NetMBA, 2010). To eliminate job dissatisfaction, Herzberg (2003) observed companies and organizations need to fix obstructive policies, provide supportive supervision, ensure competitive salaries, build job status through meaningful work, and provide job security. To make each job more satisfying and enriched, Herzberg (2003) suggested addressing motivating factors such as providing for achievement opportunities, giving recognition for contributions, matching employee skills and abilities to work that is rewarding, allowing for employee responsibility, utilizing advancement and promotions, and pointing out training and professional development for growth. Including the education profession, Davis (2013) asserted, "68 percent of working Americans would be willing to take a pay cut to work in a job that better allowed them to apply their personal interests to

the workplace” (p. 1). Job satisfaction for teachers was rated highest when they were found to love their jobs (Gu, 2016).

### **Retention and Attrition Factors**

Understanding why teachers leave the profession and solving the teacher turnover issue, which includes migration and attrition, are ongoing problems (Lytle, 2013). It is of little surprise, as Lochmiller et al. (2016) found, “The average attrition rate among teachers and administrators was highest in school districts with the highest proportion of students eligible for the federal school lunch program” (p. 16). As stated in their abstract, McCoy et al. (2013) discovered, “Teacher support, working conditions, and student behavior were among the leading factors impacting beginning teachers’ decisions to leave the profession prior to tenure” (p. 46). There are many additional factors that influence teacher retention and attrition, such as retirement, family or personal reasons, pursuit of other jobs, school staffing decisions, or job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & May, 2016).

Teachers play a pivotal part in developing and sustaining a classroom atmosphere ideal for student learning and social-emotional growth (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013). This can oftentimes leave teachers stressed or taxed (Flook et al., 2013). Joseph and Jackman (2014) stated their analysis “revealed that urban teachers were more likely than their rural counterparts to leave due to burn-out” (p. 81). Flook et al. (2013) wrote, “The personal, societal, and financial costs associated with burnout are too high to ignore” and suggested applying mindfulness, or focused attention in the present moment (p. 1). In their mindfulness pilot study, Flook et al. (2013) suggested offering teachers a course or training on mindfulness interventions can reduce stress and

burnout and increase effective teacher behavior. Furthermore, to reduce the likelihood of burnout, Hughes et al. (2015) maintained teachers need to be conscious of their own well-being, and if necessary, step back from the stress present in hard-to-staff schools.

According to Herzberg (2003), work conditions are extrinsic dissatisfaction factors. When analyzing the results from the 2012-13 teacher follow-up survey for the National Center for Educational Statistics, Goldring, Taie, and Riddles (2014) discovered after the 2011-12 school year, 8% of public school teachers left the teaching profession, and of those, about 53% of the teachers who left “reported that their general work conditions were better in their current position than in teaching” (p. 3). Additionally, from the *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2012-13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey*, almost 51% of teachers who left the teaching ranks found their current workload outside of education more manageable (Goldring et al., 2014).

In a separate study, Gu (2016) contended, “Teachers were unhappy about their jobs mainly because [of] the operating procedures in their job, which meant they had too much paperwork to do and they had a heavy teach[ing] load at work” (p. 15). Research conducted by McCoy et al. (2013) lead to this statement, “The increased amount of paperwork requirements for teachers and the workload were issues that both groups (beginning and veteran teachers) in this study mentioned as sources of displeasure” (p. 51). Researching job satisfaction and years of teaching experience, Gu (2016) did show a weak to moderate correlation between years of teaching experience and satisfaction with operating procedures, but no significant correlation between years of teaching experience and teacher job satisfaction.

Except for the Appalachia region, rural America's "pockets of poverty" are disproportionately comprised of minorities (Lichter & Johnson, 2007, p. 349). In their empirical study of how teacher turnover harms student achievement, Ronfeldt et al. (2013) concluded, "Results suggest that teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and ELA... moreover, teacher turnover is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and black students" (p. 30). Ingersoll et al. (2014) specifically examined the association between pre-service education and preparedness for beginning teachers and their attrition, and asserted pedagogical preparation (content and substance) leads to a decrease in beginning teachers leaving after their first year of teaching. Research professionals have concluded teacher turnover, or attrition, negatively impacts student achievement (Lichter & Johnson, 2007; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

**Administrative support.** Hughes et al. (2015) found principals play a key role in improving teacher retention by providing guidance and support through instructional and institutional resources. Larkin et al. (2016) stated, "Effective leadership is a fundamental element in the operation of any organization, including member retention... and part of good leadership is being able to offer teachers timely support" (p. 42). Indeed, principal leadership, especially in the area of emotional and environmental support, was a vital part in a teacher's decision to stay employed in a school (Hughes et al., 2015). The relationship with supervisor and peers is a factor that impacts job attitudes, according to Herzberg (2003).

In an empirical study, Dou et al. (2016) surmised, "Our results confirm the importance of both instructional and transformational leadership in influencing teachers'

job satisfaction and organizational commitment” (p. 13). Herzberg (2003) listed recognition as an intrinsic satisfaction motivator that impacts job attitudes. Teachers will continue teaching if they have support and encouragement from their peers and administration (Rodgers & Skelton, 2013). Burke et al. (2015) listed mentor, collegial, and administrative support; professional development; and access to internal and external resources as factors that positively impact teacher retention. In analyzing the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and principal trust and support, Trace (2016) concluded, “Teachers who see principals supporting them with expressive and instrumental support will become more likely to have a greater trust in the principal” (p. 54). When principals are involved and play a pivotal role in influencing working conditions, teachers will continue to teach, thus reducing turnover (Burkhauser, 2016).

It is prudent to remember even as teachers are stressed and overloaded with mandates, so are administrators (Mertler, 2016; Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014). Furthermore, Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016) analyzed data from the *Schools and Staffing Survey* and the *Teacher Follow-Up Survey* and found in low-performing schools, accountability efforts make it more difficult to retain teachers, but “in schools subject to sanctions, higher teacher turnover was not inevitable” (p. 44). Woods (2016) found, “Providing new teachers with induction and mentoring can be an effective retention strategy” (p. 1). When looking at what administrators can do to reduce beginning teacher attrition, Clandinin et al. (2014) indicated possible solutions such as providing more support in the form of mandated mentoring or membership in collaborative groups.

Indeed, lack of supervision was an extrinsic factor Herzberg (2003) listed as a reason for job dissatisfaction. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) argued, “Teacher empowerment is another panacea that many educational reformers consider essential in school restructuring and for optimum teacher development” (p. 41). Not to be overlooked, Herzberg (2003) recognized responsibility, advancement, and growth as three intrinsic motivators for job satisfaction. Principals play a pivotal role in improving educators’ perceptions about the school environment and work conditions, thus affecting teacher turnover (Burkhauser, 2016; Saleem, 2015).

**Salary.** Salary was an important extrinsic dissatisfaction factor for Herzberg (2003). Interestingly, Larkin et al. (2016) discovered even online teachers view lower salaries and poor prospects for income growth as discouragements. Mertler (2016) concluded, “Without a doubt, teachers indicated that the most influential reason to leave the teaching profession would be to ‘seek a more competitive salary’” (p. 41). Guarino et al. (2006) wrote, “Overall, the recent empirical literature found that higher salaries were associated with lower teacher attrition and that teachers were responsive to salaries outside their districts and profession” (p. 194). Gray and Taie (2015) found:

The percentage of beginning teachers who continued to teach after the first year varied by first-year salary level. For example, 97 percent of beginning teachers whose first-year base salary was \$40,000 or more were teaching in 2008-09, whereas 87 percent of those with a first-year salary less than \$40,000 were teaching in 2008-09 .... Also, 89 percent of beginning teachers whose first-year base salary was \$40,000 or more were teaching in 2011-12, whereas 80 percent of those with a first-year salary less than \$40,000 were teaching in 2011-12. (p. 3)

Thibodeaux et al. (2015) explained, “When asked which factors contributed most to teachers leaving the profession, teachers reported lack of administrative support, teacher workload, and student discipline” (p. 227). When discussing beginning and veteran teacher perceptions, McCoy et al. (2013) pointed out, “The most frequently-cited reasons reported by teachers for leaving the profession are salary issues, working conditions, and lack of support” (p. 47). Aragon (2016) stated, “Providing financial incentives can be an effective strategy for recruiting and retaining teachers” (p. 1). In a meta-analytic and narrative review of research on teacher attrition and retention, Borman and Dowling (2008) found teacher salaries are a very high predictor of attrition.

**Professional development and mentoring.** To make a positive impact on educator attrition and student achievement, as Guskey (2014) so succinctly wrote, any improvement effort in education must be built upon the foundation of high-quality professional learning. Woods (2016) suggested, “Induction and mentoring programs have been shown to improve teacher retention” (p. 3). School districts and administrators have a critical role in developing and implementing professional development that provides leadership and teacher change (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). The departure of veteran teachers with years of classroom experience and valuable professional development training causes a loss of wisdom needed for mentoring and coaching beginning teachers (Carroll & Foster, 2010).

Rural districts face challenges non-rural counterparts sometimes do not face including limited professional development opportunities and supplemental service providers (Yettick et al., 2014). Fortunately, professional development and mentoring can take place in various locations and times, such as during grade and content-level



meetings, scheduled professional development days, and even workshops and lectures (Rodgers & Skelton, 2013). Furthermore, Borman and Dowling (2008) stated:

During the early years of teachers' careers, other proactive policy options centered around collaboration and mentoring appear to have particular benefits... and from the evidence reviewed, it appears that initiatives that lessen the bureaucratic organization of schools and school systems and strategies that promote more genuine administrative support from school leaders and collegiality among teachers are strategies that may improve retention. (p. 399)

Guskey (2014) stated, "The most valuable feedback to teachers is regular, specific, and based on trusted measures of student learning... and that classroom observations by school leaders, coaches, or fellow teachers can offer another excellent resource" (p. 15).

Workman and Wixom (2016) wrote, "Providing teachers with ongoing feedback and targeted professional development following evaluations can be an effective strategy to retain teachers" (p. 1). Even informal mentoring where veteran teachers volunteer to "support, advise, and assist" new teachers positively impacts a teacher's decision to remain in the profession (McCoy et al., 2013, p. 50).

**School climate.** Hall and Hord (2015) suggested the best way for school leaders to shape school culture or climate is to focus on the best practices of building a shared vision, team learning, and personal mastery. If the goal is to prepare teachers for success and to improve the school environment, then a concerted effort must be made to support teachers not only through professional development but by improving the overall school climate (Lewis et al., 2016). Certainly mentoring and professional development opportunities are key to improving school climate, as Kaden et al. (2016) wrote, "Results

indicated that the majority of teachers must take on multiple teaching assignments including both multi-grade level and multi-subject preparations .... Teacher preparation programs should include courses that address multi-ability classrooms and offer teaching practices in schools with such characteristics” (p. 142).

If the desire is for teachers to stay committed to the profession, then they need to have autonomy over on-the-job decision-making and their work environment (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Autonomy, or the desire to be self-directed, is an intrinsic motivator Pink (2009) noted can positively impact employee behavior and satisfaction. As the available literature has shown, rural schools can easily address the issues of retention, attrition, and work overload by focusing on professional development, mentoring, and professional learning communities (Burkhauser, 2016; Dou et al., 2016; Goodpaster et al., 2012; Guskey, 2014; Hughes et al., 2015; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Rodgers & Skelton, 2013; Trace, 2016). Schools that focus on work conditions and on improving teacher retention, as Ingersoll et al. (2016) noted, have lower turnover when they give teachers more classroom autonomy.

### **Challenges of Small Rural Schools and K-8 Districts**

What does it mean when discussing rural education, and what is an easy-to-apply definition for rural? Johnson et al. (2014) defined rural using the National Center for Education Statistics locale coding system released in 2006, as schools “designated with locale codes 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote)” (p. 1). In the application of the Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA), the United States Department of Education (2016) defined a rural district as a local educational agency (LEA) with an average daily attendance of “fewer than 600 students;” a district with a

population density of less “than 10 people per square mile” in each county served by the LEA; and a district wherein all schools served by the LEA have a “locale code of 41, 42, or 43 as determined by the Secretary of Education” (para. 4).

In Missouri, 60.7% of school districts are small rural districts, which is greater than the national average of 49.9% (Johnson et al., 2014). Since the majority of the world’s schools are rural with many distinct features and needs, Gallo and Beckman (2016) recognized, “Without policies tailored to the unique context of rural schools and communities, ensuring equity of access, resources, and opportunity in schools across the United States becomes a difficult task” (p. 2). Rural schools can benefit from specific retention and recruitment policies to improve teacher retention and school success (Butler, 2016; Friesen, 2016; Phillips, 2015).

Lichter and Johnson (2007) recognized, “The rural poor—especially poor racial minorities—nevertheless remain heavily concentrated in geographically isolated, economically depressed, and largely forgotten regions of the country” (p. 3). Policymakers cannot ignore the challenges rural schools and students face or what those challenges mean when reducing achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Johnson et al., 2014). After the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, rural school districts experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers (Harrington, 2017). With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act, states were directed to include rural LEAs in the consultation and development of state plans, since small rural districts in America are at-risk of being excluded from the process (Brenner, 2016).

Goodpaster et al. (2012) reflected, “Teachers who are unfamiliar with rural community norms may be unprepared for contending with these dynamics, contributing to teacher attrition” (p. 11). Ingersoll et al. (2016) argued, “If we want to ensure that all students are taught by qualified teachers, many schools must pay more attention to teacher retention” (p. 45). When investigating the factors that push men out of the classroom, Joseph and Jackman (2014) found, “More than their counterparts in the urban areas, male teachers tended to leave the profession if they felt overqualified for the job” (p. 81). Providing students with trained and skilled teachers is a world-wide challenge (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014).

Of global concern in education are multiple issues such as infrastructure, overcrowding, lack of high-quality resources, teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition that must be solved (Gallo & Beckman, 2016). When looking at the changing special concentration of America’s rural poor, Lichter and Johnson (2007) found, “Any disadvantages they (rural blacks) experience from poverty are compounded by living in high poverty areas, which typically have few good jobs, educational opportunities, and public services and infrastructure” (p. 18). Indeed, there are geographically isolated rural areas in America where some of the most impoverished minorities live (Lichter & Johnson, 2007). Additionally, as rural schools continue to grow at a faster rate than non-rural enrollments, the complexities and rate increases of poverty, demographic diversity, and students with special needs will be compounded (Johnson et al., 2014).

Performance-based school accountability measures became prominent after No Child Left Behind became law, as Ingersoll et al. (2016) explained, and have caused the majority of public schools to be subject to state and district performance standards and

assessments. To comply with federal reporting requirements, larger districts are able to hire a dedicated federal director or employee, whereas smaller districts simply do not have enough resources to do the same (Yettick et al., 2014). When discussing the impact of rural education and federal education laws, Brenner (2016) stated:

Accountability provisions requiring schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress were disproportionately difficult for small rural schools where a single student's performance can have a strong impact on aggregate or subgroup scores. The mandate to provide highly qualified teachers for every child in every subject was particularly challenging for rural LEAs that struggle to recruit and retain a stable teaching force or depend on teachers who must teach multiple subjects. (p. 23)

Harrington (2017) found rural school districts in close proximity to metropolitan areas employed fewer science teachers after passage of No Child Left Behind.

Ask educators today, and they can elucidate the long hours and intense pressure of teaching 21st-century students (Brenner, 2016; Yettick et al., 2014). Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) stated, "Teaching is by all accounts an extraordinarily demanding profession" (p. 5). Roberts (2016) explained, "Workload is one of the most common factors cited as the reason for teachers considering leaving the profession" (p. 3). Workload problems, such as large teaching loads and additional duties outside instructional or contracted time, make it especially difficult for beginning teachers (McCoy et al., 2013).

Interestingly, even student demographics have been shown to have an impact on teacher attrition (Clandinin et al., 2014). For instance, Lichter and Johnson (2007)

discovered, “Rural children—especially racial minorities—have poverty rates well above national and non-metro rates” (p. 21). Goodpaster et al. (2012) found:

The ripple effect of having a bad experience with one student impacts their [teachers] reputation in the larger community; in this situation, teachers indicated that they would likely have the student and/or their siblings and friends in future classes, and possibly contend with the community assuming that one bad experience makes them poor teachers. (p. 19)

Teachers are crucial in promoting student learning, and their salaries represent a large share of the investment of local, state, and federal funding in public schools (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Lochmiller et al. (2016) found in rural districts, teachers leave the education system at the same rate as teachers in towns, suburban, and city districts; however, rural administrators leave the system at higher rates than administrators in suburban or city districts. Watts (2016) concluded, “Current literature suggests that the amount of highly qualified teachers will not be sufficient enough to staff the growing school districts in the United States, especially in rural school districts” (p. 138). With parental support critical to teacher success, Kaden et al. (2016) suggested having parents involved can actually decrease a teacher’s uncertainty and lead to a teacher’s integration within the community by providing a foundation of understanding of local expectations, customs, and culture. To combat the recruitment and retention concerns of rural schools, Malloy and Allen (2007) cited an emphasis on the benefits of authentic personal relationships and the ability to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. For communities and

policymakers around the world, rural education will remain an important concern (Gallo & Beckman, 2016).

### **Benefits of Small Rural Schools and K-8 Districts**

Teachers play many roles within a rural community, such as parent, neighbor, friend, and churchgoer, and relationships help to improve communication and interactions, thus deepening partnerships and trust with various stakeholders (Goodpaster et al., 2012). Herzberg (2003) listed status and security as extrinsic factors that impact job attitudes. The unique needs of rural students and teachers must be addressed and considered, since the majority of schools in the world are located in rural areas (Gallo & Beckman, 2016).

Joseph and Jackman (2014) found, in their focused study of men who leave the teaching profession in Trinidad and Tobago, that rural educational environments have greater support mechanisms to reduce stress than do urban schools. Lemke and Sargent (as cited in Malloy & Allen, 2007) stated:

Because rural districts experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, scholars have suggested that an ideal recruitment and retention strategy would be to emphasize the benefits of rural schools, benefits such as attractive class size, genuine personal relationships and a high degree of involvement in the decision-making process. (p. 19)

Ingersoll (2001) restated many educational reformers argue small schools enjoy a “communal climate” where benefits are embraced and shared (p. 526). Rural poverty is declining, as extreme poverty (above 40%) has decreased significantly over the last decade, which is good news for rural communities (Lichter & Johnson, 2007). The

benefits of rural teaching, for teachers who are comfortable with the rural community, can lead to teacher retention (Goodpaster et al., 2012).

