Teachers at Work: Factors Influencing Satisfaction, Retention and the Professional Well-Being of Elementary and Secondary Educators

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Teachers at Work: Factors Influencing Satisfaction, Retention and the Professional Well-Being of Elementary and Secondary Educators

by

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Abstract

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by
Patrick E. O’Reilly

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The purpose of this study has been to explore the question of how factors in the work lives of teachers influence their experience of workplace satisfaction, and how satisfaction influences retention in the teaching profession. This study had three specific goals: (1) to examine whether five specified factors that teachers’ encounter as workers influence their professional satisfaction, (2) to explore whether teacher satisfaction influences retention in the profession and (3) to determine whether school level taught plays a role in degrees of satisfaction a teacher experiences.

Data was collected over a period of five months, using a survey administered to 133 teachers, and follow-up interviews with 15, ten of whom also took the survey. Analysis indicates that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teachers at their work, that teaching is a demanding profession yet one that evokes significant loyalty among its workers, and that while school level taught does indeed play a role in professional satisfaction, teachers at elementary and secondary levels are most satisfied with their work when intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation is fueled by a love of students, of particular subject areas, and of the teaching profession. External factors, such as mandated testing and teacher performance evaluation systems, seriously erode satisfaction. Teaching is both a highly personal and highly public profession; satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which factors such as school climate and support are oriented to allow for teacher autonomy in the classroom.
The value of this study lies in the stories told, both through the survey administration and follow-up interviews, of the daily work-lives of teachers. Teachers are powerful work-agents insofar as they have the ability to shape the lives of succeeding generations. Their success depends on access to resources, appropriate support, and a measure of understanding of the complexities inherent in the teaching profession. It is hoped this study will contribute to that understanding and help enable teachers to translate improved work satisfaction to ever more successful teaching, with the likely outcome of well-educated generations of students.
Dedication

My parents, John and Teresa O’Reilly, emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1950, landing in New York on a frigid January day after a week on the stormy seas of the Atlantic Ocean. Their story is a classic one of arriving to the United States with pennies in their pockets, of decades filled with hard work, of raising and seeing to the care of five children, and of tireless sacrifice borne of a commitment to the belief that education creates opportunity. My father, who passed away in 2007 and who had an extraordinary work ethic, was famous for saying that a person needs the right tools to do a job correctly, and my mother has always pursued a love of words, reading and knowledge for its own sake. So with the gifts of the “right tools” of a strong work ethic from my father and a love of words and learning from my mother, I wish to dedicate this effort to my parents. Their lives are an example to me of, to paraphrase the words of William Strunk, choosing a suitable design and holding to it: they chose a life that would make their children’s lives better, and they held to it. Thanks to them I’ve been able to see this effort through, to them I am eternally grateful, and in their honor I dedicate this paper.
Acknowledgements

I have completed this study thanks to the support, encouragement, prodding and patience of many people; attempting to capture every one of them by name runs the risk of creating an acknowledgement almost as lengthy as this dissertation itself. While I am deeply indebted to all my professors, family, friends, colleagues and fellow students, several individuals have been closely connected to my work, beginning with my advisor, Nicholas Michelli, whose unwavering patience, outstanding advice and good humor are nonpareil. It’s the truest thing I can write is that without Nick this paper would not have been completed and that I could not wish for a better advisor. I am forever in his debt and look forward to more burgers at O’Reilly’s (sadly, no relation, and they have a great burger) in the years ahead. Anthony Picciano not only helped me through the data analysis of this study, he guided me through drafts of this paper with numerous insightful comments, excellent questions and a new phrase, “whited sepulcher,” which I have promised him this paper will not be. I am deeply grateful for his wisdom, encouragement and assistance. Susan Semel gave me the gift of appreciating an historical perspective on teachers and their work both in courses and conversations with her, which I have taken to heart not only in this study, but in my understanding of the lives of educators today. Susan and her husband, Alan Sadovnik, offered sage advice in the early stages of my research; I am most grateful to them both. To each member of my dissertation committee, Nicholas Michelli, Anthony Picciano and Susan Semel, my everlasting thanks for your help and support.

In addition to my committee members, I wish to thank three fellow-doctoral friends. Paula Fleshman, a fellow-graduate of the Urban Education program, gave many hours of guidance and assistance with the findings in this study; her help was invaluable and her good humor helped me laugh when I felt like crying. My good friend, Ted Powers, contributed excellent insights,
challenging questions and uninterrupted encouragement during my writing. Ted’s green pen is a treasured memento of his editorial comments. Another dear good friend, Alfred Bagamasbad, whose doctoral defense I had the privilege of attending, offered continuous advice and support both in person and via frequent, humor-filled text messages; his encouragement and companionship also helped mightily to see this effort through. To these individuals, Paula, Ted and Alfred, I extend my warmest gratitude and appreciation.

During both the research and writing phases of my work, I was fortunate to have access to the campus of Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, for several weeks during several summers. My good Brother-friends, Frank Kelly and Michael Flanagan, secured housing and library privileges for me at Marist; their generosity of spirit and hospitality contributed significantly to the progress of this paper, as did the encouragement of Brother Sean Sammon, a fellow researcher who graciously offered to read several drafts of this study in progress. Thanks to Frank, Michael and Sean for providing a home-away-from-home for me along the majestic Hudson River. Christine Saieh at the Graduate Center’s Urban Education office, simply would not let me quit, and Aviva Arad, an editor extraordinaire, did a remarkable job of fine-tuning the final draft and offering wise, well-placed editorial suggestions. To Christine and Aviva I am also most grateful.

