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# A Qualitative Study of the Experiences with Administrative Support of Veteran Teachers at the Secondary Level

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES WITH ADMINISTRATIVE

SUPPORT OF VETERAN TEACHERS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

RACHEL HENDRIX NOBLES

(Under the Direction of Charles Reavis)

ABSTRACT

Studies have revealed that working conditions play an integral role in teachers' decisions to remain in the profession or in their current school. Additionally, studies have found that administrative support is a factor frequently cited by teachers as a component of their working conditions. Administrators are in a position allowing them to directly influence the working conditions of teachers and indirectly influence the retention of teachers. Therefore, a need existed for a deeper more complete understanding of exactly how administrator – teacher relations at the secondary level influence veteran regular education teachers' perceptions of support. In this study, the researcher examined veteran teachers at the secondary level to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with administrative support.

A phenomenological research approach was employed to gather details about the lived experiences of the participants. The participants for this study were purposefully selected from two high schools in a school district in Southeast Georgia, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The transcripts of the interviews were used along with reflective notes, made by the researcher, to analyze the data and answer the research questions.

A number of conclusions were reached based on the findings of the study. When administrators handle student discipline issues on a consistent basis, in a timely manner, and with appropriate consequences the veteran teachers feel supported. Additionally, when administrators support the teachers by refusing to allow parents to treat them disrespectfully and upholding decisions made by the teachers they feel self-assured and appreciative. Administrators who maintain an open door policy, keep an open mind, and express a sincere interest in listening to the teachers also make them feel supported. Moreover, veteran teachers feel respected as professionals when administrators value their input and trust them to do their jobs. Administrators who show their appreciation for teachers by recognizing and rewarding their achievements are also appreciated. Furthermore, when administrators support teachers by demonstrating their care for them as individuals, the teachers believe the working environment is improved. Finally, the veteran teachers appreciate administrators, who support them by being visible, initiating frequent communication, and providing the resources they need to be successful.

INDEX WORDS: Administrative Support, Teacher Retention, Veteran Teachers, Secondary Teachers

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Connie Hendrix whose prayers, support, and encouragement made it possible for me to complete this project. I am truly blessed to have such a devoted, loving, and generous mother.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A growing consensus exists among researchers that the single most important factor in determining student achievement is the quality of the student's teacher (Rivkin, Hanusheck, & Kain, 2005). However, retaining highly qualified teachers has become increasingly more difficult for schools. Coulter (2007) estimates that each year one-third of the teacher population is in transition and 50 % of teachers leave the profession before their fifth year. Although the retention of teachers within their first five years is very important, the retention of veteran teachers is also crucial. Veteran teachers on average feel more confident in their teaching and tend to be more skilled than new teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006; Rockoff, 2003). Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, and Kardos (2001) state, "Given the enormous change in staffing that schools will undergo in the next decade, it is essential to have a large core of dedicated, accomplished teachers who can provide continuity in schools and maintain standards in the profession" (p. 310).

In order to improve teacher retention, a better understanding of the factors that lead teachers to remain in the profession or in a particular school was needed. A number of studies have been conducted to examine the factors that lead to the retention of new teachers and special education teachers. The results of existing studies on new teachers and special education teachers suggest that working conditions, in particular administrative support, are important factors in the retention of these teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Gersten, Keating, Yonvanof, & Harniss, 2001; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality [NCCTQ], 2008; Northeast Regional

Resource Center [NRRC], Learning Innovations at WestED, University of the State of New York, & New York State Education Department, 2004; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Prather-Jones, 2006). Numerous studies also reveal the specific types of administrative support that new and special education teachers value from administrators (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Gersten et al., 2001; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Markow and Martin, 2005; NCCTQ and Public Agenda, 2007; NRRC et al., 2004; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Prather-Jones, 2006; Richards, 2003; Richards, 2004; Stripling, 2004).

The United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) reports that 35.9 % of 2004-2005 public school teacher movers, with 10-19 years of teaching experience rated dissatisfaction with workplace conditions at their previous school as "very important" or "extremely important" in their decision to move, from their 2003-2004 base year school.  This percentage is higher than the reported percentages for any other category of teachers based on years of teaching experience. Additionally, the same category of teacher movers has the highest percentage, 40.2 %, of teachers who indicated that dissatisfaction with support from administrators at previous school was "very important" or "extremely important" in their decision to move from their 2003-2004 base year school. Although studies have revealed specific types of administrative support new and special education teachers value less is known about the types of administrative support valued by veteran teachers. In addition, the Education Commission of the States (2005) finds strong evidence that turnover is higher among secondary school teachers than among elementary school teachers. Therefore, in this study, veteran teachers at the secondary level will be interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with administrative support.

Background of the Study

In order to decrease the number of teachers leaving the profession or changing schools each year, the factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to stay or leave have been studied. Researchers have found that the working conditions and climate within a school act as either deterrents or supports for teacher retention (Gersten et al., 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson et al., 2001; Westat Inc., 2002). Although the specific working conditions which teachers require to experience job satisfaction may vary, researchers agree that administrators are in the best position to directly impact teachers' working conditions (Ingersoll, 2003; NRRC et al., 2004; NCCTQ, 2008).

National surveys of teachers show that working conditions play an important role in teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the profession. The results from *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey* conducted by the United States Department of Education shows that teachers who leave schools cite an opportunity for a better teaching assignment, dissatisfaction with support from administrators, and dissatisfaction with workplace conditions as their primary reasons for leaving (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007). Markow, Moessner, and Horowitz (2006) in their study of current public school teachers of grades K-12, found that working conditions such as respect; leadership ability of the principal; school culture; behavior of students; and the involvement and influence of the teacher in key activities affect teachers' satisfaction with, and their commitments to, the profession.

In 2002, North Carolina became the first state to implement a statewide study of teacher working conditions. The survey was administered to teachers and administrators, and asked for their feedback on five aspects of working conditions: time; facilities and

resources; empowerment; leadership; and professional development (Hirsch, 2005). Since 2002, the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) has helped conduct working conditions surveys in Arizona, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina. The working conditions important to the more than 150,000 teachers surveyed included: time to collaborate with colleagues; input into what is taught and how it is taught; professional development opportunities; and ample facilities and resources. However, the single most important working condition cited consistently by teachers throughout the seven states was effective and supportive leadership (Viadero, 2008).

Berry, Fuller, and Williams (2007) defined school leadership as how school leaders mold a common vision for success, improve school climate, impose norms, and acknowledge quality teaching. Blase and Blase (2004) in their study of more than 800 teachers working in public elementary, middle, and high schools in the Southeastern, Midwestern, and Northwestern United States, reported that teachers describe supportive leaders as being visible in the school, liberal with praise, and empowering of teachers. Conversely, the researchers found that teachers feel unsupported by leaders who disrupt, condemn, isolate, and micromanage them. The NRRC et al. (2004) suggested the following strategies for administrators to use to support general and special education teachers and in turn increase teacher retention: provide instructional leadership; encourage collegiality and collaborative relationships; promote a positive school climate; show teachers they are valued; and provide appropriate professional development opportunities.

The relationship between administrative support and the retention of special education teachers has been studied by a number of researchers. Gersten et al. (2001)

found that the most critical role of the principal in influencing the retention of special education teachers is to demonstrate an understanding of the special educator's role. In a study by Prather-Jones (2006), special education teachers reported that administrative support was most important in the form of effecting appropriate disciplinary actions and showing respect and appreciation for special education teachers. Other indicated needs for administrative support include: time set aside for paperwork; scheduled time for collaboration; meaningful professional development opportunities; smaller caseloads; and adequate supplies (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

Additionally, the relationship between administrative support and the retention of new teachers has been studied by a number of researchers. Markow and Martin (2005) found that new teachers who are likely to leave teaching within the next five years are less likely to state that their principal creates a supportive working environment, and more likely to feel that their job is not valued by their principal. Unclear principal expectations of new teachers and the absence of quality principal support of new teachers are frequently cited as problems for new teachers and/or reasons for leaving the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Richards, 2004). Richards (2003) conducted research on the types of support that teachers within their first five years of teaching valued from school leaders. The five most desired behaviors of administrators included: showing respect for teachers; being accessible; being fair; supporting teachers with parents; and supporting teachers in student discipline matters.

According to a survey of first year teachers conducted by the NCCTQ and Public Agenda (2007), new secondary teachers are more likely than new elementary teachers to

be concerned about the lack of administrative support in their schools. Specifically, fewer new, secondary teachers stated that the administration at their school provided them with adequate resources and instructional leadership. Wood (2005) in a study of principals' roles in induction programs in large, urban school districts found that one quarter of elementary principals surveyed conducted daily visits to the classrooms of new teachers. None of the secondary principals surveyed reported conducting daily visits to the classrooms of new teachers. The results of the study showed that the elementary principal participants are more active leaders in the induction process of new teachers than secondary principal participants.

The discrepancy between the levels of administrative support provided for elementary and secondary teachers is not limited to new teachers. A number of studies of elementary and secondary teachers with varying levels of experience, also revealed that secondary teachers are less satisfied with the administrative support they receive (Hirsch, Emerick, Church, & Fuller, 2007; Markow, Fauth, & Gravitch, 2001; Markow et al., 2006; Markow & Scheer, 2003; Marvel et al., 2007; NCCTQ & Public Agenda, 2007).The *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2003* reported that secondary teachers are less likely than elementary school teachers to say they have a collaborative or friendly relationship with their principal (Markow & Scheer, 2003). Further, they are more likely than elementary teachers to say they have never had a one-on-one meeting with their principal, or that their principal has never visited their classroom. Additionally, the results from the *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2006* demonstrated that secondary teachers are not as satisfied as elementary teachers with their communication with administrators (Markow et al., 2006). When

asked if their principal did the following: asked for teachers' suggestions or opinions; dealt with student discipline fairly; showed gratitude for teachers' efforts; set a directon for the school; made himself available to teachers; and treated teachers with respect, a higher percentage of secondary, teachers responded "no" to all six questions.

Teachers frequently agree that principals play an important role in shaping the working conditions in schools. However, teachers vary in their satisfaction with the level of administrative support they receive, as well as the types of administrative support which they desire from principals. Secondary teachers are often less satisfied than elementary teachers with the level of support they receive from their principal (Hirsch et al., 2007; Markow et al., 2006; Markow & Scheer, 2003; NCCTQ & Public Agenda, 2007). Special education teachers desire respect, as well as appreciation for their work and support with student discipline. New teachers want principals to be available and fair, treat them with respect, and support them with parents and students. A number of studies have addressed the working conditions and administrative support needs of teachers as a whole. Additionally, studies have been conducted to identify the specific administrative support needs of special education teachers and new teachers. However, less is known about the specific administrative support needs of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover occurs on a large scale in America's public schools. Research has shown that working conditions influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession or in the same position, and administrative support is often cited as a major component of the working conditions of teachers. Research has revealed what teachers as

a whole need to experience administrative support, as well as the specific administrative behaviors and practices that lead special education teachers and new teachers to feel supported. Additionally, the literature has shown that teachers at the secondary level are generally less satisfied with the administrative support they receive.

Although the literature identifies specific administrative behaviors and practices that lead special education teachers and new teachers to feel supported, literature concerning the specific administrative support needs of veteran regular education teachers was lacking. Furthermore, the researcher found no studies using qualitative methods which specifically examined the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support.

Administrators are in a position which allows them to directly influence the working conditions of teachers and indirectly influence the retention of teachers. Therefore, a need existed for a deeper more complete understanding of exactly how administrator – teacher relations at the secondary level, influence veteran regular education teachers' perceptions of support.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What are secondary level veteran regular education teachers' experiences with administrative support? The following subquestions were used to answer the overarching question:

1. How do veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe their experiences with administrative support?

2. What commonalities exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

3. What differences exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

Significance of Study

Currently, the nation is experiencing difficulty in retaining highly qualified teachers in the classroom, particularly at the secondary level. Studies have revealed that working conditions play an integral role in teachers' decisions to remain in the profession or in their current school. Studies have found that administrative support is a factor frequently cited by teachers as a component of their working conditions. By examining how teachers at the secondary level experience administrative support, the results of this study offer secondary administrators a better understanding of how they can provide a supportive environment to teachers. In turn, by providing teachers with better working conditions administrators may be able to increase teacher retention in their schools.

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the experiences of new teachers and special education teachers with administrative support. Additionally, research has been conducted to compare the levels of satisfaction that elementary and secondary teachers experience from administrative support. However, little was known about how veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level experience administrative support. Therefore, the results of this study added to the existing body of educational literature and suggested future areas for investigation.

By adding to the existing body of educational literature, more data for policymakers to utilize when designing and implementing policies to increase teacher retention are available. For example, policymakers may utilize the results of the study when planning programs to help administrators provide more supportive working

environments for teachers. Human Resources policy makers may be informed of differentiation of how veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe administrative support, thus higher rates of retention may be attained.

The teachers who participated in the study benefited from the experience by having the opportunity to share their stories with others and make a contribution to the educational literature on the topic. The researcher is a teacher; the researcher benefited from learning about the experiences of colleagues. In a phenomenological study, the researcher is often intimately linked with the phenomena being studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

A qualitative approach was used to understand the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. According to Lichtman (2006), a qualitative researcher collects, organizes, and interprets information through the filters of his or her eyes and ears in an effort to understand human experiences. Creswell (2007) indicated that during the 1990s the numbers and types of qualitative research designs became more widely recognized. The type of qualitative research design which was chosen for this study is the phenomenological research design.

Phenomenology derives from the Greek word *phainomenon* which means to illuminate something (Moran, 2000). Kvale and Brinkman (2008) defined phenomenology as an interest in understanding social phenomena from the participants' own perspectives and describing the world as the participants experience it, with the idea that the significant truth is what the participants perceive it to be. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), "Phenomenologists generally assume that there is some

commonality in human experience, and they seek to understand this commonality" (p. 365). Face to face interviews, participant observation, and document collection were the qualitative methods used to discover the experiences that are both common and unique. Qualitative research interviews possess the distinctive potential for allowing access to and unfolding the lived everyday world (Kvale & Brinkmann).

<center>Data Sources</center>

*Setting*

This study of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level was conducted in a mid-size city school district in Southeast Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), the estimated population of the county is 58, 491, the median household income is $40, 993, and 17.7 % of persons are living below the poverty level. The district educates over 10,000 students in 2 high schools, 3 middle schools, and 8 elementary schools (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2008). The participants for this study were selected from the two high schools in the district.

*Participants*

Purposive sampling was conducted to select the participants for this study. Creswell (2003) maintained that in qualitative research participants who can best help the researcher understand the research questions should be purposefully selected. The participants for this study were veteran regular education teachers with 5-15 years of experience at the secondary level who were employed full-time as classroom teachers. Teachers who met the criteria were identified, and sent an invitation for participation through the county electronic mail system. According to Lichtman (2006), the goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand rather than generalize; as a result, there

is no specific number of participants that must be studied. In addition, Lichtman stated that the majority of qualitative research studies use a small number of participants; often fewer than 10 participants are studied. For this study, a sample of seven participants was selected from the teachers identified as meeting the criteria.

Data Collection

*Interview Protocol*

The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis due to the qualitative nature of the study. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) using open-ended questions to guide participants in describing their experiences with administrative support. A semi-structured interview protocol makes use of pre-determined key themes and questions to provide a sense of order; however, does not prevent the researcher from asking additional questions and probing deeper into a particular experience (David & Sutton, 2004). The order provided by a semi-structured interview approach allowed the researcher to obtain reasonably standard data across participants (Gall et al., 2007). Obtaining reasonably standard data across participants was necessary to answer the research questions concerning the commonalities and differences among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level.

According to Patton (2002), the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to grasp how the participants view their experiences and to learn their terminology and assessments. Open-ended questions provide a framework within which participants, in a qualitative interview, can reveal their perceptions about their experiences in their own words. Open-ended questions also allow participants to provide meaningful responses

which may be unanticipated by the researcher (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The open-ended questions for the interviews were developed from the data obtained from the review of the existing literature. A panel of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level evaluated the interview questions prior to the interviews being conducted. The researcher then revised any ambiguous or misleading questions based on the recommendations of the panel. Additionally, a pilot interview was conducted with a veteran regular education teacher at the secondary level from another school district. Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers conduct pilot interviews to test their research questions and hone their interviewing skills.

After obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University (Appendix B), selected participants were contacted to schedule times for face to face interviews. Prior to each interview the researcher recorded in writing any preconceived feelings or beliefs related to the research topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs (van Manen, 1997). Bracketing any preconceived feelings or beliefs allowed the researcher to approach data collection and analysis from a nonjudgmental state. Additionally, prior to each interview the participant and researcher read and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). The face to face interviews were scheduled, semi-structured interviews and were conducted at sites chosen by the participants. Each interview was recorded, using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed. The audio recordings of the interviews provided complete verbal records and prevented the interviewer from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the interviewer's biases (Gall et al., 2007).

The researcher also wrote memos during and after the interviews to record the things the researcher heard, saw, thought, and experienced while collecting the data and reflecting on the process. In the memos, the researcher maintained a balance between descriptive and reflective notes (Groenewald, 2004). Additionally, the memos were dated so they could be correlated with the data from the face to face interviews.

*Observation*

Marshall and Rossman (2006) maintained when interviews are joined with observation, researchers will grasp the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. Therefore, the researcher employed participant observation to understand the culture of the school district. Understanding the culture of the school district provided insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

Participant observation in this study was conducted during faculty meetings, committee meetings, professional learning sessions, school wide assemblies, and parent meetings. The settings for the participant observations were chosen to allow the researcher to observe first hand how administrators supported or failed to support veteran teachers in various situations. Additionally, the researcher was able to observe how the veteran teachers responded to the support or lack of support provided to them by administrators. Participant observations were conducted for a total of 30 hours over the course of three weeks. The researcher used field notes to record the data from the observations. Following Patton (2002) the field notes included descriptions of the settings, the people, and the activities; direct quotations or summaries of conversations; and observer comments.

*Document Collection*

Additionally, documents were used to enhance the researcher's understanding of a situation and incite reflection about emerging concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An advantage of using documents was they provided a clear, tangible record for analysis (Grady, 1998). Document collection included data on the demographics of the county, the school system, and the two high schools; profiles of certified personnel at the two high schools; and the administrative history of the two high schools. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), knowledge of the history and context surrounding the settings being studied may help to clarify the values and beliefs of participants.

## Data Analysis

The audio recordings from the face to face interviews were transcribed by the researcher and used to create a single-case analysis of each participant's interview. Writing a single-case analysis of each interview allowed the researcher to reduce each interview into a separate, individual experience (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant was then given a copy of the analysis of their interview and asked to evaluate the researcher's interpretation of the data. Creswell (2003) recommended member-checking as a strategy for ensuring the accuracy of qualitative findings.

After the participants had the opportunity to review and clarify their responses to the interviews; the researcher began analyzing the data using Creswell's (2007) spiral data analysis process. Creswell maintained, "To analyze qualitative data the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (p. 150). The researcher began by organizing the data and breaking large bodies of text into smaller, more manageable units. Next, the researcher carefully read through the transcripts, reflective notes, and documents several times to get a feel for the

entire database. While reading, the researcher wrote memos and began identifying initial categories for classification. The initial categories were then expanded as the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data and classified each piece accordingly. After, classifying the data the researcher began combining similar categories to develop the major themes which were used to present the findings of the study.

<div align="center">Trustworthiness</div>

Neuman (2003) states "Qualitative researchers are less concerned with trying to match an abstract concept to empirical data and more concerned with giving a candid portrayal of social life that is true to the experiences of people being studied"(p.185). According to Glesne (1999), establishing trustworthiness is essential to demonstrating the credibility of research findings and interpretations. A trustworthy study increases the confidence of the reader that the findings are worthy of attention. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined four criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the correctness or believability of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is an important aspect of building credibility for research findings. Triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Hatch (2002) maintained that in order to access different perspectives of the participants it is necessary to triangulate the data sources. Methodological triangulation was applied in this study by the use of interviews, participant observation, and document collection.

Member checking is another way to improve the credibility of research findings. Following, the face to face interviews the participants were given the opportunity to

review summaries of their interviews and provide clarification for their answers, to ensure accuracy. Bryman (2004) stated "the establishment of credibility of findings entails both ensuring that research is carried out according to the canons of good practice, and submitting research findings to the members of the social world who were studied for confirmation that the investigator has correctly understood that social world" (p.275).

Transferability was achieved through purposive sampling and the use of dense description. Transferability describes the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell (2003), using detailed descriptions to ensure the accuracy of findings "may transport the readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (p. 196). By using many of the participants' own words to capture their experiences the researcher was truthful and authentic to the stories shared by the participants.

Dense description of the research methods and triangulation also contributed to the dependability of the research findings. Dependability refers to the importance of the researcher accounting for the changing circumstances and contexts that are basic to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher may enhance the dependability of the study by altering the research design as new findings emerge during data collection.

Bracketing contributes to the confirmability of findings by helping to ensure the researcher's beliefs do not influence the data collection and analysis processes. According to van Manen (1997), bracketing should be done prior to and during research to limit bias and ensure a reliable description of the phenomena is provided. Prior to each

interview the researcher recorded in writing any preconceived feelings or beliefs related to the research topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs. Bracketing any preconceived feelings or beliefs allowed the researcher to approach data collection and analysis from a nonjudgmental state. Additionally, each interview was recorded, using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed. The audio recordings of the interviews provided complete verbal records, and prevented the interviewer from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the interviewer's biases (Gall et al., 2007).

## Delimitations

1. The study was confined to veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level who were employed as full-time classroom teachers in a school district in Southeast Georgia.

2. The experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level were examined using phenomenological research methodology. This qualitative research method was the best for understanding experiences with administrative support and for answering the research questions.

## Limitations

1. Participants were limited to seven veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level.

## Definition of Terms

1. *Administrative Support* – are the actions taken and behaviors exhibited by administrators that aid teachers in performing their duties and enduring the stress of their positions (Weiss, 2001).

2. *Attrition* – is the phenomenon of teachers leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

3. *Movers* – are the teachers who transfer from one school to another (Marvel et al., 2007).

4. *New Teachers* – are for the purpose of this study, defined as teachers with five years or less of teaching experience.

5. *Retention* – is keeping teachers at one school from one year to the next.

6. *Turnover* – is the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs (Ingersoll, 2001).

7. *Secondary* –is for the purpose of this study, a school with grades 9-12.

8. *Veteran Teachers* – are for the purpose of this study, defined as teachers with more than five years of teaching experience.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Studies have shown the types of support new teachers and special education teachers need to experience administrative support; however, no studies using qualitative methods have examined how veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level experience administrative support. A more thorough understanding of how administrator-teacher relations influence teacher perceptions of support is needed. Therefore, a study was conducted to understand secondary level veteran teachers' experiences with administrative support. The results of this study offer secondary administrators a better understanding of how they can provide a supportive environment for teachers, as well as contribute to the existing body of educational literature.

A phenomenological approach was used to understand the experiences of veteran teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. A purposeful sample of participants was chosen, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect individual experiences with administrative support. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and used along with reflective notes, made by the researcher, to analyze the data. The responses from the interviews were coded and categorized to identify themes and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents an historical overview of teacher turnover in the United

States and the nation's efforts to recruit and retain teachers. The historical overview

concludes with recent figures on the size of the teacher workforce and number of teachers

leaving the profession or moving to another school each year. Next, the costs of teacher

turnover are examined including the monetary cost, the cost to students, and the

organizational costs. Following the costs, the external factors and working conditions that

influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession or in a particular school are

explored. Finally, the literature related to administrative support of teachers is reviewed.