### **Summary**

Chapter Two began with an analysis of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as related to educator job satisfaction, retention, and attrition, and proceeded with an investigation of the empirical research, which revealed the implications and importance of the main themes of this dissertation. The available literature focused on the main themes of retention and attrition factors, administrative support, salary, professional development and mentoring, school climate, and challenges and benefits of small rural schools and K-8 districts. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory, identifies both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that lead to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction (NetMBA, 2010).

On-the-job stress has been shown to decrease when job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism increase, and improved job satisfaction has been linked to "high degrees of professionalism and empowerment" (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005, p. 48). The intrinsic factors that lead to job satisfaction are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth, and the extrinsic factors that lead to job dissatisfaction are company policies, supervision, relationships with supervisors and peers, work conditions, salary, status, and security (Herzberg, 2003). In a review of available literature, the research revealed strategies schools can implement to help retain teachers and stop the "revolving door" of teacher attrition (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Burke et al. (2015) stated:



Of particular significance was that respondents also indicated that the availability of certain forms of support may have influenced them to remain in the profession. Cited forms of support included planning and resource sharing with experienced teachers, an allocated and available mentor, access to online resources, and participation in an online community. (p. 4)

No available research was found on veteran K-8 educator retention, although an abundance of research on rural schools was present (Butler, 2016; Friesen, 2016; Harrington, 2017; Lichter & Johnson, 2007; Phillips, 2015; Watts, 2016).

In Chapter Three, the methodology utilized to identify the factors that influence K-8 educators in regard to teacher retention is presented. The chapter includes an explanation of the problem and purpose of the research, the research questions and hypotheses, the research design, and ethical considerations. Chapter Three concludes with the specified population and sample, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to identify factors that lead to retention of veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to reveal the factors Missouri K-8 district superintendents and veteran teachers ranked as most important when asked why teachers remain in K-8 districts. A survey of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers provided the necessary quantitative data. Interviews were conducted with select participants to produce the qualitative information. The perceptions of K-8 educators about the factors that lead to retention in Missouri K-8 districts provided valuable data and real-life application for districts.

The specific methodology used in this study is presented. The problem and purpose are discussed in this chapter, the guiding research questions are highlighted, and the research design is explained in greater detail. The population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis are also described thoroughly. Finally, Chapter Three concludes with a brief summary.

#### **Problem and Purpose Overview**

Teacher turnover and attrition can have a devastating impact on a school district's economic resources and quality of education (Clandinin et al., 2014). Lytle (2013) stated, "Rural and urban school districts, especially the school districts considered high-poverty, are losing highly qualified teachers" (p. 36). Adnot et al. (2017) insisted, "There is increasing evidence that in some urban areas less effective teachers are often concentrated in lower-performing schools serving disadvantaged students" (p. 54). Phillips (2015) stated additional research studies on teacher retention or teacher attrition

will be of benefit to the education profession. Although focused on special education teacher retention, Henderson (2014) indicated additional research will be beneficial in the areas of mentorship and teacher induction programs and accepting and inclusive school climate and culture. The bottom line for education is simple. As Ingersoll (2001) wrote, simply addressing popular education initiatives will not solve school staffing shortages or ensure K-12 schools are staffed with qualified teachers if other organizational causes of teacher attrition are not addressed.

This research study was designed to identify possible factors that influence Missouri K-8 educator retention and to add to the already extensive and available research on teacher retention and attrition. Simply put, the United States education system cannot just recruit its way out of a teacher shortage or lack of qualified educators (Ingersoll, 2001). Small rural Missouri K-8 school districts face many unique challenges, so focusing on key retention factors for veteran teachers can have a positive impact on student achievement and on school climate and culture (Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016).

**Research questions and hypotheses.** The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are perceptions of K-8 superintendents regarding factors that influence veteran teacher retention in K-8 districts?
2. What are perceptions of K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts?
3. What is the statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention?

*H3<sub>0</sub>*: There is no statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention.

*H3<sub>a</sub>*: There is a statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention.

### **Research Design**

Creswell and Clark (2017) defined mixed-methods studies as when a researcher “collects data using quantitative survey procedures and follows up with interviews of a few individuals who completed the survey to help explain the reasons behind and the meanings of the quantitative survey results” (p. 6). For this study, a mixed-methods design was utilized for both qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis. Creswell (2014) stated a mixed-methods approach uses a “pragmatic world view” (p. 48). In addition:

The researcher bases the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone. The study begins with a broad survey in order to generalize results to a population and then, in a second phase, focuses on qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants to help explain the initial quantitative survey. (Creswell, 2014, p. 48)

Butin (2010) explained a mixed-methods design combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect more data points and will “strengthen the validity of the final conclusions” (p. 76). A mixed-methods design was selected as the best

possible way to integrate and analyze the perspectives of both superintendents and veteran teachers and as the best approach to check the accuracy or validity of data produced from the surveys and interviews. Lastly, of important note was the strict adherence to protocols, so the research design and results could be replicated by another researcher. Results from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interview questions were compared and analyzed.

**Qualitative.** For the qualitative portion of this study, interview questions were designed to elicit responses based on Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory factors. The interview questions were used to gather qualitative data through the perceptions of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers centered on the most common reasons why veteran teachers choose to continue teaching in their respective Missouri K-8 school districts. Interviews of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers should ideally be conducted and recorded in person, considering test reliability standards such as environment (location threat) and time of day (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). In rare cases, due to reasons beyond the researcher's or interviewee's control, the recorded interviews did take place over the phone. The interviews produced participant responses that were summarized and reviewed without bias, looking for similarities and differences.

**Quantitative.** The quantitative data were gathered using a Likert-type statement survey, and the results were utilized for statistical hypothesis testing (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory, also known as two-factor theory, includes the most common intrinsic and extrinsic factors for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Original surveys for Missouri K-8 superintendents and

veteran teachers were developed to gather quantitative data based upon Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory factors. The Likert-type original survey was emailed to Missouri K-8 Association member superintendents for responses through the survey management software Qualtrics. The Missouri K-8 superintendents were asked to forward the survey link to veteran teachers in their districts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An important component of collecting and analyzing data for a research project is ethics, which directly impact the validity of a study (American Psychological Association, 2010). As outlined by Glatthorn and Joyner (2005), there are three key ethical principles researchers should keep in mind: "equity, honesty, and humane considerations" (p. 8). Additionally, to avoid plagiarism, even if unintentional, this researcher cited and gave appropriate credit to sources and outside assistance (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). Upon approval of the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendices A and B), a letter of permission (see Appendix C) was obtained from the Missouri K-8 Association president to gather and utilize association member email addresses for both the qualitative and quantitative portions of this study. Only the K-8 executive board member email addresses were utilized for the qualitative portion. Participants were provided an introductory participation letter (see Appendix D) and an informed consent form for both the interview and the survey (see Appendices E and F). These forms outlined the title and rationale for the study, the problem to be studied, the methodology, benefits and risks, and the time commitment for participants.

Alphabetic letters and numbers replaced school district and participant names to ensure increased anonymity. The K-8 superintendent and teacher interview questions

(see Appendices G and H) and surveys (see Appendices I and J) only included job titles and years of teaching experience. Since email addresses were used to send the surveys, there existed a possibility names or personally identifiable information were collected.

Considering the sample size was small, participants were informed of possible recognition. Any identifiable information from the participating K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers, along with all information collected through the surveys and interviews, remained confidential and secured in a locked cabinet. Any electronic information or data gathered were password-protected and at the end of the study were transferred to a single drive and secured in a locked cabinet.

With the use of Lindenwood University's survey management software, Qualtrics, certain data were collected and stored at Lindenwood under password-protection. All audio interview recordings were put into transcript format and secured in a locked cabinet. All interview participants were able to review written transcripts for comments or questions. Three years from the conclusion of the study, all paper and electronic information will be professionally destroyed.

### **Population and Sample**

According to the Missouri K-8 Association (2017) website, in 2017, there were 70 K-8 school districts in 40 counties in Missouri. Participation in this research study included criteria such as, member school district of the Missouri K-8 Association, veteran teachers with more than 10 years teaching experience in a Missouri K-8, and K-8 superintendents who were regional representatives on the Missouri K-8 Association executive board [for interviews only]. The population for this study included only 2017 member districts of the Missouri K-8 Association. Bluman (2018) explained hypothesis

testing is an area of inferential statistics that revolves around a process to evaluate claims about a population based on data gathered from a sample. Fraenkel et al. (2015) clarified, “A sample in a research study is the group on which information is obtained. The larger group to which one hopes to apply the results is called the population” (p. 92). Samples taken from K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers of the Missouri K-8 Association member school districts were utilized to obtain the retention data that would be applicable to a population of all 70 Missouri K-8 school districts.

**Qualitative.** The population for the qualitative interviews of this study included the superintendents and veteran teachers in Missouri’s K-8 school districts. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2015), “A population is the total set of individuals, objects, groups, or events in which the researcher is interested” (p. 17). Since it is not feasible to interview all Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers, only regional Missouri K-8 Association executive board superintendents and select K-8 veteran teachers in member districts of the Missouri K-8 Association were interviewed. In the event a regional Missouri K-8 executive board superintendent or veteran teacher was not available, another Missouri K-8 school district from that region would have been asked to participate in the qualitative interview sample. This alternate school district would be randomly selected.

The initial sample size approved by the Independent Review Board (IRB) was 18; however, after an extended period of time an amended IRB was submitted and approved to adjust the sample to 10 participants [five superintendents and five veteran teachers] from K-8 member school districts represented on the Missouri K-8 Association board. The veteran teacher interviewed from each district was selected by the district’s



superintendent. The qualitative portion of this study utilized purposive sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling based upon the researcher's knowledge of a population tied to the purpose of the research (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Purposive sampling was based upon Missouri K-8 schools and veteran teacher retention. The Missouri K-8 executive board represents the nine regions of the Missouri K-8 Association. The sample included both a Missouri K-8 superintendent and a Missouri K-8 veteran teacher from various regions for the qualitative interviews.

**Quantitative.** The population for the quantitative portion of this study included all member districts of the Missouri K-8 Association. According to the Missouri K-8 Association (2017) website, there were 59 member districts for the 2017-2018 school year of which only 58 could be surveyed since the researcher's district was excluded from participation. For the quantitative portion, the purposive sample used for the survey instrument included all Missouri K-8 Association member superintendents and qualifying member veteran teachers. The email addresses obtained from the K-8 Association were utilized for this portion of the study. The K-8 superintendents were sent an introductory email including the survey link and the informed consent form. A separate introductory email for teachers was sent to district superintendents to be forwarded to veteran teachers, which included the survey link and a copy of the informed consent form.

### **Instrumentation**

**Qualitative.** The interview instrument consisted of eight open-ended questions. Interview questions were designed to allow participants to give their opinions objectively about the relative influence of retention factors for teachers in K-8 school districts. The interview instrument was designed based upon Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene

theory and the intrinsic and extrinsic factors for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. To reduce the possibility of researcher bias and manipulation of the interview results, all responses were analyzed using guidance from Bluman (2018), Cho and Lee (2014), Fraenkel et al., (2015), and Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2015), and based upon the theoretical framework outlined in this research study.

**Quantitative.** One of the most vital components of quantitative methodology is the instrumentation used in the collection of data and the utilization of multiple instruments to gather “richer” data for validation of research findings (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). The quantitative portion of the research to address research question three was based on a survey with a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5 [*No Influence-1; Weak Influence-2; Neutral Influence-3; Strong Influence-4; Extremely Strong Influence-5*]. The Missouri K-8 superintendent and teacher surveys were uploaded into Lindenwood University’s survey management software called Qualtrics. The superintendent and teacher numerical data generated from the survey were imported into Excel for data analysis. The survey instrument was based upon application of the research questions to Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory of intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors.

**Validity and reliability.** A main goal of this research study was to ensure the trustworthiness of the research design, data gathering, and analysis. Alshenqeeti (2014) pointed out the findings of any scientific research study are highly dependent on the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Validity in scientific research is the degree to which the instruments measure what they are designed to measure, and reliability refers to the extent a research instrument provides consistent test results with

repeated use (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2015; Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015).

Butin (2010) stated, “Articulating your dissertation’s theoretical lens gives a clearer understanding of how observations are carried out and how the gathered data are subsequently analyzed” (p. 102). In this mixed-methods research study, the original survey and interview questions were developed from the theoretical perspective of Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory. The survey statements and interview questions were field-tested by a small pilot group of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers to better assess the reliability and validity. The field test allowed for revisions and modifications prior to data collection and analysis. The pilot group’s reactions were utilized to revise the instructions, item content, and clarity and conciseness of the interview questions and survey statements.

Any suggested revisions from the pilot group were made before the instruments were finalized. The field test also allowed for improvement of the survey instrument, thus positively impacting validity and reliability and allowing the researcher to determine if the basic analysis of results was within expectations. Additionally, the field test served to assess the content-related evidence of validity. Fraenkel et al. (2015) indicated content-related evidence of validity deals with the format of the instrument, such as clarity of print and directions and appropriateness of language. To obtain content-related evidence of validity, a researcher should allow for review of the instruments by a competent individual to critique the adequacy of the instruments (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

## **Data Collection**

Once the IRB at Lindenwood University gave approval for the research study to proceed, an electronic participation letter was sent to the selected participants. For both the survey and interview questions, participants were provided informed consent forms and were allowed to withdraw at any time prior to completion.

**Qualitative.** For the qualitative sample, nine regional Missouri K-8 superintendent executive board members were sent a permission letter to request district permission to participate in this mixed-methods research study on behalf of their respective Missouri K-8 school districts. Of the nine regional Missouri K-8 superintendents, a total of five superintendents were interviewed. Since the number of superintendent and veteran teacher participants totaled only five for each interview category, instead of the approved nine, an amended IRB application was approved.

Once approval was granted by the K-8 superintendents, each was asked to request a volunteer or select a K-8 veteran teacher in the district who was then sent an introductory letter (see Appendix K) and a copy of the informed consent form. The informed consent form stated the previously described purpose, risks, and benefits, and reminded participants of the opportunity to opt out of the study without any repercussions. Five Missouri K-8 veteran teachers were interviewed, recorded, and transcribed. The superintendents and veteran teachers were interviewed face-to-face or by phone.

**Quantitative.** For the quantitative sample, all Missouri K-8 Association member superintendents were sent a permission letter requesting district permission to participate in this mixed-methods research study on behalf of their respective Missouri K-8 school

districts. Once approval was granted by the K-8 superintendents, the superintendents forwarded an email to all qualified teachers which included an introductory letter, a copy of the informed consent form, and the Qualtrics survey link. The researcher-designed survey included 16 statements and an open-ended question. The survey results were uploaded into Qualtrics, Lindenwood University's survey management software.

### **Data Analysis**

**Qualitative.** The interview questions produced narrative form responses. Since the interview questions were open-ended, participant answers were summarized and common words, themes, phrases, or factors were identified among the responses of superintendents and veteran teachers. The use of open and axial coding is best for descriptive data responses and allows for analyzing similarities or relationships and making connections (Cho & Lee, 2014). These similarities were organized and coded for identification of intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting veteran teacher retention.

**Quantitative.** Superintendent and teacher surveys included a Likert-type five-point scale with five points representing *extremely strong influence* and one point representing *no influence*. The five-point Likert-type survey represented an ordinal level of measurement, and "classifies data into categories that can be ranked; however, precise differences between the ranks do not exist" (Bluman, 2018, p. 8). To address the quantitative research question and test the null hypothesis, the Mann-Whitney *U* test was utilized to find any differences between the K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher responses.

The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test is a non-parametric test used with ordinal data to compare two samples from the same population and does not assume any relation to the distribution of scores (Fraenkel et al., 2015; Statistics Solutions, 2017). Data from the superintendent and veteran teacher surveys were analyzed to determine if the outcomes revealed any statistical significance (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was used to test the null hypothesis, and the 0.05 level of significance was used to reject or fail to reject the hypotheses.

Representations of the survey results were reported using various tables and figures to show comparisons of the superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions. Bluman (2018) stated, “The test of independence of variables is used to determine whether two variables are independent of or related to each other when a single sample is selected” (p. 622). To answer the qualitative research questions, perceptions of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers [from the survey instruments] were compared and analyzed to determine the degrees of freedom (Seltman, 2015). Lastly, the participant responses to the open-ended statement on the survey were summarized and compared for similar retention factors. Retention factors listed by participants were reviewed for common words, themes, or phrases that align with the theoretical framework of Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene theory.

### **Summary**

The focus of this mixed-methods research study was to determine factors that influence Missouri K-8 educators in regard to teacher retention. The results and conclusions of this research study can benefit and inform Missouri K-8 school boards and superintendents with proactive steps they can take to retain veteran teachers. In Chapter

Three, a detailed outline of the methodology used in this study was presented. Further explanations of the research problem and purpose, research questions and hypotheses, research design, ethical considerations, and population and sample were clearly stated in Chapter Three. Ethical considerations are paramount to the validity and honesty of any research project (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

The utilization of the Missouri K-8 executive board member school districts allowed for purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Prior permission and informed consent for both superintendents and veteran teachers were secured before the online survey and telephone interviews took place. The instrumentation utilized in this research study included surveys and interview questions. Through the use of superintendent and teacher surveys, quantitative data were collected and compared to the qualitative data generated through superintendent and veteran teacher interviews.

The summarized narrative results can be organized around common words or phrases with axial coding applied to make connections between categories (Cho & Lee, 2014). The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to determine if there existed a significant difference between superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions regarding factors that influence K-8 veteran teacher retention (Bluman, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2015). Upon completion of the surveys and interviews, the data were analyzed to determine the differences between the variables and develop the list of factors that influence Missouri K-8 veteran teacher retention.

In Chapter Four, a detailed summary of the results and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data are presented. Additionally, in Chapter Four, a review of the

purpose of the research study and the problem are addressed at the beginning. A review of the instruments developed and utilized in the research study are detailed. Finally, results from the superintendent and veteran teacher interviews and surveys are analyzed, and the basic data sets are synthesized and depicted through figures.



## Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to identify factors that lead to retention of veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts. In related research on rural school retention and recruitment strategies, school culture/climate, administrative support, and small class size were identified as meaningfully affecting teacher retention in rural Missouri public schools (Butler, 2016). Analyses revealed the factors Missouri K-8 school district superintendents and veteran teachers ranked as most important when interviewed or surveyed as to why teachers remain in K-8 districts.