My mother and my siblings have also supported my studies and have added their voices of familial strength during my years in this program. My siblings and I are the beneficiaries of good education; their respect for learning and natural spirit of inquiry are at the root of my desire to complete this degree. I thank them warmly for their understanding, support and encouragement. My Aunt Bee, who passed away many years back, holds a special place in my heart; she always encouraged my studies and spoiled me beautifully. Her generous spirit also resides in this paper.
My many friends, who are too numerous to name individually, have been most patient and encouraging through this effort. I am blessed with supportive and loving friends who understood each time I said, “I’m spending the weekend working.” or, “Sorry I can’t join you…I’m writing.” They, and my fine colleagues in the Manhasset Public Schools, have often convinced me, when I was less than convinced, that I could indeed do it. My administrative colleagues in the districts in which I conducted this study and the teachers who participated in the survey and interviews have simply, and most definitely, made this paper possible. To them I owe a debt of gratitude for their time, assistance and candid responses. Their input is the heart of this effort.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Context and Research Overview

Introduction

Among the countless attempts to decipher the complexities inherent in schools and how they do or don’t successfully educate young learners, the question of how teacher job satisfaction impacts the learning process is one of the most compelling and important aspects of the profession to consider, study and understand. Teaching is on the one hand a highly public profession; public school employees are technically appointed to their positions by a duly elected Board of Education, their salaries are paid through public funds as accrued through tax levy, and they are, for all intents and purposes, one branch among civil service employee ranks. At the same time, teaching is a highly personal profession. Many educators will admit that what they do in the classroom is a reflection of aspects of themselves, an amalgam of their own schooling and learning, teaching experiences, individual psychology, feelings about children, and sense of their own competence or absence of it. Understanding how schools can create good learning environments and how students can best learn is not a simple task; the temptation to a reductionist perspective may have appeal, and is often the modus of simple-minded education reformers, but is of course misguided. Yet, no education reforms will improve student learning and performance if teachers are incompetent; similarly, it may be posited that teacher job satisfaction will likely create better teaching, given the propensity in human nature to perform better on tasks to which we are attracted and from which we derive a personal sense of well-being. A conversation about teacher job satisfaction and retention, therefore, is likely to yield insight that is helpful to the ongoing national soul-searching about how our schools might improve and students might be better educated. In fact, and at the risk of over-simplification, I
believe understanding professional satisfaction and retention is among the keys to school improvement. With teachers who are satisfied in their professional lives and who desire to continue as teachers, students are likelier to learn and enjoy the experience of learning; it follows that students will perform better and become life-long learners if their teachers derive a personal, and indeed visceral, sense of well-being from their efforts in the classroom. It also follows that we must ask essential questions about overall teacher job satisfaction at elementary and secondary levels, about how job satisfaction relates to retention and about the factors influencing the overall picture of the teacher work experience. By exploring these questions, we begin to peel the onion of daily, institutional and cultural factors that influence teacher satisfaction and retention.

**Personal Context**

From my earliest childhood, I have enjoyed being in, around, and connected to schools and learning. As a youngster, I looked forward to each year of elementary school and the rituals associated with those years: classrooms, books, teachers, fellow classmates, chalk and erasers, clapping those erasers against each other on a Friday afternoon outside the building, reading, writing and learning. As a child of Catholic parochial education, I was schooled, in large measure, the old-fashioned way. Many of my teachers were Sisters of Saint Joseph, a religious order highly regarded for its teaching expertise, who, along with the non-religious teachers in the school were carefully chosen and highly competent. Thus my elementary experience was for the most part energizing, eye opening, and mind expanding; I can remember the day I learned to read (first word: mouse), the day I stood, perplexed, in front of a science lab table for the first time, and certainly remember perhaps the most intriguing day of all in seventh grade, when the boys were separated from the girls for the “talk” about sex, a topic which pretty much consumed our
curiosity for the rest of that year and beyond. In all honesty I cannot recall a weak teacher from my elementary years, a gift that has influenced my successful pursuit of education well beyond those formative grades. At home I took, with my siblings and some friends, to “playing school,” a game of imitating the classroom complete with books, assignments and rudimentary lesson plans. It’s no surprise then that my first significant awareness of quality teaching tied to job satisfaction comes from these early grades. By and large, those elementary teachers genuinely enjoyed their work and worked hard to develop the young minds before them each day; elementary school graduation day was both sad and terrifying, filled with foreboding about high school, new and stricter teachers, the departure from the warm confines of St. Benedict Joseph Labre School.

Fast forwarding to the start of my own career as an educator, I was equally blessed by the influences of master teachers in the high schools in which I initially taught, Marist High School in Bayonne, New Jersey, and Archbishop Molloy High School in Briarwood, Queens. In each of these I discovered an essential truth about teaching: it is at once a profession and a personal experience, a daily series of relationships, interactions, challenges, successes and failures, all of which are, for the mindful educator, the building blocks of success, but which are also for the dissatisfied pedagogue, a road to perdition. In my high school years I began to notice the phenomenon of a distinction between teachers suited to the profession and those blatantly unsuited. The difference? Strong teachers had a passion about their subject and an ability to relate to youngsters; weak teachers might have known their material, but could not organize a lesson or connect with students. The memory is seared to mind of the day my 11th grade math teacher, whose response to student misbehavior was to gradually and continuously lower his voice as the roar of the students grew louder (on the theory that the lower his volume, the more
students would strain to hear him) was observed by the department chair, who had been inundated by parent complaints. Things got so bad that in the middle of the lesson the Chair stormed out as Mr. Crowe stood whispering more and more softly to the chalkboard about solving trigonometric equations. I suspect my embarrassment on his behalf was an unusual reaction among members of the class. It upset me to see a teacher in so much pain; his inability to channel enthusiasm or connectedness, not to mention the subject at hand, was difficult to witness.

My formative years as a teacher showed me the essential ingredients for success and satisfaction as a teacher: in a word, “with-it-ness,” a term loaded with meaning though difficult to find in a dictionary. Migrating from teaching in Catholic high schools to public highs schools, then from teaching to public school administration has placed me in numerous school contexts, with the opportunity to observe teaching from many angles. My current position as a District Coordinator for English Language Arts and Reading places me in classrooms of all sizes, with elementary and secondary teachers of all types, and affords a “feet on the ground” perspective from which to consider the relationship between teachers, satisfaction, retention and student success. My desire to consider teacher job satisfaction and its impact on student learning is borne from years of experience as a student, teacher and administrator. This introduction continues with a statement of purpose for my study, an overview of my research questions, an explanation of their significance, a brief description of the methodology of my study, further developed in Chapter 3, a theoretical framework, possible outcomes and concluding thoughts.
Introduction to Research Questions