This final section defines school leadership; discusses strategies for administrators to use

to support teachers; and examines the experiences of special education, new, elementary,

secondary, and veteran teachers with administrative support.

Historical Overview

Teacher retention has historically been a challenge for public schools in the

United States. During the Colonial era and throughout the mid nineteenth century, the

majority of teachers in the United States were young white males who viewed teaching as

temporary work. Young men often taught during agriculture's slow season or while

preparing for other careers and generally left the teaching profession by age 25. The few

females who taught did so as adolescents before setting up their own households and

families. The attrition rate during this period likely exceeded 95 % within five years of

entry. By 1850, the teaching profession had shifted from predominantly male to

predominantly female; however, women tended to remain in teaching for a shorter period of time than men because they were forced to quit upon marriage (Sedlak & Schlossman, 1986).

The drive for universal education during the late 1800s increased the demand for teachers, and the progression of the industrial revolution meant there were fewer men to fill these positions. Requiring teaching credentials also decreased the number of males interested in teaching. Males often saw teaching as a temporary position; therefore, were not willing to invest in formal preparation for teaching. As more women entered the teaching profession, relations between teacher and student became increasingly more depersonalized and the curriculum became increasingly more institutionalized (Rury, 1989).

Between 1905 and 1925, the nation experienced a teacher shortage; however, improved working conditions and modest salary increases helped to attract a large number of men into the field. The demand for teachers became even greater following the baby boom in 1950. As the number of students increased, school districts were forced to allow older and married women to teach. Prior to the 1920s, school districts abided by colonial-era social policy, which made every effort to distribute scarce public resources, such as teaching jobs, among potential social dependents (Sedlak & Schlossman, 1986).

After World War II, Americans began to focus on the importance of children as America's future ability to compete with other nations. As a result, teachers began to enjoy a higher level of recognition for their importance in shaping America's future. The elevated status of teachers led women and men to begin pursuing teaching as a lifelong career. During the 1970s and 1980s, the nation experienced recessions and declining birth

rates, forcing many school districts to make cuts in staffing. Because these cuts generally eliminated the jobs of younger teachers, the mean age of teachers rose almost everywhere (Rury, 1989).

In the 1990s, the number of teachers entering the profession increased steadily; however, the number of teachers leaving the profession increased at a greater rate (Carroll, 2007). In 1994, Richard W. Riley, former United States Secretary of Education, warned the nation that in order to offset retirements of baby boomers, 2 million teachers would need to be hired within the next 10 years. In response to Riley's warning, states and districts focused their attention and resources on attracting the best teaching candidates to their schools, some even offered signing bonuses, mortgage subsidies, and student loan forgiveness to new hires (Johnson, 2006). Over the next 10 years, the United States exceeded Riley's goal by hiring approximately 2.25 million teachers; however, during the same decade, the nation lost 2.7 million teachers, with over 2.1 million of them leaving before retirement (Carroll, 2007). By 2003, teacher retention had replaced teacher recruitment as the biggest staffing challenge faced by districts and schools (Johnson, 2006).

In recent years, increased student enrollment and policy mandates, such as class size reduction, have further expanded the need for a larger teaching force (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Today's teaching force is the largest in history, and over 150,000 new teachers are graduating from teacher preparation programs annually. However, even with the large number of graduates each year research suggested that supply has not kept pace with demand in many areas. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) estimated 157,000 teachers exit the field of teaching each year and more than 232,000 teachers

move to another school. These approximately 389,000 teachers who either leave the teaching field or move to another school make up an estimated 12 % of the total teacher workforce.

<div align="center">Costs of Teacher Turnover</div>

The high rate of teacher turnover that the nation is currently experiencing is not a new phenomenon; however, it continues to be problematic for a number of reasons. First, teacher turnover forces schools, districts, and states to devote time, attention, and financial resources to initiatives designed to recruit new teachers. Second, the instability of the teaching workforce created by teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement. Finally, teacher turnover can inhibit schools' efforts to implement reforms (Voke, 2003).

*Monetary Cost*

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) examined the various monetary costs associated with teacher turnover, for both schools and district central offices in five school districts (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). The NCTAF estimated that non-urban schools spend $33,000 each on teacher transfers every year regardless of whether they leave the district or not. Urban schools are estimated to spend as much as $70,000 each. Additionally, if a teacher leaves a non-urban district, the central office must spend approximately $6,250 to replace the teacher. Urban school districts are estimated to spend $8,750 to replace a teacher. Finally, the NCTAF estimated the total cost for all schools and districts in the United States to recruit, hire, and train replacement teachers is approximately $7.34 billion a year.

*Cost to Students*

In addition to the monetary costs, teacher turnover is costly to students. Rivkin et al. (2005) pointed out the most important school-based factor in influencing how much a child learns is the quality of the child's teacher. Studies have shown that during the early years of a teacher's career, teaching effectiveness increases with experience (Hanushek et al., 2004; Rivkin et al., 2005). As new teachers gain more knowledge and experience, they are able to raise student achievement. However, with the high rate of new teacher turnover, the nation is currently experiencing, half of all teachers are being lost before they reach their peak effectiveness.

Additionally, researchers found that the impact of a high quality teacher is even more significant for low-performing, minority students (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). Gordon, Kane, and Staiger (2006) stated that poor and minority students that have a high quality teacher for four consecutive years can achieve at the same levels as their more affluent white peers. High quality teachers, however, are not equally distributed across schools, districts, regions, and subject or grade assignments (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007). In fact, poor and minority students are less likely to have fully-licensed, highly qualified teachers.

*Organizational Cost*

Another, cost of teacher turnover is the organizational cost to the school. Whether a teacher leaves the field of education or simply moves to another school, that individual takes with him acquired expertise and knowledge about the students, their families, the curriculum, and the practices of the school. A high rate of teacher turnover can negatively affect professional development, class size, scheduling, curriculum planning, collegiality,

and a variety of other factors, adding a significant degree of chaos and complexity to the operation of the school as an organization. Additionally, the implementation of school reforms is harmed by high teacher turnover. Implementing school reforms requires a sustained commitment from the stakeholders which is not possible in schools with a high turnover rate (Guin, 2004).

<div align="center">Factors that Influence Teacher Retention</div>

*External Characteristics*

In order to improve teacher retention, the factors that lead teachers to remain in the profession or in a particular school becomes important to understand. In deciding whether to continue or leave teaching, teachers continually assess the benefits of teaching in relation to other occupations. Teachers who decide to remain in teaching make ongoing assessments of the attractiveness of teaching in their current school relative to other schools. One factor that teachers assess is the external characteristics of the school, or the characteristics that are generally not within the control of the school. External characteristics are based on the demographics of the population being served by the school (Johnson et al., 2005).

Schools with high rates of teacher turnover most often serve large proportions of high-poverty students. High poverty, urban schools lose 22 % of their teachers each year, while low-poverty schools lose only 12.8 % of their teachers (Ingersoll, 2004). Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) reported that public school teachers in high poverty schools are twice as likely to transfer to another school as public school teachers in low poverty schools. High poverty schools may be situated in either urban or rural districts, but are most frequently located in areas with high rates of crime. Safety is a major concern for

most individuals when deciding where to work; therefore, schools located in areas with high rates of crime often experience more difficulty attracting and retaining teachers (McElroy, LaCour, & Cortese, 2007).

Ingersoll (2001) suggested there is very little difference in turnover rates between small and large public schools, except that the majority of turnover in small schools is due to migration, while the majority of teacher turnover in large schools is a result of attrition. Elfers, Plecki, and McGowan (2007) reported similar findings from their study of turnover rates in small and large public high schools in Washington. In addition, the *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2001* showed that principals from large schools are less likely than those in small schools to describe their teachers as very committed to teaching (Markow et al., 2001).

Schools serving greater proportions of minority students and academically disadvantaged students have higher rates of teacher turnover than low-minority, high achieving schools (Johnson et al., 2005). This is primarily due to the turnover of white teachers, who tend to move to schools with non-minority, higher-income students. Rivkin et al. (2005) suggested that students at higher minority, lower performing, lower-income schools are more likely to have inconsistent staffing, and to be taught by a larger number of inexperienced teachers than students at predominately white, higher-achieving, and more affluent schools.

*Working Conditions*

Another factor that teachers assess is the internal characteristics of the school, or the characteristics which are generally within the control of school administrators. The internal characteristics of the school are often referred to as working conditions.

According to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (CCSRI) (2007), working conditions include factors such as teacher empowerment, time, professional development, access to resources, and leadership. Johnson and The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2004) outlined 11 benchmarks for school workplace conditions based on emerging research as follows:

1. Appropriate teaching assignments; fair and manageable teaching load and class size

2. Working collaboratively with colleagues

3. Ongoing observation of, interaction with, and advice from experienced colleagues

4. Collective, teacher responsibility for student achievement, comprehensive student support services, school-family-community partnerships

5. Complete, aligned curriculum that can be used flexibly

6. Sufficient resources and materials; teacher stipends for extras

7. Standardized tests, as one part of a comprehensive assessment strategy

8. Coherent, job-embedded assistance that meets individual teachers' instructional needs

9. Progressively expanding influence and increasing opportunities for career growth

10. Safe, well-maintained, well-equipped facilities for all schools

11. Principal who actively brokers workplace conditions; encourages teacher interdependence and collective work (p. 4)

National surveys of teachers show that working conditions play an important role in teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the profession (Markow et al. 2006; Marvel et al., 2007; Viadero, 2008). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey* conducted by the United States Department of Education showed that the most important factors influencing whether teachers remain in a school are support from administrators and colleagues and a positive, collaborative school environment (Marvel et al., 2007). Conversely, teachers who move to other schools cite an opportunity for a better teaching assignment, dissatisfaction with support from administrators, and dissatisfaction with workplace conditions as their primary reasons for leaving. The survey also showed that 60.9 % of teachers who left the teaching profession after the 2003-2004 school year rated the general working conditions of their current occupation as better than in teaching. More than half of the teachers who left the profession also reported they exert greater influence over workplace policies and practices and greater control over their own work in their new career.

Markow et al. (2006) reported that involvement in school policy making was a key determinant of teacher satisfaction; however, 40 % of the teachers they surveyed, felt they are not given the opportunity to influence policies that affect them. Also, one-quarter of the teachers surveyed felt they lacked adequate involvement in shaping the school curriculum. Using national data from the *Schools and Staffing Surveys* collected in four cycles from 1987 to 2000, Ingersoll (2003) found that teachers' influence in decision making varies considerably from school-to-school. Additionally, Ingersoll stated there are fewer conflicts among teachers and fewer disagreements between administrators and teachers in schools that delegate more authority to teachers.

According to Markow et al. (2006), working conditions such as respect, leadership ability of the principal, school culture, behavior of students, and involvement and influence of the teacher in key activities affect teachers' satisfaction with, and their commitments to, the profession. Significant predictors of a teacher's satisfaction with his/her career include the following:

1. Teacher is not assigned to classes that he/she feels unqualified to teach.

2. Teacher feels that his/her salary is fair for the work done.

3. Teacher has enough time for planning and grading.

4. School does not have problems with threats to teachers or staff by students.

5. School does not have problems with disorderly student behavior.

6. Teacher is treated as a professional by community.

7. Teacher has adequate involvement in team building and problem-solving.

8. Teacher has adequate ability to influence policies that affect him/her.

9. Teacher has adequate time for classroom instruction.

10. Teacher has adequate ability to influence student promotion or retention.

11. Teacher has adequate involvement in shaping the school curriculum. (p. 77)

In 2002, North Carolina became the first state to implement a statewide study of teacher working conditions (Hirsch, 2005). The survey was administered to teachers and administrators, and asked for their feedback on five aspects of working conditions: time,

facilities and resources, empowerment, leadership, and professional development. Since 2002, the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) has helped conduct working conditions surveys in Arizona, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina (Viadero, 2008). The working conditions important to the more than 150,000 teachers surveyed include the following: time to collaborate with colleagues, input into what is taught and how it is taught, professional development opportunities, and ample facilities and resources. However, the single most important working condition cited consistently by teachers throughout the seven states is effective and supportive leadership.

<div align="center">Administrative Support</div>

Berry, Fuller, and Williams (2007) defined school leadership as how school leaders mold a common vision for success, improve school climate, impose norms, and acknowledge quality teaching. Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) identified seven critical areas in which all schools need leadership: instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic planning, external development, and micro-political. Although all of these leadership areas must be addressed in a school, it may not be necessary for one person to be responsible for all seven areas. A more effective method of managing a school may be for the principal to distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school. A number of studies supported the use of distributed leadership as a strategy to increase teacher retention (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Johnson, 2006; MacBeth, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2001).

*Administrative Support Strategies*

The NRRC et al. (2004) suggested the following strategies for administrators to use to support teachers and in turn increase teacher retention: provide instructional leadership, encourage collegiality and collaborative relationships, promote a positive school climate, and show teachers they are valued. The NCCTQ (2008) pontificated there is no foolproof set of strategies for administrators to use to support teachers; rather, administrators must set aside time for experimentation and effective evaluation of whether the adopted strategies have been successful. According to Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006), administrators will need more than just strategies, they will need to develop, manage, and exhibit the qualities necessary, for effective leadership. The necessary qualities for effective leadership include tolerance and eagerness to learn from others, flexibility in their views, determination in their quest for achievement for all, resilience, and optimism.

Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) identified twenty principals in high needs schools, within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, who had been successful in retaining teachers and increasing student achievement. The principals were surveyed, and eight participated in focus groups to determine the innate characteristics they feel contributed to their success and the strategies which positively impact the working environment in their schools. The results of the survey and focus group revealed that principals successful in retaining teachers share five characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, they are as follows: (a) visionary leaders who set goals for their schools and implement plans to achieve them; (b) cautious risk takers who can quickly analyze data and make good decisions; (c) self-motivated and persistent in doing what is

necessary to make their school successful; (d) problem-solvers; and (e) dedicated and passionate about their job. In order to create an environment that teachers want to remain in, the principals stated that the following key strategies are very important as follows:

1. Be a strong leader – do not be afraid to take a risk

2. Develop appropriate relationships with staff – know teachers as individuals

3. Demonstrate support for teachers – be an advocate for teachers

4. Involve teachers in decision-making – always remind staff to consider what is in the best interest of students

5. Empower teachers – know when it is appropriate to empower teachers and how to do it effectively

6. Continually develop leadership abilities of teachers

7. Provide opportunities for teachers to grow in their profession – provide both in-house and off site opportunities for professional development, focused on the needs of the school and teachers

8. Be available – let teachers know they are welcome to share with you

9. Set aside time for teachers to plan individually and as a group – guard teachers' planning time

10. Make certain that groups for planning include new and veteran teachers

*Teachers' Experiences with Administrative Support*

Blase and Blase (2004) in their study of more than 800 public elementary, middle, and high school teachers reported that teachers describe supportive leaders as being visible in the school, liberal with praise, and empowering of teachers. Conversely, the researchers found that teachers feel unsupported by leaders who disrupt, condemn,

isolate, and micromanage them. Based on a survey of 875 current and former teachers in California, Futernick (2007) concluded that teachers want a principal who: maintains a safe and orderly teaching environment, shares decision making responsibilities with teachers, provides teachers with sufficient time for individual and collaborative planning, and effectively guides instruction.

Richards (2006) using the results of her study of 250 new and veteran, elementary and middle school teachers, grouped 22 principal behaviors teachers report as providing support and encouragement, into four components: (a) effective administrative behaviors; (b) emotional support behaviors; (c) valuing teachers' judgment as professionals behaviors; (d) respect and care for teachers as professionals behaviors. According to Richards, teachers most value principal behaviors in the emotional support behaviors component including: accessibility; views role of principal as protector, problem solver, nurturer, and encourager; acknowledges and praises good work; is honest, fair, and trustworthy; is warm and friendly to students and teachers; is interested in teachers as people. Also, Richards found that teachers with less than six years of experience place a greater value on emotional support behaviors than more experienced teachers.

The relationship between administrative support and the retention of special education teachers has been studied by a number of researchers. Gersten et al. (2001) found that the most critical role of the principal in influencing the retention of special education teachers is to demonstrate an understanding of the special educator's role. In a study of experienced, special education teachers by Prather-Jones (2006), special education teachers reported that administrative support was most important in the form of effecting appropriate disciplinary actions and showing respect and appreciation for

special education teachers. Other indicated needs for administrative support include: time set aside for paperwork, scheduled time for collaboration, meaningful professional development opportunities, smaller caseloads, and adequate supplies (Otto & Arnold, 2005).

The NRRC et al. (2004) reported specific ways that special education teachers know they are supported by their administrators. One way special education teachers know they are supported is when they have taken part in developing school goals and missions which encompass all students. Another, way that special education teachers know they are supported is when their administrators take part in developing students' Individual Education Plans, and they refer to those plans when resolving discipline issues. Administrators can show all teachers they support them in educating students with special needs by using professional evaluations which record specific methods teachers use to accommodate students' various learning styles.

Also, studied by a number of researchers is the relationship between administrative support and the retention of new teachers. Markow and Martin (2005) found that new teachers who are likely to leave teaching within the next five years are less likely to state that their principal creates a supportive working environment, and more likely to feel that their job is not valued by their principal. Unclear principal expectations of new teachers and the absence of quality principal support of new teachers were frequently cited as problems for new teachers and/or reasons for leaving the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Richards, 2004). The NCCTQ and Public Agenda (2007) in their study of 865 new teachers in high needs schools, found that 79 % of new teachers surveyed would choose supportive

administrators over significant salary increases. Additionally, one out of four new teachers surveyed does not feel they are supported by their administrators in handling student discipline problems. Nearly as many new teachers also feel their administrators do not provide adequate resources such as well equipped classrooms and textbooks.

Richards (2003) conducted research on the types of support that teachers within their first five years of teaching value from school leaders. The five most desired behaviors of administrators include: showing respect for teachers, being accessible, being fair, supporting teachers with parents, and supporting teachers in student discipline matters. A survey of Texas teachers conducted by Stripling (2004) demonstrated the positive impact of principal leadership, and outlined specific competencies in the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) for the Texas Principal that may improve the retention rate of new teachers. Listed below in order of significance are the four SBEC principal competencies that were found to be statistically significant in positively impacting new teacher retention.

1. Create a campus culture that sets high expectations, promotes learning, and provides intellectual stimulation for self, students, and staff.

2. Model and promote the highest standard of conduct, ethical principles, and integrity in decision-making, actions and behaviors.

3. Facilitate the implementation of sound, research-based theories and techniques of classroom management, student discipline and school safety to ensure an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

4. Utilize strategies to ensure the development of collegial relationships and effective collaboration of campus staff. (p. 2)

According to a survey of first year teachers conducted by the NCCTQ and Public Agenda (2007), new secondary teachers are more likely than new elementary teachers to be concerned about the lack of administrative support in their schools. Specifically, fewer new, secondary teachers stated that the administration at their school provided them with adequate resources and instructional leadership. Wood (2005) in a study of principals' roles in induction programs in large, urban school districts found that one quarter of elementary principals surveyed conducted daily visits to the classrooms of new teachers. None of the secondary principals surveyed reported conducting daily visits to the classrooms of new teachers. The results of the study showed that the elementary principal participants are more active leaders in the induction process of new teachers than secondary principal participants.

The discrepancy between the levels of administrative support provided for elementary and secondary teachers is not limited to new teachers. A number of studies revealed that both new and veteran, secondary teachers are less satisfied with the administrative support they receive (Hirsch, Emerick, Church, & Fuller, 2007; Markow et al., 2001; Markow et al., 2006; Markow & Scheer, 2003; Marvel et al., 2007; NCCTQ & Public Agenda, 2007). The *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2001* reported that elementary teachers are more likely than secondary teachers to give their principal an "A" in creating a supportive environment (Markow et al., 2001). Also, the *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2003* reported that secondary teachers are less likely than elementary school teachers to say they have a collaborative or friendly relationship with their principal (Markow & Scheer, 2003). Further, they are more likely

than elementary teachers to say they have never had a one-on-one meeting with their principal, or that their principal has never visited their classroom.

Additionally, the results from the *Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2006* demonstrated that secondary teachers are not as satisfied as elementary teachers with their communication with administrators (Markow et al., 2006).When asked if their principal did the following: asked for teachers' suggestions or opinions, dealt with student discipline fairly, showed gratitude for teachers' efforts, set a directon for the school, made himself available to teachers, and treated teachers with respect, a higher percentage of secondary, teachers responded "no" to all six questions. Additionally, secondary teachers reported a greater level of frustration with not being able to influence the promotion and retention of students.

Similar to secondary teachers, studies showed that secondary school principals are also less satisfied with the principal-teacher relationship than their elementary school counterparts (Markow et al., 2001; Markow & Scheer, 2003). Secondary principals are less likely than elementary principals to strongly agree they enjoy working with their staff, and more likely to report a lack of high quality teachers as a big problem in their school. When asked if teachers in their schools are very committed to teaching, secondary principals are also less likely than elementary principals to strongly agree (Markow et al., 2001).

Although administrative support has proven to be important in the retention of new and veteran teachers, the types of administrative support they desire vary (Blase & Blase, 2004; Hirsch, 2008; Johnson, 2006; NCCTQ, 2008). Hirsch (2008) reported new teachers often want administrators to provide them with environments that are flexible

and collaborative; however, veteran teachers often desire autonomy and privacy.

Richards (2006), as a follow up to her 2003 study of the principal behaviors most valued

by teachers within their first five years of teaching, conducted a study of 250 elementary

and middle school teachers, to compare the principal behaviors and attitudes that are most

valued by teachers at three career stages: (a) 1-5 years, (b) 6-10 years, and (c) 11 + years

of experience. Consistent with the first study, Richards found the five most desired

behaviors of administrators include: showing respect for teachers, being accessible, being

fair, supporting teachers with parents, and supporting teachers in student discipline

matters.

Additionally, Richards (2006) found that respects and values teachers as

professionals was ranked as the most valuable principal behavior by teachers at all three

career stages. However, administrators who respect and value teachers as professionals

are most highly valued by teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience. Moreover, as

teachers gain experience, their appreciation for the following principal behaviors and

attitudes increases: embraces high, consistent standards for everyone; supports teachers in

student discipline matters; supports teachers with parents; is visible on school grounds; is

honest, fair, and trustworthy; and values views of teachers and provides opportunities for

shared decision-making. Moreover, Richards discovered that praise is relatively

unimportant to teachers with more than 10 years of experience. Richards also discovered

that of the three groups studied the teachers with less than six years of experience valued

emotional support behaviors more than the other teacher groups.

Williams (2003) interviewed 12 teachers, each with at least 15 years of

experience, who were identified by their administrators as outstanding teachers, and

asked them to describe the workplace dynamics that contribute to their fulfillment and

longevity in the classroom. The outstanding teachers stated that classroom autonomy is

one of the most important working conditions they require to experience fulfillment.

Another, important working condition for the outstanding teachers was being viewed as

experts in their field by the administrators with whom they work. The teachers indicated

they do not appreciate having their creativity stifled by being told what to teach and how

to teach it; however, they do appreciate being supported and encouraged by

administrators.  Administrators who provided the right combination of support and

challenge were valued by these veteran teachers.

Alvy (2005) suggested specific strategies that could be used by administrators to

effectively support veteran teachers. One strategy is for administrators to mold a school

culture that reveres the knowledge and experiences of veteran teachers. Administrators

can mold this culture by acknowledging the achievements and efforts of veteran teachers.