The instrumentation tools consisted of a Likert-type survey for both superintendents and veteran teachers and interview questions based on Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory factors for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The survey management software, Qualtrics, was used for superintendent and veteran teacher responses on the Likert-type survey that consisted of 16 statements, and one open-ended statement. Responses from the veteran teacher survey totaled 43, except for survey statement 10, which only resulted in 42 total responses. Responses from the superintendent survey totaled 32 responses, except for statements 3, 7, and 9, which only resulted in 31 responses.

Researcher-created interview questions and survey items were aligned with three research questions that guided the study. Research question three contained a statement of statistical difference using the population parameters of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. In the evidence-gathering process, testing the hypothesis is an important step to determine if a difference exists and to estimate the likelihood the hypothesis is true or false (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). To determine

whether to reject or not reject the hypotheses and to answer question three, the researcher collected quantitative data and analyzed the results.

To further evaluate the Likert-type survey results and to answer research question three, the ordinal data required a non-parametric analysis as an alternative to the standard *t*-test. The Mann-Whitney *U* test is a non-parametric alternative test commonly used for making inferences from quantitative data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The Mann-Whitney *U* test was utilized to compare the K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher responses and assumed  $\alpha = .05$  and a significant difference when  $p < .05$ .

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

**Interview results.** Common themes, words, and phrases were used to analyze the interview findings for research questions one and two, which allowed for the comparison of K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher responses. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of five K-8 superintendent interviews and five K-8 veteran teacher interviews. The K-8 veteran teachers who were interviewed must have taught in a K-8 school district for 10 or more years as an interview qualification. Recorded interviews were conducted either in person or over the phone utilizing the seven interview questions. Recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed for similarities and differences in respondent perceptions and were grouped by words, phrases, or themes.

Interview questions were based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (NetMBA, 2010) and were corresponded to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The selected interview samples were taken from the various Missouri K-8 Association regions to allow for a better sampling across the state of Missouri. Lastly, codes were assigned to each K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher interviewed to assure

anonymity. Assigned codes for K-8 superintendents were S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5, and codes for K-8 veteran teachers were T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5.

***Superintendent interview question one.*** What do you believe are the primary reasons veteran teachers choose to teach at a K-8 school district?

Superintendents interviewed mentioned several common factors they believe influence veteran teachers to teach in a K-8 school district. Among the most common factors superintendents reported were small class sizes, community feel, and the ability to better interact and get to know students. Both S1 and S4 stated they have veteran teachers who grew up and were raised in their K-8 schools and community. Superintendent S3 felt parent involvement was better in a K-8 school district, and S5 thought teachers “liked the close relationship with parents who become a part of the community.” Participant S2 viewed fewer discipline problems and the job being more meaningful as contributing factors for teachers remaining in K-8 districts.

***Teacher interview question one.*** Why did you choose to be a teacher in a Missouri K-8 school district?

The veteran teachers interviewed responded with various answers that included similar reasons why they chose to teach in a K-8 school district. Interview respondents T1 and T2 referenced growing up in small communities and attending K-8 school districts when they were younger. Teacher T1 stated, “I chose to become a teacher because I went to a K-8 when I was in school.” Similarly, T2 remarked, “I chose to be in a K-8 district because that’s what I went to as a kid myself.” Two veteran teachers responded with similar answers: “I didn’t know that I would end up in a K-8 district,” and “It actually happened by happenstance.” Additionally, three of the interview

respondents cited similar answers about the climate or atmosphere of the school and closeness of the community as why they chose to teach in a K-8 district.

***Superintendent interview question two.*** What are some reasons (retention factors) that have most influenced teachers to remain in Missouri K-8 teaching positions?

The majority of superintendents felt small class sizes and the ability to build close relationships with students, parents, and co-workers are major retention factors influencing teachers to stay in K-8 school districts. Superintendent S1 responded “small class sizes,” the ability to “get to know their kids,” and developing “good relationships with parents” as reasons teachers remain in K-8 schools. Participant S5 listed “small class size” and the “freedom to be flexible with scheduling or ability grouping” as some reasons that have most influenced teachers to remain in K-8 schools. Again, S4 commented, “The small class sizes that are often found in the K-8 school structure” help facilitate the development of relationships on an “individual level” with students. Lastly, S3 viewed the K-8 environment as a positive draw and factor to retain K-8 teachers.

***Teacher interview question two.*** What are some reasons (retention factors) that have most influenced you to remain in your current K-8 school district or position?

Three of the interview respondents cited community, families, or students as retention factors that influence them to remain in their K-8 school districts. Teacher T1 mentioned familiarity with the community and even stated, “I also liked the comfort zone of it and just the small school environment.” Veteran educator T3 mentioned small class sizes as a factor and shared, “I care for each and every one of these kids that attend the school, and I’m developing that rapport with them. [It] is important to me as a veteran teacher.”

Two veteran teachers responded a factor for staying is the opportunity to have their own children attend a K-8 school district. Participant T4 replied, “We’ve had the opportunity to bring our children through this, uh, school district, which has been awesome and a blessing for us as well.” Teacher T2 attended a K-8 school as a young student and commented, “I was adamant that my kids had the same experience that I did.” Lastly, three of the interview respondents specifically mentioned the administration as a retention factor that influenced them to remain in their current K-8 school districts or positions.

*Superintendent interview question three.* How do the most influential factors (from the previous question) change throughout the course of a teacher’s career?

The majority of superintendents interviewed felt the demands of being an educator and constant changes from the federal to the state level are factors that have changed throughout each teacher’s career. Superintendent S5 stated, “DESE [Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education] is becoming more and more demanding.” Likewise, S4 asserted, “The demands on teaching have increased over the years,” while S2 shared standards have changed and “that takes a toll on them, so it does change morale” and “their overall outlook on education.” Participant S1 cited the change in state assessments “from MMAT to the MAP” and from “pencil and paper, now it’s all online” as influential factors for K-8 teachers. Lastly, S3 discussed the constant change and addition of school responsibilities to feed and sometime clothe students, provide vision screening, offer additional school security, and implement dyslexia training and screening as some changes throughout a teacher’s career.

***Teacher interview question three.*** How has that most influential factor changed throughout the course of your teaching career?

When responding to the question of whether or not the most influential retention factor has changed over time, three of the five veteran teachers responded there has been no change in the reason they remain in their K-8 schools. Two veteran teachers responded with similar answers about being challenged or stepping out of their comfort zones as a motivating factor to remain in their K-8 schools. Teacher T1 commented, “[I] needed to step out of my comfort zone,” and “I have to really pay attention to not become lax in the classroom.” Veteran T3 stated having multiple grade levels to teach “challenges me as a veteran teacher to work even harder” to meet the needs of students and to learn “different strategies to help” students.

***Superintendent interview question four.*** What are some specific intrinsic factors veteran teachers have expressed or described about working in a Missouri K-8 school district?

Responses for question four from superintendents varied greatly, and no one theme emerged. Superintendent S4 felt the amount of responsibility and the “opportunity to wear many hats” are specific factors veteran K-8 teachers have expressed about working in a K-8 school district. Achievement and recognition are intrinsic factors S2 stated veteran teachers have described about working in a K-8 school district. Participant S5 remarked the ability to be in on decision-making is an important intrinsic factor for veteran K-8 teachers. Lastly, S1 pointed to advancement and growth as key intrinsic factors for veteran teachers in a K-8 school district.

***Teacher interview question four.*** Overall, to what degree have intrinsic factors influenced your decision to remain in your K-8 school district?

According to Herzberg (2003), some intrinsic motivating factors that lead to job satisfaction are achievement, recognition, responsibility, challenge, promotion, and growth. Two respondents interviewed discussed responsibility and growth as intrinsic factors that have influenced them to remain in their K-8 school districts. The two veteran teachers responded with similar answers that can be summarized as taking on challenges and being flexible. Teacher T2 indicated all teachers “wear many hats” and assume “extra duties such as supervisory assistant and things like that,” which leads to taking on new roles and challenges and not getting bored. Veteran educator T4 discussed taking on multiple teaching positions in a K-8 school district over the course of his teaching career and felt it provided perspective and satisfaction and made him “feel good” to help.

Three interview respondents cited student achievement and seeing students grow and make progress. For example, T3 stated, “I’m making a difference in a child’s life or student’s life is the utmost importance to me as a veteran teacher.” Teacher T5 felt the intrinsic factor that motivated her to remain in a K-8 school district was seeing students achieve and make progress. Additionally, T5 responded, “Student achievement or any student, any student who even started low and moved up... those are the things that I keep working for.” Teacher T1 pointed out, “I have to be able to see the students grow.”

***Superintendent interview question five.*** What are some specific extrinsic factors veteran teachers have expressed or described about working in a Missouri K-8 school district?

Superintendents S3, S4, and S2 detailed answers with the central theme of working conditions as an extrinsic factor K-8 veteran teachers have expressed as important for retention and satisfaction. Participant S4 stated the most influential extrinsic factors are working conditions and a positive climate and culture that helps morale. Both S5 and S1 mentioned relationships as a critical extrinsic factor for veteran K-8 teachers. Specifically, S5 felt veteran teachers “really like the amount of support that they got from the administration.” Superintendent S1 listed many of Herzberg’s (2003) extrinsic (hygiene) factors such as policies, supervision, relationships, and salary and benefits as specific extrinsic factors veteran teachers have mentioned about working in a K-8 school district.

***Teacher interview question five.*** Overall, to what degree have extrinsic factors influenced your decision to remain in your K-8 school district?

Herzberg (2003) listed policy, supervision, relations with boss, work conditions, pay and benefits, co-workers, and job security as extrinsic factors. The top extrinsic factors all five veteran teachers listed were work conditions, relationship with boss (administration), and co-workers. In addressing work conditions, T5 commented, “I have the nicest room in the school,” while T2 stated, “I love the small class sizes and we have community support that I feel is just second-to-none.”

Relationships with administration and co-workers were a common theme for veteran teachers to remain in their K-8 school districts. Educator T4 remarked how teachers are “constantly bouncing, bouncing ideas off each other and sometimes on a daily basis, weekly basis, or hourly basis.” Teacher T3 emphasized, “I feel the relationship I have with my fellow teachers, staff, and administration is great and that’s



super important to me for teacher retention.” Lastly, T1 indicated relationships with fellow teachers and administrators are important to retention and also stressed the school has great working conditions which leads to a community-oriented climate.

***Superintendent interview question six.*** Do you believe a teacher’s personality impacts his or her longevity in a Missouri K-8 school district? If yes, how or in what ways?

Four of the five superintendents interviewed felt a positive personality that embraces change and can be flexible impacts a teacher’s longevity in a K-8 school district. Two superintendents also listed a sense of humor and bubbly personality as important attributes for K-8 teachers to have to be successful. Superintendent S1 commented K-8 teachers “have to be flexible” and “willing to fill in anywhere at any time.” Participant S1 felt K-8 teachers have to have a “sense of humor to cope” with all the change and stress that comes with a small K-8 school district.

Specifically, S5 listed being a “team player” and “a personality that helps them to be flexible, wear lots of hats, but at that same time be willing to join in and become a part of the community” as important for teacher longevity in a K-8 school district. Similarly, S4 mentioned having “to be flexible and willing to wear many hats” as important personality traits for teacher longevity in a K-8 school. Finally, S3 added teachers’ personalities can help them “feel better,” “last longer,” and “enjoy their job.”

***Teacher interview question six.*** In what ways has your personality benefited your longevity as a K-8 teacher?

Responses to question number six varied among the interview respondents, but some overlapping themes emerged such as accepting the challenges of a K-8 district,

remaining flexible, being confident, having an outgoing personality, and believing in the work and the impact it has on students. Teacher T2 answered the K-8 school is like home and a big part of her life and could not imagine teaching anywhere else. Veteran T1 pointed out being the only grade-level teacher forces her to come up with solutions for problems, whether it is dealing with classroom discipline or finding new instructional content solutions. Teacher T3 mentioned having a bubbly personality that excites students in class and that motivates her to continue teaching in a K-8 district.

*Superintendent interview question seven.* Which factors do you think superintendents and school boards should address in order to retain veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts?

All superintendent respondents mentioned salary as a factor K-8 schools should address to retain veteran teachers. Superintendent S3 stated, “Money’s probably number one” and listed “salary and insurance” as areas for focus. Similarly, S3 pointed out “little perks you can add” such as keeping buildings in good shape, providing current technology, and making coffee service available in the teachers’ lounge can have a positive impact on veteran teacher retention. Superintendent S2 thought working conditions and maintaining competitive salaries with area schools should be a priority for superintendents and school boards.

When responding to this question, S5 stated, “Well, number one is money,” and also added providing more employee benefits and giving promotions are important factors for teacher retention. Respondent S4 shared, “I think a big one is to continue to remain competitive with regard to the salary schedule in order to retain good-quality teachers in K-8 schools.” Lastly, S1 suggested “money” as an important retention factor,

but added having “good clear, set policies” and valuing teachers’ opinions and thoughts as additional retention factors.

***Teacher interview question seven.*** What factors do you think administrators and school boards should address in order to retain veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 districts?

The most common factor mentioned by three of the five veteran teachers interviewed was salaries. Teacher T1 simply stated, “It boils down to salaries,” while T2 stated, “Getting salaries up...[is]...by far the most pressing issue on the table.” Veteran T3 pointed out that when possible, school boards and administrators need to address benefits and raises, because teachers are “an important asset to the K-8 district.” To retain veteran K-8 teachers, T4 asserted school boards and administrators need to involve “the teachers in the decision-making process for sure, without a doubt, and make them feel a part” of the team. Teacher T5 articulated K-8 district leaders need to “find what works and stick with it and quit pushing change for the sake of change.”

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

**Survey results.** The quantitative portion of the research addressed research question three and involved a survey based on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5 (*No Influence-1; Weak Influence-2; Neutral Influence-3; Strong Influence-4; Extremely Strong Influence-5*). The Missouri K-8 superintendent and teacher survey results were uploaded into Lindenwood University’s survey management software called Qualtrics. The K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher numerical data generated from the survey were imported into Excel for data analysis.

Respondent survey data were analyzed, and veteran teacher and superintendent responses were compared for each individual survey statement. Survey data from the

Likert-type responses are depicted in bar graph representation for each question. Additionally, percentage groupings are indicated for K-8 veteran teacher and superintendent responses for each statement. The survey instrument was based upon application of the research questions to Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory of intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors.

The total number of survey responses for statement one was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were presented with the first statement to determine if their K-8 school districts recognize the achievement and success of teachers, students, and the school. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 62.79% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*. On the same statement, 81.26% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 2).

By contrast, 16.28% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, while only 6.26% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement one resulted in a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.175. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.175 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

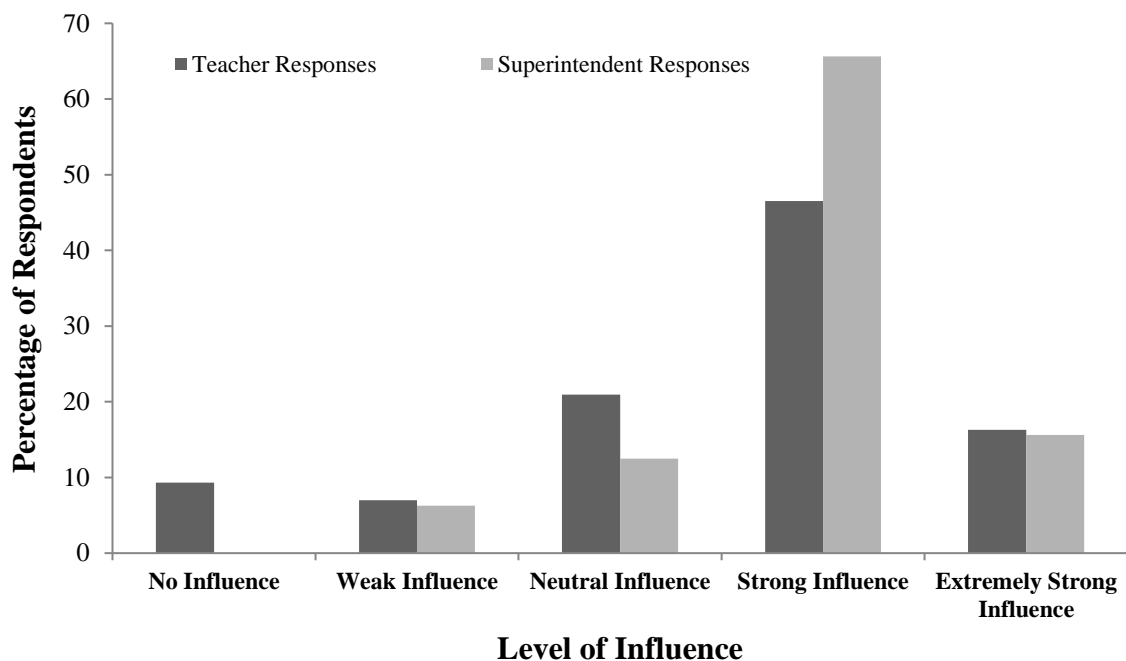


Figure 2. My K-8 school district recognizes the achievement and success of me, other teachers, students, and the school.