An introduction to the research questions that form the basis for contextualizing the topic of teacher job satisfaction sets the stage for understanding the purpose of the study, the research questions, and methodology employed anticipated outcomes, and significance of the study. Carroll and Foster’s article (2010), regarding a study by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF, 2010) indicates that, “After five years, over 30% of our beginning teachers have left the profession…and their departure is expensive: NCTAF estimated that the nation’s school districts spent at least 7.2 billion a year on teacher turnover and churn” (p 4). Given the alarming rate of departure from the teaching profession, an inquiry as to who is likely to stay in the profession and who may leave teaching certainly merits study. Having worked in education for thirty-five years and feeling very strongly about the critical role of education in the lives of youngsters and adults, my investment in this inquiry is both professional and personal. Education allowed my siblings and me to achieve middle-class lives in this country; we are the products of parents who were born in Ireland and raised under modest circumstances. Both of my parents completed their education as middle-aged adults in New York thirty years after leaving Ireland; they both also benefitted from the remarkable opportunity of attending school through the City University of New York, specifically Queensborough and LaGuardia Community Colleges. Therefore, my interest in this topic is multi-layered: experience has taught me that the most effective educational moments involve close interaction between students and teachers, prompting the examination in this study of the relationship between professional satisfaction and longevity in teaching. Teacher work satisfaction and retention, impacting the quality of what happens in the classroom, are significant factors to understanding dedicated professionalism and student success.
Overview of Purpose

This study intends to uncover the relationship between teacher work satisfaction and retention in the profession, using the lens of five factors that influence the teacher experience on a regular if not a daily basis: (1) school climate (2) workplace support (3) teacher professional development, (4) perceptions about the teaching profession as experienced by teachers, and (5) factors contributing to entry to the profession in the first place. By asking teachers why they chose working in a classroom to make a living, then asking whether they feel supported in what type of climate they work, whether they have access to professional development and how they feel about it, and finally how they believe they are seen within the community in which they work and in the larger professional world, this study proposes to enable greater insight to the relationship between satisfaction, as influenced by these factors, and the critically important issue of teachers staying or leaving the profession, also known as retention in teaching.

The methodology for this study employs both a quantitative and qualitative approach: first, for the purpose of measuring teachers’ responses, a survey is used with questions designed around the five factors outlined, followed by questions related to satisfaction, and concluding with questions about retention in the profession and reasons for staying or departing education. The data gathered in the survey is further explored using a qualitative study through interviewing of a total of 15 teachers: ten volunteers from among the survey respondents and five additional teachers from outside the survey pool; the purpose of the interviews is to flesh out teacher experiences in the workplace and to mine their lived insights about how they value and see themselves valued as professionals. Demographic information examines variables related to years in the profession, gender, race, and type of district of each respondent, among other demographic variables. An important goal of this study is to study the question of whether a
distinction is evident in survey and interview responses as made by elementary and secondary teachers. This research proposes that if a distinction is evident between elementary and secondary teachers’ responses relative to the five factors under examination, and these responses are related to work satisfaction, and that further, a relationship may be established between satisfaction and retention, this study may be significant to understanding how to (a) make teaching a more satisfying work experience and how to (b) strengthen retention, i.e. how to foster life-long teaching professionals. If this study accomplishes its purpose it will play a modest role in the never-ending pursuit of better school and stronger teachers, thus contributing to the goal of forming well-educated students.

Overview and Introduction of Research Questions

Developing research questions has involved careful examination of possible perspectives from which teacher satisfaction might be studied. Initially, for example, examining whether a relationship exists between teacher satisfaction and student performance clearly seemed an important question, given that student performance is the sine qua non of the endeavor of schools. Further consideration, however, determined there would be significant difficulty in gathering performance data, given restrictions on access to student test results and grades, and that it would be unlikely to successfully measure the relationship between student performance and a given teacher’s classroom. Another variable examines the question of who enters the teaching profession in the first place. Guarino (2006) and her colleagues, for example, explored “Four studies found that college graduates with the highest levels of measured ability tend not to go into teaching, and [that] two of these studies found that this holds primarily for elementary school teachers rather than secondary school teachers” (p. 181). Given this startling outcome, the factor of “choice of entry to the profession” was added to the original four, detailed in the
research questions below, of school climate, workplace support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching. For the purpose of examining the factors influencing teaching, satisfaction and retention, this study therefore posits three research questions:

1. How do the factors of entry to teaching, school climate, workplace support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession?
2. Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach, specifically the elementary and secondary levels?
3. How does job satisfaction at these levels relate to teacher retention rates at each level?

**Significance of Study**

In an age of data-driven instruction, external assessment, and teacher evaluation tied to assessment results, an overlooked aspect of student success lies in the daily human interaction between teacher and student, an interaction heavily influenced by how well a teacher likes the work she does. Bogler (2002) suggests the significance of studying satisfaction: “It is important to study teacher job satisfaction because of its effect on teacher retention” (p.666). Absence of satisfaction in the teaching profession often leads to job burnout; Kahn, Schneider, Jenkens-Henkleman, &Moyle. (2006), citing the work of Maslach (2003) describe burnout as follows:

In most contemporary research job burnout is viewed as comprising three dimensions. *Emotional Exhaustion* is characterized by an employee’s feeling of emotional and physical overextension, such as when a teacher feels drained and depleted because of work. *Cynicism* refers to a detached attitude toward the people encountered at work. This
would be illustrated by a teacher who lacks concern about students. Finally, feelings of reduced *professional efficacy* refer to a lack of confidence concerning one’s productivity at work and affect multiple teaching tasks and domains, not only emotional aspects of teaching (p. 794).