A second strategy for supporting veteran teachers is to honor them by asking them to

mentor a new teacher. Saffold (2004) reported four specific benefits experienced by

veteran teachers who served as mentors for new, middle school teachers: enhanced

reflective practices, increased opportunities for professional discourse, expanded view of

profession, and renewed commitment to teaching.

Additionally, Alvy (2005) suggested administrators provide collegial support for

veteran teachers. Williams (2003) found that although veteran teachers state that a sense

of community among colleagues is very important, when collegial relationships conflict

with teachers' commitments to students and their own personal needs they will seek

meaningful connections elsewhere. Another, strategy suggested by Alvy is for

administrators to design professional development opportunities based on the unique needs and interests of veteran teachers. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), administrators should find it imperative to develop policies that mirror the research that has been recommended. Being an effective teacher involves continuous professional growth.

Summary

The review of the literature shows that teacher retention has historically been a challenge for the United States. The high rate of teacher turnover has forced schools, districts, and states to devote time, attention, and financial resources to initiatives designed to recruit new teachers. Student achievement and school reforms have also been negatively effected by the high rate of turnover. In order to decrease the number of teachers leaving the profession or changing schools each year, the factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to stay or leave have been studied. One factor teachers assess is the external characteristics of the school, or the characteristics that are generally not within the control of the school. Another, factor teachers assess is the internal characteristics of the school, or the characteristics which are generally within the control of school administrators. The internal characteristics of the school are often referred to as working conditions. Researchers have found that the working conditions and climate within a school act as either deterrents or supports for teacher retention. Although the specific working conditions which teachers require to experience job satisfaction may vary, researchers agreed that administrators are in the best position to directly impact teachers' working conditions.

National and state surveys have revealed that administrative support is often cited as a major component of the working conditions considered by teachers when deciding whether to remain in the profession or in a particular school. Teachers vary in their satisfaction with the level of administrative support they receive, as well as the type of administrative support which they desire from principals. Research has shown the specific administrative behaviors and practices that lead new teachers and special education teachers to feel supported. National and state surveys also reveal secondary teachers are often less satisfied than their elementary counterparts with the level of support they receive from their principal. However, literature examining the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support was lacking.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Teacher turnover occurs on a large scale in America's public schools. Research has shown that working conditions influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession or in the same position, and administrative support is often cited as a major component of the working conditions of teachers. Research has revealed what teachers as a whole need to experience administrative support, as well as the specific administrative behaviors and practices that lead special education teachers and new teachers to feel supported. Additionally, the literature has shown that teachers at the secondary level are generally less satisfied with the administrative support they receive.

Although the literature identifies specific administrative behaviors and practices that lead special education teachers and new teachers to feel supported, literature concerning the specific administrative support needs of veteran regular education teachers was lacking. Furthermore, the researcher found no studies using qualitative methods which specifically examine the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. Administrators are in a position which allows them to directly influence the working conditions of teachers and indirectly influence the retention of teachers. Therefore, a need existed for a deeper more complete understanding of exactly how administrator – teacher relations at the secondary level, influence veteran regular education teachers' perceptions of support.

Research Questions

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What are secondary level veteran regular education teachers' experiences with administrative support? The following subquestions were used to answer the overarching question:

1. How do veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe their experiences with administrative support?

2. What commonalities exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

3. What differences exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was used to understand the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. According to Lichtman (2006), a qualitative researcher collects, organizes, and interprets information through the filters of his or her eyes and ears in an effort to understand human experiences. Creswell (2007) indicated that during the 1990s the numbers and types of qualitative research designs became more widely recognized. The type of qualitative research design which was chosen for this study is the phenomenological research design.

Phenomenology derives from the Greek word *phainomenon* which means to illuminate something (Moran, 2000). Kvale and Brinkman (2008) defined phenomenology as an interest in understanding social phenomena from the participants' own perspectives and describing the world as the participants experience it, with the idea that the significant truth is what the participants perceive it to be. According to Johnson

and Christensen (2004), "Phenomenologists generally, assume that there is some commonality in human experience, and they seek to understand this commonality" (p. 365). Face to face interviews, participant observation, and document collection were the qualitative methods used to discover the experiences that are both common and unique. Qualitative research interviews possess the distinctive potential for allowing access to and unfolding the lived everyday world (Kvale & Brinkmann).

<div align="center">Data Sources</div>

*Setting*

This study of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level was conducted in a mid-size city school district in Southeast Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), the estimated population of the county is 58, 491, the median household income is $40, 993, and 17.7 % of persons are living below the poverty level. The district educates over 10,000 students in 2 high schools, 3 middle schools, and 8 elementary schools (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2008). The participants for this study were selected from the two high schools in the district.

*Participants*

Purposive sampling was conducted to select the participants for this study. Creswell (2003) maintained that in qualitative research participants who can best help the researcher understand the research questions should be purposefully selected. The participants for this study were veteran regular education teachers with 5-15 years of experience at the secondary level who were employed full-time as classroom teachers. Teachers who met the criteria were identified, and sent an invitation for participation through the county electronic mail system. According to Lichtman (2006), the goal of

qualitative research is to describe and understand rather than generalize; as a result, there

is no specific number of participants that must be studied. In addition, Lichtman stated

that the majority of qualitative research studies use a small number of participants; often

fewer than 10 participants are studied. For this study a sample of seven participants was

selected from the teachers identified as meeting the criteria.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

*Interview Protocol*

The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis due to

the qualitative nature of the study. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview

protocol using open-ended questions to guide participants in describing their experiences

with administrative support. A semi-structured interview protocol makes use of pre-

determined key themes and questions to provide a sense of order; however, does not

prevent the researcher from asking additional questions and probing deeper into a

particular experience (David & Sutton, 2004). The order provided by a semi-structured

interview approach allowed the researcher to obtain reasonably standard data across

participants (Gall et al., 2007). Obtaining reasonably standard data across participants

was necessary to answer the research questions concerning the commonalities and

differences among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary

level.

According to Patton (2002), the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to grasp

how the participants view their experiences and to learn their terminology and

assessments. Open-ended questions provide a framework within which participants, in a

qualitative interview, can reveal their perceptions about their experiences in their own

words. Open-ended questions also allow participants to provide meaningful responses which may be unanticipated by the researcher (Mack et al., 2005). The open-ended questions for the interviews were developed from the data obtained from the review of the existing literature. A panel of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level evaluated the interview questions prior to the interviews being conducted. The researcher then revised any ambiguous or misleading questions based on the recommendations of the panel. Additionally, a pilot interview was conducted with a veteran regular education teacher at the secondary level from another school district. Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers conduct pilot interviews to test their research questions and hone their interviewing skills.

After obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University selected participants were contacted to schedule times for face to face interviews. Prior to each interview the researcher recorded in writing any preconceived feelings or beliefs related to the research topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs (van Manen, 1997). Bracketing any preconceived feelings or beliefs allowed the researcher to approach data collection and analysis from a nonjudgmental state. Additionally, prior to each interview the participant and researcher read and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). The face to face interviews were scheduled, semi-structured interviews and were conducted at sites chosen by the participants. Each interview was recorded, using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed. The audio recordings of the interviews provided complete verbal records, and prevented the interviewer from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the interviewer's biases (Gall et al., 2007).

The researcher also wrote memos during and after the interviews to record the things the researcher heard, saw, thought, and experienced while collecting the data and reflecting on the process. In the memos, the researcher maintained a balance between descriptive and reflective notes (Groenewald, 2004). Additionally, the memos were dated so they could be correlated with the data from the face to face interviews.

*Observation*

Marshall and Rossman (2006) maintained when interviews are joined with observation, researchers will grasp the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. Therefore, the researcher employed participant observation to understand the culture of the school district. Understanding the culture of the school district provided insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

Participant observation in this study was conducted during faculty meetings, committee meetings, professional learning sessions, school wide assemblies, and parent meetings. The settings for the participant observations were chosen to allow the researcher to observe first hand how administrators supported or failed to support veteran teachers in various situations. Additionally, the researcher was able to observe how the veteran teachers responded to the support or lack of support provided to them by administrators. Participant observations were conducted for a total of 30 hours over the course of three weeks. The researcher used field notes to record the data from the observations. Following Patton (2002) the field notes included descriptions of the settings, the people, and the activities; direct quotations or summaries of conversations; and observer comments.

*Document Collection*

Additionally, documents were used to enhance the researcher's understanding of a situation and incite reflection about emerging concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An advantage of using documents was they provided a clear, tangible record for analysis (Grady, 1998). Document collection included data on the demographics of the county, the school system, and the two high schools; profiles of certified personnel at the two high schools; and the administrative history of the two high schools. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), knowledge of the history and context surrounding the settings being studied may help to clarify the values and beliefs of participants.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings from the face to face interviews were transcribed by the researcher and used to create a single-case analysis of each participant's interview. Writing a single-case analysis of each interview allowed the researcher to reduce each interview into a separate, individual experience (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant was then given a copy of the analysis of their interview and asked to evaluate the researcher's interpretation of the data. Creswell (2003) recommended member-checking as a strategy for ensuring the accuracy of qualitative findings.

After, the participants had the opportunity to review and clarify their responses to the interviews; the researcher began analyzing the data using Creswell's (2007) spiral data analysis process. Creswell maintained, "To analyze qualitative data the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (p. 150). The researcher began by organizing the data and breaking large bodies of text into smaller, more manageable units. Next, the researcher carefully read through the transcripts, reflective notes, field notes, and documents several times to get a feel

for the entire database. While reading, the researcher wrote memos and began identifying

initial categories for classification. The initial categories were then expanded as the

researcher repeatedly reviewed the data and classified each piece accordingly. After,

classifying the data the researcher began combining similar categories to develop the major

themes which were used to present the findings of the study.

<div align="center">Trustworthiness</div>

Neuman (2003) states "Qualitative researchers are less concerned with trying to

match an abstract concept to empirical data and more concerned with giving a candid

portrayal of social life that is true to the experiences of people being studied"(p.185).

According to Glesne (1999), establishing trustworthiness is essential to demonstrating the

credibility of research findings and interpretations. A trustworthy study increases the

confidence of the reader that the findings are worthy of attention. Lincoln and Guba

(1985) outlined four criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the correctness or believability of the research findings

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is an important aspect of building credibility for

research findings. Triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers

search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form

themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Hatch (2002)

maintained that in order to access different perspectives of the participants it is necessary

to triangulate the data sources. Methodological triangulation was applied in this study by

the use of interviews, participant observation, and document collection.

Member checking is another way to improve the credibility of research findings.

Following, the face to face interviews the participants were given the opportunity to

review summaries of their interviews and provide clarification for their answers, to ensure accuracy. Bryman (2004) stated, "the establishment of credibility of findings entails both ensuring that research is carried out according to the canons of good practice and submitting research findings to the members of the social world who were studied for confirmation that the investigator has correctly understood that social world" (p.275).

Transferability was achieved through purposive sampling and the use of dense description. Transferability describes the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell (2003), using detailed descriptions to ensure the accuracy of findings "may transport the readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (p. 196). By using many of the participants' own words to capture their experiences the researcher was truthful and authentic to the stories shared by the participants.

Dense description of the research methods and triangulation also contributed to the dependability of the research findings. Dependability refers to the importance of the researcher accounting for the changing circumstances and contexts that are basic to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher may enhanced the dependability of the study by altering the research design as new findings emerged during data collection.

Bracketing contributes to confirmability of findings by helping to ensure the researcher's beliefs do not influence the data collection and analysis processes. According to van Manen (1997), bracketing should be done prior to and during research to limit bias and ensure a reliable description of the phenomena is provided. Prior to each

interview the researcher recorded in writing any preconceived feelings or beliefs related to the research topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs. Bracketing any preconceived feelings or beliefs allowed the researcher to approach data collection and analysis from a nonjudgmental state. Additionally, each interview was recorded, using a digital voice recorder, and transcribed. The audio recordings of the interviews provided complete verbal records, and prevented the interviewer from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the interviewer's biases (Gall et al., 2007).

## Summary

A phenomenological approach was used to understand the experiences of veteran teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. A purposeful sample of seven participants was chosen, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect individual experiences with administrative support. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and used along with reflective notes, field notes, and documents to analyze the data. The responses from the interviews, reflective notes, field notes, and documents were coded and categorized, to identify themes and answer the research questions. Findings are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Researchers agree that administrators are in the best position to directly impact teachers' working conditions and indirectly influence the retention of teachers (Ingersoll, 2003; NRRC et al., 2004; NCCTQ, 2008). The CTQ has helped conduct working conditions surveys in Arizona, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina and the single most important working condition cited consistently by teachers throughout the seven states was effective and supportive leadership (Viadero, 2008). Therefore, a need existed for a deeper more complete understanding of exactly how administrator – teacher relations influence teachers' perceptions of support. In this study, the researcher examined veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with administrative support. This study was designed to answer the following overarching research question: What are secondary level veteran regular education teachers' experiences with administrative support? Additionally the study was designed to seek answers to the following subquestions:

1.  How do veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe their experiences with administrative support?

2. What commonalities exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

3. What differences exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

Chapter four presents the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document collection. A qualitative research design was used to gain an understanding of the teachers' experiences with administrative support from their perspectives. Open-ended interview questions, developed based on a review of the existing literature, were employed to allow participants to provide meaningful responses concerning their experiences with administrative support.

Research Design

A phenomenological research approach was employed to gather details about the lived experiences of the seven participants. The open-ended interview questions, found in Appendix A, were reviewed by a panel of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level and piloted. The seven participants for this study were purposefully selected from two high schools in a school district in Southeast Georgia and scheduled, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the participant, digitally recorded, and transcribed. Following, the face to face interviews the participants were given the opportunity to review summaries of their interviews and provide clarification for their answers, to ensure accuracy.

The researcher also wrote memos during and after the interviews to record the things the researcher heard, saw, thought, and experienced while collecting the data and reflecting on the process. In the memos, the researcher maintained a balance between descriptive and reflective notes (Groenewald, 2004). Additionally, the memos were dated so they could be correlated with the data from the face to face interviews.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) maintained when interviews are joined with observation, researchers grasp the meanings that everyday activities hold for people.

Therefore, the researcher employed participant observation to understand the culture of the school district. Understanding the culture of the school district provided insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

Participant observation in this study was conducted during faculty meetings, committee meetings, professional learning sessions, school wide assemblies, and parent meetings. The settings for the participant observations were chosen to allow the researcher to observe first hand how administrators supported or failed to support veteran teachers in various situations. Additionally, the researcher was able to observe how the veteran teachers responded to the support or lack of support provided to them by administrators. Participant observations were conducted for a total of 30 hours over the course of three weeks. The researcher used field notes to record the data from the observations. Following Patton (2002) the field notes included descriptions of the settings, the people, and the activities; direct quotations or summaries of conversations; and observer comments.

Additionally, documents were used to enhance the researcher's understanding of a situation and incite reflection about emerging concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An advantage of using documents was they provided a clear, tangible record for analysis (Grady, 1998). Document collection included data on the demographics of the county, the school system, and the two high schools; profiles of certified personnel at the two high schools; and the administrative history of the two high schools. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), knowledge of the history and context surrounding the settings being studied may help to clarify the values and beliefs of participants.

Data Sources

*Setting*

This study of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level was conducted in a mid-size city school district in Southeast Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), the estimated population of the county is 58, 491, the median household income is $40, 993, and 17.7 % of persons are living below the poverty level. The district educates over 10,000 students in 2 high schools, 3 middle schools, and 8 elementary schools (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2008). The participants for this study were selected from the two high schools in the district. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the schools, they are referred to as High School A and High School B. Both high schools serve grades 9-12 and are currently labeled as schools in need of improvement. High School A has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) since 2006 and High School B has not made AYP since 2005. A comparison of student enrollment by demographics is presented for the two high schools in Table 1.

Table 1

*Comparison of Student Enrollments by Demographics*

_____

| Characteristics | High School A | High School B |
|---|---|---|
| Total Student Enrollment | 1180 | 1305 |
| Economically Disadvantaged % | 54 | 46 |
| Students with Disabilities % | 13 | 13 |
| English Language Learners % | 1 | 1 |
| Asian % | 2 | 2 |
| African American % | 59 | 53 |
| Hispanic % | 8 | 5 |
| Caucasian % | 24 | 35 |
| Multiracial % | 7 | 5 |

_____

*Note.* Adapted from *2007-2008 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card: Student and School Demographics*, by Governor's Office of Student Achievement, November 2008, Retrieved from http://reportcard2008.gaosa.org

Over the last 15 years High School A has had 7 principals and 20 assistant principals, with an average of 5 assistant principals serving each year (Board of Education, n.d.). The average tenure for a principal at High School A has been 2.5 years and the average tenure for an assistant principal has been 3.9 years. High School B has had 2 principals and 10 assistant principals over the past 15 years, with an average of 3 assistant principals serving each year. The average tenure for a principal at High School

B has been 7.5 years and the average tenure for an assistant principal has been 4.6 years.

Profiles of certified personnel at the two high schools are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

*Profile of Certified Personnel at High School A*

| Characteristics | Administrators | Support Personnel | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 6.00 | 8.64 | 113.95 |
| Average Annual Salary | $79,137.05 | $64,678.44 | $51,286.57 |
| Average Contract Days | 210.00 | 201.97 | 192.10 |
| Full-time | 6 | 8 | 111 |
| Part-time | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 3 | 0 | 41 |
| Female | 3 | 10 | 73 |
| Certificate Level | | | |
| Vocational Certificate | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| 4 Year Bachelor's | 3 | 6 | 39 |
| 5 Year Master's | 2 | 4 | 55 |
| 6 Year Specialist's | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| 7 Year Doctoral | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | |
| Black | 1 | 2 | 30 |
| White | 5 | 8 | 82 |
| Hispanic | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Years Experience | | | |
| < 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| 1-10 | 0 | 4 | 46 |
| 11-20 | 5 | 1 | 32 |
| 21-30 | 0 | 4 | 24 |
| > 30 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Average | 17.40 | 17.11 | 12.89 |

*Note.* Adapted from *2007-2008 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card: Certified Personnel Data*, by Governor's Office of Student Achievement, November 2008, Retrieved from http://reportcard2008.gaosa.org

Table 3

*Profile of Certified Personnel at High School B*

_____

| Characteristics | Administrators | Support Personnel | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 5.00 | 7.53 | 70.87 |
| Average Annual Salary | $79,332.42 | $65,519.95 | $52,590.40 |
| Average Contract Days | 211.00 | 199.73 | 193.00 |
| Full-time | 5 | 7 | 70 |
| Part-time | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Gender | | | |
|    Male | 2 | 2 | 20 |
|    Female | 3 | 7 | 52 |
| Certificate Level | | | |
|    Vocational Certificate | 0 | 0 | 2 |
|    4 Year Bachelor's | 1 | 3 | 27 |
|    5 Year Master's | 3 | 6 | 29 |
|    6 Year Specialist's | 1 | 0 | 13 |
|    7 Year Doctoral | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | |
|    Black | 2 | 1 | 20 |
|    White | 3 | 8 | 50 |
|    Hispanic | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Years Experience | | | |
|    < 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
|    1-10 | 1 | 4 | 28 |
|    11-20 | 3 | 2 | 22 |
|    21-30 | 1 | 2 | 15 |
|    > 30 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
|    Average | 21.33 | 17.50 | 12.89 |

*Note.* Adapted from *2007-2008 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card: Certified Personnel Data*, by
Governor's Office of Student Achievement, November 2008, Retrieved from
http://reportcard2008.gaosa.org

*Participants*

All participants were employed full-time as regular education classroom teachers and had 5-15 years of experience. The sample of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level consisted of four males and three females. The seven participants included five Caucasians, one African American, and one Puerto Rican American. The researcher protected the participants' identities by assigning pseudonyms and editing transcript references to eliminate any identifiable information. Four of the participants in the study were selected from High School A and three of the participants were selected from High School B. An overview of the participants is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Participant Pseudonyms and Teaching Experience*

| Participant Name | Years in Education | Number of Schools | Years at Current School |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bo | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Lynn | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Harold | 9 | 3 | 4 |
| Wendy | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| Sam | 10 | 3 | 7 |
| Danny | 12 | 3 | 2 |
| Connie | 15 | 4 | 8 |

Data Analysis

After, the participants had the opportunity to review and clarify their responses to the interviews; the researcher began analyzing the data using Creswell's (2007) spiral data analysis process. Creswell maintained, "To analyze qualitative data the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (p. 150). The researcher began by organizing the data and breaking large bodies of text into smaller, more manageable units. Next, the researcher carefully read through the transcripts, reflective notes, field notes, and documents several times to get a feel for the entire database. While reading, the researcher wrote memos and began identifying initial categories for classification. The initial categories were then expanded as the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data and classified each piece accordingly. After classifying the data, the researcher combined similar categories to develop the major themes which were used to present the findings of the study.

Report of Findings

One overarching research question and three subquestions guided this study. The overarching research question sought to discover the experiences of secondary level veteran regular education teachers with administrative support. The three subquestions were used to answer the overarching research question. The data resulting from the semi-structured interviews, the observations, and the documents collected are presented to correspond with the subquestions of the study. The data are presented in the form of text selections corresponding to each subquestion and are further divided by the most prevalent themes resulting from the data analysis. The following seven themes emerged from the exploration of the participants' lived experiences with administrative support: (a) support with student discipline; (b) support with parents; (c) accessibility and willingness to listen; (d)

respect as professionals; (e) recognition, appreciation, and rewards; (f) care for individuals; (g) visibility, communication, and resources.

*Subquestion 1*

How do veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe their experiences with administrative support?