The total number of survey responses for statement two was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were asked if teachers are recognized by their K-8 administration, colleagues, and parents for hard work and dedication. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 67.44% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 81.25% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 3). In comparison, 11.63% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, and 0% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement two indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.218. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.218 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

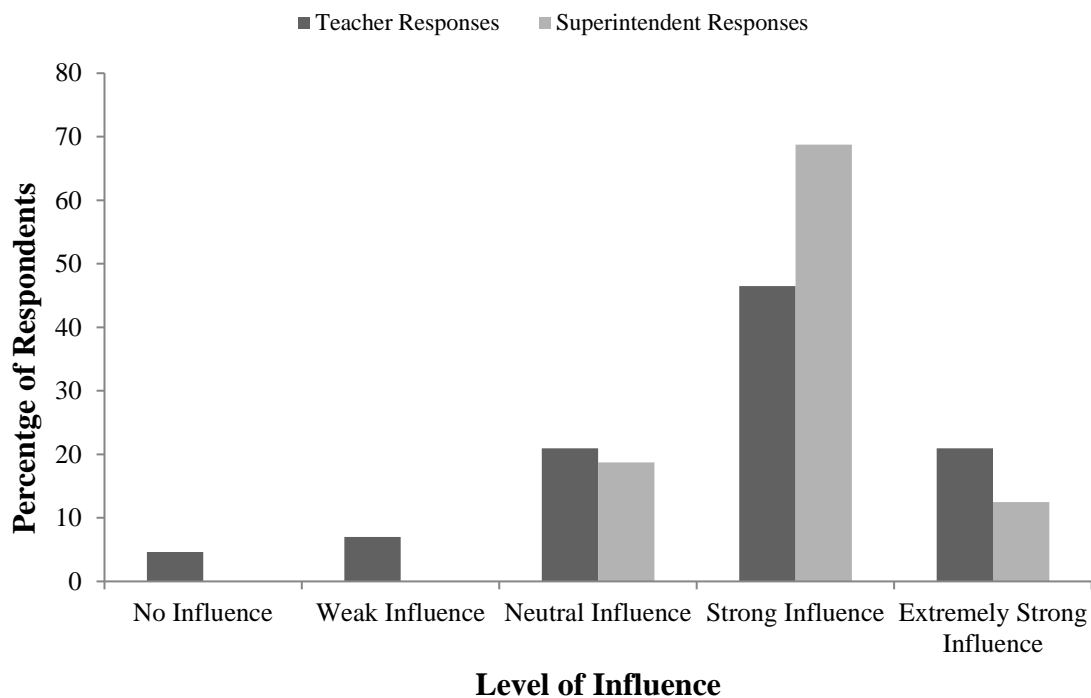


Figure 3. I/Teachers are recognized by K-8 administration, colleagues, and parents for hard work and dedication.

A total of 31 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement three. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree teachers have a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 school district and feel they make a difference. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 95.35% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, and 100% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 4). No veteran teachers (0%) or superintendents (0%) responded with *no influence* or *weak influence*.

Survey statement three indicated a  $p$ -value (two-tailed) of 0.833. Since the computed  $p$ -value of 0.833 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

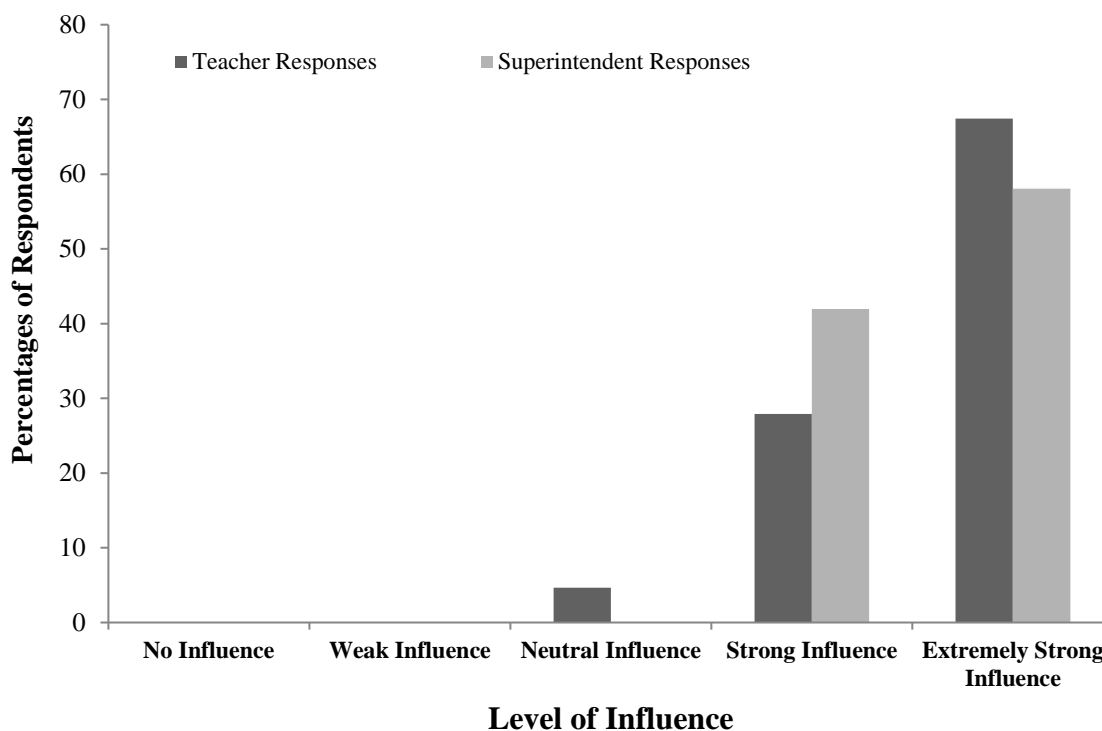


Figure 4. I/Teachers have a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 school district and feel I/they make a difference.

The total number of survey responses for statement four was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree teachers have the support of administration, colleagues, parents, and the community in their K-8 school district. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 83.72% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*,

while 87.50% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 5). By contrast, 4.65% of veteran teachers and 3.13% of superintendents responded with *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement four indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.000. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.000 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

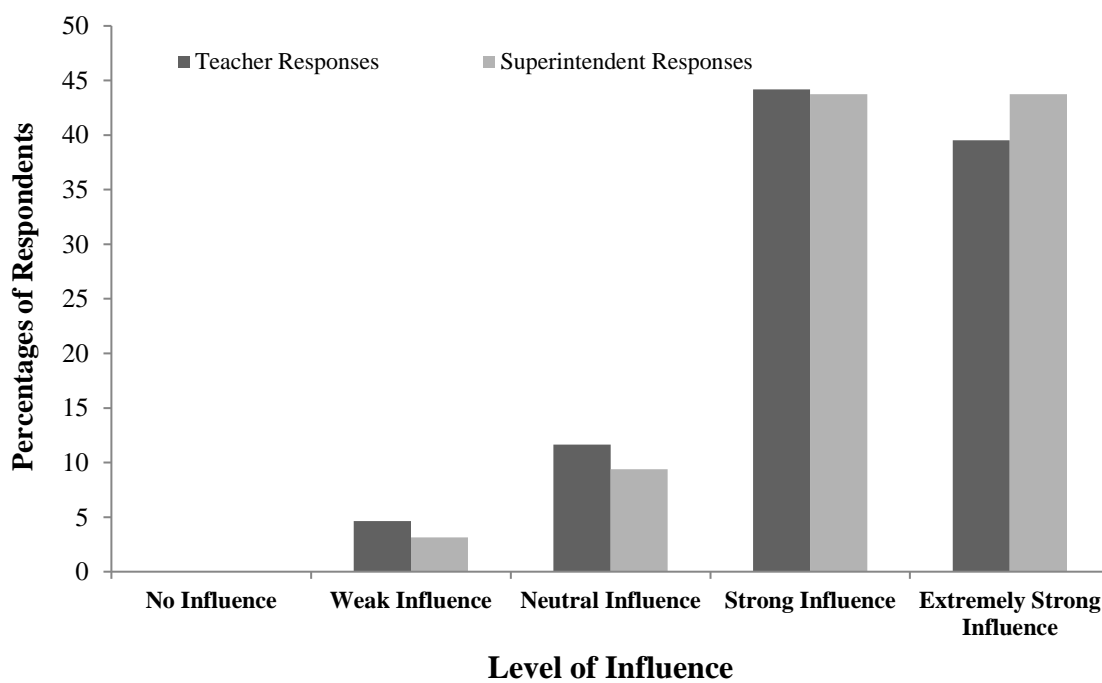


Figure 5. I/Teachers have the support of administration, colleagues, parents, and the community in my K-8 school district.

A total of 32 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement five. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree teachers have autonomy and the ability to make decisions on lesson plans, instruction, and classroom discipline. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 95.34%



perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*. Similarly, 93.76% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 6). No veteran teachers (0%) responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, and only 3.13% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement five indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.004. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.004 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

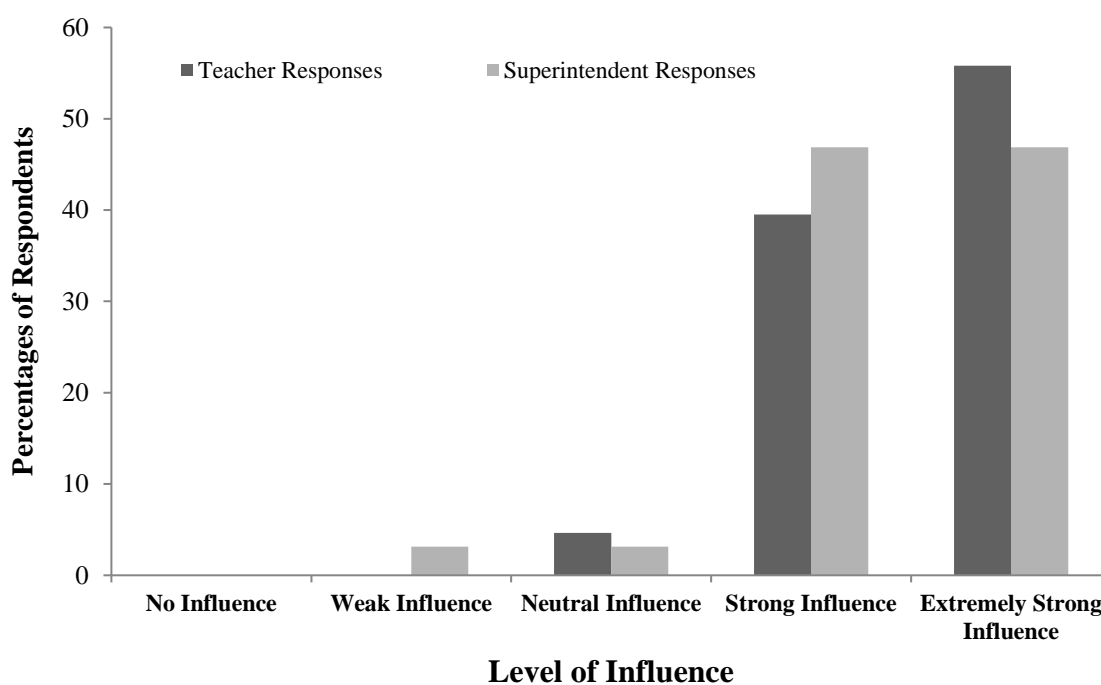


Figure 6. I/Teachers have autonomy and the ability to make decisions on lesson plans, instruction, and classroom discipline.

The total number of survey responses for statement six was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers

were prompted to respond to the degree teachers have opportunities for promotion at their K-8 school districts. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 9.30% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*. In strong contrast, 46.88% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 7). Of the veteran teachers, 34.88% responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, while 18.76% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement six indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.001. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.001 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

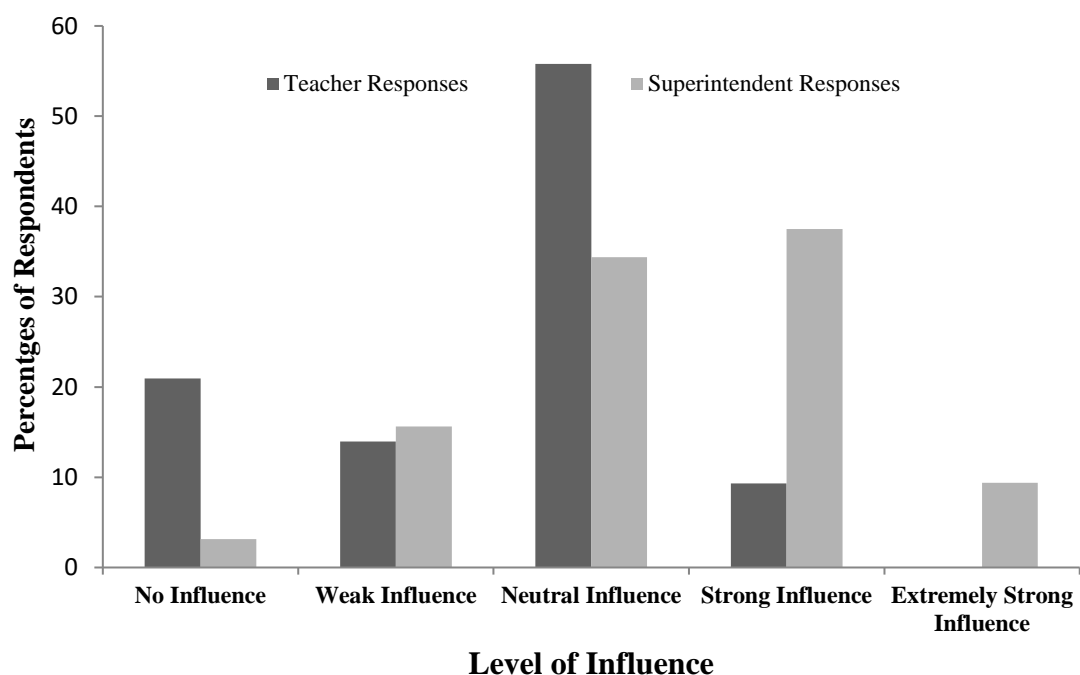


Figure 7. I/Teachers have opportunities for promotion at my K-8 school district.

A total of 31 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement seven. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree their K-8 school districts have multiple professional development opportunities. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 41.86% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 70.97% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 8). Interestingly, 27.91% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, and only 6.46% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement seven indicated a  $p$ -value (two-tailed) of 0.000. Since the computed  $p$ -value of 0.000 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

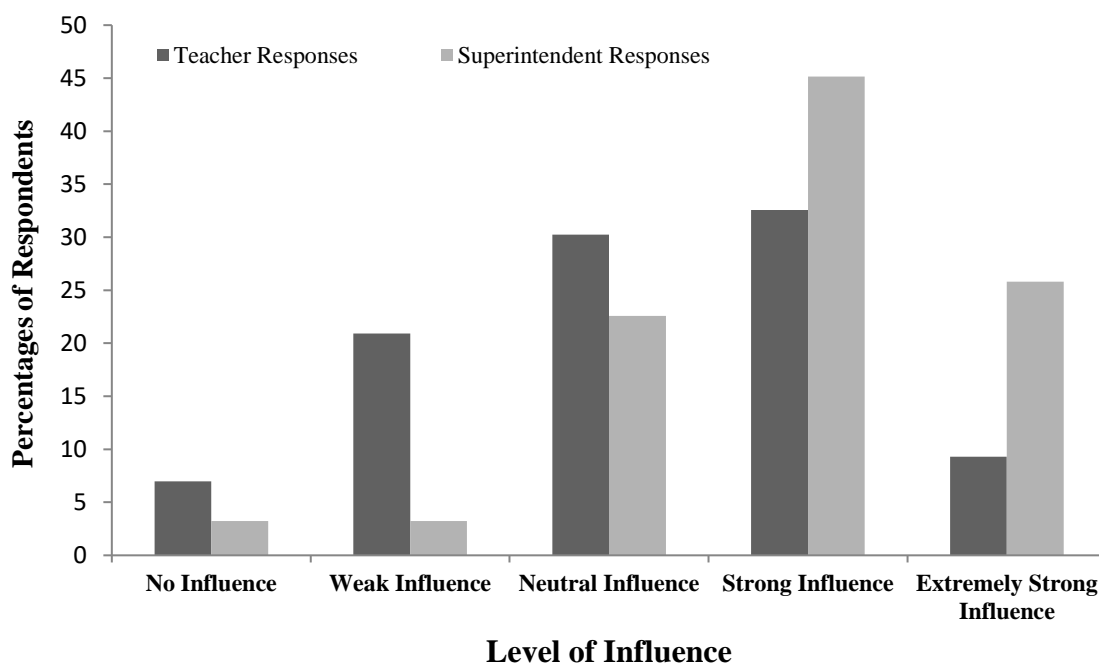


Figure 8. My K-8 school district has multiple professional development opportunities.

The total number of survey responses for statement eight was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree the employee handbook outlines expectations at their K-8 school districts and if school policies are clear. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 44.19% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 62.51% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 9). On the other hand, 18.61% of veteran teachers and 15.63% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement eight indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.019. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.019 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

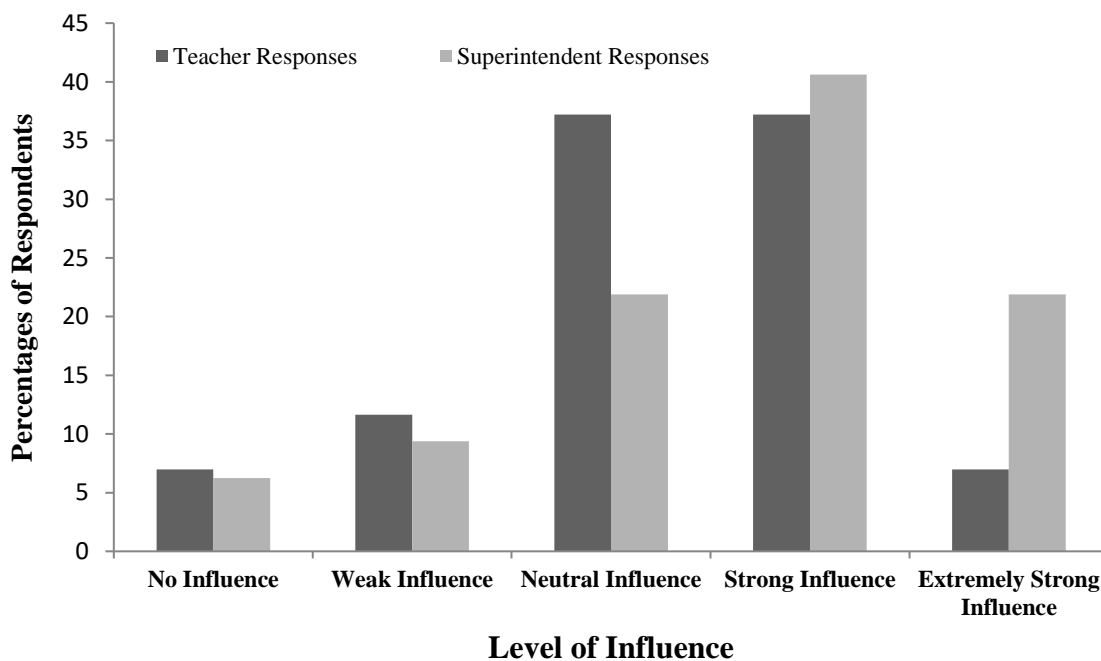


Figure 9. Employee handbook outlines expectations at my K-8 school district, and school policies are clear.