The corrosive effect of a burned-out teacher on a student’s learning may well be imagined and is, sadly, too often the lived experience of students in classrooms. This study is significant because it explores the relationship between teachers and their work and internal and external factors that create satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the profession. Looking beyond the measures created by data-driven teacher evaluation systems, this study posits that how a teacher feels in relationship to teaching matters a great deal: how satisfied a teacher is at work is likely to be a factor in overall effort at work. Pajak and Blase (1984) addressed the interplay of the teacher-self in a qualitative study of teachers who gathered regularly in a bar every Friday to socialize and decompress from the work week. Interviews done in this bar surfaced that, “the teachers studied tended to dichotomize their professional and personal identities” and “the teachers appropriated a public drinking place for several hours each week in order to separate themselves from the contrastingly serious, restrictive, and moralistic social reality of schools” (Pajak & Blase, 1984, p. 165). One of the factors Pajak and Blase (1984) report from the group of teachers interviewed is the dichotomy “between the teachers’ conception of their professional role and their personal identities” (p. 168). This study of teacher satisfaction is significant when it adds to the understanding of how the teacher “self” is impacted positively or negatively in the performance of teaching, given the social constraints teachers feel within the confines of the profession. Taking this conversation from the bar room back to the classroom, this study intends
to show how the important factors of entry to the profession, climate and support, professional
development and perceptions of teaching contribute to the relationship between a teacher and her
intention to remain in the profession for all or the better part of a working career.

**Significance of Research Questions**

A closer examination of the proposed research questions shows why they are significant
in understanding factors that lead to success in the classroom.

1. **How do the factors of entry to teaching, climate, workplace support, professional
development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and
retention in the profession?**

This question is significant because it calls for examining factors over which school
systems have some measure of control, and those over which they have less, if any,
control. Ultimately, no improvement to external factors (climate, physical plant, support
systems, administrative dispositions, etc.) is more powerful than the influence of intrinsic
factors (sense of well-being, feeling that one has chosen the right profession, love of
students and learning, among many), but extrinsic factors may contribute to the degree of
potency of intrinsic ones. For the purposes of this study, the five factors of (1) choice of
entry to the profession, (2) school climate, (3) workplace support, (4) professional
development and (5) teachers’ perceptions of how others view the profession, are the
focus of inquiry. Through both a survey and volunteered interviews, evidence surfaces
about these factors and how they influence satisfaction and retention. If this relationship
exists, it contributes to a better understand the lived experience of teachers, providing an
informed eye as to how workplace conditions may continually improve so as to foster
better teacher performance and greater retention, leading to improved conditions for student learning.

2. **Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach, specifically the elementary and secondary levels?**

   This question is significant because if one teacher group is more satisfied than another, probing the reasons for greater satisfaction at one level may inform development of mentoring, school climate, availability of resources, or other tangibles that lead to greater overall satisfaction and retention on both school levels. Additionally, if elementary and secondary teachers differ in their perceptions about the way the profession is regarded by others, this difference may surface how emotional or cultural influences impact teacher satisfaction and retention. Examining whether a difference in satisfaction exists at the elementary and secondary teaching levels is likely to contribute to the study of specific workplace environments and relationships, factors which influence the work product of successful teachers: student who learn.

3. **How does job satisfaction at these levels relate to teacher retention rates at each level?**

   The loss of teachers within the first five years of employment to other professions is costly and damaging to all schools and school districts. Carroll and Foster, in their report (NCTAF, 2010) indicate, “In addition to hemorrhaging teaching talent at the beginning of the career, we are about to lose accomplished teaching talent at the veteran end of the career on an unprecedented scale. The teaching career pipeline is collapsing at both ends. Even our highest performing schools and districts are about to lose much of the expertise
that has been at the core of their success for decades. Teaching effectiveness in virtually every school district in the country will be affected, just as we are challenged with educating a 21st century workforce that can keep us competitive in a global economy” (p.4). If this study shows that dissatisfied teachers are likely to consider leaving the profession early in their careers, or if it shows that dissatisfied teachers beyond the financial point of being able to leave (because they would incur serious financial harm) would leave if finances were not a factor, then surfacing the underlying factors that create dissatisfaction and a physical or attitudinal departure has importance, as this study may suggest ways to prevent these departures. Cost savings may be realized through teacher retention if greater levels of retention are possible, but we must first understand this relationship of satisfaction and retention to achieve that end.

Taken as a group, these questions examine the factors that may create a satisfied, productive teacher or a dissatisfied, potentially counter-productive one. Ultimately, the value of these questions lies in the impact this research may have in understanding teachers: they will contribute to the literature, but more importantly may impact the lives of teachers, toward the goal of creating more productive educators.

**Definition of Terms: Satisfaction and Retention**

Understanding the significant terms of a study of job satisfaction is aided by research connected to the sociology of work and the field of industrial psychology. In educational psychology, the term satisfaction applies to the experience of work among teacher employees in a given school, district, or region. For example Fuming and Jiliang (2007) focus in their study of job satisfaction in Chinese schools on a working definition of overall job satisfaction that
suggests, “Overall job satisfaction means the workers’ attitude toward all aspects of work and the work environment, that is, the workers’ overall reaction to their work in its entirety” (p. 87).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) defined job satisfaction as “an affective reaction to one’s work” (p. 1061). Perrachione, Rosser, and Petersen (2008) cite Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory (1966) in which Herzberg theorized, “that job satisfaction was influenced by ‘intrinsic factors’ or ‘motivators’ relating to actual job content or ‘what the person does’ and by ‘extrinsic factors’ or ‘hygienes’ associated with the work environment or ‘the situation in which [the person] does the work’” (p. 3). Perrachione et al., (2008) referencing Bobbit, Faupel, and Burns (1991) and Meek (1998) further indicate that “employee satisfaction has been a reliable predictor of retention in teaching” and that “this area of research has repeatedly demonstrated that job satisfaction results in higher levels of teacher retention” (Perrachione et al., 2008, p. 2). For the purposes of this paper, an operative definition of “retention” is a teacher’s remaining in the teaching profession until retirement eligibility age or beyond, or for one’s working life. The overall experience of job satisfaction is an attitudinal and affective experience; teacher satisfaction is an experience of ability connected to implementing (planning, organizing and carrying out) activities toward the goal of delivering instruction.

**Theoretical Framework: Self-Determination Theory**

Consideration of psychological underpinnings of work satisfaction among teachers leads to investigation of theories of motivation and the relationship between work experience and positive and negative influences on psychological well-being among teacher-employees in the work place. An overarching understanding of factors that contribute to both satisfaction and extreme disengagement from work may inform the study of teacher work satisfaction. Self-Determination Theory, developed by researchers Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan at the
University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, led to the creation of a consortium of psychologists and academics who explore the dynamics of human motivation and behavior, with application to the endeavor of work; a portion of this research studies this theory and its impact on education. The tenets of Self-Determination Theory are stated on the front page of this organization’s website.