*Support with Student Discipline*

The participants were asked to describe ways their current or former administrators showed support in matters of student discipline. Although all of the participants could recall a time when they felt supported in a matter of student discipline, only Sam felt he had been consistently supported in this area. Sam enthusiastically reported,

> Any time I write a referral, it is acted upon quickly and fairly. I am certain that a
> good part of this is that I do not write many referrals. I try to take care of most
> anything that I can in the classroom. I do have this expectation, because I take
> care of so much in the classroom, I expect to be backed up to the fullest when I do
> send a referral. In the current situation, that I am in, it happens every time I write
> one. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Sam also stated he always receives feedback from administrators concerning the outcomes of referrals. Sam said,

> Referrals written are in triplicate and copies go to the office, students, and
> teachers. Listed on the teacher referral copy is a note of the results of the
> conference in the office. If I write the referral, I always get to know what happens
> to the student. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Harold did not feel he had been consistently supported in matters of student discipline; however, he acknowledged the majority of the time he was supported. Harold hesitated for a moment, but then stated,

Most of the time when I have sent a student on referrals, I have not been questioned as to why or how it was done. They took my opinion of what had happened and went ahead and did what they felt. They gave the student the most they could give them depending on their background as far as discipline is concerned. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Bo also did not believe he had been consistently supported in matters of student discipline but could remember several instances when he felt supported. Bo seemed proud as he described a specific situation,

A time that I felt really supported is when I had a group of students that were refusing to participate in an extracurricular activity. I first asked them to participate and do what they were supposed to do. I knew they were really angry with me, and I needed some assistance, so I sent up some parents to talk to them and they still refused to participate. I ended up sending the principal up to talk to them. I felt really lucky in that situation that the principal was there and just happened to be passing by at the time. I had not called her over and asked her for advice. She was just there and wanted to try to help me immediately. I felt immediate support, because she dropped everything else that she was doing to help me in that situation. Not only that, there was follow through later. Later we sat down and decided what our actions were going to be, and we wrote a letter together to send to the parents. By sending out the letter, we kind of stopped some

problems before they even started with some of the parents. (personal

communication, March 2, 2009)

Additionally, Bo emphasized that he feels supported in matters of student discipline when

administrators trust his word. Bo stated,

With discipline referrals, if I just write what I see, and I am questioned about it

later that kind of bothers me a little bit. It is not when they question me for

clarification. It's when they say well this student said this. Well, I am telling you

what happened or least how I perceived it. Trusting my word or taking my word is

usually what makes me feel supported. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Another, way Bo indicated administrators could show him support in matters of student

discipline is to act upon his recommendations for students' consequences. Bo explained,

If they come to me, and they ask me how I feel and I give them that response, and

they follow up with what I have given them, then that makes me feel supported. If

they ask me how I feel, and they don't go with it then what is the point. Why did

you even ask me to begin with? I understand that sometimes there are more things

going on with those decisions than I am aware of, but acting upon my

recommendations is usually what makes me more supported. (personal

communication, March 2, 2009)

Connie very succinctly described how an administrator could make her feel

supported in matters of student discipline when she said, "By being consistent, fair, and

immediate, with consequences for student misconduct" (personal communication, March

6, 2009). Lynn also described the manner in which an administrator could handle a

situation involving student discipline to make her feel supported. Additionally, Lynn

discussed an administrator from her past who handled student discipline issues well. Lynn smiled as she shared,

> As far as student discipline, I think when they strictly enforce the rules, when they are very just kind of black and white about it and go by the code of conduct book is when I feel supported. They are not emotionally involved in it. They just look at okay this is the offense, and here is your punishment, and that is the end of it. One of my very first principals would call and say, "What is the deal with this kid? What do you want to do with him? Do you need him out of your class for a day or so? Do you need me just to put a scare in him?" That was always nice, because a lot of times you just needed them out of the room for that moment. Put a little a scare into them, and let them come back, and a lot of times that worked better than anything else. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Wendy also recalled an administrator from her past who made her feel supported in matters of student discipline. Wendy very passionately explained,

> I had a principal one time that if you had a problem in your classroom, you could just pick-up the phone and he would come down and get them. He would not allow anyone to disrupt the learning environment, and he never questioned me in front of a student. The most important way an administrator can support me is by helping with discipline, because if the discipline is okay, everything falls into place. I know it sounds odd, but I think I need more support from them now with discipline than when I first started. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Danny remembered more than one administrator from his past that made him feel

supported in matters of student discipline. Danny confidently described the actions taken

by prior administrators when he stated,

> When there was a problem, they handled the referral exactly the way it was
>
> written and gave the child a consequence. There were no gray areas, and there
>
> was no sitting on the fence one way or the other. It was a black and white matter,
>
> and it was done. Cut and dry and handled immediately, and they did not second
>
> guess you. Any situation that I had to deal with a child, they were extremely calm.
>
> They were a lot better at diffusing situations than I am. One thing that I learned
>
> from them is the calmer you are, the more likely you are to get a positive result,
>
> and the more likely the situation does not escalate. The really great ones, if the
>
> situation called for it, they could raise their voice. However, it was so rare when
>
> they did this it really caught the attention of the people around them. (personal
>
> communication, March 4, 2009)

The participants were also asked to describe ways their current or former

administrators did not show support in matters of student discipline. Sam was the only

participant who seemed to have trouble recalling a time when he had not been supported

in a matter of student discipline. Sam sounded relieved when he said,

> I have been fortunate to have been supported all the way through my career. I do
>
> not believe any of my administrators have ever given preferential treatment to the
>
> student over me in a disciplinary situation. I have not always been satisfied the
>
> student got enough punishment, but I understand why. I know enough about the
>
> system to understand, perhaps, it was a student with not many offenses.

Therefore, they were not at the point in the discipline plan where further

punishment was warranted. Even though the anger in me or the hurt at them

misbehaving might have wanted stronger punishment, I can understand there is a

process that had to be followed. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Wendy and Harold also expressed they were often dissatisfied with the level of

punishment assigned by administrators; however, were not as understanding as Sam.

Wendy sounded very frustrated as she described,

I had a situation where a student was in my classroom and suddenly announced to

the class that he was hungry while I was in the middle of a lesson. Then he got up

and walked across the room to ask another student if he could buy some candy. I

asked him to sit down, and he went back to his desk, but then he got up again

while I was still teaching. Again I had to stop the lesson and ask him to sit down.

Then he started singing while I was teaching. Finally, I had to ask the

collaboration teacher, who was in the room with me, to escort him to the office.

The only thing the administrator did was conference with the student. I feel like

this administrator handled things according to how easy they could be for him.

(personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Wendy then shared a situation in which she felt an administrator did not consider her

safety when assigning punishment to a student. Wendy seemed to still be in disbelief as

she explained,

One time a student had drugs in my classroom during first block, and I called for

the resource officer to come to my room. I thought the student was being arrested

and charged with contraband, but after fourth block the student walked by my

room, on his way out of the building, and threatened me for turning him in. After

he threatened me, he was suspended for 10 days. When the 10 days were up, he

came back to school and was back in my class for the rest of the year. (personal

communication, March 10, 2009)

Harold also shared a situation in which he felt the punishment assigned to a student was

not severe enough for threatening a teacher. Harold was incensed as he recalled,

I had an incident where a student threatened me physically, and at best the child,

was given a slap on the wrist, one day suspension and one day in ISS. The

administrator asked me what I thought should be done. I told him exactly what

should be done; he should have at least three days suspension for this type of

thing. This was totally ignored, no explanation whatsoever, he put the referral

back in my box and never said another word about it. I was really upset when I

walked out. As a teacher, I feel this is the foremost thing that needs to be taken

care of. Teachers are not targets, and we do not need to be treated as targets. If we

let these children know they can do this, physically or verbally, then we are

opening a door we don't want to have opened. In this incident, I feel that this is

exactly what happened. Because I think this child would do it again, if the

situation came up the same way. There would be nothing to deter them from

getting in a teacher's face and threatening us, because they had little or no

consequences. Threatening teachers is a primary thing we have to worry about, in

the school, and this is the number one issue that should be addressed and come

down on with as hard a discipline as we can possibly give. (personal

communication, March 6, 2009)

Additionally, Harold expressed his frustration with administrators not assigning any consequences for discipline infractions. Harold explained,

There have been several occasions where I have disciplined a student, or sent them to an assistant principal, and they were sent back to me without doing anything. I am a teacher that does not write referrals very often and when I do they should know I have taken all the steps involved, before I do this. I average maybe five referrals a year, so when they send them back without doing anything to them, it makes me look bad, it undermines my own ability to control my class. Sometimes consistency is lacking and you feel more comfortable when you know everything is being done on a consistent basis. Also, with rules throughout the building. One assistant may enforce it one way and one another way, so this needs to be worked on. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Connie, Lynn, and Danny were also discouraged by the failure of administrators to handle student discipline issues. Connie spoke candidly as she said,

I feel a lack of support when they shred or ignore referrals; when you call for an administrator, and no one shows up; or when a disruptive student is removed from class but immediately is returned to class with no explanation. At one school, if I had to buzz the front office for an administrator, a secretary would finally arrive to check on me but no administrator. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Lynn expressed her displeasure with administrators ignoring referrals when she stated,

I think when the referrals are just mysteriously gone; to me that is the biggest issue. I had a student who skipped my class and had to be brought back to class by the resource officer, yet he received absolutely no punishment at all. Also, when

referrals have been lost and you asked the administrator about them and they just

say, "Well I haven't seen that or whatever." (personal communication, March 5,

2009)

Danny described a particular discipline issue he believed administrators were not

consistently handling. Danny was quite exasperated as he explained,

We went to dress code this year, and the dress code I see walking about the school

every day is appalling. One school, I was at previously, had an administrator

actually sit down in the lunchroom area and anybody having a dress code issue

was an automatic referral. I think if we saw this kind of thing more; we would

have compliance and a lot less issues. One of the teachers did a quick count and

counted 68 violations of the dress code, and this is not acceptable to me. The

problem needs to be addressed from the top, and the administration has let us

down. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Bo shared the other participants' frustrations with administrators not handling

student discipline issues but also wondered if sometimes the issues were handled without

him being informed of the result. Bo spoke slowly as he reflected on his experiences and

said,

I think that I have felt not supported when referrals don't come back to me at all;

meaning they are not processed. There have been times when I have been

disrespected and had to call for administrators to remove students from my room.

Sometimes that has resulted in several days of ISS or nothing at all; at least not

that I am aware of. It might be that is the issue, maybe the student was disciplined

in a way that I didn't know of, but if I don't know that the student was disciplined

for their actions then I feel that I am not being supported. I think that no matter what I should receive some type of written response to a referral. If I spent the time to sit down and write the referral I think the minimum response back should at least be an explanation. Maybe there were other circumstances, I wasn't aware of that could help my situation in the future. If a student has a problem and an administrator knows about it then I think they should share it with me, so that I am better able to handle that student in the future. If an administrator chooses not to respond, then I want that on paper, so that if the parent of the child comes back to me and says, "Well why didn't, you do anything?" I can show them the referral. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Additionally, Bo indicated he does not feel supported by administrators if they are not ensuring policies are consistently enforced by all teachers. Bo stated,

I don't feel very supported when either one I am enforcing policies, and I am not being praised for continuing to do it, or two I am seeing other teachers not enforcing those rules and not having anything happen to them. I feel that both situations; create a feeling that what I am doing is not important or is not being supported. So they are either, not supporting me and enforcing those rules or those rules are not important enough to be cared about. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Bo also expressed his frustration with the length of time it takes administrators to handle student discipline issues. Bo explained,

If a student is being removed from my class for discipline; it shouldn't happen three or four days after the incident. They should be taken out immediately. There

should be an immediate consequence that is shown for their actions. I think that is

how I would feel most supported. I don't think always not only the student that is

being disciplined, but the class itself sees what is happening if the student's

discipline is delayed by several days. If they are very destructive in my class and

then they are not in my class for the next two days; most students can connect the

dots and be like that student was kicked out of the class for two days because of

their behavior. If the student is allowed to remain if my class for several days,

before being punished, I think that actually reinforces the negative behavior.

Because nothing has happened, the student feels that they got away with saying

whatever they wanted, and now they are going to do it again because nothing

happened. I really do think that makes the students feel empowered; that they can

continue doing what they shouldn't, because no immediate action was taken.

(personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Danny was equally frustrated with the length of time it takes administrators to handle

student discipline issues and provide feedback to teachers. Danny shared,

I feel a lack of support when I have to deal with the same child, and I have to give

the second referral before the first one has been handled. It may take two or three

weeks to get a copy of the referral back, and then a lot of times it is coded, and I

still don't know what happened. I think this creates a problem for the child as well

as for the teacher. If it were handled immediately the first time; I don't think the

second referral would occur. When you have a conflict with a kid; you have to

have an immediate consequence. The child does not need to go home that day

thinking that he has gotten away with something, or sending the child home that

day wondering what will happen. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

*Summary.* The participants shared both positive and negative experiences with

administrative support in matters of student discipline. All of the participants recalled

times when they were supported by administrators in matters of student discipline. The

majority of participants felt they were being supported when student discipline was

handled on a consistent basis, in a timely manner, with appropriate consequences, and

feedback was given. Several participants also indicated it was important for

administrators to trust their explanations of situations.

Although all of the participants were able to recall a time when they felt supported

in a matter of student discipline, only one believed he had been consistently supported by

administrators. Three of the participants admitted they were not always satisfied the

consequences assigned for discipline infractions matched the severity of the infractions.

There were also three participants who felt discipline referrals were often ignored by

administrators. Additionally, two participants expressed their frustrations with the length

of time it takes administrators to handle student discipline referrals. Finally, four of the

participants indicated they do not always receive feedback concerning the outcomes of

referrals.

*Support with Parents*

When the participants were asked to describe ways their current or former

administrators showed support in problems with parents, they all responded quickly with

examples. Harold, Connie, and Wendy described times when administrators supported

them by refusing to allow parents to be disrespectful to them.

Harold proudly recalled,

> I was in a parent conference where we had a problem with a student, and the
> parent really started to berate me and started getting loud. My principal at the time
> totally cut that parent off, and explained that we do not talk to each other in this
> kind of way. He explained to the parent that we show respect. We may not like
> everything that is happening, but we use a different manner to express it. I really
> felt like he was backing me up, not because of the decision I made, but because of
> the way I was being treated. The principal made sure the parent would show you
> respect; whether, they agreed with the decision I made or not. (personal
> communication, March 6, 2009)

Connie confidently stated,

> I had a former principal who would immediately stop a parent conference; if a
> parent in any way became abusive of a teacher. If a parent refused to leave, after a
> teacher was dismissed from a conference, the parent was arrested. The principal
> and assistant principal would always defend me in public, and on occasion would
> chew me out in private. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Wendy also spoke with assurance as she said,

> My former principal never allowed anyone to come in and be crazy, he always
> trusted what we said and had our backs. I had a situation with a special needs
> student in my class and the principal sat in on the parent conference. The mother
> of the student began to be very rude and disrespectful and the principal
> immediately stopped the conference and came to my defense.

He told the mother that she was not going to talk to me that way and that she was

going to treat me with respect. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Lynn, Sam, and Bo all recalled instances when administrators supported decisions

they made. Lynn happily shared,

I think one way that I have felt supported by a principal is when they will meet

with parents, but they will ask the teacher to come in, and they explain to the

parent why a certain procedure is in place. I was coaching a group of defiant

students, and I told them I was going to cut the greater part of them off the team if

I didn't see changes, and that some of them would be put on probation. A parent

wanted to get very upset and went immediately to the principal, and he backed me

up and said, "Well, they were warned and that was the coach's call." He really

respected the time that we put in after school, recognizing that it was not

something that we had to do. I was really appreciative of that. (personal

communication, March 5, 2009)

Sam recalled a time when a principal supported a curriculum decision he made. Sam

bragged,

There was a time when I was teaching a particular book in my class. A parent had

a concern about what I was teaching and called a board member. My principal

called me to the office, informed me of the complaint, and asked me if I was

teaching this. I told her; I was indeed teaching this. The principal asked me if it

was a requirement in my curriculum, and I told her it was. The principal then

stated that I would not hear another word about it, and I never did. Instead of me

having to worry about this, she took care of everything. The principal informed

the parent and the board member that everything was on the up and up, and there

was nothing unusual going on in my classroom. I never had to deal with it.

Because of the support I received, I was able to keep my head where it should be,

with my kids. I felt this was a very supportive thing to do. (personal

communication, March 3, 2009)

Bo seemed grateful as he spoke about a parent who was unhappy with a decision he made

and went directly to the principal with the complaint. Bo described,

In my early years of teaching, I had a complaint from a parent, and they went

right over my head to the principal. The principal talked to me about it, and said

she was not even sure she wanted to tell me about it, but here is what happened,

and here is how I responded. The way she responded was she reinforced

everything that I had already told the student and the parent. The student had been

ill and had an excused absence, but I said she still had to do something to make up

for the grade she missed. I said I thought the fair thing for her to do was to come

in sometime after school and make it up. Well the student didn't like that at all

and neither did the parent. So, the parent didn't ask me about it but went to the

principal. The principal said, "I agree with the teacher's decision and I think that

is fair, and she definitely does have to do something to make up for the grade."

The principal directly supported and just completely reinforced what I had said.

(personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Bo also shared a similar situation in which parents attempted to take their concerns

directly to the principal rather than meeting with him first to discuss their concerns. Bo

explained,

I can think of another time when some other parents have tried to go over my

head, before, talking to me about things. I think another way of showing support

was to have the parents set up a meeting with me first, before, talking to an

administrator about it. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Additionally, Bo and Danny shared situations in which administrators supported

them by believing what they said rather than what a parent said. Bo stated,

I had a situation one time where the parent told the principal something, that her

child told her, that wasn't true. The principal said, "Well I am sorry, but I will

have to trust the word of the professional that I hired over one of the students in

the school." That is what I felt was very crucial. I guess I would have to say if that

didn't happen I probably wouldn't have stayed at that school for very long. I feel

as a professional you are hiring me and doing a background check on me. I am an

adult, and I have had many years of education, and I have no reason to hurt these

students. If you are not going to trust what I say, and you are going to trust the

word of a kid who is just trying to get out of trouble and doesn't have that

experience, then this is probably not the place for me. (personal communication,

March 2, 2009)

Danny seemed pleased as he said,

I told a parent that I would let their child turn in some missing assignments for

half credit. The child lied to his parent, and told them that I would no longer let

him turn in the assignments, and they called the administrator to complain. He

came to me and stated he knew they were not telling the truth, "because you said

you were going to do it and you would do it." He said," the child is lying to the

parent." He instructed me to put a print out in the student's hand, that day, of

everything he owes me and give him a deadline of Friday. I felt this was

important, even though the parent complained they believed my side more so than

the parent. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Conversely, when the participants were asked to describe ways their current or

former administrators did not show support with parents only Lynn, Wendy, and Bo

could think of examples. Lynn seemed quite disgusted as she shared,

I put a girl on silent lunch, and she lied and told her parent that she was not

allowed to eat. The administrator came to my door asking why this child was not

allowed to eat. While I am sure she was just doing her job, the way she asked me

was very accusatory and it took away from my respect of her as a professional,

because she did not give me professional courtesy. I ended up calling the parent

with the guidance counselor on speaker phone to straighten it out. This

administrator was really just kind of incompetent and often backed up parents.

She knew the child was lying, but she didn't really know how to, I guess,

approach the parents and say these are the procedures and this is what happened. I

just took it into my own hands to call that parent, because I knew that she would

basically support the child and it would become a lot bigger than it actually was.

(personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Wendy and Bo each described situations in which administrators failed to support them

by not attending parent conferences they requested for administrators to attend.

Wendy's displeasure was evident as she described,

There was one time when I asked an administrator to sit in on a parent conference and he said that he would, but he never showed up. I told him that I was concerned about what the child and their parent would say. He never let me know that he wasn't going to come, and I never asked him about it later, because I figured it was pointless. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Bo sounded disappointed as he explained,

There were a couple of times that I requested that an administrator be at a conference that I had with a parent. They asked me to go to the conference first and see what happened; before, they were going attend a conference with them. I kind of felt unsupported at the time. If I feel that I need an administrator there then it is kind of an iffy situation, and I think it would serve us all better if that were to happen. What I expected to happen at the conference happened, and the parent kind of stormed off and didn't listen to what I had to say. He said, "Well I don't care what you have to say. I am going straight to the principal and talk to her about this situation." Yelling at me out the office and all I could say is, "I am sorry you feel this way, but yes if you feel that way then set up a conference with an administrator." What I feel was a very difficult situation, having a parent yell at me in front of other students, could have been adverted if the principal would have been there and supportive in the first place. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

*Summary.* All of the participants eagerly shared experiences with administrators who supported them with parents. Three participants described times when administrators supported them by refusing to allow parents to be disrespectful to them. Additionally,

three participants recalled instances when administrators supported decisions they made.

Two participants shared situations in which administrators supported them by believing

what they said rather than what parents said. Conversely, when the participants were

asked to describe ways their current or former administrators did not show support with

parents only three participants shared examples. One participant revealed that an

administrator failed to support her by not handling a situation professionally. Also, two

participants acknowledged administrators failed to support them by not attending parent

conferences that they requested for the administrators to attend.

*Accessibility and Willingness to Listen*

The participants were asked to give examples of how their current or former

administrators showed they were accessible. All of the participants indicated that it is

important for administrators to be accessible and willing to listen. Also, all of the

participants stated that at some point in their careers they had administrators, who they

believed, they could talk to anytime. Bo and Lynn indicated all of the administrators that

they have worked for maintained an open door policy. Bo smiled as he explained,

> All of the principals that I have had have been really been great with this. They all
>
> had an open door policy; that you don't need to set up an appointment, and you
>
> don't need to send an e-mail first, that anytime you need to come in you can just
>
> come in and talk about anything that is on your mind. (personal communication,
>
> March 2, 2009)

Lynn reflected for a moment before saying,

> You know, I haven't really ever felt that an administrator was not accessible to
>
> me. I think when their doors are open and they are willing to talk to teachers; that

to me always makes me feel like I can come in and talk to them or when they will

ask about certain things going on; it could be student discipline or just different

programs we have going on in school. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Sam not only described an administrator who maintained an open door policy, but who

also would frequently invite him in to talk. Sam spoke with pride as he shared,

I had a principal for several years that always had her door open; unless the

meeting she was in required it be closed for privacy. She would often, when I was

around helping in the office or making copies, invite me in and talk with me about

what was going on. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Connie felt being accessible involved more than just having an open door policy. Connie

described being accessible as, "Having an open door policy, responding to emails in a

timely manner, and having a personality that is calm and consistently polite" (personal

communication, March 6, 2009).

Harold, Danny, and Wendy all gave examples of administrators who had an open

door policy, but also stressed the importance of administrators keeping an open mind and

not being quick to pass judgment. Harold explained,

I was always able to walk into my principal's office and talk to him about

anything I needed to talk with him about, and he would sit and listen to any

concerns I might have. He would listen about different areas, and he never once

told me he did not have the time to talk with me. Also, I had an accusation being

made one time that I had said something about another teacher. I went in and

talked to the principal about it and was told about what had happened. They

wanted to know my side before any judgment was made. I could have been

wrong, but at least they were willing to listen to what I had to say first. I do think

it makes it easier for us to talk about problems and things; when you are talking to

someone who is going to listen without being too judgmental. (personal

communication, March 6, 2009)

Danny paused for a moment before saying,

I think that my principal here is pretty accessible as far as being able to walk in

and sit down to talk with her. I think principals need to be very open minded with

people that have been there for a long time and keep a good eye on what is going

on. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Wendy stated,

Principal's need to listen, be open-minded, and be a support system for teachers.

They need to maintain an open door policy. Don't jump to conclusions always

hear both sides of the story, before, you start judging and passing down law. I feel

like I can always go and talk to my administrator about what is going on.

(personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Connie, Wendy, Harold, Sam, and Danny all agreed that they had also

experienced administrators who were not accessible and willing to listen to them. Connie

explained one administrator showed he was not accessible "by having a closed door,

being consistently ill-tempered, and displaying no body language or hostile body

language" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).Wendy disappointedly recalled,

I had an administrator that I felt like I couldn't talk to, because he was not going

to be supportive. I felt like he was more concerned about how a situation was

going to effect his day. He didn't want to deal with anything that might make his

day more stressful so rather than deal with things he just shut you out. (personal

communication, March 10, 2009)

Harold raised his voice as he said,

I had one who after a year had not established a rapport with me whatsoever. It

was not so much that he was aloof, but he was not very personable. I didn't feel I

could talk with him about issues and things, so I didn't. (personal communication,

March 6, 2009)

Sam sounded irritated as he described,

For probably two to two and a half years, I had a principal who was never in his

office. If you found him around school; he was not willing to stop and chat. Any

time he was talking with you it was clear that it was a superficial conversation.

You could have been anybody, anywhere. If it was not something on paper, which

followed the paper chain up to his office and back down to you, you very rarely

got a chance to talk with him. I never would have gone to him for anything,

because it was clear to me that he would not have given me anything more than

lip service. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

   *Summary.* All of the participants indicated, at some point, in their careers they

had administrators who were accessible and willing to listen. Two participants

acknowledged that all of the administrators that they had worked for maintained an open

door policy. Additionally, one participant had an administrator who would frequently

invite him in to talk. Another, participant stated being accessible also involved

responding to emails in a timely manner and being consistently polite. Furthermore, three

participants mentioned it is important for administrators to keep an open mind and not be quick to pass judgment.