A total of 31 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement nine. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree teachers have the support of the administration and colleagues at the school district. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 86.04% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 93.55% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 10). Only 2.33% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, and no superintendents (0%) responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement nine indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of  $<0.0001$ . Since the computed *p*-value of 0.0001 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

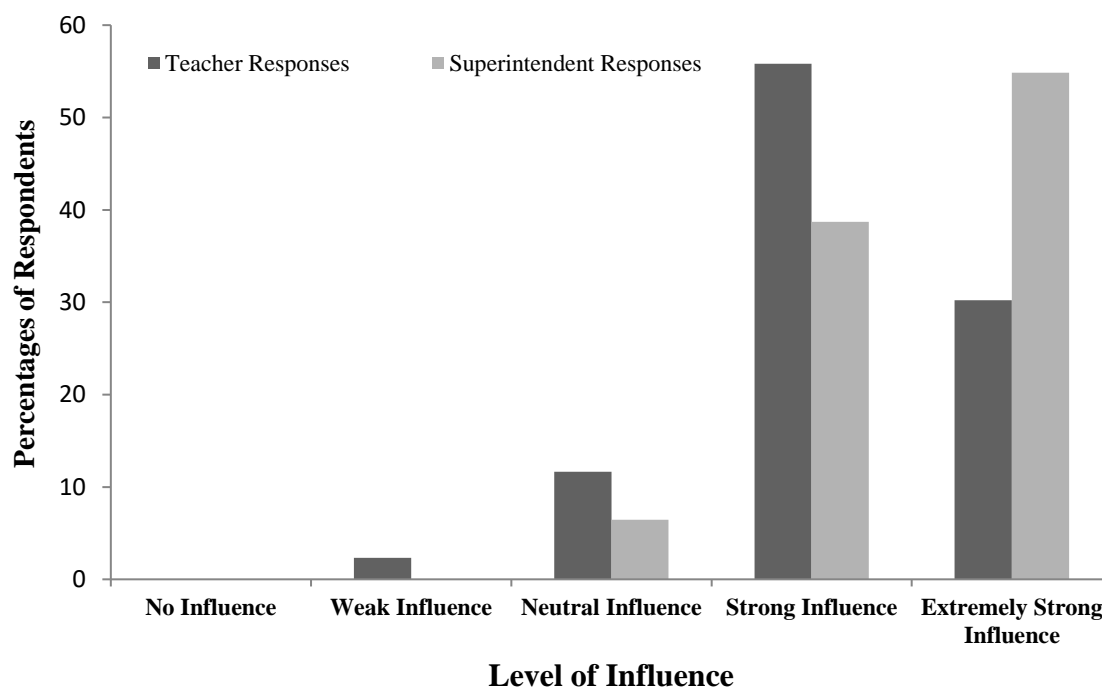


Figure 10. /Teachers have the support of the administration and colleagues at my school district.

The total number of survey responses for statement 10 was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 42 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree there is a positive culture and climate at their K-8 school district. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 71.43% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 96.88% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 11). By contrast, 11.90% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, while no superintendents (0%) responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 10 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of <0.0001. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.0001 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

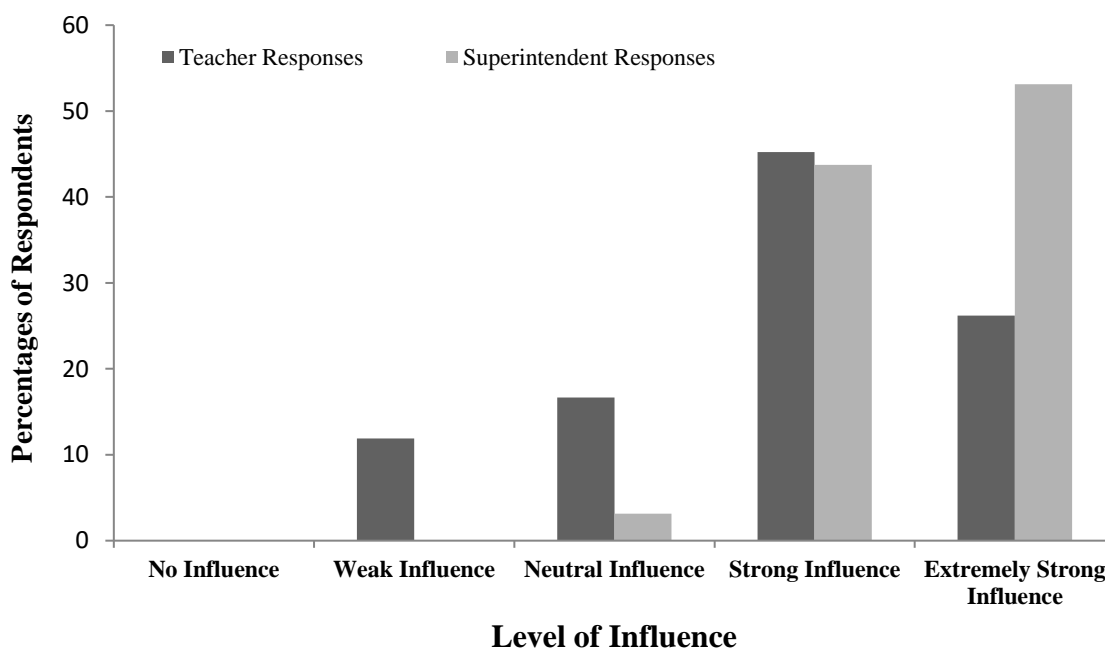


Figure 11. There is a positive culture and climate at my K-8 school district.

A total of 32 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement 11. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree the location of their K-8 school district is a positive factor for teachers [close to home or spouse's work]. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 60.46% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, and 65.63% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 12). On the other hand, 25.58% of veteran and 18.76% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 11 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.871. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.871 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

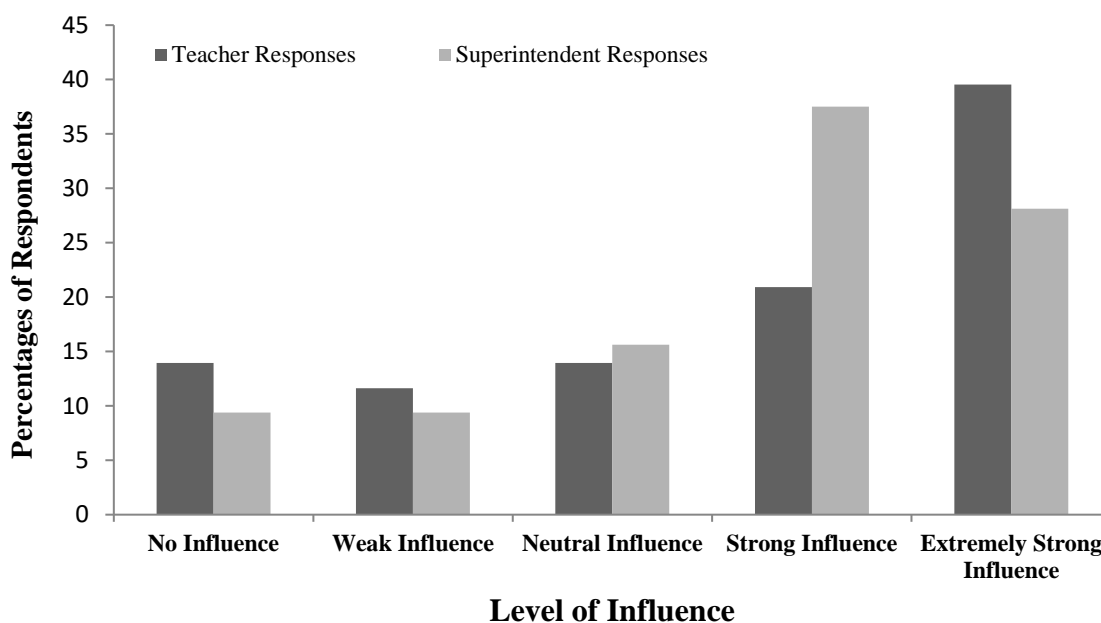


Figure 12. The location of my K-8 school district is a positive factor for teachers (close to home or spouse's work).

The total number of survey responses for statement 12 was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree their K-8 school districts have a competitive salary schedule and the ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 41.86% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 43.76% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 13). Another 34.88% of veteran teachers and 25% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 12 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.628. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.628 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

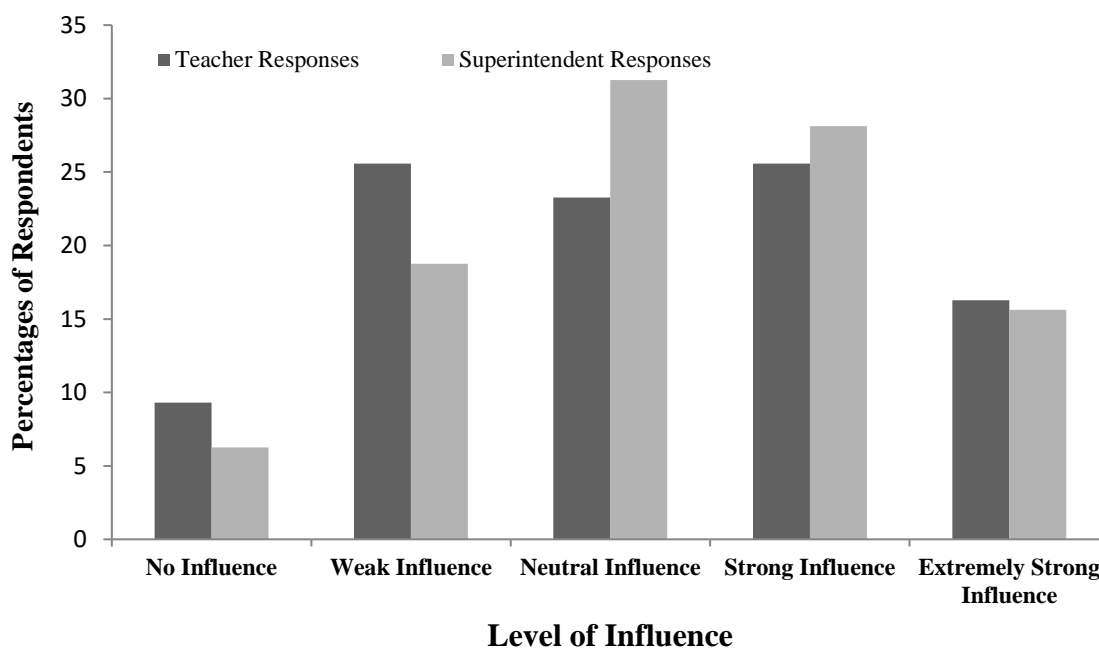


Figure 13. My K-8 school district has a competitive salary schedule and the ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends.



On statement 13, a total of 32 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers provided a response. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree their K-8 school district has board-paid health insurance (even with employee contribution). The veteran teachers' responses indicated 65.12% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, and 75% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 14). By contrast, 18.61% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, while 9.38% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 13 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.150. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.150 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

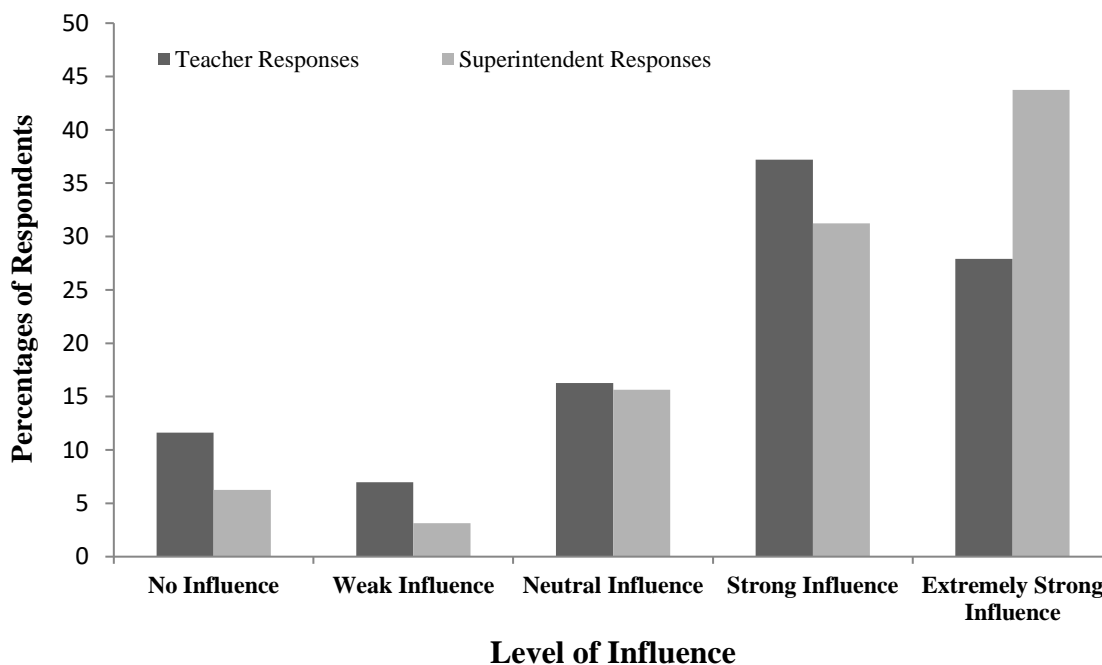


Figure 14. My K-8 school district has board-paid health insurance (even with employee contribution).

The total number of survey responses for statement 14 was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 42 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree veteran teachers are looked up to in their school districts and if their input is sought. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 66.67% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 78.13% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 15). On statement 14, 9.52% of veteran teachers and 6.26% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 14 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.054. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.054 is greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

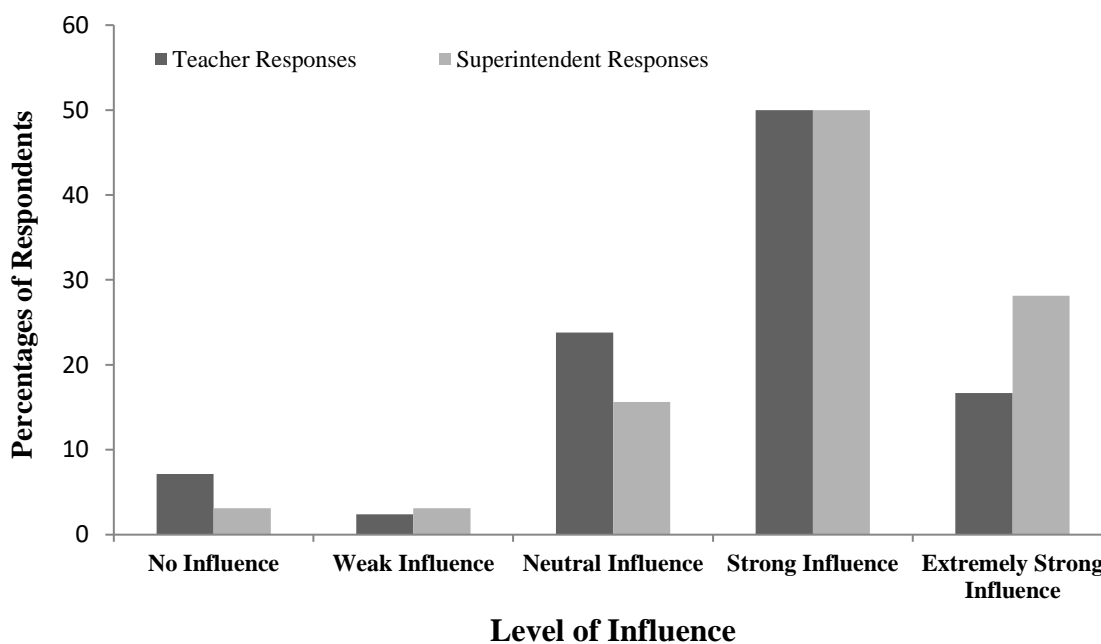


Figure 15. I/Teachers are looked up to as veteran teacher(s) in my school district, and my/their input is sought.

A total of 32 K-8 superintendents and 43 K-8 veteran teachers responded to statement 15. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree their K-8 school districts have safe facilities and adequate resources. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 62.79% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, while 81.26% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 16). By contrast, 9.31% of veteran teachers and 9.38% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 15 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.004. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.004 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

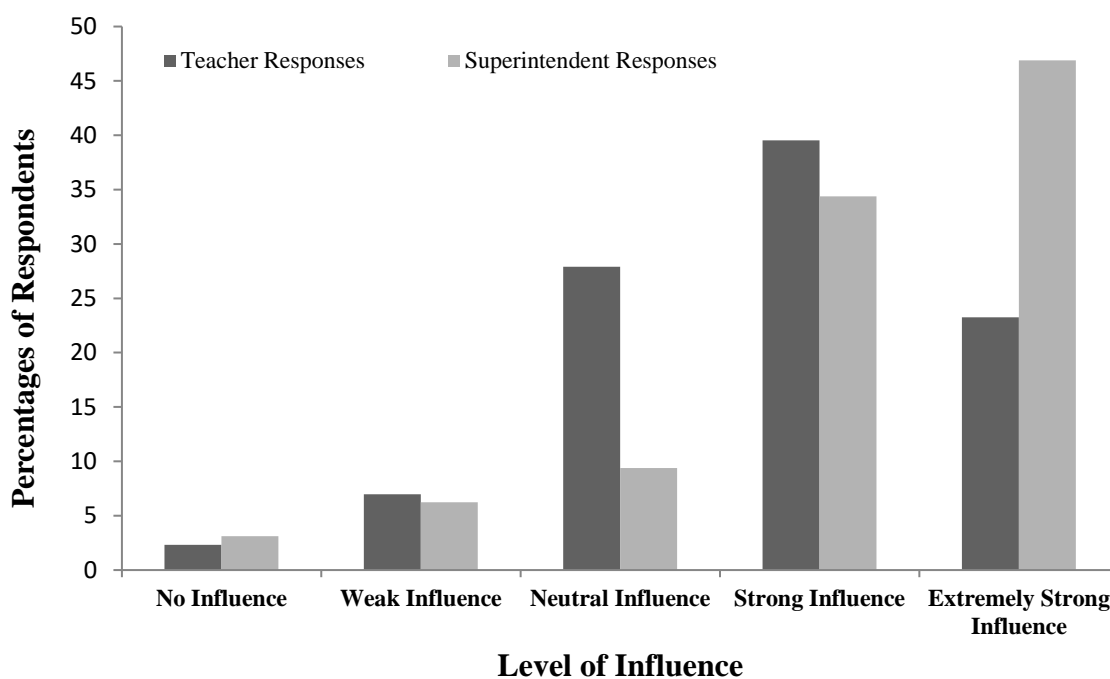


Figure 16. My K-8 school district has safe facilities and adequate resources.