**Self-Determination Theory** (SDT) represents a broad framework for the study of human motivation and personality. SDT articulates a meta-theory for framing motivational studies, a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation, and a description of the respective roles of intrinsic and types of extrinsic motivation in cognitive and social development and in individual differences. Perhaps more importantly SDT propositions also focus on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people’s sense of volition and initiative, in addition to their well-being and the quality of their performance. Conditions supporting the individual’s experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are argued to foster the most volitional and high quality forms of motivation and engagement for activities, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. In addition SDT proposes that the degree to which any of these three psychological needs is unsupported or thwarted within a social context will have a robust detrimental impact on wellness in that setting.

([www.selfdeterminationtheory.org](http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org))

The relationship of this theory to a study of teacher work satisfaction may be found in the research conducted by Gagné and Deci in *Self Determination Theory and Work Motivation* (2005). Gagné and Deci reference Porter and Lawler’s (1968) “proposed model of intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation [according to which] people [do] an activity because they find it
interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, requires an instrumentality between the activity and some separable consequences such as tangible or verbal rewards, so satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 331). Further, Self-Determination Theory makes a distinction between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation; citing Dworkin (1988), Gagné and Deci (2005) explain autonomy as “endorsing one’s actions at the highest level of reflection,” and continue, “Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. When people engage an activity because they find it interesting, they are doing the activity wholly volitionally (e.g., I work because it is fun)” (p.334). Establishing a relationship between Self-Determination Theory and work motivation, Gagné and Deci (2005) continue, “SDT focuses not only on job characteristics such as choice and constructive feedback as one way to influence autonomous motivation, but it also suggests that the interpersonal style of supervisors and managers is important” (p. 342). In education supervisors include superintendents, principals and department chairs; of these, the latter two are likelier to have a direct influence on the day-to-day work experience of teachers, but every level of school supervision influences the factors of professional development (how much and of what quality is available), school climate (how restrictive or respectful is the environment of the school) and support (what type of resources are available; how responsive is the school to teachers’ needs).

Self-Determination Theory further suggests a relationship between this theory of human motivation and work outcomes. Gagné and Deci (2005) note that Deci (1989) “found that managerial autonomy support, defined as managers’ acknowledging their subordinates’ perspectives, providing relevant information in a non-controlling way, offering choice, and encouraging self-initiation rather than pressuring subordinates to behave in specified ways, was
associated with employees’ being more satisfied with their jobs” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 345). If we extrapolate this finding to the work experience in education, examination of professional development (as a function of encouraging self-initiation), climate (the overall physical and psychological landscape) and support (as a discreet factor but together with climate, influencing information flow, choice, and acknowledgement of teacher perspectives) will suggest a relationship between these factors and work satisfaction. Gagné and Deci (2005) also suggest a relationship between work satisfaction and the perceptions of others regarding the value of the work performed: “When people are autonomously motivated at work they tend to experience their jobs as interesting or personally important, self-initiated, and endorsed by relevant others. When people perform effectively at these jobs, they experience satisfaction of the basic psychological needs and have positive attitudes toward their jobs” (p. 353). In the field of education, “relevant others” involves myriad stakeholders, including supervisors, fellow teachers, parents and students. We may suggest, then, that the factor of how others perceive the work of teachers in a given community correlates to teacher autonomy and work satisfaction. Gagné and Deci (2005) suggest that work “endorsed by relevant others” is more satisfying work because the acknowledgement of the value of the work has a reflexive effective on the worker: if the community endorses the value of teacher work through material and verbal support mechanisms, teachers are likelier to feel greater autonomy and more satisfied about what they do. Self-Determination Theory offers a framework for understanding intrinsic motivation as an essential element of work satisfaction. In this study, the extent to which internal (choice of entering teaching) and workplace (climate, support, professional development and the role of relevant others) factors support or diminish teacher motivation and satisfaction will inform understanding of how satisfaction influences the work experience and likelihood of retention.
Significance of Potential Outcomes

Considerable study has been conducted regarding teacher work satisfaction at both the elementary and secondary levels. Marston’s study (2005), also cited in Chapter 2, details many differences between elementary and secondary teachers, both in what they value and what satisfies them. Marston (2005) cites Perie and Baker (1997), who found “that elementary school teachers tended to be more satisfied than secondary teachers” (Marston, 2005, p. 470). In addition, Brunetti (2001) cites the same Perie and Baker study in reporting that, “Using composite criteria to identify teachers as low, moderate, or high in job satisfaction, they [Perie and Baker] found that only 26.3 percent of public high school teachers fit in the high category” (Brunetti, 2001, p. 50). Guarino (2006) cites Henke et al. (2001) who found “that secondary teachers, particularly science teachers and sometimes math teachers, were more likely to leave [the teaching profession] than were elementary teachers” (Guarino, 2006, p. 187). This study continues the conversation about degrees of work satisfaction at the elementary and secondary levels, posing the question whether one school level of teacher experiences different degrees of satisfaction in the course of their careers than the other. Factors influencing satisfaction and retention may relate to variables such as age and gender of the teacher, but overall school climate and district demographics may also play a significant role. The assertion that choice of profession, climate, support, professional development and perceptions about teaching are influences on practitioners is significant if this study shows a relationship of satisfaction to retention. Further, if this study generates findings similar to those discussed in Marston (2005) and Guarino (2006) that elementary teachers are generally more satisfied than secondary school teachers, the reasons for this outcome are important toward informing the work environment of
all teachers. Brunetti (2001) asserts a “generally held belief secondary teachers enter teaching primarily because of a love of their subject, in contrast to elementary teachers—at least according to general belief—who enter teaching primarily because they want to work with children” (p.62). If Brunetti’s assertion is accurate, this study also proposes to shed light on whether the secondary teacher, attracted to teaching because of a love of a particular subject, is able to maintain satisfaction over time when compared to the elementary teacher, whose desire to work with children serves as a significant motive for entering the profession.