Conversely, five participants agreed they had experienced administrators who were not accessible and willing to listen. One participant described an administrator who was not accessible by saying he had a closed door, a bad temper, and uninviting body language. Another, participant spoke about an administrator who found it easier to shut teachers out rather than to deal with them. Additionally, one participant explained a former administrator never established a rapport with him. Finally, one participant recalled an administrator who he felt, at best, only engaged teachers in superficial conversations.

*Respect as Professionals*

The participants were asked to give examples of how their current or former administrators demonstrated their respect for them as professionals. All of the participants agreed that they wanted to be respected for the professionals which they have become. Sam expressed how important being respected as a professional is for him by stating,

> At this point in my career, I think administrative support for me is respecting the professional that I have become by not questioning my judgment, and by providing the resources I need to do the things that I need to get done in my classroom. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Additionally, all of the participants agreed that when administrators value their input they feel respected as professionals. Harold confidently reported,

On several occasions, I have had an administrator come and ask my opinion on something. How do I think something may work? How can we work at things better? When I have introduced and talked about different subjects; they have listened intently. If for some reason it could not be done; they explained to me why it could not be done. They did not dismiss me. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Harold also described how he knew a former administrator valued his input. Harold said,

A couple of times on suggestions I made, he did follow through with them. One time we had issues with failures, and how we were going to handle them. I told him we needed to look to the eighth grade kids coming in and try to save them rather than trying to get the kids who had already failed to come up. Be proactive and take care of it, before, it got to us rather than after the fact. He implemented a program which helped us to do this. We highlighted the children we thought would have problems; we didn't tell the kids, but we did it and it worked pretty well. The number of kids we had dropping out declined fairly significantly. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Lynn explained, how administrators could show her that her input was valued, by saying,

I think when they act on your input or a discipline is something that I suggested. I think also when they put you in charge of certain things, because you had a good idea. Maybe send another colleague to you, because they know you are strong in a certain area. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

In addition, to having their input valued Danny, Connie, and Bo felt respected as professionals when administrators trusted them to do their jobs. Danny adamantly stated,

To me it is acknowledgement of the fact that when I come in 30 to 40 minutes

before the bell every day, and I decide to leave at 3:30 or 3:40 it is not a big deal.

I have put in more than a lot of teachers who worked that day, and how hard I

work. If I am done and don't have any other duties or responsibilities; then no one

should say anything about me walking out at 3:35. I have been here more hours

than I am required to be here. The administration should trust that I have done

what I needed to do for the day. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Connie was very direct when she said, "I feel respected when an administrator asks for

my opinion on issues that affect me in the classroom also simply allowing me to do my

job, and trusting me to do my job" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Bo excitedly shared,

There are plenty of times that I have felt trusted, and I guess that would be the

best example of how I felt respected. I feel trusted when my decisions that I make

for my program are followed through without much push. I feel that I am trusted,

because the things that I selected are almost always approved without any

questions. So, the direction that I have for my program is trusted by the

administration. Through their approval it allows me to feel free and flexible in

those programs to do what I want to do, and take the direction that I want to go. I

think they do trust that I have my program's best interest in mind when I make

those decisions. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Another, way administrators made Wendy, Lynn, and Sam feel respected as

professionals was by asking them to take on other roles in addition to teaching.

Wendy eagerly told how a former administrator made her feel respected as a professional when she explained,

> As a first year teacher, my principal I guess saw something in me and made me department chair. I was also a part of a curriculum writing team. He was always encouraging me to take leadership roles. Also, when I am put on committees that are truly going to effect outcomes like with discipline and curriculum. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Lynn enthusiastically said,

> Every time they ask me to be on a leadership team or do another job for the school; I feel respected as a professional. I also feel respected as a professional when they ask to move students into my classroom that might be having problems in another class, or when they ask me to try a new program or a new class or something like that. I really felt supported as a professional when they asked me to teach an advanced placement class, before I even began to teach at the school. That was really nice to have that encouragement already. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Sam proudly conveyed,

> There have been a lot of occasions where my principals asked me to go to certain trainings, because they thought that I would work well with a particular group of students, or I would work well as a redeliverer. I have served as a redelivery person for one school and as a trainer. I consider this a leadership role to be able to pass on information to others. I think it is a lot of responsibility to give

someone. They trusted me with these responsibilities, and I felt respected as a professional. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Although Wendy, Sam, Connie, and Danny felt they had often been respected as professionals, they readily acknowledged there were times when they were not respected. Wendy and Sam described times when administrators were not interested in their input concerning curriculum issues. Wendy resentfully recalled,

There was a new program that we tried one year and a lot of people really didn't understand the new program. Some of us gave suggestions about how to fill in the gaps for the kids who, we knew, were going to struggle with the new program. We told the administration what we thought would help, but our suggestions were ignored and no other suggestions were given in their place. We were asked what we thought would help, and then when we told them it was like "well I don't think that would work." There was no more discussion about how to fix the problem. There was a high failure rate after we started the new program and no one seemed to understand or wanted to hear about the problem. When you talked about it they just said, "well we know," and you got the impression that they didn't want to hear about it. A lot of administrators forget what it is like to be in the classroom, and when they want to implement new policies they should probably listen to and get feedback from teachers before saying this is the way it is going to be. I think more teachers would be receptive to what they had to say if they did that. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Sam bitterly shared,

> I was at another school that did not have an honors and advanced placement
> program, and several of us were approached to go and get training; to select
> textbooks; and to write curriculum. The process took two years to plan for
> including a lot of time during summers, on weekends, and after school. I was
> quite proud of the curriculum that we developed. After one year of having the
> program, they decided they were going to do away with the whole program.
> Taxpayer money was spent on training and books that could not be used for other
> classes. The teachers who had spent all of that time and hard work to build and
> teach those classes were not consulted about the discontinuation of the program. It
> was announced at the board meeting by the principal. The board approved, and
> the teachers who worked so hard found out after the fact. I felt that I deserved to
> have my opinion heard. There is almost always a middle ground, and a solution
> could have been accomplished. When you have highly trained professionals in
> your building, and their opinions are not considered as a resource; this was
> disrespectful to us and not fair to us, or the students we were teaching. That was
> probably the straw that broke the camel's back and I decided to move on. It was
> the biggest thing, in a series of events, by that principal and the board that made it
> clear to me that I was more of a number than a person. I felt disrespected, and for
> the amount of work and hours that I put in outside of the normal day, I felt it was
> unwarranted. I could not work in a place where I was so under appreciated.
> (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Connie recalled a former administrator who did not value her input regarding the morale of the faculty. Connie said,

> One time some other teachers and I were discussing the poor faculty morale with the principal, and he informed us that he was not responsible for our personal happiness. It immediately said to us that he did not value our opinions. Administrators need to understand that they are responsible for the morale of the faculty. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Danny was also indignant as he described a time when he reached his breaking point; due to, the lack of professional respect he was shown by an administrator. Danny stated,

> At a former school, I had the best test scores with both advanced and average students, yet a first year teacher was brought in and was given all of the advanced and gifted classes. I was given three different classes and three different preps. It was not fair to bring in someone new and give them the top classes after I had produced good results. It is like promoting from within, if you are doing well, why would go outside to bring in someone with basically no track record. When I went to the administrator to talk to him about my schedule; I was told if I wanted to seek employment elsewhere I could. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Danny went on to explain that he was more upset about the way he was treated, than he was about the classes that he had been assigned to teach. Danny said,

> I want to be happy with what I am teaching, but I would be more tolerant of what I am teaching, or accept what I am teaching a lot more if I have a good relationship with the administrator. If you feel like you have a good relationship

with your principal, they like you and support you this makes all the difference in the world. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

*Summary.* Each of the participants was able to recall a time when administrators demonstrated their respect for them as professionals. One participant indicated it was important for administrators not to question his judgment and to provide him with the resources he needed. All of the participants agreed when administrators value their input they feel respected as professionals. Three participants mentioned they feel respected as professionals when administrators trust them to do their jobs. Additionally, three participants stated they feel respected as professionals when they are asked to take on leadership roles in addition to teaching.

Conversely, four participants described times they were not respected as professionals by administrators. Two participants spoke about times when administrators were not interested in their input concerning curriculum issues. Another, participant recalled a time when a former administrator did not value her input regarding the morale of the faculty. Additionally, one participant indicated he felt he was not respected as a professional when the honors and gifted classes, with which he had been successful, were taken from him and assigned to a teacher with less experience.

*Recognition, Appreciation, and Rewards*

Acknowledgment from administrators of the time and hard work put in by teachers was appreciated by all of the participants; however, some participants valued it more than others. Lynn stressed how important administrative recognition and appreciation were to her by explaining,

The biggest thing that makes me feel supported is acknowledgment of extracurricular things, that I am doing, that take away from my personal time but go above and beyond the regular school day. I am the type of teacher who does multiple activities after school, and I am at the school more than I am at home. I had a principal, one time, get up during a faculty meeting and thank all of the football coaches and all of the basketball coaches and never say one word about the sport I was coaching, so I was kind of like well okay. I was also on the leadership team and team leader at the time. I was doing all of these different jobs, and not once did he say anything about me. He kept recognizing multiple groups in all of the faculty meetings, and he would always call on me if he needed something or whatever. Then one day in a faculty meeting he thanked a girl for ordering pizza, and I had just had it. I was done. Once he did that, I decided it was probably time to go to another school. I think with your more seasoned, veteran teachers you just have to show your appreciation for them, and give them the tools they need to get different jobs done, and really appreciate the uniqueness that every teacher brings to the table, because everyone has something to offer. I think in your veteran teachers, if you can find what their particular thing is then they will feel more valued. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Lynn also described a positive experience with an administrator demonstrating their appreciation for her work by saying, "It was very simple, I just got a note in my box from them telling me that they appreciated my support of them, and the work that I do" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

Bo shared, praise from administrators is even more important to him now than when he first began teaching, by stating,

I appreciate praise. I think everybody does. They all want to know that they are appreciated, or that their superiors think they are doing a good job. I think that trickles down, as soon as I hear a principal saying that we have done well then I can share that with the students, and they also feel proud. I think I probably appreciate more praise now than early one. I think what I have noticed in some of the jobs that I have been at is that principals seem to praise a lot more frequently when you first start out, but as you stay at a job that diminishes. I think that is normal, but I think that it would also be nice if there was just a little reminder that they are still watching, and that they still think you are doing good. If they just sent emails or wrote notes, I think that would make you feel that you are still valued. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Sam and Danny expressed that they still enjoy being praised and rewarded by administrators; however, it is not as important to them now, as it was early in their careers. Sam shared,

I think we go through in our careers the same kind of growing that children go through in their educations. When children are young they need more hand holding and people to tell them they are doing a good job. I needed this when I was a beginning teacher. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Danny explained,

I think that I am a lot more secure in myself and my job, than I was in the past. At this time, I feel like more of a part of a team and that my job is secure. I feel good

about where I am at and my relationship to my principal. I think there was a time
when, I was a little more of a needy teacher. Now, I feel like they are a peer rather
than a boss. The support I value now is them knowing and believing in what I am
doing, and this is the most important thing. In past years, I took situations more to
heart and was a little more upset and concerned about them than I am today. I
needed more support, pats on the back, than I do today. However, I think the less I
need them the more I get. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

For Harold and Sam, administrators, simply saying thank you is appreciated.
Harold said, "I have been one of those people who really felt good about when they tell
you thank you for doing a good job" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).
Sam stated,

I am not always out for a thank you. I see what needs to be done, and I do it as I
am sure that 99% of my colleagues do, but it is nice to get from a leader, "hey I
saw what you did, thanks." (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Sam also spoke about how a former administrator would privately recognize teachers
when she saw them doing something well. Sam happily recalled,

She would not stop you in the middle of doing good to tell you were doing the
right thing; she would tell you later on maybe a week later. She would always find
a way to let you know. One time I dealt with a kid in the hallway and she liked the
way I handled the situation. Later I found a sticky note in my mailbox with a
smiley face and her initial. She would recognize you in a more private way, and
you knew she really cared. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Additionally, Sam commented on administrators recognizing teachers in front of the faculty rather than privately. Sam reflected on his career as he said,

> If I am going to be recognized for something, in front of the faculty, I want it to be for something they can use as well. If I am doing something in my classroom that I can turn around and share with them, that would improve what they are doing, that is a good time to recognize this. This is where I am in my career now. In my growth, I feel very comfortable with what goes on in my four walls, and I want to help other people, who are not so comfortable, with what is going on in their four walls. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Sam, Wendy, Lynn, Connie, and Danny also commented on ways they had been rewarded by administrators. Sam, Wendy, and Lynn shared that administrators had rewarded them by assigning them to leadership positions. Lynn explained that she liked to be rewarded by being "encouraged to take on different leadership roles and get active in making changes to make the school better" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Lynn also shared an experience, in which all the teachers at her school were rewarded for implementing a new procedure for checking dress code compliance. Lynn stated,

> I appreciated when we had to do the whole going into another classroom and check dress code, and they gave us the dress down day and gave us lunch. I thought that was really nice, because I wasn't fully on board with that, I did it, but I wasn't fully on board and it helped to kind of make me feel a little more at ease in doing those checks and that sort of thing. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Connie mentioned a former administrator would occasionally reward teachers by surprising them with a substitute, to cover their class, so they could have lunch off campus. Danny explained that he was rewarded for his dedication and achievement with his advanced students, by being given the option to move up to the next grade with them or remain in the same grade and teach a new group of advanced students. Danny expressed his thoughts about being rewarded for his dedication by saying,

Administrators should reward loyalty. They should reward the fact that someone has been there. This does not mean to reward poor teaching. Reward someone who has given results, and who at least has a clue about what is going on at a school. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

*Summary.* All of the participants shared at least one experience in which they were recognized or rewarded by an administrator, and only one participant recalled an experience with not being recognized by an administrator. One participant indicated praise from administrators is even more important to him now than it was when he was a novice teacher. Five participants expressed although they still enjoy being praised and rewarded by administrators, it is not as important to them now as it was early in their careers. Two participants acknowledged administrators simply saying thank you is appreciated.

Additionally, one participant commented on administrators recognizing teachers privately versus recognizing them in front of the faculty. Three participants shared that administrators have rewarded them by assigning them to leadership positions. One participant also mentioned teachers at her school have been rewarded with lunch and dress down days. Another, participant stated a former administrator occasionally

rewarded teachers by surprising them with a substitute, to cover their class, so they could have lunch off campus. Finally, one participant explained he feels teachers who have been loyal, and who have demonstrated success with students should be rewarded.

*Care for Individuals*

All of the participants indicated they appreciate it when administrators take an interest in them personally as well as professionally. Although all of the participants appreciated administrators caring for them personally, some of them valued it more than others. Sam expressed how important having an administrator who cares about him as person is by sharing,

> Just recently, I lost a family member, and prior to this I was leaving school early to go to the hospital. For about three weeks, I was not at my best as a teacher or department head. She asked me on a daily basis how my family was doing, or if there was anything that she personally, or the school could do for me. She asked me if I was okay coming in to teach, if I was getting everything done, and did I need help. Really, I did not feel at any time that she was out of touch with what was going on with me. In a building where you have this many people working for you, this is saying a lot that she knew on a day to day basis even when I had not said a lot. On the day, I got the phone call that he had died; I had tried to come to school for a training session. When the message was delivered to me my principal said, "you need to go now and don't worry about anything, I will take care of everything." This meant the world to me that they felt I needed to be there for my family. Every administrator I have considered a good one has been able to

show me, in some way, they care about me as a person. This is the bottom line.

(personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Danny spoke about an administrator who showed a great deal of concern for his health.

Danny proudly explained,

I have had some major health issues, and she has been extremely supportive and

has never complained about my having to be out for medical reasons. In other

words, it was not a question of whether I felt pressure to try and be here even

though I was not well. She was super about making sure I took care of myself

number one. This was very important to me. Also, I think if administrators are

willing to make small talk on occasion; have a conversation with you and are a

little interested about you, and your life and what you are about then I think they

are reaching out to you. Letting you know they are interested in what you are

going through everyday, and what your life is like makes it a better environment.

(personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Connie shared an experience with an administrator who understood, because she was ill it

was not the best day for him to observe her teaching. Connie sounded relieved as she

said,

I was very, very ill one time, and I did not know that my principal came by to

observe. I went to him, and told him I was at work, because I could not get a sub.

I asked if he could do another observation, and he agreed. He said he wondered

what was wrong. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Lynn acknowledged that she wants administrators to take an interest in her personally

and also to respect the fact that she has a personal life. Lynn stated,

I think definitely, I want them to want to know about my personal life and ask and want to engage in conversations. One time I had a friend buy tickets to a show as a gift for me and totally surprised me, but it was the same weekend as a school event I was coordinating. The administrators just totally helped in taking over and implementing my plan even though I wasn't there, and it wasn't a big deal that I wasn't there. They respected that part of my personal life and that was really nice. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Additionally, Lynn commented on administrators showing they care by having a sense of humor. Lynn explained, "When they poke fun at you and they know your personality, and you know that they are joking with you I think that really makes a work environment that you want to come to" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

Although Wendy stated that she does appreciate concern from administrators, she does not wish for administrators to become too involved in her personal life. Wendy explained,

One time I was having some issues outside of school, and I had to find somewhere else to live very quickly. I went to the principal to let her know what was going on, so that she would know why I had to be out for a couple of days. She offered to let me stay with her, and even gave me her personal number. She knew that if certain things were not in order in my personal life that I could not be an effective teacher. I do appreciate concern from administrators, and them asking how I am doing but not taking it too far. I am really one of those people who like things totally separate. I don't work at home, and I don't talk about my personal life at school. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Harold and Bo expressed although it is nice, it is not necessary for administrators to take an interest in them personally. Harold said,

It is not a big deal if they take an interest in me personally. It does help, to a certain extent, if you know you can go up and talk to this person that they are approachable and all conversations do not necessarily have to deal with the school spectrum. The issues do not always have to be school, as teachers we need people to talk to as well and sometimes people above us to help us understand things better. They do not have to be our friends, but they do need to be our mentors. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Bo seemed indecisive when he stated,

I don't think there should ever be a time when they are required, on paper, to have to care about what is happening in the personal life of a teacher. I don't think it would be unprofessional for them to ask is everything going okay, but I don't think they should have to. I would appreciate it. I think I would feel like I was more in a caring environment if that were to happen. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Additionally, Sam and Danny mentioned former administrators who they felt were not interested in them as individuals. Sam described his relationship with a former administrator by saying, "I never really felt he knew anything about me or cared to know anything about me other than a body in a classroom keeping kids out of trouble" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Danny explained,

I have had schools where I thought the administrators would almost give you the cold shoulder, and this not an environment I want to work in. I had some I

actually felt animosity towards; again, not a work environment that I wanted to work in. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

*Summary.* The majority of the participants shared experiences with administrators they believed cared about them as individuals. However, two of the participants also shared experiences with administrators who did not care about them as individuals. One participant explained how important it was for him to have an administrator help him during the loss of a family member. Two participants spoke about administrators who were empathetic during times they were having health issues. One participant acknowledged she wants administrators to take an interest in her personally and to respect the fact that she has a personal life. Another, participant stated although she does appreciate concern from administrators, she does not wish for administrators to become too involved in her personal life. Finally, two participants indicated it is nice, but not necessary for administrators to care about them as individuals.

*Visibility, Communication, and Resources*

When describing their experiences with administrative support some of the participants commented on the lack of administrative presence in their classrooms. The majority of the participants stated that they would like for administrators not only to see what they are doing in their classroom, but also to communicate with them about their classes. Lynn emphatically said,

I feel like as teachers, we come up with a lot of exciting lessons and we want them to see those and to see what students are doing. Come in and tell me some things to help my teaching style or that sort of thing. Also, when they come in and

interact with kids in our lesson; I think that really helps me to feel like I am

supported in what I am doing. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

When asked what topic she would like more communication with administrators on Lynn

said,

I think it would be with setting up our schedules for next year asking us what

worked out and what didn't work out; really kind of hammering things out a little

more narrowly. I know that scheduling is very difficult for them, but really

focusing on what we need as teachers, and asking us as far as scheduling goes,

maybe materials those sorts of things I think that would really help in the

classroom. Rather than changing things up three weeks into the semester.

(personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Connie shared an experience in which administrators refused to communicate with her

about her teaching schedule. Connie stated, "I feel I was treated unfairly when I was

assigned to teach courses in which I am not certified and in no way proficient" (personal

communication, March 6, 2009). Additionally, speaking about the visibility of

administrators, Connie assuredly stated, "Administrators need to be at school as much as

teachers and be out and about all day" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Danny reported that it is important to him for administrators not to just say you are doing

a good job, but for them to notice you are doing a good job. Danny assuredly stated,

To come by and see what you are doing in your classroom; what you are doing

well and what you are not doing well. Basically, no one knows what I am doing

here, except for my one observation, no one even comes by to see. Frankly, I

don't mind principals being in the classroom. It might change my behavior a little,

but it will not change the overall picture of what I am trying to accomplish. They

need to see what I am doing, or what I am not doing. I think if they are not

looking at me, and what I think is a good job there are probably a lot of people

doing a poor job and getting away with it. (personal communication, March 4,

2009)

Bo asserted his opinion when he shared,

I don't hear often from them which I know is usually a good sign, but I would

appreciate more frequent communication, and them being the first one to

communicate. Instead, of them just responding to an email them originating an

email. Something that it is not just always me seeking their counsel, that they are

being proactive in communicating. I always feel that I could use more comments

on how I can improve. I think that throughout my entire career, it is a constant

motion of improvement, and that I can always improve no matter what. If they

can give me comments on how to improve, I would be grateful for those. I think

their presence is important. I think even if they were to come in occasionally, just

to listen or see what is going on without having to evaluate me or the students that

would kind of show appreciation or support. (personal communication, March 2,

2009)

Harold also expressed his desire for more communication with administrators, and added

that the tone of the communication is important. Harold revealed,

As a teacher, I like constructive criticism. If somebody comes and tells me,

Harold, you are doing something wrong, you need to do something this way or

better. I am looking with tunnel vision, from my own perspective without looking

from anywhere else. At least, I am getting that insight to help me be better at what

I do. A lot of times we all fall into ruts no matter how many years we have been

teaching, and need somebody from the outside looking in, and saying you are

doing a good job but. I think the way people handle constructive criticism is as

important as doing it. When you do it the negative way you are going to put

people off. They are going to be upset, and they do not want to do it anymore. If

you say, you are doing great, but here are some ideas that you might want to try,

people do not get their feelings hurt. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

Additionally, Sam commented on a former administrator who always remembered to ask

him questions related to what she had observed in his classroom. Sam expressed his

appreciation for the administrator demonstrating a continued interest in his classes by

stating,

She would ask me about things she had observed previously. "How is this going,

have you finished this, is that kid giving you any more trouble?" It was clear to

me that she thought enough of me, personally and professionally to remember and

to ask me about them later. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

In addition to communicating with them about their classes, some of the

participants expressed they feel more supported when administrators ensure they have the

resources they need to be successful. Lynn and Connie indicated having the classroom

supplies they need is important. Lynn explained how important classroom supplies are to

her by saying,

Oh, that is extremely important. I am a little meticulous about everything, because

I worry about not having it the next year. I think that really being able to order

what I need and having that freedom and that option and not having the

administration do it is really nice. It also makes me feel valued when they ask us

what they can get for us, and what we need. (personal communication, March 5,

2009)

Connie shared a disappointing experience with asking a former administrator for teaching

supplies. Connie said, "When I asked a former principal about teaching supplies, he

reached into a drawer and took out a piece of chalk and broke it in half and said here"

(personal communication, March 6, 2009). Sam recalled a time when he was not

provided with the resource, in this case a large enough classroom, he needed to be

successful. Sam explained,

There was a time when I moved classrooms three times in one semester. At the

time, I was at that particular school I moved classrooms at least once every year I

was there. One particular year, I began the year with one class of 36 students, and

all of my classes were at the legal limit. I was in a good size room and the school

got the chance for new equipment, for a language lab, and a large room was

needed. I had to move, and I was okay with this. No more than a month later, for

other reasons, I had to move to another room. I ended up in the smallest room on

the hallway, yet I still had very large classes and larger senior students. Nothing I

would seem to say to the principal would get him to change his mind or look at

moving a smaller class. I felt like this kind of stymied me and my kids for that

semester, all that uprooting and moving. This is a small thing, but something to

consider. The environment you put people in is a way to support or not support

them. I felt not supported at this time. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Additionally, Lynn, Connie, Sam, and Bo suggested by assisting teachers, or providing teachers with people to assist them, administrators are ensuring teachers have the resources they need to be successful. Lynn described how administrators are providing her with the resources to make a new class successful. Lynn stated,

It has been really nice, because not only have they given me a lot of freedom in that class, but they have given me a lot of support. I have several people from the board coming to help with the class and give me training individually, and I am going to three different conferences related to the subject. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

Rather than receive assistance from people outside of the school, Connie expressed a desire to have time to collaborate with colleagues. Connie said, "Administrators should provide time for teacher collaboration" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Additionally, Sam explained how a former administrator, without his knowledge, set up a collaborative relationship for him with another teacher. Sam said,

There was a guy that taught at the same school, and he was a "type A" involved in everything. At that point, I was in my room teaching my kids and doing a good job, but not involved in anything outside my classroom. This administrator introduced me to this guy, and made sure we would become friends by putting us on the same committees and giving us the same planning period, and she never told either one of us what she was doing. Her plan worked. We became very good friends and started collaborating and talking about things. We came up with some real good ideas, and I came out of my shell, volunteered, and did training. She understood what I needed even when I did not. I did not know what I needed to

bring myself out of my shell, and to bring me to the next level of what I was

suppose to be doing; from classroom awareness to school wide awareness. Instead

of just telling me, she figured out a way to make it happen without making me

retreat back into my hole. If she had said, "you need to volunteer to do

something." I would have volunteered, because I don't like to disappoint the

people I am working for. At the same time, I would have done one thing to get her

off my back. This other way, she eased me into it and made me understand that I

had a responsibility beyond the four walls of my classroom. I became a much

better teacher because of it. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Conversely, Bo described a time when he was not provided with the assistance he needed

to be successful. Bo disappointedly recalled,

I feel that I am treated unfairly when I am expected to go straight through the day

without any break or planning period. I feel it is unfair to ask me to work at a

school for eight hours straight with no down time, constantly supervising students

and then staying after school and supervising students for another five to eight

hours for a school event. There are days that I will go 16 straight hours

supervising students without a break. The very first time it happened, I brought it

to their attention that I don't have a break all day. I don't have a chance to even

eat my lunch. I said, "I really need some type of break during this day in order for

me to get through it," and they didn't do anything. They just said, "Well that is

what we have to do today and you are going to have to do the best you can." I just

didn't think that was fair that they couldn't find a substitute, or someone else to

cover for me for a few minutes, so that I could at least use the restroom. Even an

additional set of hands for a period that could have helped me to take care of some

tasks. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Bo also, shared how administrators could help him with the extracurricular activities he is

involved in, by saying,

I would feel more supported if they would ask me what they could do to help or

maybe even assign someone else to be with me. I think just professionally as an

administrator making sure that I have enough help, that I am being provided with

enough support, that when I am on all of these extra trips, and I am away from the

school that I have enough resources to be an adequate teacher and adequate

advisor. I think that would probably be one of the best things that I could see.

(personal communication, March 2, 2009)

*Summary.* The majority of the participants indicated they would like for

administrators to spend more time observing and communicating with them about their

classes. Two participants acknowledged they would like for administrators to

communicate with them about their teaching schedules. One participant reported he

would like for administrators not only to say he is doing a good job, but to really notice

he is doing a good job. Another, participant explained he did not hear from administrators

often and would appreciate them initiating more frequent communication. Additionally, a

participant reported the tone used by administrators when communicating with teachers is

important. Moreover, one participant expressed his appreciation for a former

administrator who demonstrated a continued interest in his classes.

Also, four participants explained administrative support, in the form of providing

teachers with the resources they need to be successful is important. The participants

shared both positive and negative experiences with administrators providing them with resources. Two participants shared that they value having the proper classroom supplies. Additionally, one participant recalled a time when he was not provided with a large enough classroom to accommodate his students. Four participants suggested, by assisting teachers or providing teachers with people to assist them, administrators are ensuring they have the resources they need to be successful. Finally, one participant discussed receiving assistance from people outside of the school, two participants mentioned collaborating with other teachers, and one participant indicated help from anyone would be appreciated.

<div align="center">*Subquestion 2*</div>

What commonalities exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

*Support with Student Discipline*

       The participants were asked to describe ways their current or former administrators showed support or did not show support in matters of student discipline and commonalities in responses were present. Commonalities in responses were noted relative to: how consistently student discipline issues were handled, appropriateness of consequences for student discipline, trusting teachers' words, timeliness of consequences for student discipline, providing feedback on student discipline, and acting upon teachers' recommendations for consequences.

       *Consistency.* Each of the participants indicated it is important that student discipline issues are consistently handled. Five participants shared their experiences with former administrators who they could always depend on to deal with student discipline

issues. Wendy described a former administrator by saying, "I had a principal one time that if you had a problem in your classroom you could just pick-up the phone and he would come down and get them" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Conversely, six participants described their frustrations with administrators who did not always take care of student discipline problems. Three of the six participants suggested by not dealing with these situations administrators made it difficult for them to enforce rules and procedures in their classrooms. Harold stated, "When they send them back without doing anything to them, it makes me look bad, it undermines my own ability to control my class" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

*Appropriateness.* Another, common response from participants involved administrators assigning appropriate consequences for student misbehavior. All of the participants expressed punishments assigned by administrators should fit the infractions committed by students. Five of the participants described incidents in which they believe appropriate consequences were assigned to students. Harold explained, "They gave the student the most they could give them depending on their own background as far as discipline is concerned" (personal communication, March, 6, 2009). Three participants also indicated they understand additional factors, such as students' prior discipline record, are often taken into consideration when consequences for misbehavior are assigned. Bo acknowledged, "I understand that sometimes there are more things going on with those decisions than I am aware of" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Conversely, six participants reported situations in which they were not satisfied with the punishments given to students. Sam acknowledged, "I have not always been satisfied the student got enough punishment, but I understand why" (personal

communication, March 3, 2009). Additionally, two of the participants spoke about occasions when students threatened them, and they did not believe the punishments assigned to the students were appropriate. Wendy said, "After, he threatened me he was suspended for 10 days. When the 10 days were up he came back to school and was back in my class for the rest of the year" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Likewise, Harold stated, I had an incident where a student threatened me physically and at best the child was given a slap on the wrist" (personal communication, March, 6, 2009).

Furthermore, two participants made very similar comments concerning how they felt supported by administrators who were impartial when assigning consequences for student misbehavior. Danny described administrators, who made him feel supported in matters of student discipline by stating,

> When there was a problem, they handled the referral exactly the way it was written and gave the child a consequence, there were no gray areas and there was not sitting on the fence one way or the other. It was a black and white matter and it was done. (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Similarly, Lynn said,

> As far as student discipline, I think when they strictly enforce the rules, when they are very just kind of black and white about it and go by the code of conduct book is when I feel supported. They are not emotionally involved in it they just look at okay this is the offense and here is your punishment and that is the end of it. (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

*Trust.* All of the participants also suggested that it is essential for administrators to trust them to tell the truth concerning matters of student discipline. Bo stated,

> With discipline referrals, if I just write what I see, and I am questioned about it later that kind of bothers me a little bit. It is not when they question me for clarification it's when they say well this student said this. Well I am telling you what happened, or least how I perceived it. Trusting my word or taking my word is usually what makes me feel supported. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Danny made the following comment about administrators dealing with student discipline referrals: "The really great ones handled it and did not second guess you" (Danny, personal communication, March 4, 2009). Connie described a situation in which an administrator did not trust the word of a teacher by stating, "I experienced a situation where a colleague was reprimanded for something based on the word of several students in the class; however, the teacher never had the opportunity to present his side of the story" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

*Timeliness.* Six of the seven participants spoke about their experiences with the length of time it took for administrators to handle discipline problems. Three participants shared experiences with administrators who were slow to deal with problems, and six participants described experiences with administrators who handled discipline infractions quickly. Connie described how quickly a former administrator responded to calls from teachers with student discipline issues by stating, "One administrator insisted that everyone respond to a call to a class by running" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Another, participant spoke about how slowly discipline referrals were dealt with

by saying, "I feel a lack of support when I have to deal with the same child, and I have to give the second referral, before the first one has been handled" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Three participants indicated they would like for administrators to handle discipline referrals immediately. Danny stated, administrators should "deal with infractions immediately" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Connie said administrators could support her with student discipline issues "by being consistent, fair, and immediate with consequences for student misconduct" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Bo also said he would feel supported "by having an immediate consequence that is shown for their actions" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

*Feedback.* Receiving feedback from administrators concerning the outcomes of discipline referrals was also a common topic mentioned by participants. Four of the participants described experiences with submitting discipline referrals to administrators and never receiving any feedback. Bo stated, "I think that no matter what I should receive some type of written response to a referral" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Danny explained that he may get a copy of the referral back a few weeks later; however, "a lot of times it is coded, some of them may be spelled out a little more than others, but often I do not know what has occurred" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

*Teacher recommendation.* Finally, two participants indicated when administrators act upon their recommendations, when assigning consequences to students for misbehavior, they feel supported. Bo explained, "If they come to me and they ask me how I feel, and I give them that response, and they follow up with what I have given them then that makes me feel supported" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Lynn described how administrators could make her feel supported by saying, "I think when

they act on your input, or a discipline is something that I suggested" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

*Support with Parents*

 The participants were also asked to describe ways their current or former administrators showed support or did not show support with parents and similar responses were given. Similarities in responses were noted relative to: not allowing parents to be disrespectful to teachers, supporting teachers' decisions, trusting teachers' words, and not attending parent conferences.

*Respect.* Three of the participants described situations in which administrators attended parent conferences and did not allow parents to be disrespectful to teachers. Connie said, "The principal would immediately stop a parent conference if a parent in anyway became abusive of a teacher" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Likewise, Wendy stated,

> The mother of the student began to be very rude and disrespectful and the principal immediately stopped the conference and came to my defense. He told the mother that she was not going to talk to me that way and that she was going to treat me with respect. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

*Support for decisions.* Three participants also shared incidents in which administrators supported them with parents by reinforcing decisions they made. Bo explained how an administrator supported him by stating, "The way she responded was she reinforced everything that I had already told the student and the parent" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Similarly, Lynn shared,

> I was coaching a group of defiant students, and I told them I was going to cut the
> greater part of them off the team if I didn't see changes and that some of them
> would be put on probation. A parent wanted to get very upset and immediately
> went to the principal, and he backed me up and said, "Well, they were warned and
> that was the coach's call." (personal communication, March 5, 2009)

*Trust.* Additionally, three participants shared similar responses concerning
administrators believing their explanation of a situation rather than what a parent said.
Danny recalled how an administrator reacted by saying, "I felt this was important, even
though the parent complained they believed my side more so than the parent" (personal
communication, March 4, 2009). Additionally, Bo described,

> I had a situation one time where the parent told the principal something that her
> child told her that wasn't true. The principal said well I am sorry, but I will have
> to trust the word of the professional that I hired over one of the students in the
> school. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

*Absence of Support.* Finally, two participants provided common responses related
to administrators not supporting them with parents. In both situations, the failure of
administrators to attend parent conferences, which the teachers requested for them to
attend, led to the teachers not being supported in problems with parents. Bo recalled,
"What I feel was a very difficult situation, having a parent yell at me in front of other
students, could have been adverted if the principal would have been there and supportive
in the first place" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Similarly, Wendy stated,
"There was one time when I asked an administrator to sit in on a parent conference and

he said that he would, but he never showed up" (personal communication, March 10, 2009).

*Accessibility and Willingness to Listen*

Participants were asked to give examples of how current or former administrators showed they were or were not accessible and willing to listen. Similar comments were made pertaining to the accessibility and willingness to listen of administrators in relation to administrators having an open door policy; being open-minded and not quick to make judgments; and not being accessible.

*Open door policy.* All of the participants agreed they had experienced at least one administrator in their career they felt was accessible and willing to listen. Two of the participants shared common experiences in which all of their administrators had been accessible and willing to listen. Lynn stated, "You know I haven't really ever felt that an administrator was not accessible to me" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Likewise, Bo explained,

> All of the principals that I have had have been really been great with this. They all had an open door policy that you don't need to set up an appointment, you don't need to send an e-mail first that anytime you need to come in you can just come in and talk about anything that is on your mind. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

*Open-minded.* Also, three participants made similar comments about administrators being open-minded and not quick to make judgments. Harold recalled a time when he was accused of saying something about another teacher and stated, "They wanted to know my side before any judgment was made. I could have been wrong, but at

least they were willing to listen to what I had to say first" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Similarly, Wendy stated,

> Principal's need to listen, be open-minded, and be a support system for teachers. They need to maintain an open door policy. Don't jump to conclusions always hear both sides of the story before you start judging and passing down law. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

*Not accessible.* Conversely, five participants described experiences with administrators who were not accessible and willing to listen. Wendy described a former administrator by saying, "He didn't want to deal with anything that might make his day more stressful, so rather than deal with things he just shut you out" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Additionally, Connie explained one administrator showed he was not accessible "by having a closed door, being consistently ill-tempered, and displaying no body language or hostile body language" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

*Respect as Professionals*

Participants were also asked to give examples of how current or former administrators demonstrated their respect for them as professionals. All of the participants agreed they wanted to be respected for the professionals which they have become. Additionally, similar responses were given by the participants related to administrators: valuing their input, trusting them to do their jobs, assigning them to leadership positions, and not valuing their input.

*Value input.* Additionally, all participants agreed they feel respected as professionals when administrators value their input. Connie stated, "I feel respected when

an administrator asks for my opinion on issues that affect me in the classroom" (personal

communication, March 6, 2009). Harold recalled,

> On several occasions, I have had an administrator come and ask my opinion on
>
> something. How do I think something may work? How can we work at things
>
> better? When I have introduced and talked about different subjects, they have
>
> listened intently. (personal communication, March 6, 2009)

*Trust.* Three participants also gave similar responses indicating they feel

respected as professionals when administrators trust them to do their jobs. Bo explained,

"I feel that I am trusted, because the things that I select are almost always approved

without any questions, so the direction that I have for my program is trusted by the

administration" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Danny stated,

> To me it is acknowledgement of the fact that when I come in 30 to 40 minutes
>
> before the bell every day and I decide to leave at 3:30 or 3:40 it is not a big deal.
>
> The administration should trust that I have done what I needed to do for the day.
>
> (personal communication, March 4, 2009)

*Additional roles.* Furthermore, three participants made related comments

revealing they feel respected as professionals when they are asked to take on other roles

in addition to teaching. Each of the three participants specifically mentioned being asked

to take on leadership roles. Lynn stated, "Every time they ask me to be on a leadership

team or do another job for the school I feel respected as a professional" (personal

communication, March 5, 2009). Similarly, Sam described how he felt about

administrators assigning leadership roles to him, by saying, "They trusted me with these

responsibilities, and I felt respected as a professional" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

*Input not valued.* Conversely, four participants acknowledged there had been times when their input was not valued by administrators. Sam explained how he felt when his input was not valued by an administrator by saying, "When you have highly trained professionals in your building and their opinions are not considered as a resource; this was disrespectful to us, and not fair to us, or the students we were teaching" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Wendy described what happened when administrators asked for teachers' suggestions about how to implement a particular program, by stating, "We told the administration what we thought would help, but our suggestions were ignored and no other suggestions were given in their place" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Additionally, two of the participants' opinions were not valued on a common topic, curriculum.

*Recognition, Appreciation, and Rewards*

Additionally, common remarks concerning administrators recognizing, appreciating, and rewarding teachers were made regarding: how important recognition is to participants, the ways administrators express their appreciation, and the types of rewards received by participants. Acknowledgment from administrators of the time and hard work put in by teachers was appreciated by all of the participants.

*Recognition.* Two of the participants indicated it is very important for administrators to recognize their work, and show their appreciation for them. The two participants also suggested teachers would feel more valued if administrators acknowledged and showed appreciation for the things teachers do well. Lynn explained,

I think with your more seasoned, veteran teachers you just have to show your

appreciation for them and give them the tools they need to get different jobs done,

and really appreciate the uniqueness that every teacher brings to the table, because

everyone has something to offer. I think in your veteran teachers if you can find

what their particular thing is then they will feel more valued. (personal

communication, March 5, 2009)

Two participants similarly stated, administrators recognizing their work and showing

their appreciation for them is nice, but not as important as it was early in their careers.

Sam shared,

I think we go through in our careers the same kind of growing that children go

through in their educations. When children are young they need more hand

holding and people to tell them they are doing a good job. I needed this when I

was a beginning teacher. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Danny, when speaking about the early years of his career, stated, "I needed more

support, pats on the back than I do today" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

*Showing appreciation.* The participants also shared examples of how

administrators showed their appreciation for their hard work. Two of the participants

made similar comments related to administrators showing their appreciation by simply

saying thank you. Harold said, "I have been one of those people who really felt good

about when they tell you thank you for doing a good job" (personal communication,

March 6, 2009).

Sam stated,

> I am not always out for a thank you. I see what needs to be done and I do it, as I
>
> am sure that 99% of my colleagues do, but it is nice to get from a leader, "Hey I
>
> saw what you did, thanks." (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Moreover, three participants acknowledged a written note from an administrator is

appreciated. Bo shared, "If they just sent emails or wrote notes, I think that would make

you feel that you are still valued" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Likewise,

Lynn described an experience with an administrator demonstrating their appreciation for

her work by saying, "It was very simple, I just got a note in my box from them telling me

that they appreciated my support of them and the work that I do" (personal

communication, March 5, 2009).

   *Rewards.* Additionally, three participants spoke about being rewarded with

leadership positions and two participants said they were provided lunches as rewards.

Lynn explained that she liked to be rewarded by being "encouraged to take on different

leadership roles and get active in making changes to make the school better" (personal

communication, March 5, 2009). Connie mentioned a former administrator would

occasionally reward teachers by surprising them with a substitute, to cover their class, so

they could have lunch off campus.

*Care for Individuals*

   Participants provided related comments about administrators caring for teachers

as individuals corresponding to: the importance of administrators caring about them as a

person, administrators respecting participants' personal lives, willingness of

administrators to help teachers, and the working environment created by administrators.

All of the participants indicated they appreciate it when administrators take an interest in them personally as well as professionally.

*Importance.* Two of the participants agreed having administrators care for them as individuals is very important. Sam stated, "Every administrator I have considered a good one has been able to show me in some way they care about me as a person" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Conversely, two participants acknowledged having administrators care about them as people is nice but not necessary. Harold said, "It is not a big deal if they take an interest in me personally" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

*Respect for personal lives.* Four participants shared related experiences, in which administrators understood they needed to take care of personal matters in order to be at their best at work. Wendy, explained how an administrator responded to a personal problem she had, by saying, "She knew that if certain things were not in order in my personal life that I could not be an effective teacher" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Similarly, Danny described how an administrator supported him, by stating, "I have had some major health issues and she has been extremely supportive and has never complained about my having to be out for medical reasons. She was super about making sure I took care of myself number one" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

*Willingness to help.* Two participants described similar incidents in which administrators were understanding, but were also willing to help. Sam shared, "She asked me on a daily basis how my family was doing or if there was anything that she personally or the school could do for me" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Likewise, Wendy recalled a time an administrator offered to help her, by saying, "She offered to let

me stay with her, and even gave me her personal number" (personal communication, March 10, 2009).

   *Environment.* Finally, two participants suggested when administrators care for teachers as individuals it creates a better working environment. Danny explained, "Letting you know they are interested in what you are going through everyday, and what your life is like makes it a better environment" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Similarly, Bo described how he would feel if administrators showed they cared for him as an individual. Bo shared, "I would appreciate it. I think I would feel like I was more in a caring environment if that were to happen" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

*Visibility, Communication, and Resources*

   Similarities in comments made about administrators being visible, communicating with teachers, and providing them with resources were present relative to administrators: observing classes; communicating with teachers; providing feedback to teachers; and ensuring the necessary resources to be successful are available.

   *Administrative presence in classrooms.* Five participants made similar statements indicating they want administrators to visit their classrooms, and see them teaching. Bo expressed his opinion by saying, "I think their presence is important" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).Two participants pointed out they rarely have administrators come into their classrooms. Danny said, "Basically, no one knows what I am doing here, except for my one observation, no one even comes by to see" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

*Communication.* The majority of the participants also stated that they would like for administrators to communicate with them about their classes. Bo said, "I would appreciate more frequent communication" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Additionally, two participants acknowledged they would like for administrators to communicate with them concerning their teaching schedules. When explaining what topics she would like to engage in more communication with administrators about Lynn said, "I think it would be with setting up our schedules for next year" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

*Feedback.* Additionally, three participants made related comments suggesting they would like for administrators to give them more feedback on ways they can improve their teaching methods. Lynn stated, "Come in and tell me some things to help my teaching style or that sort of thing" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Bo acknowledged, "If they can give me comments on how to improve I would be grateful for those" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

*Resources.* In addition, to communicating with them about their classes, several of the participants expressed feeling more supported when administrators ensure the necessary resources to be successful are available. Lynn and Connie agreed having the classroom supplies they need is important. Lynn explained how important classroom supplies are to her by saying, "Oh that is extremely important. I am a little meticulous about everything, because I worry about not having it the next year" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Finally, Lynn, Connie, Sam, and Bo suggested by assisting teachers, or providing teachers with people to assist them administrators are

ensuring they have the resources they need to be successful. Similarly, Connie and Sam each mentioned collaborating with other colleagues.

*Commonalities across Themes*

Commonalities in participants' responses were noted across themes regarding: trust between administrators and teachers; administrators being consistent in their dealings with students and teachers; administrators and teachers being proactive; administrators giving and receiving feedback; and administrators and teachers viewing matters from other perspectives.

*Trust.* One common topic present throughout participants' responses was trust. All of the participants indicated they want administrators to trust their word in matters of student discipline. Three participants mentioned administrators supporting them, in dealing with parents, by trusting their word. Additionally, three participants acknowledged they feel respected as professionals when administrators trust them to do their jobs. One participant revealed he feels respected as a professional when administrators trust him with responsibilities in addition to teaching. Furthermore, Bo expressed how important it is for administrators to trust him by stating,

> Trust, I think is how I feel the most supported. I really don't feel supported at all if I tell you something and you doubt it or make me prove it through other means. The most important way that I feel supported is when I have an administrator who trusts what I say, and what I do. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Finally, two participants commented on being able to trust administrators. Connie said she would feel more supported if she were "able to build a relationship with trust between the administration and me" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Sam described a

former administrator he trusted by saying, "If she said she would, she did. If she said she wouldn't, she wouldn't" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

*Consistency.* Another, topic which was identified throughout participants' responses was consistency. The participants shared experiences with administrators who consistently handled student discipline issues, as well as with administrators who did not. The majority of participants revealed they feel supported when student discipline is handled on a consistent basis. One participant mentioned that administrators need to work on enforcing school rules consistently throughout the building. Another, participant indicated he does not feel supported when administrators do not ensure all teachers are consistently enforcing school policies.