The total number of survey responses for statement 16 was 32 for K-8 superintendents and 43 for K-8 veteran teachers. Superintendents and veteran teachers were prompted to respond to the degree student discipline is handled quickly and consistently at their K-8 school districts. The veteran teachers' responses indicated 67.44% perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence*, and 87.50% of superintendents perceived a *strong influence* or *extremely strong influence* (see Figure 17). A full 13.96% of veteran teachers responded *no influence* or *weak influence*, while only 3.13% of superintendents responded *no influence* or *weak influence*. Survey statement 16 indicated a *p*-value (two-tailed) of 0.033. Since the computed *p*-value of 0.033 is lower than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected.

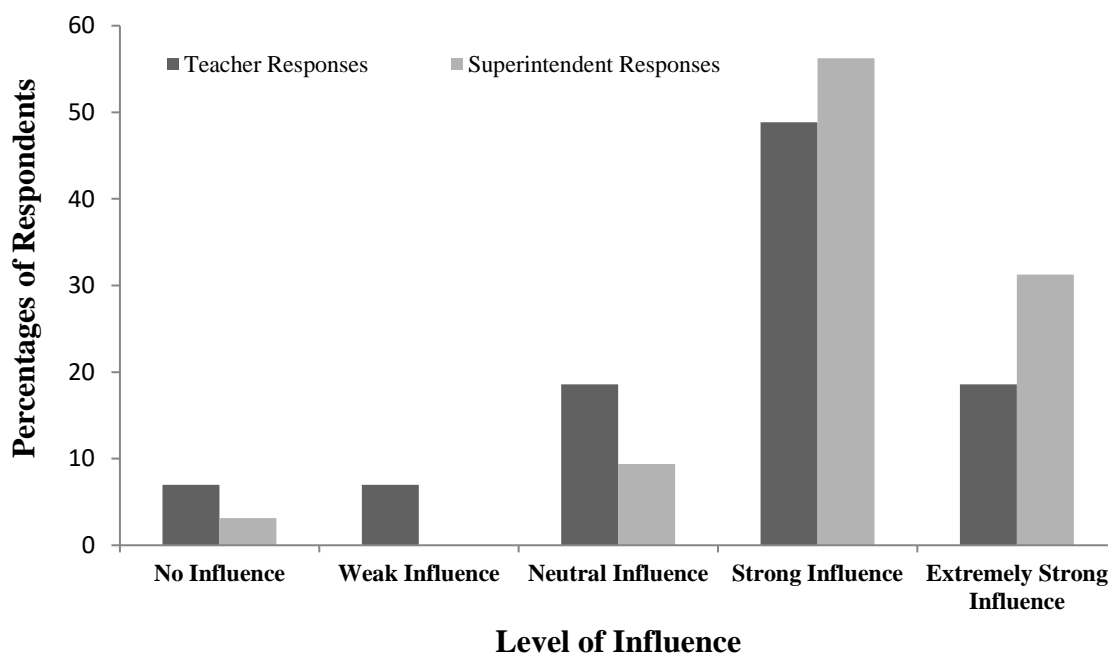


Figure 17. Student discipline is handled quickly and consistently in my K-8 school district.

### **Quantitative Survey Summary Results**

The third research question was designed to determine the statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention. The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test is a non-parametric inferential statistic used to determine whether two uncorrelated groups differ significantly (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The  $t$ -test is a parametric test, so an alternate to the  $t$ -test was required since the superintendent and veteran teacher surveys produced ordinal data. The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test assumes  $\alpha = .05$  and when  $p < .05$ , a significant difference exists. Table 1 summarizes the  $p$  values or probability determinations from the results of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test performed on each combined survey statement. The  $p$ -value for each combined survey statement in Table 1 indicates if the null hypothesis was rejected or not rejected for each survey statement.

Table 1

*Mann-Whitney U Test Results of K-8 Superintendent and Veteran Teacher Perceptions  
Regarding Factors that Influence Teacher Retention: Research Question Three*

Survey Statement	<i>p</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value < or > .05	Null Hypothesis
1	0.1750	$p > .05$	Not rejected
2	0.2180	$p > .05$	Not rejected
3	0.8330	$p > .05$	Not rejected
4	0.0000	$p < .05$	Rejected
5	0.0040	$p < .05$	Rejected
6	0.0010	$p < .05$	Rejected
7	0.0000	$p < .05$	Rejected
8	0.0190	$p < .05$	Rejected
9	0.0001	$p < .05$	Rejected
10	0.0001	$p < .05$	Rejected
11	0.8710	$p > .05$	Not rejected
12	0.6280	$p > .05$	Not rejected
13	0.1500	$p > .05$	Not rejected
14	0.5400	$p > .05$	Not rejected
15	0.0040	$p < .05$	Rejected
16	0.0330	$p < .05$	Rejected

*Note.* The Mann-Whitney *U* assumes  $\alpha = .05$  and a significant difference when  $p < .05$ .

After analyzing each of the 16 survey statements for both superintendents and veteran teachers, the final analysis was to perform the non-parametric Mann-Whitney *U* test on both the superintendent and veteran teacher mean averages for each of the 16 statements. Performing the Mann-Whitney *U* test on the mean averages indicates if there is a statistical difference to reject or not reject the null hypothesis (Bluman, 2018;

Fraenkel et al., 2015). Computing the mean averages for each of the 16 statements resulted in a mean average for superintendent responses of 4.008 and veteran teachers of 3.685.

The minimum total response for superintendents was 3.28, and the maximum was 4.581 on 16 survey statements. The minimum total response for the veteran teachers was 2.535, and the maximum was 4.682 on 16 survey statements. The computed  $p$ -value for a two-tailed test from the Mann-Whitney  $U$  was 0.061 and was greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , thus the null hypothesis was not rejected ( $p < .05$ ) and no statistical difference exists. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis stated there was a statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention and was rejected.

### **Survey Comments**

For both superintendent and veteran teacher surveys, the last statement was open-ended to allow for respondent comments. Veteran teachers and superintendents were asked on statement 17 to describe any additional factors that have influenced veteran teachers to stay in their K-8 school districts. Respondent comments were categorized using Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (NetMBA, 2010). The vast majority of respondent comments for both veteran teachers and superintendents mentioned "family or community atmosphere or closeness, small class size, and students" as factors that influence veteran teachers to stay in Missouri K-8 school districts.

For example, one veteran teacher indicated, "The personal and caring staff, students and community made staying here easy for me." Another veteran K-8 teacher

stated, “I love the closeness and feeling of unity that is just not found in bigger districts. Our students have more one-to-one instruction, and individualized instruction happens on a daily basis.” Finally, a third veteran teacher explained:

The school district is not close to my home. It is a bit of a drive. But, I do have the support of the administrator who does not try to micro-manage most things. The pay is not good, but sometimes the support and the somewhat freedom I have in my classroom outweighs the pay. My expectations and my administrator’s expectations for the students are the same, and that is also important. I would like to teach closer to my home, but I will not leave my district for just any other district.

A K-8 superintendent stated:

This is a safe, caring environment for teaching and learning. The focus is clearly on the kids, from the school board on down. The community has repeatedly expressed strong support for their school. It is a good place to work – the work environment is upbeat and healthy.

Still another superintendent commented retention is influenced by the “overall stability of the board of education, community, and faculty. There has been limited attrition leading to stability and consistency.”

Small class size as a factor for retention was mentioned by both superintendents and teachers. One teacher wrote, “My class size gives me the opportunity to make a difference with my students. The smaller class size allows us to explore education at a deeper level. Less of my kids fall through the cracks than at a larger district.” One superintendent stated, “Small class size and supportive family-type working



environment” are additional factors that influence veteran teachers to stay in a K-8 school district. Another superintendent explained veteran teachers “love the small class size and the limited discipline issues.” One veteran teacher and one superintendent responded similarly with “small class size” as a factor for veteran teacher retention.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four was structured into two parts representing the qualitative interview responses and the quantitative survey response data. The results of both the interview and survey data were collected and analyzed as outlined in Chapter Three. The K-8 veteran teacher and superintendent interview responses were analyzed for common themes similar to Herzberg’s (2003) motivation-hygiene factors for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction to develop a framework for summarization and conclusions in Chapter Five. Descriptive analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic retention factors helped to guide the data presentation and analysis of the responses.

The quantitative portion of the research addressed research question three, and results of the survey data gathered were analyzed. Respondent data were compared between veteran teachers and superintendents for each individual survey statement. Survey data from the Likert-type responses were depicted in bar graph representation for each statement. Additionally, percentage groupings were indicated for veteran teacher and superintendent responses for each statement. The results of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test were articulated in detail, and because the computed  $p$ -value for the two-tailed test at 0.061 was greater than the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Chapter Five begins with an outline of the qualitative and quantitative research study findings. A more in-depth analysis of the research data allows for a focused interpretation from which to draw detailed conclusions. Implications for practice were a central theme of this research so K-8 school districts can develop policies or procedures to retain veteran teachers. Finally, recommendations for future research that correspond to or focus on K-8 school districts and teacher retention policies and practices are detailed.

## Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Urban and rural school districts often face the realities of low salaries and poor working conditions that impact the ability to attract and retain highly qualified teachers (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Consequently, turnover in teaching staff can contribute to inequitable access of students to effective instruction (Nicotera, Pepper, Springer, & Milanowski, 2017). Teacher attrition and retention are closely tied to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Friesen, 2016; Herzberg, 2003; McNeill, 2016; Phillips, 2015; Pink, 2009).

When discussing teacher turnover, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) stated:

For most teachers, the decision to leave is associated with dissatisfactions with teaching. Among the most prominent reasons for dissatisfaction in recent years have been pressures associated with test-based accountability, unhappiness with administrative support, and dissatisfaction with teaching as a career. Teachers also report that they leave for both financial and personal reasons. (p. 30)

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to identify factors that lead to retention of veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts. Identifying the most important and common retention factors for teachers can have a positive impact on the education of students and stability of a school district (de Feijter, 2015; McAtee, 2015; Thompson, 2017; Watts, 2016). Interviews were conducted with both K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers to glean qualitative data to establish perceived retention factors. Utilizing surveys, perceptions of both superintendents and veteran

teachers were collected and analyzed for similarities and differences in an effort to identify if a statistical difference exists relative to the quantitative hypothesis.

In this chapter, summary findings of the mixed-methods study are reviewed. Utilizing the topics detailed in the literature review in Chapter Two and an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, conclusions centered around the research questions are presented. Next, implications for practice are discussed, and practical suggestions are provided for K-8 superintendents and schools boards. Lastly, recommendations for future research are outlined and a summary conclusion is provided.

### **Findings from the Qualitative Data Analysis for Research Questions One and Two**

RQ1: What are perceptions of K-8 superintendents regarding factors that influence veteran teacher retention in K-8 districts?

RQ2: What are perceptions of K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts?

Seven questions were developed and utilized for the interviews to identify retention factors from the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. There were two basic research objectives of this study. The first objective was to articulate the core perceptions of veteran Missouri K-8 educators that lead to longevity and retention in the K-8 school environment. The second was to identify the factors that influence retention of veteran K-8 teachers in Missouri.

School districts face the ever-mounting challenge of filling classrooms with highly qualified educators due to teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). After analyzing the interview data in Chapter Four, the findings revealed common retention factors as perceived by both K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. Five veteran K-8 teachers

and five K-8 superintendents were interviewed, and commonalities emerged after a review of the interview data for each question asked.

The first interview question asked of Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers was why teachers chose to teach in a K-8 school district. Superintendent responses detailed small class sizes, a sense of community, and the ability to better interact and get to know each student as reasons teachers select K-8 school districts. Veteran teachers listed school climate or atmosphere and closeness of the community and school as reasons why they chose to teach in a K-8 school district.

Watts (2016) indicated school culture and a familial closeness positively contribute to teacher retention. Malinen and Savolainen (2016) found school climate has a positive impact on teacher job satisfaction. Two teacher respondents listed attending a K-8 school as a child as a reason they chose to teach in a K-8 district. Two teacher respondents shared it was happenstance or by accident they ended up teaching in a K-8 school district. Both superintendents and veteran teachers listed the sense of community and the closeness or atmosphere of the school as positive factors for attracting and retaining teachers.

The second interview question asked K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers for their perceptions regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts. Superintendents detailed the ability to build close relationships and small class sizes as the major factors that lead to teacher retention in K-8 school districts. Veteran teachers listed small class sizes and the community, families, and students as retention factors that have led them to remain in K-8 school districts. Two teacher respondents listed attending

a K-8 school as a child and wanting their own children to attend a similar school as a reason they chose to teach and remain in a K-8 school district.

Researching stress, burnout, and the impact on retention, Thompson (2017) found teachers perceive, almost daily, work-related stress due to inadequate resources, testing, low parent involvement, workload, and administration. Small class sizes, the community, and close relationships emerged as retention factors for both superintendents and veteran teachers.

Interview question three was asked to determine if the most influential retention factor for teachers changes over time. The K-8 superintendents felt the most influential retention factors do change over time due to increased demands on teachers from the state and federal levels. Veteran K-8 teachers, for the most part, did not feel like the most influential factors changed, as they still held the community feel and small class sizes as important retention factors. Small schools tend to enjoy a close-knit climate where benefits are held and shared (Ingersoll, 2001). Two veteran teacher respondents shared the most retention influential factor is to be challenged and able to step out of their comfort zones. The responses for question number three indicated a slight difference in perceptions between superintendents and veteran teachers.

The fourth interview question required participants to list to what degree intrinsic (motivating) factors have influenced the decision to remain teaching in a K-8 school district. The top intrinsic retention factors listed by superintendents were the ability to grow professionally and advance within the school system in addition to personal and school recognition and achievement. The top intrinsic retention factors listed by veteran teachers were being challenged, the ability to take on more responsibility and grow

professionally, and making a difference and helping students achieve. Friesen (2016) found teachers who were involved in extra-curricular activities that exposed them to the students and community after school hours contributed to positive job satisfaction and increased teacher retention. Both superintendents and veteran teachers clearly viewed the ability for teachers to hold more responsibility, fill many roles, and have opportunities for growth as motivating factors for K-8 teacher retention.

The fifth question asked of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers was to what degree have extrinsic (hygiene) factors influenced a veteran teacher's decision to remain in a K-8 school district. Superintendents listed working conditions such as positive school climate and administrative support as the top extrinsic factor that would influence a veteran teacher to stay in a K-8 school district. Administrative and teacher relationships have an impact on teacher job satisfaction (Trace, 2016). Veteran teachers also listed working conditions such as relationships with administration and co-workers as the top extrinsic factor that influences them to remain in their current K-8 school districts. Through interviews, McAtee (2015) discovered educators desire more time to collaborate with peers. Both superintendents and veteran teachers held the extrinsic factor of working conditions as the main reason for teacher retention in a K-8 school district.

Interview question six was asked to K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers to determine in what ways a teacher's personality benefits his or her longevity as a K-8 teacher. Superintendents communicated a teacher who can accept change, be flexible, and have a positive attitude or personality can benefit and have longevity in a K-8 school district. Veteran teachers also listed being flexible, accepting challenges, having an

outgoing personality, and a belief in the work and making a difference in the lives of students as personality traits that benefit longevity. McNeill (2016) determined positive teacher interactions with students contribute to teacher satisfaction. Both superintendents and veteran teachers listed having a positive or outgoing personality, being flexible, and accepting change or challenges as personality traits that aid in veteran teacher longevity and teacher retention in K-8 school districts.

The final interview question was asked to K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers to identify any factors that boards of education and superintendents should address to retain veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 districts. Superintendents were unanimous when they responded improving teacher salaries as the top factor to address to retain teachers. The majority of veteran teachers interviewed responded with improving salaries and benefits as the main retention factor to address, but also listed ensuring boards of education and superintendents involve teachers in decision-making and reducing the amount of change that occurs in schools as important factors. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) wrote teachers need autonomy over their work environment and on-the-job decisions to remain committed to the teaching profession. Both superintendents and veteran teachers listed improving salaries and benefits for teachers as the top retention factor to keep teachers in K-8 school districts.

### **Findings from the Quantitative Data Analysis for Research Question Three**

RQ3: What is the statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention?



Research question three was the quantitative component of this mixed-methods research and was developed to ascertain whether a difference in perceptions exists between K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers regarding retention factors. To test the null hypothesis, the Mann-Whitney *U* Test was utilized. The Mann-Whitney *U* test is the non-parametric equivalent of an independent samples *t*-test, which is used to compare two independent groups, in this case K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The Mann-Whitney *U* test indicated a calculated *p*-value of the mean survey averages for both superintendent and veteran teacher responses was 0.061. The results of the survey data analysis revealed there was no significant difference between Missouri K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher survey response data given a probability value of  $p < .05$  and  $\alpha = .05$  with the calculated value of 0.061. In other words, when analyzing the 16 survey statements for the two groupings of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers, the responses tended to be statistically similar and not significantly different.

Survey statement 17 was an open-ended constructed response that offered superintendents and veteran teachers the opportunity to provide additional perceptions or insight into the K-8 teacher retention question. Participant responses to the open-ended statement provided valuable insight into K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions on retention factors. The majority of written responses from both K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers listed small class sizes, positive student interaction, a family or community atmosphere, or close culture as factors that influence teacher retention. The main retention factors listed by K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers on survey statement 17 are similar to the main factors divulged during the qualitative

interviews and the job satisfaction or dissatisfaction factors in the theoretical framework (Herzberg, 2003; Pink, 2009).

## **Conclusions**

For this research project, the theoretical framework was based upon the work of Herzberg, who detailed factors that impact attitudes and ultimately job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (NetMBA, 2010). Herzberg's (2003) intrinsic and extrinsic factors include salary, work conditions, relationship with boss and peers, company policies, supervision, achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Additionally, Pink (2009) detailed the following three intrinsic factors he believed were most important: the ability to be autonomous or self-directed, mastery or the desire to improve the areas important to oneself, and finding a purpose and making a difference. The overarching goal of this research project was to elicit the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers to identify factors that impact K-8 teacher retention through a mixed-methods study. After considering the established theoretical framework and synthesizing the qualitative and quantitative research data and findings, the three research questions outlined in this research project were addressed.