A review of relevant literature on this topic affords further insight as to how other researchers have studied and written about this essential topic in the exploration of satisfaction and retention in the teaching.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Historical Perspective

A worthy literature review regarding teachers and career satisfaction does well to begin with an historical perspective on the teaching career. Understanding the genesis of the form and structure of the profession is likely to provide a good contextual foundation. To a large extent, career satisfaction in the classroom (as in almost any other profession) has a relationship to the culture of the workplace, including the history of how that culture developed over time. In *Silences and Images*, Grovesnor, Lawn, and Rousmaniere (1999) suggest, intriguingly, that this history is shrouded in the absence of sound; they begin with the reflection, “There have been a great many ‘silences’ in the history of education across many cultures, silences about the practice, meaning and culture of the classroom” (p. 1). Their work derives from a series of conferences in the mid 1990’s in several locations in Canada; they posit that silences are found in the stasis of empty classrooms, filled with desks, books and this question hanging in the air of these empty rooms: “What was the lived reality of teacher’s work and student’s lives in and around [those] classrooms?” (Grovesnor, et al., 1999, p. 1). Philip Gardner’s contribution to the conference, “Reconstructing the Classroom Teacher, 1903-1945” offers that, “From the inception of a structure of formal training and certification…there has been no shortage of public and political pronouncements about the nature of teaching” and he goes on to characterize the outcome of the scrutiny of the profession as follows, “Teachers have been variously constructed as selfless missionaries, as intellectual upstarts, as ambitious status seekers, as social isolates, as cruel authoritarians, as well-meaning dupes unwittingly serving this interest or that, as emergent professionals, as trade union fighters, or as a disparate occupational constituency divided against
itself. In each of these assertions, there is of course some truth” (Gardner, et al., 1999, p.125). Gardner captures the essence of the multitude of perceptions of teachers through the lens of recent history; his characterization of the many and contradictory qualities attributed to teachers shows just how complex perceptions are and suggests how highly nuanced a sense of professional satisfaction might be within the confines of these public perceptions.

Gardner’s assertion begs the question of how teachers perceive themselves, given the level of scrutiny to which they have historically been subjected. His essay also notes the wide debate about teaching in the public arena after the turn of the (nineteenth) century, with a highly prescient observation about professionals in that period that teachers, “conclude[d] that they were more or less widely misunderstood by the world outside and that the rhetoric of public discussion of education and the reality of their teaching lives were two quite different things” (Gardner, et. al., 1999, p. 127). Gardner indicates that misperception about teachers has been an attribute of the profession for at least a century and before; historically, teachers have been up against multiple sources of interaction and feedback, creating an intriguing question about how satisfying an experience such teachers had in the early parts of the preceding century. The contributors to these conference talks in Silences and Images hone in on some of the essential challenges of the profession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and suggest that the very questions about teacher satisfaction and elementary and secondary work were as relevant then as they are today. Gardner asserts that, “Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the gulf between elementary and secondary teacher, rooted in long-standing social, educational and professional separation remained unabridged” (Gardner, et. al., 1999, p.139). Perhaps we need to consider the notion of ‘separation’ as an essential concept in the exploration of teacher dispositions; as literature suggests, teachers are prone to experience a sense of separation—from
administrators, parents, boards of education, and most significantly, from each other, in their quest to educate students.

As we consider the frames of the teaching profession, one piece of the core lies in how teachers are both members of a community but also individuals, isolated, separated, and having to employ creative energy to keep students engaged and cooperative. Kate Rousmaniere’s essay on Margaret Haley within *Silences and Images*, “Sixteen Years in a Classroom,” details the daily ritual of the teacher and union leader in Chicago’s public schools in the late nineteenth century. Haley and her colleagues had to organize physical activities, regulate classroom temperature, control close to fifty students without using corporal punishment, and manage to teach students (Rousmaniere, 1999, p. 248). Teachers today may not face fifty students at once, but to some extent are responsible for as many tasks, if not more, in a given day in the classroom. History shows us that the question of extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing the profession are relevant to a conversation about teaching today as they were about teaching in bygone eras; Rousmaniere captures the matter beautifully in the conclusion of her essay on Margaret Haley, with the observation, “The work of the teacher does not happen only in the classroom in one second; it changes over time and through communities….Teachers’ work is regular and regulated, but it is also spontaneous and unrehearsed. Teachers are among the most literate of all workers, yet the nature of their work leaves them too exhausted to chronicle their day, and classroom papers are usually discarded because they are not considered important” (Rousmaniere, 1999, p. 254). While teachers may, ironically enough, chronicle little of their own daily experiences, those who observe the profession render insight to the essential question of job satisfaction and student learning in both the historical and contemporary classroom.
Larry Cuban’s seminal work *How Teachers Taught* (1993) explores the history of classroom practice through two major historical periods, 1890-1940 and 1965-1975. Cuban’s first chapter plunges directly to the drawing of a distinction between elementary and secondary instruction in the earliest years of the historical periods he explores. Citing similarities and differences in instruction in the early twentieth century, Cuban observes, “Teaching was fragmented in high schools as students traveled from class to class to meet with five or more teachers in a given day” (Cuban, 1993, p. 37) and that, “This was not the case at the elementary school, where the teacher would spend all day with the same students” (Cuban, 1993, p. 38). Perhaps this distinction is most striking for its familiarity, for while the contemporary elementary classroom sees students excused from primary instruction (at a surprising rate) for “specials” “pullouts” and the like, the high school teacher usually sees students for forty minutes a day, every day. Just as the high school teacher sees the same set of students once a day, his elementary counterpart sees her students all day, or is at least responsible for the same set of students from one end of the day to the next. In its early chapters Cuban’s book closely details historical underpinnings of three school districts, those in New York, Denver and Washington D.C., examining innovations, reforms, and the rise of teacher-centered progressivism against the backdrop of expanding bureaucracies and more stringent teacher evaluation systems. He concludes that, “For teachers, contradictions multiplied as they tried to resolve the tensions generated by partisans of progressive pedagogy and the daily realities they faced in their schools” (Cuban, 1993, p. 113). Cuban elucidates the essential tension teachers felt in the early years of the twentieth century, struggling as they did between the expectation of infusing basic skills and socializing children to good behavior and respect for authority, while “wanting to embrace the values of progressive pedagogy (individual choice, self-expression, and independent thinking)”,
all of which “suggests that many teachers began to see a fundamental dilemma in what they did and what role they were expected to play” (Cuban, 1993, p. 113). Cuban fast-forwards to the present from his examination of early to mid-twentieth century schools, with the prescient observation that, “The paradox of teacher-centered progressivism that grew in the inter-war decades is one that has persisted since, creating classrooms where teachers are beset by conflicting impulses to be simultaneously efficient, scientific, child-centered, and authoritative” (Cuban, 1993, p. 114). Cuban draws a link between teachers of the past and the present, suggesting that factors able to influence job satisfaction have applicability yesterday and today: the existence of a palpable tension between experiences “behind the classroom door”, the highly personal, idiosyncratic, relational (for better or worse) lived reality for teachers, and the equally potent expectations from outside the classroom door, those from parents, administrators, school boards and state education departments.