Additionally, one participant suggested that along with having an open door policy administrators should be consistently polite. Two participants also suggested it is important for administrators to be consistent in their dealings with teachers. Sam described a former administrator, who was consistent in her dealings with teachers, by saying, "Faculty members talk about dealings with administration and, it did not matter who you talked to, their dealings would always be the same as your dealings" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Another, participant expressed his desire for administrators to be more consistent in demonstrating their appreciation for teachers and praising them. Furthermore, several participants indicated they would feel more supported if administrators consistently communicated with them about their classes and provided them with resources.

*Proactive.* Being proactive is also a topic which was present throughout participants' responses. One participant shared an experience in which an administrator

worked with him to take steps to avoid student discipline issues. Another, participant explained how an administrator took his advice and implemented a program to identify and help incoming freshmen who were likely to experience difficulties. Additionally, a participant indicated he would like for administrators to be proactive in communicating with teachers rather than waiting for teachers to come to them with issues. Bo said, "Instead, of them just responding to an email them originating an email. Something that is not just always me seeking their counsel, that they are being proactive in communicating" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Finally, one participant described a difficult situation with a parent, which he feels could have been avoided if an administrator had been proactive in supporting him with dealing with the parent.

*Feedback.* Additionally, giving and receiving feedback was a topic mentioned by participants across themes. Receiving feedback on student discipline referrals was important to the majority of the participants; however, only one participant acknowledged he consistently receives feedback. Four of the participants described experiences with submitting discipline referrals to administrators and never receiving any feedback. Bo described how he felt about receiving feedback on referrals by saying, "I think that no matter what I should receive some type of written response to a referral" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Three participants indicated they would like for administrators to spend more time observing their classes and providing them with feedback on how they can improve their teaching skills. Moreover, one participant explained her belief that teachers would be more receptive to policies implemented by administrators if administrators listened to their feedback first.

*Other perspectives*. Participants also made several remarks concerning the ability to see matters from other perspectives. One participant acknowledged, "I don't think that I necessarily look at things fairly all the time. However, I think that I have learned over time to try to look at other perspectives other than mine" (Danny, personal communication, March 4, 2009). Another, participant explained why he needs administrators to help him see matters from another perspective when he said, "because I am looking, with tunnel vision, from my own perspective without looking from anywhere else" (Harold, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Additionally, two participants suggested administrators need to remember to look at matters from teachers' perspectives. Wendy stated,

A lot of administrators forget what it is like to be in the classroom, and when they want to implement new policies they should probably listen to and get feedback from teachers before saying this is the way it is going to be. (personal communication, March 10, 2009)

Similarly, Bo said,

We all get to a point in our jobs where we forget about other peoples' perspectives. I think an administrator needs to not forget what it was like being a teacher, and not be so overrun being an administrator and having to take care of administrative tasks that they forget what it was like to be a teacher. I am trying to do that same thing as a teacher. I try and not forget what it was like being in high school. I have to remember how I felt back then is much different than how I feel now. (personal communication, March 2, 2009)

Finally, Sam described a former administrator who never forgot what it was like to be a teacher, because she often performed the duties of a teacher. Sam recalled,

She was the kind of leader that you never wanted to disappoint, because you knew she would never ask you to do something that she would not do. She never actually said as much, but there were lots of times when she would do things that everybody else was doing. She would work the gate at the ballgame if someone did not show up; she would substitute in a class if needed. You never got the idea that she was unwilling to do what she was asking you to do. (personal communication, March 3, 2009)

*Summary*

Similarities in participants' responses were present throughout all of the themes as well as across themes. Commonalities in responses about student discipline were noted relative to: how consistently student discipline issues were handled, appropriateness of consequences for student discipline, trusting teachers' words, timeliness of consequences for student discipline, providing feedback on student discipline, and acting upon teachers' recommendations for consequences. Related responses concerning supporting teachers with parents were found corresponding to: not allowing parents to be disrespectful to teachers, supporting teachers' decisions, trusting teachers' words, and not attending parent conferences.

Additionally, similar comments were made pertaining to the accessibility and willingness to listen of administrators in relation to administrators: having an open door policy; being open-minded and not quick to make judgments; and not being accessible. Comparable responses regarding administrators respecting teachers as professionals were

given related to administrators: valuing their input, trusting them to do their jobs, and assigning them to take on leadership roles. Common remarks concerning administrators, recognizing, appreciating, and rewarding teachers were also made regarding: how important recognition is to teachers; the ways administrators express their appreciation; and the types of rewards received by participants.

Moreover, participants provided related comments about administrators caring for teachers as individuals corresponding to: the importance of administrators caring for them as a person, administrators respecting participants' personal lives, willingness of administrators to help teachers, and the working environment created by administrators. Similarities in comments made about administrators being visible, communicating with teachers, and providing them with resources were present relative to administrators: observing classes; communicating with teachers; providing feedback to teachers; and ensuring the necessary resources to be successful are available.

Finally, commonalities in participants' responses were noted across themes regarding: trust between administrators and teachers; administrators being consistent in their dealings with students and teachers; administrators and teachers being proactive; administrators giving and receiving feedback; and administrators and teachers viewing matters from other perspectives.

*Subquestion 3*

What differences exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

*Support with Student Discipline*

Differences were identified in participants' experiences with administrative support in matters of student discipline relative to: how consistently it was handled; timeliness of consequences, providing feedback; lessons learned from administrators; sharing information about students; being proactive; ensuring enforcement of rules; ease of handling; and amount of support needed.

Although all of the participants could recall a time when they felt supported in a matter of student discipline, only Sam felt he had been consistently supported in this area. Sam said, "I have been fortunate to have been supported all the way through my career" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Sam was also the only participant who indicated the discipline referrals he writes are all handled in a timely manner. "Any time I write a referral it is acted upon quickly and fairly" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Additionally, Sam was the only participant who said he always receives feedback from administrators on the outcomes of referrals. Sam reported, "If I write a referral, I always get to know what happens to the student" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Several participants expressed their frustrations with the length of time it takes administrators to address discipline issues. However, only Danny expressed concern for how students feel when they are sent home without knowing what is going to happen to them. Danny stated, "The child does not need to go home that day thinking that he has gotten away with something, or sending the child home that day wondering what will happen" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Danny was also the only participant who acknowledged he learned something from watching former administrators handle

student discipline issues. Speaking about former administrators Danny said, "One thing that I learned from them is, the calmer you are the more likely you are to get a positive result and the more likely the situation does not escalate" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

Rather than observing administrators to learn how to better handle student discipline issues, Bo suggested, administrators should share information they have about students, which would enable teachers to better address future problems. Bo explained, "If a student has a problem and an administrator knows about it then I think they should share it with me, so that I am better able to handle that student in the future" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Another, unique way Bo proposed administrators could help teachers is by being proactive and working with teachers to take steps to avoid student discipline issues. Bo described a situation in which an administrator helped him to deal with a student discipline issue, and then explained how they took steps to avoid future problems by developing a new policy and notifying parents. Bo said, "By sending out the letter we kind of stopped some problems before they even started with some of the parents" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Bo was also the only participant to point out he does not feel supported by administrators if they are not ensuring policies are consistently enforced by all teachers. Bo stated,

> I don't feel very supported when either, one I am enforcing policies and I am not
> being praised for continuing to do it or, two I am seeing other teachers not
> enforcing those rules and not having anything happen to them. (personal
> communication, March 2, 2009)

Many similar frustrations were shared about how administrators handled student discipline issues; however, Wendy was the only participant who offered her opinion on why an administrator did not handle student discipline issues appropriately. Wendy commented, "I feel like this administrator handled things according to how easy they could be for him" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Moreover, Wendy was the only participant to suggest if administrators helped her to get discipline issues under control everything else would work itself out. Wendy said, "The most important way an administrator can support me is by helping with discipline, because if the discipline is okay everything falls into place" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Finally, Wendy said, "I know it sounds odd, but I think I need more support from them now with discipline than when I first started" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Wendy was the only participant who indicated she needed more help in this area now than she did early on in her career.

*Support with Parents*

The few variations in the participants' experiences, with administrative support when dealing with parents, were related to the manner in which administrators handled situations with parents. Bo described a unique experience, in which, parents were required to meet with him about their concerns, before an administrator would meet with the parents. Bo explained, "I think another way of showing support was to have the parents set up a meeting with me first before talking to an administrator about it" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Additionally, Connie was the only participant to admit although administrators always supported her in front of parents, they would sometimes reprimand her in private.

Connie said, "The principal and assistant principal would always defend me in public and on occasion would chew me out in private" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Connie also revealed a unique way in which a former administrator dealt with confrontational parents. Connie stated, "If a parent refused to leave after a teacher was dismissed from a conference the parent was arrested" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Finally, Lynn was the only participant who shared a situation in which an administrator failed to support her by not handling a situation with a parent professionally. Lynn said, "While I am sure she was just doing her job, the way she asked me was very accusatory and it took away from my respect of her as a professional, because she did not give me professional courtesy" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Lynn's response to the situation with the administrator not supporting her with the parent was also unique. Lynn responded by seeking the help of the guidance counselor to mediate the misunderstanding with the parent.

*Accessibility and willingness to listen*

Participants' experiences with the accessibility and willingness to listen of administrators differed with regard to: administrators engaging teachers in conversations; administrators' temperaments and body languages; administrators' rapports with teachers; and how administrators should treat particular groups of teachers. Many of the participants spoke about administrators having open door policies; however, only Sam experienced an administrator who often invited him in to talk. Sam shared, "She would often, when I was around helping in the office or making copies, invite me in and talk with me about what was going on" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Like other

participants, Connie described being accessible as having an open door policy; however, Connie uniquely added to this description "responding to emails in a timely manner, and having a personality that is calm and consistently polite" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Connie also uniquely described an administrator who was not accessible by saying, "He had a closed door, a bad temper, and uninviting body language" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Additionally, Wendy spoke about an administrator who found it easier to shut teachers out rather than deal with them. Wendy recalled, "He didn't want to deal with anything that might make his day more stressful, so rather than deal with things he just shut you out" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Harold explained a former administrator never established a rapport with him. Harold reported, "I had one who after a year had not established a rapport with me whatsoever" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

Furthermore, one participant uniquely recalled an administrator who he felt, at best, only engaged teachers in superficial conversations. Sam described the administrator by saying, "Any time he was talking with you, it was clear that it was a superficial conversation. You could have been anybody, anywhere" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Finally, Danny when describing a former administrator who was accessible and willing to listen added, "I think principals need to be very open minded with people that have been there for a long time and keep a good eye on what is going on" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Danny was the only participant who suggested that administrators should be open minded with a specific group of teachers.

*Respect as Professionals*

Participants' experiences with being respected as professionals varied in relation to administrators: valuing their input, providing them with explanations, and demonstrating respect for their experience. Although all of the participants agreed when an administrator values their input they feel respected as professionals, differences were noted in their experiences. Like many of the participants, Harold indicated administrators sought his input on various decisions; however, only Harold acknowledged administrators provided him with explanations when they were not able to follow through with his suggestions. Harold reported, "If for some reason it could not be done, they explained to me why it could not be done. They did not dismiss me" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Conversely, when administrators asked Wendy for her input on implementing a new program they not only chose to dismiss her input, but also chose not to look for further suggestions. Wendy recalled, "We told the administration what we thought would help, but our suggestions were ignored and no other suggestions were given in their place" (personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Unlike Harold and Wendy who were each asked for their input, Sam described a situation in which an administrator decided to end a program, which he had invested a great deal of time and energy into developing, without giving him the opportunity to voice his opinions. Sam explained, "When you have highly trained professionals in your building and their opinions are not considered as a resource, this was disrespectful to us and not fair to us or the students we were teaching" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Additionally, Sam was the only participant who suggested it was possible for teachers and administrators to compromise. Sam said, "There is almost always a middle

ground and a solution could have been accomplished" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Finally, Danny shared a unique experience in which he felt he was not respected as a professional when the honors and gifted classes, with which he had been successful, were taken from him and assigned to a teacher with less experience. Danny shared, "It was not fair to bring in someone new and give them the top classes after, I had produced good results" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Additionally, Danny was the only participant whose administrator suggested that he seek employment elsewhere if he was not happy.

*Recognition, Appreciation, and Rewards*

Also, distinct comments regarding participants' experiences with being appreciated, recognized, and rewarded by administrators were made concerning: administrators acknowledging the time teachers invest in extracurricular activities; the manner in which administrators reward teachers; and the importance of praise and how it is given. Lynn was the only participant who stated she feels most supported when administrators acknowledge the amount of time she invests in extracurricular activities. Additionally, only Lynn spoke about experiences in which the entire faculty was rewarded or experiences in which dress down days were given as rewards. Lynn said, "I appreciated when we had to do the whole going into another classroom and check dress code, and they gave us the dress down day, and gave us lunch" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

Although all of the participants indicated they appreciated being praised by administrators, only Bo indicated it is more important to him now than it was early in his

career. Bo revealed, "I think I probably appreciate more praise now than early one" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Another, variation in the experiences shared by Bo is when administrators praise him, on how well his group of students performs he shares the praise with his students. Bo stated, "I think that trickles down, as soon as I hear a principal saying that we have done well then I can share that with the students and they also feel proud" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Bo was also, the only participant who reported praise from administrators diminishing as the years he remained at one school increased. Bo recalled, "I think what I have noticed in some of the jobs that I have been at, is that principals seem to praise a lot more frequently when you first start out, but as you stay at a job that diminishes" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Conversely, Danny indicated he believes he receives more praise from administrators now than he did early in his career. Danny said, "I needed more support, pats on the back than I do today. However, I think the less I need them the more I get" (personal communication, March 4, 2009). Danny was also the only participant to suggest administrators should reward teachers for loyalty. Danny stated, "They should reward the fact that someone has been there. This does not mean to reward poor teaching. Reward someone who has given results and who at least has a clue about what is going on at a school" (personal communication, March 4, 2009).

Sam was the only participant who shared how he felt about administrators recognizing teachers privately versus recognizing them in front of the faculty. Speaking about a former administrator Sam recalled, "She would recognize you in a more private way and you knew she really cared" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Sam described when he felt it was appropriate to be recognized in front of the faculty by

saying, "If I am doing something in my classroom that I can turn around and share with them that would improve what they are doing, that is a good time to recognize this" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Finally, Sam was the only participant who acknowledged, he would like to be rewarded by having the opportunity to help other teachers. "In my growth, I feel very comfortable with what goes on in my four walls, and I want to help other people who are not so comfortable with what is going on in their four walls" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

*Care for Individuals*

Few differences were noted in the participants' experiences with administrators showing they cared for them as individuals. However, the three differences that were noted related to administrators: being involved in teachers' personal lives, showing they care by having a sense of humor, and administrators serving as mentors for teachers. Although all of the participants indicated they appreciate administrators taking an interest in them personally, only Wendy added, "But not taking it too far" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Wendy went on to say, "I am really one of those people who like things totally separate. I don't work at home and I don't talk about my personal life at school" (personal communication, March 10, 2009). Additionally, Lynn was the only participant who mentioned administrators showing they care by having a sense of humor. Lynn explained, "When they poke fun at you, and they know your personality, and you know that they are joking with you. I think that really makes a work environment that you want to come to" (personal communication, March 5, 2009).

Finally, Harold uniquely pointed out administrators are not obligated to be teachers' friends; however, they should serve as mentors for teachers. Harold explained,

he finds it helpful to be able to talk to administrators about topics not related to school by saying, "The issues do not always have to be school as teachers we need people to talk to as well, and sometimes people above us to help us understand things better" (personal communication, March 6, 2009).

*Visibility, Communication, and Resources*

Variations in participants' responses concerning their experiences with administrators being visible, communicating with them, and providing them with resources were present in relation to: time spent observing classes and communicating with teachers; communicating with students in the classroom; initiating communication with teachers; the tone of communication; the types of resources provided to teachers; and the manner in which resources are provided.

The majority of the participants stated they would like for administrators, not only to see what they are doing in their classroom, but also to communicate with them about their classes. However, only Lynn mentioned feeling supported when administrators communicated with the students as well. Lynn stated, "Also, when they come in and interact with kids in our lesson, I think that really helps me to feel like I am supported in what I am doing" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Additionally, Bo shared he would like for administrators to initiate communication with teachers. Bo said, "I would appreciate more frequent communication, and them being the first one to communicate" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Harold added he feels the tone of the communication is important. Harold revealed, "I think the way people handle constructive criticism is as important as doing it" (personal communication, March 6, 2009). Additionally, Sam expressed his

appreciation for an administrator who frequently engaged him in dialogue about his classes by saying: "It was clear to me that she thought enough of me, personally and professionally to remember and to ask me about them later" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

When speaking about the resources provided to them by administrators, Lynn was the only participant who mentioned receiving individual training, and opportunities to attend conferences as resources for improving her teaching skills. Lynn stated, "I have several people from the board coming to help with the class and give me training individually and I am going to three different conferences on the topic" (personal communication, March 5, 2009). Bo uniquely described a time when he was not supported by administrators by not being given a break during the school day. Bo recalled, "I feel that I am treated unfairly when I am expected to go straight through the day without any break or planning period" (personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Additionally, Sam spoke about not being supported by administrators when he was assigned to a classroom, which he felt was not large enough to adequately accommodate his classes. Sam explained, "This is a small thing, but something to consider. The environment you put people in is a way to support or not support them. I felt not supported at this time" (personal communication, March 3, 2009). Sam was also the only participant who described an experience in which he was provided with the resources he needed to be successful, without his knowledge. Sam said, "She understood what I needed, even when I did not. I did not know what I needed to bring myself out of my shell, and to bring me to the next level of what I was suppose to be doing" (personal communication, March 3, 2009).

*Summary*

Differences were identified in participants' experiences with administrative support in matters of student discipline relative to: how consistently it was handled, timeliness of consequences, providing feedback, lessons learned from administrators, sharing information about students, being proactive, ensuring enforcement of rules, ease of handling, and amount of support needed. Variations in the participants' experiences with administrative support when dealing with parents were few, and were related to the manner in which administrators handled situations with parents. Participants' experiences with the accessibility and willingness to listen of administrators differed with regard to: administrators engaging teachers in conversations; administrators' temperaments and body language; administrators' rapports with teachers; and how administrators should treat particular groups of teachers.

Additionally, participants' experiences with being respected as professionals varied in relation to administrators: valuing their input, providing them with explanations, and demonstrating respect for their experience. Also, distinct comments regarding participants' experiences with being appreciated, recognized, and rewarded by administrators were made concerning: administrators acknowledging the time teachers invest in extracurricular activities; the manner in which administrators reward teachers; and the importance of praise and how it is given.

Furthermore, differences in the participants' experiences with administrators showing they cared for them as individuals were noted relative to administrators: being involved in teachers' personal lives, showing they care by having a sense of humor, and administrators serving as mentors for teachers. Finally, variations in participants'

responses concerning their experiences with administrators being visible, communicating with them, and providing them with resources were present in relation to: time spent observing classes and communicating with teachers; communicating with students in the classroom; initiating communication with teachers; the tone of communication; the types of resources provided to teachers; and the manner in which resources are provided.

Summary

A phenomenological approach was used to understand the experiences of veteran teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. A purposeful sample of seven participants was chosen, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect individual experiences with administrative support. Open-ended interview questions, developed based on a review of the existing literature, were employed to allow participants to provide meaningful responses concerning their experiences with administrative support. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and used along with the reflective notes, the field notes, and the documents collected to analyze the data. The data collected were coded and categorized, to identify themes and answer the research questions.

One overarching research question and three subquestions guided this study. The overarching research question sought to discover the experiences of secondary level veteran regular education teachers with administrative support. The three subquestions were used to answer the overarching research question. The data resulting from the semi-structured interviews, the observations, and the documents collected are presented to correspond with the subquestions of the study. The data are presented in the form of text selections corresponding to each subquestion, and are further divided by the most prevalent themes resulting from the data analysis.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

A growing consensus exists among researchers that the single most important

factor in determining student achievement is the quality of the student's teacher (Rivkin,

Hanusheck, & Kain, 2005). However, retaining highly qualified teachers has become

increasingly more difficult for schools. Coulter (2007) estimates that each year one-third

of the teacher population is in transition and 50 % of teachers leave the profession before

their fifth year. Although the retention of teachers within their first five years is very

important, the retention of veteran teachers is also crucial. Veteran teachers on average

feel more confident in their teaching and tend to be more skilled than new teachers

(Hanushek et al., 2004; Kane et al., 2006; Rockoff, 2003). Peske et al. (2001) stated,

"Given the enormous change in staffing that schools will undergo in the next decade, it is

essential to have a large core of dedicated, accomplished teachers who can provide

continuity in schools and maintain standards in the profession" (p. 310).

Summary

Currently, the nation is experiencing difficulty in retaining highly qualified

teachers in the classroom, particularly at the secondary level. Studies have revealed that

working conditions play an integral role in teachers' decisions to remain in the profession

or in their current school. Studies have found that administrative support is a factor

frequently cited by teachers as a component of their working conditions. Administrators

are in a position which allows them to directly influence the working conditions of

teachers and indirectly influence the retention of teachers. Therefore, a need existed for a

deeper more complete understanding of exactly how administrator – teacher relations at the secondary level, influence veteran regular education teachers' perceptions of support. In this study, the researcher examined veteran teachers at the secondary level to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with administrative support.

A phenomenological research approach was employed to gather details about the lived experiences of the seven participants. The open-ended interview questions, found in Appendix A, were reviewed by a panel of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level and piloted. The seven participants for this study were purposefully selected from two high schools in a school district in Southeast Georgia and scheduled, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the participant, digitally recorded, and transcribed. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities, and transcript references were edited to eliminate any identifiable information. The transcripts of the interviews, reflective notes, field notes, and documents were used to analyze the data and answer the research questions.

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What are secondary level veteran regular education teachers' experiences with administrative support? The following subquestions were used to answer the overarching question:

1. How do veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level describe their experiences with administrative support?

2. What commonalities exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

3. What differences exist among the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support?

## Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of secondary level regular education teachers with administrative support. The qualitative data, derived from the semi-structured interviews, provided first hand perspectives of participants as they described their experiences with administrative support. In Chapter IV, the data from the interviews, the participant observations, and the documents collected were presented in the form of text selections corresponding to each subquestion, and were further divided by the most prevalent themes resulting from the data analysis. The following seven themes emerged from the exploration of the participants' lived experiences with administrative support: (a) support with student discipline; (b) support with parents; (c) accessibility and willingness to listen; (d) respect as professionals; (e), recognition, appreciation, and rewards; (f) care for individuals; (g) visibility, communication and resources. In this chapter, the seven themes were used to organize the discussion of the research findings. Finally, the researcher used the findings derived from the subquestions to reach conclusions about the research, consider implications from the study, and make recommendations for further research.