To answer research question one, the perceptions of K-8 superintendents regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts were analyzed and detailed. Reflecting upon this question, K-8 superintendents listed small class sizes (work conditions), a sense of community, ability to impact the lives of students, administrative support, recognition, achievement, growth, advancement, and salary when interviewed. The findings indicated the retention factors listed by K-8 superintendents align to the job satisfaction factors of Herzberg (2003) and Pink (2009). There exists a

nexus that the K-8 superintendent interview data align with the literature review in Chapter Two and the theoretical framework. Coleman (2017) recommended school administrators and school districts focus on implementing retention practices such as cultivating a positive and supportive school environment, reducing teacher workloads, providing teacher recognition, offering professional development, and mentoring.

The implications from K-8 superintendent perceptions also connect to the K-8 veteran teacher perceptions, which indicated positive teacher retention outcomes when K-8 school boards and superintendents address the common factors listed by both. McCoy et al. (2013) listed low wages, lack of support, increased teaching demands, disruptive students, and uninvolved parents as reasons for teacher dissatisfaction that lead to attrition. When surveyed, teachers listed the need for smaller class sizes and improved student behavior measures (Garrick et al., 2017). It can be concluded from this study that K-8 teachers who are satisfied and feel valued by their districts are less likely to leave, thus decreasing teacher attrition and increasing retention (Davis, 2013).

To answer research question two, perceptions of K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention in K-8 districts were gathered, noted, and analyzed. Veteran teacher interview data were detailed and corresponded to Herzberg's (2003) and Pink's (2009) job satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors. From the interview data, K-8 veteran teachers listed salary, involvement in decision-making, administrative support, positive co-worker relationships, school climate or atmosphere, closeness of the community and school, small class sizes, additional responsibility, professional growth, being flexible and challenged, and getting to know students and helping them succeed.

As Burkhauser (2016) pointed out, teachers will continue teaching, despite certain factors, if the right workplace conditions exist. Gu (2016) found teacher job satisfaction rated highest when they love their jobs.

Throughout the veteran teacher interviews, salary was mentioned far less frequently than other job satisfaction factors, which supports McCoy et al.'s (2013) assertion that support, working conditions, and student behavior are leading factors that impact teacher retention. To combat the recruitment and retention concerns in rural schools, Malloy and Allen (2007) cited an emphasis on the benefits of authentic personal relationships and the ability to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. Also, Hanushek (2016) detailed teachers are less extrinsically motivated by such things as salary, but more intrinsically motivated by their devotion to students and sense of purpose or mission. Missouri K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher interview responses highlighted many of the same retention factors; however, the importance held by each group was slightly different.

The third research question addressed the difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers regarding factors that influence teacher retention. The statistical analysis indicated there were not any significant differences between the participant groups, and the null hypothesis was not rejected. Retention factors where no significant difference existed according to  $p$ -value ( $p < .05$ ) included the following:

- Recognize the achievement and success of teachers, students, and school ( $p = 0.175$ );

- Teachers are recognized by their K-8 administration, colleagues, and parents for hard work and dedication ( $p = 0.218$ );
- Teachers have a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 district and feel they make a difference ( $p = 0.833$ );
- Location of K-8 school district is a positive factor ( $p = 0.871$ );
- K-8 school district has a competitive salary schedule and the ability to earn extra money ( $p = 0.628$ );
- K-8 school district has board-paid health insurance ( $p = 0.150$ ); and
- Teachers are looked up to as veteran teachers ( $p = 0.054$ ).

Although there were no overall significant differences between K-8 superintendents and K-8 veteran teachers, statistical differences were still present. The largest perceived differences according to  $p$ -value ( $p < .05$ ) were in the following areas:

- Support of administration, colleagues, parents and community ( $p = 0.0000$ );
- Autonomy ( $p = 0.0040$ );
- Opportunity for promotions ( $p = 0.0010$ );
- Multiple professional development opportunities ( $p = 0.0000$ );
- Handbooks outline expectations, and policies are clear ( $p = 0.0190$ );
- Support of administration and colleagues ( $p = 0.0001$ );
- Positive culture and climate ( $p = 0.0001$ );
- Safe facilities and adequate resources ( $p = 0.0040$ ); and
- Student discipline is handled quickly and consistently ( $p = 0.0330$ ).

When researching teacher retention practices in rural schools, Phillips (2015) found many of the same reasons or factors for retention, such as high levels of administrative support,

classroom autonomy, sense of belonging, and connections and support from the school community and co-workers. As Schanzenbach (2014) summarized, “Class size matters. Research supports the common-sense notion that children learn more and teachers are more effective in smaller classes” (Executive Summary, para. 2). Butler (2016) concluded school climate/culture, administrative support, and small class sizes are the top-three recruitment and retention strategies in rural public schools.

The first two qualitative research questions resulted in similar findings regarding K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions on retention factors. Using inferential statistics, the third quantitative research question resulted in no significant difference in responses between K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. In conclusion, the analysis and findings of the qualitative and quantitative data reveal no significant statistical difference between the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers with regard to retention factors.

### **Implications for Practice**

Simply hiring more teachers will not solve the teacher shortage concern, especially if more teachers leave than are available for hire (Carroll & Foster, 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Teachers play an important role in developing and advancing a positive classroom culture that promotes student learning and social-emotional growth (Flook et al., 2013). This study was designed to fill the gap in available research regarding retention factors for Missouri K-8 teachers, which could reduce attrition and increase retention. The results and findings of this research study confirm there are retention factors that positively impact K-8 teacher retention and should be implemented and monitored by K-8 school districts.

Reducing the teacher turnover in a district can save money on hiring and training beginning teachers and can positively impact student achievement (Flook et al., 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Beyond simply restating the retention factors identified, a more useful and meaningful application of implication practices is to highlight the retention factors that have the greatest perceived differences and need to be addressed in K-8 districts. The following are implications for practice K-8 school districts should address.

**Administrative support and school climate.** Banerjee, Stearns, Moller, and Mickelson (2017) argued any meaningful school reform aimed at improving student achievement must include addressing teacher job satisfaction and school culture. A constant and reoccurring theme from interviews and survey data was that administrative support is highly valued by teachers, but this area is viewed differently by K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers. Many veteran teachers interviewed commented about a positive and supportive relationship with their administrators. Survey data indicated veteran teachers feel recognized by their K-8 administrators for hard work and dedication; however, the survey data also revealed a slight difference in perceptions between teachers and superintendents.

To create an increased level of job satisfaction and to reduce attrition, administrators need to ensure teachers feel supported and comfortable in their jobs (Lytle, 2013; McCoy et al., 2013; Phillips, 2015). To start, promoting a culture of open, two-way communication with teachers in a district is key (Lewis et al., 2016; Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016). Factors such as collaboration, high expectations, relationship-building,

and valuing of teachers and students are essential (Burke et al., 2015; Herzberg, 2003; Lewis et al., 2016).

Weekly teacher or grade-level meetings and school assemblies are great avenues to foster trust and support and to encourage relationships and team-building while learning and celebrating (Rodgers & Skelton, 2013). Additionally, critical opportunities exist to build teacher and administrative communication during teacher observations and evaluations (Guskey, 2014). One-on-one discussions about expectations and performance, and even giving and taking constructive feedback, can be opportunities to strengthen relationships and express gratitude and appreciation for mutual respect (Harris, 2015; Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016). Teachers who are comfortable sharing and communicating with their administrators will build bonds and create support and loyalties that improve job satisfaction and increase retention (Herzberg, 2003; Larkin et al., 2016; Pink, 2009).

School districts need to promote a positive school climate and culture that recognizes and rewards achievement, hard work, and dedication (Banerjee et al., 2017; Dou et al., 2016; Flook et al., 2013). Weekly newsletters home, available school social media accounts, and traditional newspaper articles can be utilized to detail student, teacher, and school accomplishments and successes to all stakeholders. School districts must develop processes and have practices in place that ensure teachers develop a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 district and feel they make a difference, beyond just recognition (Butler, 2016; Gu, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001; Thompson, 2017). Connecting teachers to the community can also positively impact teacher retention (Butler, 2016; Friesen, 2016).



**Salary and teacher autonomy.** School districts must continually address a competitive salary schedule and board-paid health insurance if they desire to make a positive impact on teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016). Emphasizing the ability for teachers to earn extra money through extra duties is one way to provide additional compensation, meet district needs, and foster interaction and communication with students and the community at after-school events (Friesen, 2016; McNeill, 2016). During veteran teacher interviews, many participants mentioned that in their small rural K-8 districts, teachers often teach multiple grade levels or have additional job responsibilities.

Additionally, the data revealed teachers highly value autonomy and the ability to make classroom decisions and be involved in the decision-making process throughout the district (McAtee, 2015; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Pink, 2009). Involving teachers not only in salary and benefits discussions but also seeking their input on curriculum and assessment decisions is a positive tool to build a shared vision and sense of loyalty that improves retention (Lewis et al., 2016; McAtee, 2015; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). However, K-8 school districts must monitor and assess workloads of teachers, as stress and burnout can build, which leads to increased attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Roberts, 2016).

**Promotions, professional development, and policies.** Finally, to improve teacher retention, K-8 districts need to address the retention factors of promotion, professional development, and policies, since the research data revealed veteran teachers in K-8 districts indicated concerns in these areas. Since K-8 teachers fulfill many roles

and responsibilities throughout their districts, school administrators and boards should highlight these as opportunities for promotion. It may be more cost-effective to invest in professional development and promotions for existing teachers than to continue hiring new teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kaden et al., 2016; McCoy et al., 2013).

In many small rural K-8 districts, the need for multiple content areas and classroom teachers exist; however, low student populations and funding gaps make it unnecessary and financially impossible to have all the positions full-time (Brenner, 2016; Carroll & Foster, 2010; Kaden et al., 2016). The K-8 districts can support teachers through professional development to gain degrees and certification in multiple areas or content fields (Brenner, 2016; Kaden et al., 2016; Mertler, 2016). For example, a teacher with the ability to teach Title I reading, social studies, and gifted classes is deeply involved in many aspects of school operations and success. A teacher who is satisfied and personally vested in a district is less likely to leave, thus increasing retention (Davis, 2013).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The available research consulted throughout this project greatly aided in the direction and support of this paper. Furthermore, the related research on teacher retention helped provide a measure of reliability to the results and a level of validity to the interview and survey instruments and data collected and analyzed. This study specifically focused on Missouri K-8 school districts and the perceptions of K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers with regard to retention factors. This study supplemented the available research on retention factors for teachers to remain at K-8

school districts. Participant responses included small class sizes and the ability to develop individual student relationships, a strong sense of community pride and support, excellent administrative support, teacher and student recognition of achievements and successes, and positive school culture and climate.

Recommendations for future research arising as a result of this mixed-methods study include the following:

1. Survey, analyze, and rank the perceptions of K-8 teachers in other states and categorize the results to compare to previous research on teacher retention.
2. Conduct research to investigate and analyze the perceptions of superintendents and veteran teachers in Missouri K-12 districts utilizing a similar mixed-methods study with the same instruments as this research project. The data collected could be compared to Missouri K-8 retention data to see if any differences or commonalities exist.
3. Phillips (2015) conducted research on characteristics of teacher retention practices in rural schools that produced similar results as this mixed-methods study. A recommendation for future research would be to apply a similar mixed-methods study to larger urban K-12 districts and see if a statistical difference exists within the data.
4. Conduct additional research to study the perceptions of teachers in K-12 districts and K-8 districts regarding the difference salary and benefits make in teacher retention to determine if there is any impact on teacher retention.
5. Since many small rural schools have lower student-to-teacher ratios, a mixed-methods study could be undertaken to analyze class sizes and student achievement data from the state assessment of both K-8 and K-12 schools. Results would add to the

available research on test scores and class size and provide states and school districts evidence to support their guidance and position on class sizes.

6. Take this mixed-methods study one step further and analyze K-8 and K-12 district attrition data on the exact reasons teachers leave districts. Reasons for leaving could include retirement, moving to another district for more money, becoming an administrator, and changing careers, just to name a few. Utilizing exit interviews and surveys, valuable data could be gleaned that detail exactly why teachers depart. The K-8 and K-12 retention data could be compared to see if any statistical differences or similarities exist. Additionally, it would be helpful when researching why teachers leave to exclude the retirement category and just focus on the other attrition factors. These data could help districts and administrators understand why teachers leave the profession early so policies and procedures could be instituted to keep effective teachers on staff.

### **Summary**

As outlined in Chapter One, this research study was undertaken to determine retention factors that influence Missouri K-8 educators to remain in K-8 school districts and to inform school boards and superintendents on best practices and policies for teacher retention. Three research questions guided the direction of this mixed-methods study. A review of the available research in Chapter Two revealed teacher retention issues and attrition concerns that impact education. Ever-increasing teacher attrition is a result of teacher job dissatisfaction (Trace, 2016). Chapter Two also established Herzberg's (2003) motivation-hygiene theory for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as the theoretical framework for this research study.

Superintendents and veteran teachers from K-8 districts were interviewed and surveyed for their perceptions regarding retention factors. Using qualitative interviews, data were gathered and analyzed for common words, themes, and phrases from five K-8 superintendents and five veteran teachers regarding retention factors. Quantitative surveys were administered to 32 K-8 superintendents and 43 veteran teachers, and the responses were analyzed using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney  $U$  test to determine if any statistical difference exists between the perceptions of superintendents and veteran teachers. Quantitative data results indicated no significant difference exists between group responses, so the null hypothesis ( $H3_0$ ) was not rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H3_a$ ) was not supported.

Conclusions were developed from the data analysis and findings that supported the guiding research questions for this project. Based upon the findings, the researcher concluded retention factors identified can be utilized by superintendents and school boards to positively impact K-8 teacher retention. Based upon K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions, retention factors such as recognizing teacher achievement and successes, ensuring a positive school climate, providing support from administration and the community, focusing on increasing salaries and reducing class sizes, and providing opportunities for advancement and professional development should be focused upon. If a school district aims to reduce teacher turnover and impact the classroom, the key lies in the quality of supports (de Feijter, 2015).

Applying the implications for practice in Chapter Five will provide school districts the ability to retain more teachers and subsequently address the retention and attrition issue. Educational leaders who recognize the importance of reducing teacher

attrition do not simply save time and money, but put themselves in a position to provide the very best learning environment. Future research on teacher retention is needed to empower all educational stakeholders to ultimately focus on the important end result—student achievement.

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter



DATE: September 26, 2017

TO: Jerold Osbourn

FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [1118744-1] Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in  
 Regard to Teacher Retention

IRB REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED APPROVAL DATE: September 26,  
 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: September 25, 2018

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review (Cat 7) based on the applicable federal regulation. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of September 25, 2018.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Leary at 636-949-4730 or [mleary@lindenwood.edu](mailto:mleary@lindenwood.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to [IRB@lindenwood.edu](mailto:IRB@lindenwood.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.



**Appendix B****IRB Amendment Approval Letter**

DATE: May 9, 2018  
TO: Jerold Osbourn  
FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [1118744-2] Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in  
Regard to Teacher Retention

IRB REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: May 9, 2018  
EXPIRATION DATE: September 25, 2018  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the

researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All **SERIOUS** and **UNEXPECTED** adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All **NON-COMPLIANCE** issues or **COMPLAINTS** regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of September 25, 2018.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

## Appendix C

### Missouri K-8 Association Permission Letter

July 4, 2017

Mrs. Cassie Huckstep-Spangler  
BONCL R-X School



Re: Permission to obtain and use Missouri K-8 Association member district superintendent email addresses in order to conduct a research study on *Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention*

Dear Mrs. Spangler:

Because Dr. Shelly Fransen is the president of the Missouri K-8 Association and the chair of my dissertation committee and you are the vice president of the Missouri K-8 Association, in order to avoid any conflict of interest, I am writing you to request permission to obtain and use a list of Missouri K-8 Association member district superintendent email addresses.

I am currently enrolled in the Lindenwood University Doctoral Program and am in the process of writing my dissertation for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration. The study is titled, *Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention*.

The intended purpose of this mixed-methods research study is to fill the gap in available research with regard to retention factors for veteran educators in Missouri K-8 school districts. Analysis of data may indicate the reasons veteran Missouri educators stay employed in K-8 school districts and will provide strategies and policies that can be implemented to help with retention. Missouri K-8 school administrators and boards of education will be able to use the information from this study to develop their own procedures and policies to retain veteran educators in hopes of reducing teacher turnover and increasing student achievement.

If approval is given, Missouri K-8 member superintendents' contact information will be collected from the Missouri K-8 Association, through district websites, or by phone. For the qualitative portion of this research study, regional K-8 executive board superintendents and one veteran teacher from each district will be interviewed at their convenience. For the quantitative portion of the research study, a survey will be emailed to all K-8 Association member superintendents. The superintendents will be asked to forward a teacher survey to teachers in their districts. The initial email will detail the purpose and procedures of the research and the data-gathering process. Interviews will

be audio-recorded and transcribed, and all participants will remain anonymous. No one will be forced to participate. No cost will be incurred other than the 15-30 minutes the interviews will take. Participants will be asked to provide their perceptions about teacher retention factors.

Approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact Dr. Shelly Fransen at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jerold Carless Osbourn  
 Doctoral Candidate

#### Permission Letter for Missouri K-8 Association

As the superintendent of a Missouri K-8 school district and vice president of the Missouri K-8 Association, I, Mrs. Cassie Huckstep-Spangler, grant permission for Jerold Carless Osbourn to obtain email addresses for Missouri K-8 superintendents listed with the Missouri K-8 Association in order to investigate K-8 superintendent and veteran teacher perceptions with regard to veteran teacher retention in Missouri K-8 school districts. By signing this permission form, I understand the following safeguards are in place to protect the participants:

1. May withdraw consent at any time without penalty.
2. The identities of the participants will remain confidential and anonymous in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.

I have read the information above, and any questions I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. Permission, as explained, is granted.

---

Signature

Date

## Appendix D

### Participation Letter

Dear Missouri K-8 Superintendent:

My name is Jerold (Carless) Osbourn, and I am currently enrolled at Lindenwood University in the Doctoral Program. I am in the process of writing my dissertation for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration. The mixed-methods study is titled, *Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention*.