Kate Rousmaniere’s exploration of New York City’s teacher experience during years of reform and increasing demands on the profession sheds further light on the history of teachers and their relationship to their work. In her introduction to City Teachers (1997), Rousmaniere lists several important themes about perceptions regarding the profession among teachers after World War I; among these is that, “schools took on the mantle of a social service agency for a diversifying urban student population” yet at the same time, “teachers identified…that they worked in a strangely lonely environment, isolated from their colleagues even as they worked in a crowd of children” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 3). These themes, of increased demand accompanied by isolation and bureaucratic demands, echo Cuban’s assertion in How Teachers Taught (1993) about the fundamental dilemma for teachers between what they actually did in the classroom and the roles they were expected to play (p. 113). These historians suggest an
underlying assertion about the profession, that the role of the teacher is multi-faceted, pressurized, and ultimately highly individualized; Gardner’s terse assertion in “Reconstructing the Classroom Teacher,” his essay in *Silences and Images* (1999) which says that “Teaching remained [in the period after World War I] an intensely private and often solitary craft” (p. 127) coincides with Rousmaniere’s (1997) and Cuban’s (1993) historically positioned perspectives of the complexity embedded in the profession, given its necessary response to administrative and social expectations, at times poised against the idiosyncratic connection teachers have to what they do on a daily basis. These historians suggest the importance of understanding not only the interior of a teacher’s classroom but the interior of a teacher’s disposition about themselves and their work. A consideration of teacher well-being will take into account variables that Rousmaniere says in *City Teachers* (1997) are perennial considerations in rooting to the history of teachers, among them social status. She notes that, “teaching has traditionally been an avenue for upwardly mobile working class people and ethnic and racial minorities…. [they] have earned more than most working class people, so that the social status of teaching is unclear” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 5). While teachers are certainly better paid today than ever before, Rousmaniere is correct when she notes, “much of teachers’ work is tedious clerical work, and the physical working conditions of schools can be as gritty and unglamorous as a factory” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 6). Rousmaniere further asserts that the nature of teaching, its fast-paced way of hurtling teachers from one end of the day to the next, has left us few written traces of their experience; she echoes the sentiment in *Silences and Images* (1999) when reflecting in *City Teachers* on “a haunting silence in teachers’ historical record, a silence all the more ironic because the nature of teachers’ work is so noisy and active” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 8). As we gain insight to the lived experiences of teachers from the not so distant past, the complexity of
their daily work experience emerges, attended by strong suggestions that, especially under the progressive movement of the inter-war period, teacher work became more difficult in response to examination, critique, and criticism from numerous constituents.

Delving into an examination of the centralization of the New York City school system in *City Teachers* (1997), Kate Rousmaniere offers a statement eerily applicable today; she notes, “In the 1890’s, a small coalition of middle-class business and professional leaders organized to replace the ward system with a centralized city school board structured along a corporate bureaucratic model” (p. 14). While the ward system itself was an administrative response to the previous, highly localized school structure, the wards presented an inefficient and patronage-based mode of organization. Rousmaniere further explains how, in response to the proposed dissolution of the wards, New York City teachers objected on the grounds that the diversity of the population in the city demanded a more localized (and therefore decentralized) organizational model, but she goes on to assert that, “they also objected to centralization for specific job-related reasons” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 14). Reaching back to the nineteenth century, Rousmaniere unearths an essential consideration: that teacher satisfaction historically has been uprooted, and a sense of well-being lost, when they have lost a sense of local control of their own destinies. She observes, “Teachers objected to the proposed board of superintendents because it would decrease the authority of the principal with whom teachers had a personal contact, and, potentially, some room for negotiating professional matters” (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 14). Among these were the practice of promotion through seniority and establishment of a board of examiners, to administer an objective test for hiring and advancement. Rousmaniere’s historical examination has hit on a central nerve of the question of teacher satisfaction: empowerment and control.
Ruth Jacknow Markowitz’s study of the Jewish teaching experience in *My Daughter the Teacher* (1993) touches on this same nerve from a pedagogical perspective; she believes, “Teachers have always employed what has been termed the ‘hidden pedagogy,’ whereby teachers interpret the explicit regularities of instruction called for by textbooks and professionals, adapting those teaching methods that help them cope in a practical matter with the demands of an occupational structure over which they have little control” (p. 104). Markowitz astutely points to the phenomenon of the “closed classroom door,” a type of bastion that teachers have historically used as a means of keeping the agents of external control on the outside, while maintaining a semblance of self-management inside the classroom. She describes these classrooms as, “small universes of control with the teacher in command” (Markowitz, 1993, p. 104) where control from the outside is kept as much at bay as possible.