*Support with Student Discipline*

According to Markow et al. (2006), 2 of the 11 significant predictors of teachers' satisfactions with their careers include schools not having problems with disorderly student behavior and schools not having problems with threats to teachers or staff by students. Congruent with the literature, the participants in this study described times they were satisfied, as well as times they were not satisfied as a result of how student

discipline problems were handled at their schools. In fact, the participants shared more about their experiences with administrative support in matters of student discipline than any other area of administrative support. Additionally, more negative experiences were shared, by the participants, concerning administrative support in matters of student discipline than any other area of administrative support. Participants indicated they did not feel supported by administrators when they failed to: assign appropriate consequences for discipline, respond quickly to student discipline problems, provide teachers' with feedback on the outcomes of referrals, and make teacher safety a priority. Conversely, participants reported feeling supported by administrators who handled student discipline problems: in a consistent manner, with an immediate response, by assigning appropriate consequences, and by trusting the words of the teachers.

Richards (2006) conducted a study of 250 elementary and middle school teachers, to compare the principal behaviors and attitudes that are most valued by teachers at three career stages: (a) 1-5 years, (b) 6-10 years, and (c) 11 + years of experience. Richards found that one of the five most desired behaviors of administrators is supporting teachers in matters of student discipline. Additionally, Richards found that as teachers gain experience, their appreciation for certain principal behaviors and attitudes increases, and among those are supports teachers in student discipline matters and embraces high, consistent standards for everyone. One participant who had been teaching for nine years acknowledged she needs more help with student discipline now than she did earlier in her career. The same participant also indicated the most important way administrators can support her is by helping with student discipline. In contrast, to Richards, the only participant who stated he values administrators who embrace high, consistent standards

for everyone was the participant with the least amount of experience. Although only one participant stated he would like for teachers to be held to high, consistent standards, all of the participants indicated they would like for administrators to hold students to high, consistent standards.

Based on a survey of 875 current and former teachers in California, Futernick (2007) concluded that one of the four skills teachers want a principal to possess is the ability to maintain a safe and orderly teaching environment. Two participants in this study echoed Futernick's findings, and described situations in which administrators did not show concern for teachers' safety when disciplining students who had threatened the participants. Additionally, one of the participants expressed his belief that teacher safety is the number one issue that should be addressed in schools.

Although, the participants reported more negative experiences with administrative support in matters of student discipline than any other area of support; none of the participants indentified their negative experiences in this area as reasons for their turnovers from schools. However, two participants indicated the lack of respect they were shown as professionals led to them leaving schools, one participant acknowledged that he would leave a school if he did not feel respected as a professional, and one participant shared that the lack of appreciation she was shown by a previous administrator led her to leave a school.

According, to Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1993) factors such as administrative support in matters of student discipline and safety are hygiene factors, and while the absence of these types of support can create job dissatisfaction, the presence of them does not motivate or lead to job satisfaction. On the other hand, factors such as

administrators showing respect for teachers as professionals and administrators recognizing and appreciating the contributions of teachers are motivators. Unlike hygiene factors, motivators are associated with job satisfaction and performance. In summary, hygiene factors, like administrative support in matters of student discipline and safety, are associated with the environment in which a person performs their job. Conversely, motivators, such as administrators showing respect for teachers as professionals and administrators recognizing and appreciating the contributions of teachers relate to the job a person performs.

*Support with Parents*

Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) identified twenty principals in high needs schools, within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, who had been successful in retaining teachers and increasing student achievement. According to these principals, one of the strategies which are essential to create an environment that teachers want to remain in is to be an advocate for teachers. Richards (2006) found that teachers most value principal behaviors in the emotional support behaviors component which includes views role of principal as protector and problem solver. Similar, to the above findings the participants in this study made comments which indicated they view the role of principal as advocate, protector, and problem solver. For example, Wendy described a former principal by saying, "He always trusted what we said and had our backs" and "He immediately stopped the conference and came to my defense" (personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Richards (2006) found that one of the five most desired behaviors of administrators is supporting teachers with parents. Moreover, Richards found that

principals who support teachers with parents become more valued by teachers as they gain experience. The findings of this study support the idea that teachers value administrators who support them with parents. All of the participants spoke confidently as they recalled experiences in which administrators supported them with parents. Specifically, participants indicated they appreciated administrators who did not allow parents to be disrespectful to them, supported decisions they made, and trusted their words.

Further, one participant shared an experience in which an administrator supported him, in dealing with a parent, by trusting his word. Bo expressed his feelings about his administrator trusting his word, by stating, "That is what I felt was very crucial. I guess I would have to say if that didn't happen I probably wouldn't have stayed at that school for very long" (personal communication, March 2, 2009). Additionally, two participants reported by not attending parent conferences, they had requested for administrators to attend, they were not supported with parents. Finally, one participant revealed, due to an administrator failing to handle a situation professionally, she was not supported with a parent.

*Accessibility and Willingness to Listen*

According to Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004), another strategy which is essential to create an environment that teachers want to remain in, is for principals to be available, and to make teachers feel comfortable coming to them to talk. Richards (2006) found accessibility is also one of the behaviors in the emotional support behaviors component which is the component most valued by teachers. The findings in this study did not vary from the previous research which indicated it is important for administrators

to have an open door policy, as well as make teachers feel welcome to come in and share their thoughts. The participants explained that by observing an administrator's personality, body language, and rapport with teachers, they are able to assess whether or not the administrator sincerely wants to hear from teachers. Additionally, four of the participants reported they had experienced administrators who were not sincere and as a result, did not attempt to share their thoughts with the administrators.

Additionally, Richards (2006) pointed out as teachers gain experience their appreciation for principals who are visible on school grounds increases. Corresponding to this finding, only the participant with 15 years of experience commented that administrators should be at school as much as teachers and visible throughout the day. Unlike the previous studies the researcher found that it is also important for administrators to be open minded when they listen to teachers. Three of the participants, in this study, mentioned administrators should keep an open mind and not be quick to pass judgment when listening to teachers. Further, one participant suggested being accessible and willing to listen also involved responding to emails in a timely manner and being consistently polite. Finally, participants described administrators who were not accessbile and willing to listen by saying they: had a closed door policy, a bad temper, and uninviting body language; found it easier to shut teachers out rather than deal with them; never established a rapport with teachers; and only engaged teachers in superficial conversations.

*Respect as Professionals*

Richards (2006) found that respects and values teachers as professionals was ranked as the most valuable principal behavior by teachers at all three career stages. The

participants in this study did not vary from Richards' findings they also expressed their desire to be respected for the professionals which they have become. Additionally, all of the participants indicated they feel respected as professionals when administrators value their input. Similarly, among the 11 benchmarks for school workplace conditions outlined by Johnson and The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2004) are progressively expanding influence and increasing opportunities for career growth. Also, Markow et al. (2006) reported that involvement in school policy making is a key determinant of teacher satisfaction.

Moreover, one-quarter of the teachers surveyed by Markow et al. (2006), felt they lacked adequate involvement in shaping the school curriculum. Two of the participants in this study shared experiences in which administrators did not value their input concerning curriculum decisions. Further, one of these participants described his experience by stating, "That was probably the straw that broke the camel's back, and I decided to move on" (Sam, personal communication, March 3, 2009). Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) reported that involving teachers in decision-making is a key strategy, used by successful administrators, to create an environment that retains teachers.

Additionally, a number of studies supported the use of distributed leadership as a strategy to increase teacher retention (Day et al., 2000; Johnson, 2006; MacBeth, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2001). Three participants supported this finding by acknowledging they feel respected as professionals when they are asked to take on leadership roles, in addition to teaching. Other strategies reported by Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) include empowering teachers and continually developing their leadership skills.

Hirsch (2008) reported new teachers often want administrators to provide them with environments that are flexible and collaborative; however, veteran teachers often desire autonomy and privacy. Similar to the findings of Hirsch, three of the veteran teachers indicated they feel respected as professionals when administrators trust them to do their jobs. Moreover, one participant suggested he feels respected as a professional when administrators do not question his judgment. Williams (2003) reported one of the workplace dynamics which contributes to the fulfillment and longevity in the classroom of veteran teachers is being viewed as experts in their field by the administrators with whom they work.

Furthermore, Markow et al. (2006) found significant predictors of teachers' satisfactions with their careers include teachers feel their salary is fair for the work done, and teachers have adequate ability to influence student promotion or retention. In contrast, none of the participants reported any concern that their salary is fair for the work they do or any interest in being able to influence the promotion and retention of students.

*Recognition, Appreciation, and Rewards*

One strategy suggested by the NRRC et al. (2004), for administrators to use to support teachers and in turn increase teacher retention, is to show teachers they are valued. Blase and Blase (2004) in their study of more than 800 public elementary, middle, and high school teachers reported that teachers describe supportive leaders as being visible in the school, liberal with praise, and empowering of teachers. Additionally, Richards (2006) concluded that nurturing, encouraging, and acknowledging and praising good work are highly valued emotional support behaviors for administrators to possess.

Likewise, the participants in this study expressed they appreciate being recognized, praised, and rewarded by administrators.

However, the researcher found that some participants, value being recognized, praised, and rewarded by administrators more than others. The two participants with the least amount of teaching experience expressed that being acknowledged and praised by administrators is very important to them. One of the two participants revealed that praise from administrators is even more important to him now than it was in his first couple of years teaching. The other participant explained how she felt after her administrator repeatedly failed to recognize her hard work, by stating, "I decided it was probably time to go to another school" (Lynn, personal communication, March 5, 2009).

The other five participants acknowledged that although they still enjoy being praised by administrators it is not as important to them now, as it was early in their careers. Moreover, Richards (2006) discovered that praise is relatively unimportant to teachers with more than 10 years of experience. The findings in this study supported Richards' conclusion; the three teachers with more than 10 years experience, suggested praise from administrators was not as important as other principal behaviors.

Alvy (2005) suggested specific strategies that could be used by administrators to effectively support veteran teachers. One strategy is to honor them by asking them to mentor a new teacher. In comparison to the findings of Alvy, one participant mentioned that he would like to help other teachers who need assistance; however, he did not specifically refer to serving as a mentor. A second strategy for supporting veteran teachers is for administrators to mold a school culture that reveres the knowledge and experiences of veteran teachers. Administrators can mold this culture by acknowledging

the achievements and efforts of veteran teachers. Similarly, one participant suggested that administrators should reward teachers who have been loyal and demonstrated success in the classroom.

Finally, the participants shared ways they appreciated being recognized or rewarded by administrators in the past. Three participants shared that administrators rewarded them by assigning them to leadership positions. One participant also mentioned teachers at her school have been rewarded with lunch and dress down days. Another, participant stated a former administrator occasionally rewarded teachers by surprising them with a substitute, to cover their class, so they could have lunch off campus. Finally, one participant explained he was rewarded by being allowed to choose which classes he would teach.

*Care for Individuals*

Additionally, Richards (2006) found that being warm and friendly to students and teachers, as well as interested in teachers as people are also principal behaviors in the emotional support behaviors component. All of the participants in this study acknowledged they appreciate it when administrators show they care about them as individuals; however, like praise from administrators, some participants valued it more than others. Four participants indicated it is very important for administrators to demonstrate an interest in them personally; however, for three of the participants it was nice but not necessary.

According to Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004), in order to create an environment that teachers want to remain in it is very important for principals to develop appropriate relationships with staff, and know teachers as individuals. Two of the

participants in this study, agreed that when administrators care for teachers as individuals it creates a better working environment. Participants also indicated they appreciate administrators showing concern for their health and family. Additionally, participants want administrators to respect their personal lives and not become too involved.

Richards (2006) also discovered that of the three groups studied the teachers with five or less years of experience valued emotional support behaviors more than the other teacher groups. However, in this study the participant with the least years of experience was one of the three who suggested it was nice, but not important for administrators to take an interest in him personally. Additionally, Richards concluded that it is not necessary for administrators to care about what makes teachers with more than 10 years of experience happy. According to Richards, these experienced teachers simply desire for administrators to perform their jobs well. Contrary to Richards' findings, the two participants in this study who had more than 10 years of experience indicated it was important for administrators to care about them as individuals. Finally, one participant with 10 years of experience, revealed how important it is for administrators to care about him as an individual by stating, "Every administrator I have considered a good one has been able to show me in some way they care about me as a person" (Sam, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

*Visibility, Communication, and Resources*

Futernick (2007) concluded that teachers value a principal who provides them with sufficient time for individual and collaborative planning and effectively guides instruction. Five participants, in this study, also suggested they would like for administrators to effectively guide instruction. The five participants indicated they would

feel more supported if administrators observed them teaching, and communicated with them about their classes. Additionally, three of the five participants would also like for administrators to provide them with feedback on ways to improve their teaching methods. Comparing, the researcher's findings with those of Futernik (2007), only two participants made references to collaborating with colleagues. One participant shared an experience with an administrator setting him up with someone to collaborate with, and the other participant indicated she would like to be given the time for collaboration.

Johnson and The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2004) outlined 11 benchmarks for school workplace conditions based on emerging research and among them are: appropriate teaching assignments, fair and manageable teaching load and class size; *s*ufficient resources and materials, teacher stipends for extras; standardized tests, as one part of a comprehensive assessment strategy; and *c*oherent, job-embedded assistance that meets individual teachers' instructional needs. In relation to the benchmarks outlined by Johnson and The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, the researcher's findings were similar with the exceptions that none of the participants mentioned teacher stipends or standardized tests, and none indicated they were upset with the size of their classes. One participant expressed his frustration with a large class he was assigned to teach; however, his frustration resulted from having to change classrooms twice and not being given a large enough room. Additionally, two participants indicated they would like for administrators to communicate with them about their teaching schedules.

Since 2002, the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) has helped conduct working conditions surveys in Arizona, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina (Viadero, 2008). Among, the working conditions important to the more

than 150,000 teachers surveyed are: time to collaborate with colleagues, professional development opportunities, and ample facilities and resources. Moreover, one participant discussed the individualized training she was receiving to meet her instructional needs. The same participant also indicated she would be attending some conferences related to the new subject she was teaching. The conferences mentioned by this participant were the only professional development opportunities discussed.

Similar to Johnson and The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (2004) and Viadero (2008), four participants spoke about the importance of administrators providing them with the resources they need to be successful. Two participants addressed the importance of having the classroom supplies they need. Additionally, four participants suggested another way administrators could provide them with the necessary resources is by assisting them, or finding someone to assist them when they need help. Additionally, only one participant mentioned he would like for administrators to respect his individual planning time.

Markow et al. (2006) discovered significant predictors of teachers' satisfactions with their careers include teachers not being assigned to classes they feel unqualified to teach, having adequate time for classroom instruction, and having enough time for planning and grading. Similar to Markow et al., one participant acknowledged, in the past, she had been assigned to teach classes that she was not certified to teach and felt this was unfair. In contrast, to Markow et al. none of the participants mentioned being concerned about having enough time for classroom instruction.

Conclusions

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What are secondary level veteran regular education teachers' experiences with administrative support? A number of conclusions were reached based on the findings of the study.

The secondary level veteran regular education teachers feel confident when they have administrators who support them in matters of student discipline. When administrators handle student discipline issues: on a consistent basis, in a timely manner, and with appropriate consequences the veteran teachers feel supported. Veteran teachers also feel supported when administrators trust their explanations of situations rather than students' versions of what happened. Ideally, the veteran teachers would like for administrators to deal with student discipline problems immediately, without bias, and to consider teacher recommendations for consequences. Conversely, the veteran teachers experience frustration and disappointment when administrators do not support them with student discipline issues. The veteran teachers do not feel supported when administrators ignore referrals, do not make teacher safety a priority, and fail to provide them with feedback on the outcomes of referrals.

Overall, the veteran teachers are satisfied with the support they receive from administrators in dealing with parents. When administrators support the teachers by refusing to allow parents to treat them disrespectfully and upholding decisions made by the teachers, they feel self-assured and appreciative. Working with administrators who trust the words of the veteran teachers, over those of parents, is also very important to them. The veteran teachers are annoyed and disappointed when administrators fail to

handle situations with parents professionally or do not attend parent conferences they have requested for the administrators to attend.

Additionally, the veteran teachers feel secure when administrators support them by being accessible and willing to listen. Administrators who maintain an open door policy, keep an open mind, and express a sincere interest in listening to the teachers make them feel supported. When the veteran teachers feel that administrators are insincere and will be quick to pass judgment, they do not confide in them or seek their counsel. The veteran teachers often observe administrators' personalities, body languages, and rapports with teachers to determine if administrators are sincerely accessible and willing to listen.

Again, the veteran teachers feel confident when administrators support them by respecting them as professionals. Having administrators who respect veteran teachers as professionals is an essential working condition for the teachers. Veteran teachers feel respected as professionals when administrators value their inputs, trust their judgments, and trust them to do their jobs. When administrators assign veteran teachers to leadership positions they feel respected as professionals as well as encouraged and excited. Administrators who do not value the veteran teachers' inputs make them feel resentful, disrespected, and unappreciated.

Administrators who show their appreciation for teachers by recognizing and rewarding their achievements are appreciated by all of the veteran teachers. However, for some of the veteran teachers being praised and rewarded is not as important to them now as it was earlier in their career. Conversely, for some of the veteran teachers being recognized and rewarded by administrators remains equally important or more important at this point in their careers. When administrators acknowledge the veteran teachers by writing notes, saying thank you, providing lunch, or assigning leadership positions the teachers feel valued.

Likewise, all of the veteran teachers appreciate it when administrators show they care about them as individuals; however, like praise from administrators, some participants value it more than others. The veteran teachers appreciate administrators showing concern for their health and family. Additionally, the veteran teachers are grateful when administrators offer to help them, or simply show them compassion. However, the veteran teachers also desire for administrators to maintain appropriate professional boundaries when it comes to their personal lives. Finally, when administrators support teachers by demonstrating their care for them as individuals the veteran teachers believe the working environment is improved.

Furthermore, the veteran teachers appreciate administrators, who support them by being visible, initiating frequent communication, and providing the resources they need to be successful. Administrators who observe the veteran teachers' classes, and communicate with them about their classes make them feel valued. Additionally, the veteran teachers are grateful when administrators provide them with feedback on ways to improve their teaching methods. Although the veteran teachers do appreciate administrators communicating with them, and providing them with feedback; the tone of the communication needs to be supportive and the feedback constructive. The veteran teachers also value administrators who ensure they have classroom supplies, people to assist them, training, and other resources they need to be successful.

Implications

This study sought to discover the lived experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support. By examining how veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level experience administrative support, the

results of this study offer secondary administrators a better understanding of how they can provide a supportive environment to teachers. In turn, by providing teachers with supportive environments, administrators may be able to increase teacher retention in their schools. As a result of increased teacher retention, it may be easier for administrators to implement reforms in their schools; money, time, and other resources necessary to recruit teachers may be saved; and the stability of the teaching workforce may lead to increased student achievement.

Additionally, by adding to the existing body of literature, more data for policymakers to use when designing and implementing policies to increase teacher retention is available. The results of this study can also be used by policymakers to plan programs to help administrators provide more supportive working environments for teachers. Moreover, educational leadership professors can use this research to aid aspiring administrators in recognizing the significant role they will play in facilitating the support of veteran teachers. Educational leadership professors can also use this research to design classes and other learning opportunities which will prepare future administrators for creating and maintaining supportive working environments for veteran teachers.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Research</div>

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for further research are suggested:

1. This study should be replicated in other school districts to uncover additional methods administrators may use to support veteran teachers at the secondary level.

Surveys and interviews of veteran teachers in other districts and states would provide a more adequate picture of all veteran teachers.

2. This study could be expanded to include a larger and more diverse sample. Data gained could be cross-referenced for the effect of gender, grade, subject taught, race, age, and other relevant factors.

3. This study was limited to veteran teachers at the secondary level. Further research should be considered involving veteran teachers at the elementary and middle school levels.

4. The researcher's findings were limited to the experiences of public school teachers. Further research should be considered to examine the experiences of private school teachers with administrative support.

5. Further research should be considered to garner input from administrators concerning the feasibility and practicality of providing veteran teachers at the secondary level with the administrative support they desire.

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    39-62.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

1. What makes you feel supported as a teacher? What might make you feel more
supported?

2. What do you think is the most important way your principal could support you?

3. Describe a time when you felt really supported by your current principal or a former
principal. Are there other examples?

4. Describe a time when you felt a lack of support from your current principal or a former
principal. Are there other examples?

5. Give examples of how your current principal or a former principal demonstrated
his/her respect for you as a professional?

6. Describe ways your current principal or a former principal:

    a. showed support in problems with parents.

    b. did not show support in problems with parents.

7. Describe ways your current principal or a former principal:

    a. showed support in matters of student discipline.

    b. did not show support in matters of student discipline.

8. Give examples of how your current principal or a former principal showed that he/she:

    a. was accessible and valued your input.

    b. was not accessible.

9. Describe a time when your current principal or a former principal treated you:

    a. fairly.

    b. unfairly.

10. Has the kind of support that you value from a principal changed over the years? How?

11. If you could give advice to a new principal on ways to support teachers, what would you say?

12. Is there anything else that you could add to help me better understand your experiences with administrative support?

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

| Georgia Southern University |
| --- |

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Phone: 912-478-0843

Veazey Hall 2021
P.O. Box 8005

Fax: 912-478-0719      IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu      Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:**      Rachel Hendrix Nobles
1215 Spring Grove Rd
Jesup, GA 31545

Charles Reavis
P.O.Box 8131

**CC:**      Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:**      Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
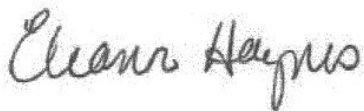(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:**      February 27, 2009

**Subject:**      Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered:**H09205** and titled **"A Qualitative Study of the Experiences with Administrative Support of Veteran Teachers at the Secondary Level"**, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter**. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Rachel Hendrix Nobles and I am a graduate student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a study of the experiences of teachers with administrative support. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of veteran regular education teachers at the secondary level with administrative support.

Participation in this research will include completion of a face to face interview and a follow-up interview via electronic mail. A semi-structured interview protocol using open-ended questions will be used for the face to face interview, and it will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. During the interview I will make notes about the things I see, hear, think, and experience. Following the interview the recording will be transcribed and you will be provided with a typed summary of the interview to review. After, reviewing the summary you will be given the opportunity to provide clarification for your responses. The follow-up interview will be a structured interview conducted via electronic mail. The follow-up interview will allow me to ask questions for clarification of responses from the previous interview and to ask questions that I missed the opportunity to ask during the previous interview.

I know of no risks or discomforts associated with the completion of these interviews beyond those experienced in everyday life. The benefits of participating in this study include having the opportunity to share your experiences with others and make a contribution to the educational literature on the topic. The benefits to society include more data for policymakers and administrators to utilize when designing and implementing policies and programs to increase teacher retention will be available.

All data collection for this study will take place during February and March of 2009. The face to face interviews are designed to last from 45 minutes to one hour. The follow-up electronic interview is designed to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. In order to protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms will be used and the interviews will be conducted at private locations selected by the participants. The data collected from the interviews will be stored on a computer and a USB drive in my home and will only be accessible to myself and the members of my dissertation committee. Data stored on my computer and USB drive will be erased after one calendar year. All written notes and typed transcripts will also be destroyed after one calendar year.

Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered.  If you have questions about this study, please contact me or my faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your

rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.
Participation in this study is voluntary, and there will be no compensation for your participation. You may end your participation at any time by telling me that you no longer wish to participate. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in this study or for withdrawing from this study. In addition, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.  If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date on the following page.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences with Administrative Support of Veteran Teachers at the Secondary Level

Principal Investigator:   Rachel Hendrix Nobles


 Faculty Advisor:        Dr. Charles Reavis
                         Professor of Educational Leadership
                         Georgia Southern University




_____           _____
Participant Signature                             Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____           _____
Investigator Signature                            Date