The intended purpose of this mixed-methods research study is to fill the gap in available research with regard to retention factors for veteran educators in Missouri K-8 school districts. Analysis of data may indicate the reasons veteran Missouri educators stay employed in K-8 school districts and will provide strategies and policies that can be implemented to help with retention. Missouri K-8 school administrators and boards of education will be able to use the information from this study to develop their own procedures and policies to retain veteran educators in hopes of reducing teacher turnover and increasing student achievement.

Thank you for your participation and help in collecting these doctoral dissertation data. Attached is an informed consent form in which specific information about this research is provided.

Sincerely,

Jerold Carless Osbourn

Lindenwood University  
School of Education  
209 S. Kingshighway  
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

## Appendix E

### Interview Informed Consent Form

# LINDENWOOD

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention

Principal Investigator Jerold C. Osbourn

Telephone: [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info \_\_\_\_\_

---

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jerold C. Osbourn under the guidance of Dr. Shelly Fransen. The purpose of this research is to fill the gap in available research with regard to retention factors for veteran educators in Missouri K-8 school districts. Analysis of data may indicate the reasons veteran Missouri educators stay employed in K-8 school districts and will provide strategies and policies that can be implemented to help with retention.
2.
  - a) Your participation will involve an interview lasting 30 minutes or less and consisting of seven questions. The interviews will be recorded and conducted either in person or over the phone, whichever method is convenient for the participant.
  - b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 30 minutes or less.
  - c) Approximately 6-9 Missouri K-8 superintendents and 6-9 veteran teachers will be involved in this research. There will be approximately 12-18 total interview participants.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about Missouri K-8 veteran teacher retention factors.
5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe and secure location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Jerold C. Osbourn, at [REDACTED], or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shelly Fransen, at [REDACTED]. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Printed Name

## Appendix F

### Survey Informed Consent Form

# LINDENWOOD

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

### Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention

Principal Investigator Jerold C. Osbourn

Telephone: [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info \_\_\_\_\_

---

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jerold C. Osbourn under the guidance of Dr. Shelly Fransen. The purpose of this research is to fill the gap in available research with regard to retention factors for veteran educators in Missouri K-8 school districts. Analysis of data may indicate the reasons veteran Missouri educators stay employed in K-8 school districts and will provide strategies and policies that can be implemented to help with retention.
2.
  - a) Your participation will involve the completion of a confidential online survey. The Likert-type survey includes 16 questions on a five-point Likert-type scale and one open-ended question. In the survey you will be asked to identify the degree to which a given factor has impacted or not impacted the decision to stay at or leave your school. The last question is open-ended to allow you to identify any factor that may not have been presented in the survey that impacts veteran K-8 teacher retention.
  - b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be five to 10 minutes to complete the online survey.
  - c) Approximately 50-200 Missouri K-8 superintendents and veteran teachers will be involved in this research.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about Missouri K-8 veteran teacher retention factors.
5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any



questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe and secure location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Jerold C. Osbourn, at [REDACTED] or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shelly Fransen, at [REDACTED]. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Printed Name

## Appendix G

### Interview Questions: Superintendent

**Job Title:** Superintendent

**Definition of Veteran Teacher for this interview:** Those teachers who have completed 10 years or more of teaching in a Missouri K-8 school district.

Examples of *intrinsic factors*:

- ***Achievement***—personal, student, or school achievement
- ***Recognition***—personal, student, or school recognition
- ***The teaching profession itself***—making a difference in the lives of students; enjoyment of teaching; or the support of fellow K-8 teachers, administrators, parents, community
- ***Responsibility***—autonomy of curriculum, instruction, and decision-making; responsibility for various content fields or multiple grade levels
- ***Advancement***—opportunities for promotion; ability to get certified and teach in multiple grades or content areas
- ***Growth***—excellent professional development; district is a professional learning community; mentoring program

Examples of *extrinsic factors*:

- ***School policies/procedures***—clear, consistent, and fair; employee handbooks outline expectations; school mission statement and goals present and articulated
- ***Supervision***—administrative supervision and support
- ***Relationship***—the support and relationship with K-8 teachers and administrators
- ***Working conditions***—morale, culture, and climate of K-8 buildings or district; small class sizes; close to home; location close to spouse’s work
- ***Salary and benefits***—board-paid insurance; competitive salary schedule; ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends
- ***Status***—leader in the school and district; veteran or tenured teacher; only teacher for a certain content field or specialty
- ***Security***—safe facilities; student discipline handled quickly in the school; support of administration and parents when dealing with student discipline

Interview Questions:

1. What do you believe are the primary reasons veteran teachers choose to teach at a K-8 school district?
2. What are some reasons (retention factors) that have most influenced teachers to remain in Missouri K-8 teaching positions?
3. How do the most influential factors (from the previous question) change throughout the course of a teacher's career?
4. What are some specific *intrinsic* factors veteran teachers have expressed or described about working in a Missouri K-8 school district?
5. What are some specific *extrinsic* factors veteran teachers have expressed or described about working in a Missouri K-8 school district?
6. Do you believe a teacher's personality impacts his or her longevity in a Missouri K-8 school district? If yes, how or in what ways?
7. Which factors do you think superintendents and school boards should address in order to retain veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 school districts?

## Appendix H

### Interview Questions: Teacher

**Job Title:** Teacher

**10 or more years' educational experience in a K-8 district:** \_\_\_\_ Yes / \_\_\_\_ No

**Definition of Veteran Teacher for this interview:** Those teachers who have completed 10 years or more of teaching in a Missouri K-8 school district.

Examples of *intrinsic factors*:

- ***Achievement***—personal, student, or school achievement
- ***Recognition***—personal, student, or school recognition
- ***The teaching profession itself***—making a difference in the lives of students; enjoyment of teaching; or the support of fellow K-8 teachers, administrators, parents, community
- ***Responsibility***—autonomy of curriculum, instruction, and decision-making; responsibility for various content fields or multiple grade levels
- ***Advancement***—opportunities for promotion; ability to get certified and teach in multiple grades or content areas
- ***Growth***—excellent professional development; district is a professional learning community; mentoring program

Examples of *extrinsic factors*:

- ***School policies/procedures***—clear, consistent, and fair; employee handbooks outline expectations; school mission statement and goals present and articulated
- ***Supervision***—administrative supervision and support
- ***Relationship***—the support and relationship with K-8 teachers and administrators
- ***Working conditions***—morale, culture, and climate of K-8 buildings or district; small class sizes; close to home; location close to spouse's work
- ***Salary and benefits***—board-paid insurance; competitive salary schedule; ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends
- ***Status***—leader in the school and district; veteran or tenured teacher; only teacher for a certain content field or specialty
- ***Security***—safe facilities; student discipline handled quickly in the school; support of administration and parents when dealing with student discipline

Interview Questions:

1. Why did you choose to be a teacher in a Missouri K-8 school district?
2. What are some reasons (retention factors) that have most influenced you to remain in your current K-8 school district or position?
3. How has that most influential factor changed throughout the course of your teaching career?
4. Overall, to what degree have **intrinsic** factors influenced your decision to remain in your K-8 school district?
5. Overall, to what degree have **extrinsic** factors influenced your decision to remain in your K-8 school district?
6. In what ways has your personality benefited your longevity as a K-8 teacher?
7. What factors do you think administrators and school boards should address in order to retain veteran teachers in Missouri K-8 districts?

## Appendix I

### Survey: Superintendent

You have been selected to participate in a confidential survey to help determine the factors (*intrinsic* and *extrinsic*) that have motivated teachers to maintain their positions with K-8 school districts for 10 years or longer. For the purposes of this study, a veteran teacher is defined as teaching in a Missouri K-8 school district for 10 years or longer. This survey was designed to identify factors impacting veteran teachers' decisions not to leave K-8 districts.

#### Examples of *intrinsic* factors:

- ***Achievement***—personal, student, or school achievement
- ***Recognition***—personal, student, or school recognition
- ***The teaching profession itself***—making a difference in the lives of students; enjoyment of teaching; or the support of fellow K-8 teachers, administrators, parents, community
- ***Responsibility***—autonomy of curriculum, instruction, and decision-making; responsibility for various content fields or multiple grade levels
- ***Advancement***—opportunities for promotion; ability to get certified and teach in multiple grades or content areas
- ***Growth***—excellent professional development; district is a professional learning community; mentoring program

#### Examples of *extrinsic* factors:

- ***School policies/procedures***—clear, consistent, and fair; employee handbooks outline expectations; school mission statement and goals present and articulated
- ***Supervision***—administrative supervision and support
- ***Relationship***—the support and relationship with K-8 teachers and administrators
- ***Working conditions***—morale, culture, and climate of K-8 buildings or district; small class sizes; close to home; location close to spouse's work
- ***Salary and benefits***—board-paid insurance; competitive salary schedule; ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends
- ***Status***—leader in the school and district; veteran or tenured teacher; only teacher for a certain content field or specialty
- ***Security***—safe facilities; student discipline handled quickly in the school; support of administration and parents when dealing with student discipline

**Job Title:** Superintendent

Please indicate whether or not a given factor is present, and then circle the number that accurately describes how its presence or absence has impacted veteran teachers' decisions **not** to leave K-8 school districts.

Please rate the following factors in terms of how much each has influenced veteran teachers' decisions to remain in a Missouri K-8 district for 10 years or longer.

<b>Extremely Strong Influence 5</b>	<b>Strong Influence 4</b>	<b>Neutral Influence 3</b>	<b>Weak Influence 2</b>	<b>No Influence 1</b>			
Factor			Degree to which the factor's presence or absence has impacted your decision to stay in a K-8 district				
1. My K-8 school district recognizes the achievement and success of me, other teachers, students, and the school.			5	4	3	2	1
2. Teachers are recognized by K-8 administration, colleagues, and parents for hard work and dedication.			5	4	3	2	1
3. Teachers have a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 school district and feel they make a difference.			5	4	3	2	1
4. Teachers have the support of administration, colleagues, parents, and the community in my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
5. Teachers have autonomy and the ability to make decisions on lesson plans, instruction, and classroom discipline.			5	4	3	2	1
6. Teachers have opportunities for promotion at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
7. My K-8 school district has multiple professional development opportunities.			5	4	3	2	1
8. Employee handbook outlines expectations at my K-8 school district, and school policies are clear.			5	4	3	2	1
9. Teachers have the support of the administration and colleagues at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
10. There is a positive culture and climate at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
11. The location of my K-8 school district is a positive factor for teachers (close to home or spouse's work).			5	4	3	2	1
12. My K-8 school district has a competitive salary schedule and the ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends.			5	4	3	2	1
13. My K-8 school district has board-paid health insurance (even with employee contribution).			5	4	3	2	1

14. Teachers are looked up to as veteran teachers in my K-8 school district, and their input is sought.	5	4	3	2	1
15. My K-8 school district has safe facilities and adequate resources.	5	4	3	2	1
16. Student discipline is handled quickly and consistently in my K-8 school district.	5	4	3	2	1
17. <b>Open-Ended Question:</b> Please describe any additional factors that have influenced veteran teachers to stay in your K-8 school district.					



## Appendix J

### Survey: Teacher

You have been selected to participate in a confidential survey to help determine the factors (*intrinsic* and *extrinsic*) that have motivated you to maintain your position with a K-8 school district for 10 years or longer. For the purposes of this study, your superintendent has identified you as a possible candidate and veteran K-8 educator. Your superintendent has given the researcher permission to survey you in an attempt to identify factors impacting your decision not to leave your K-8 district.

#### Examples of *intrinsic* factors:

- ***Achievement***—personal, student, or school achievement
- ***Recognition***—personal, student, or school recognition
- ***The teaching profession itself***—making a difference in the lives of students; enjoyment of teaching; or the support of fellow K-8 teachers, administrators, parents, community
- ***Responsibility***—autonomy of curriculum, instruction, and decision-making; responsibility for various content fields or multiple grade levels
- ***Advancement***—opportunities for promotion; ability to get certified and teach in multiple grades or content areas
- ***Growth***—excellent professional development; district is a professional learning community; mentoring program

#### Examples of *extrinsic* factors:

- ***School policies/procedures***—clear, consistent, and fair; employee handbooks outline expectations; school mission statement and goals present and articulated
- ***Supervision***—administrative supervision and support
- ***Relationship***—the support and relationship with K-8 teachers and administrators
- ***Working conditions***—morale, culture, and climate of K-8 buildings or district; small class sizes; close to home; location close to spouse's work
- ***Salary and benefits***—board-paid insurance; competitive salary schedule; ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends
- ***Status***—leader in the school and district; veteran or tenured teacher; only teacher for a certain content field or specialty
- ***Security***—safe facilities; student discipline handled quickly in the school; support of administration and parents when dealing with student discipline

**Job Title:** Teacher

**10 or more years of educational experience in a K-8 district:** \_\_\_\_ Yes / \_\_\_\_ No

If you answered **no** to the previous question of 10 or more years of educational experience, you **do not** meet the criteria required for this survey. Thank you for your time.

If you answered **yes** to the previous question of 10 or more years of educational experience, please complete the rest of the survey. Please proceed to the next portion of the survey.

Please indicate whether or not a given factor is present, and then circle the number that accurately describes how its presence or absence has impacted your decision not to leave your K-8 school district.

Please rate the following factors in terms of how much each has influenced your decision to remain in a Missouri K-8 district for 10 years or longer.

<b>Extremely Strong Influence 5</b>	<b>Strong Influence 4</b>	<b>Neutral Influence 3</b>	<b>Weak Influence 2</b>	<b>No Influence 1</b>			
Factor			Degree to which the factor's presence or absence has impacted your decision to stay in a K-8 district				
1. My K-8 school district recognizes the achievement and success of me, other teachers, students, and the school.			5	4	3	2	1
2. I am recognized by K-8 administration, colleagues, and parents for hard work and dedication.			5	4	3	2	1
3. I have a sense of enjoyment and pride in teaching at a K-8 school district and feel I make a difference.			5	4	3	2	1
4. I have the support of administration, colleagues, parents, and community in my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
5. I have autonomy and the ability to make decisions on lesson plans, instruction, and classroom discipline.			5	4	3	2	1
6. I have opportunities for promotion at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
7. My K-8 school district has multiple professional development opportunities.			5	4	3	2	1
8. Employee handbook outlines expectations at my K-8 school district, and school policies are clear.			5	4	3	2	1
9. I have the support of the administration and colleagues at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
10. There is a positive culture and climate at my K-8 school district.			5	4	3	2	1
11. The location of my K-8 school district is a positive factor for me (close to home or spouse's work).			5	4	3	2	1

12. My K-8 school district has a competitive salary schedule and the ability to earn extra money with extra duty stipends.	5	4	3	2	1
13. My K-8 school district has board-paid health insurance (even with employee contribution).	5	4	3	2	1
14. I am looked up to as a veteran teacher in my K-8 school district, and my input is sought.	5	4	3	2	1
15. My K-8 school district has safe facilities and adequate resources.	5	4	3	2	1
16. Student discipline is handled quickly and consistently in my K-8 school district.	5	4	3	2	1
17. <b>Open-Ended Question:</b> Please describe any additional factors that have influenced you to stay in your K-8 school district.					

**Appendix K**  
**Interview Letter**

Dear Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_:

Please forward this message to the veteran K-8 teacher you contacted who agreed to be interviewed.

Thank you,

Carless Osbourn

Dear Veteran K-8 Teacher:

My name is Carless Osbourn. I am currently a student at Lindenwood University writing my dissertation titled, *Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention*. The reason you are receiving this email is because I am seeking a veteran teacher with 10 years or more in a Missouri K-8 district to participate in my research study. The teacher's participation will involve an interview lasting 30 minutes or less and consisting of seven questions. The interviews will be recorded and conducted either in person (preferred) or over the phone, whichever method is convenient for the participant.

Please note participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study.

It is important to note that all participants' identities will be kept anonymous. Furthermore, teachers' identities will not be revealed in any publication or presentation

that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

If you are eligible (taught in a Missouri K-8 school district 10 years or more) and wish to participate in the survey, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. My email address and cell phone number are shown below. A copy of the *informed consent form* is attached to this email for your review. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you!

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

**Appendix L**  
**Survey Letter**

Dear Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_:

Please forward this message to all K-8 teachers in your district, as agreed.

Thank you,

Carless Osbourn

Dear Teachers:

My name is Carless Osbourn. I am currently a student at Lindenwood University writing my dissertation titled, *Factors that Influence K-8 Educators in Regard to Teacher Retention*. The reason you are receiving this email is because I am seeking veteran teachers with 10 years or more in a Missouri K-8 district to participate in my research study. Teachers' participation will involve completion of an online survey consisting of 16 questions on a five-point Likert-type scale and one open-ended question. Survey participation will take five to 10 minutes.

Please note participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study.

It is important to note all participants' identities will be kept anonymous. Furthermore, teachers' identities will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

If you are eligible (taught in a Missouri K-8 school district 10 years or more) and wish to participate in the survey, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. My email address and cell phone number are shown below. A copy of the *informed consent form* is attached to this email for your review. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

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## Vita

Jerold Carless Osbourn was born and raised in Northwest Arkansas and graduated from Decatur High School with honors in 1989. After high school, Mr. Osbourn enlisted in the United States Army and served for over seven years. Duty stations included the Persian Gulf War, Germany, and several stations throughout the United States. Upon leaving the Army, Mr. Osbourn obtained his Bachelors of Science degree in Education with a minor in history from College of the Ozarks in 2001.

In the fall of 2001, Mr. Osbourn began his teaching career at the Kirbyville R-VI School District where he taught middle school history and coached girls middle school basketball. During the 2003-2004 school year Mr. Osbourn earned the Middle School Teacher of the Year award from the school district. He completed his Master of Science in Education in 2008 from Missouri State University. Mr. Osbourn spent three years as the Kirbyville R-VI middle school principal.

In 2008, Mr. Osbourn was promoted to superintendent of schools for the Kirbyville R-VI School District, where he continues to serve. In 2010, he earned his Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University. During the 2013-2014 school year, Mr. Osbourn was honored as Superintendent of the Year by the Missouri K-8 Association in recognition of his service and devotion to the education of Missouri's students.

Mr. Osbourn hopes to continue serving as superintendent of the Kirbyville R-VI School District and have his children attend school there. In his free time, Mr. Osbourn enjoys kayaking and traveling, riding his motorcycle on the rural Ozark roads, and spending quality time with family and friends.