As an historical perspective suggests, teacher satisfaction is cloaked in numerous mantles, a chief one being a sense of control, both inside and outside the classroom. Of course a sense of control may be compromised by agents or forces of change; Gardner’s essay, in *Silences and Images*, (1999) hears the voice of the classroom teacher as having “a particular and characteristic quality” which includes an “inward-oriented concentration on those personalities and places which dominate everyday working life… [while] those beyond [children and other teachers] figure only occasionally and at a considerable remove” (p. 128). Further, Gardner metaphorically hears teachers decrying most change; “more commonly it (change) is associated with concerns distant from [that of teachers] and which are usually interpreted as the exercise of political rather than educational interests” (Gardner, 1999, p. 129). Gardner captures one of the essences of historically based understanding of teacher dispositions with the observation that teachers in the nineteenth century (and often today) saw change as “originated ‘out there’ and [it]
might be deflected, absorbed, or defeated. Continuity could not be resisted in this way. It resided ‘in here’ and was symbolized by the classroom itself—that small, unchanging physical space in which, throughout his or her career, a single adult teacher stood daily before dozens of children” (Gardner, 1999, p. 129). Gardner joins other historians of the profession in naming the intimacy many teachers experience with the work they do and the children they teach; historical understanding of the formation of the modern teacher offers groundwork for deconstructing the elements that create and destroy satisfaction among many educators. While examining teacher satisfaction brings us to the roles that pedagogy, curriculum, politics or parents may play, we must keep in mind the essential truth of teaching, its singularity of expression in the person of the individual in his or her classroom before a set of students every day.

Gardner’s essay in Silences and Images (1999) additionally offers insight to the effect of changes in the landscape of teaching following the Second World War. He asserts that, “the secret garden cultivated by teachers in the early decades of the century would be exposed, gradually, to a widening public gaze” (Gardner, 1999, p. 134). The image of teachers occupying a ‘secret garden’ is intriguing and telling, a metaphor for the highly personal and idiosyncratic nature of the classroom and begging an analysis of how teachers function, and with what degree of satisfaction, in those gardens. Gardner also fleshes out differences among elementary and secondary teachers of this period; he notes that, “Elementary teachers in the first half of the twentieth century were able to draw on both the rational and the magical to claim an exclusive right to shape the education of the children in their charge” (Gardner, 1999, p. 134), though they maintained a distance from secondary school teachers (p. 135). Secondary counterparts to elementary teachers lay claim to a form of the profession of a higher intellectual and pedagogical status (p. 140) suggesting a widening gap in the experience and cultures of the secondary and
elementary teacher. Markowitz in *My Daughter the Teacher* (1993) also explores teacher work conditions in the pre and post-war period and observes that the increase in daily pupil load had tremendous impact, causing greater stress amidst diminished resources and pressure from parents for their children to complete a high school diploma (p. 108). Markowitz further delineates the pre- and post-depression periods, asserting that, “Prior to the Depression, teaching in New York City high schools had been relatively ‘simple and tranquil’ in comparison to the experience of many high school teachers during the thirties” (p. 109). The strains of the Depression on the entire society created greater strains in the classroom, increased teacher responsibility, and a wistful sense that the job had been easier in the past, prior to the Depression  (p. 109).

Particular note of educational movements over the course of American educational history also suggest the buffeting that teaching has undergone, depending on which movement is current on the educational and political landscape. For example, the “Social Efficiency” movement, as outlined by Rousmaniere in *City Teachers* (1997) emphasized, “the systematic education of urban youth away from the dangers of the unfettered city streets and toward civic and social cohesion” (p. 56). Social efficiency “shifted the weight of teachers’ responsibility from academic instruction to social behaviors and furthered the emphasis on the social identity of the teacher” (p. 73). In other words, the teacher became a primary agent of socialization for the “great unwashed” students, many of whom were immigrants; teachers’ pedagogy and lifestyle underwent scrutiny, as teachers were expected to serve as role models for appropriate socialization of students. Ultimately, though, according to Rousmaniere, it was not teacher resistance, but the demands of school operations and emphasis on curriculum that undercut the social efficiency movement (p. 73).
Semel and Sadovnik, in *Schools of Tomorrow, Schools of Today* (1999) note the social efficiency movement of the first decade of the twentieth century led to reforms in which, “Suddenly, teachers were faced with problems of putative uncleanliness (bathing became part of the school curriculum in certain districts), and they began to teach basic socialization skills (p. 5). By contrast, the Progressive movement in education placed the teacher in another role entirely. Semel and Sadovnik detail the development of this highly influential educational movements in *Schools of Tomorrow, Schools of Today* (1999); in the introduction, Semel gives an overview of the development of Progressive education, noting that, “In a progressive setting, the teacher is no longer the authoritarian figure from whom all knowledge flows. Rather, the teacher assumes the peripheral position of facilitator, encouraging, offering suggestions, questioning, and helping to plan and implement courses of study” (p. 8). Semel’s introduction to *Schools of Tomorrow* also notes that the origins of Progressivism lie in Dewey’s observation, “that children learn both individually and in groups and he believed that children should start their inquiries by posing questions about what they want to know. Today we refer to this method of instruction as ‘problem solving’ or ‘inquiry method’” (p. 8). To the extent that a school system adopts a given educational philosophy, the job experience of the teacher is going to be impacted, one way or the other. Today, for example, educational reform has swung to the “data-driven” camp, in which a teacher’s job performance is measured by student progress, as measured on standardized tests. It is indisputable that this movement is impacting the teacher work experience, and therefore teacher satisfaction. The relationship between educational reform and classroom dynamic, and the impact on overall job satisfaction, is another component in the inquiry to the overall experience teachers have as workers.
An historical framework for considering teacher job satisfaction reveals that, from the beginning of the profession in an organized school system, working conditions and efficacy have been closely linked. The question of extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing overall efficacy is characterized by an intriguing metaphor in *Silences and Images* (1999), where Grosvenor, Lawn, and Rousmaniere extol the classroom as a physical and symbolic nexus of teacher self-identity and satisfaction. They offer that, “Schools and classrooms, we began to realize [in the context of their conference] are not static points, but whole series of events and social relations over time, rich with personal dynamics….a ninety year old retired primary teacher can describe with acid assuredness, the color and feel of the burlap covering on the bulletin board in her first fifth-grade classroom” (p. 6). The highly personal nature of the profession, as revealed through the lens of history, also suggests a difference in overall satisfaction between elementary and secondary teachers, as noted particularly by Gardner, suggesting that the research question of a distinction between these two groups is relevant today as it was yesterday. Precise historical records of student achievement may not be accessible to the degree they are today, but we may certainly imagine the learning environment (and student experience) of a satisfied and supported teacher versus that of a discontented or mistreated educator. Our research questions are framed by an historical perspective suggesting that teachers and teaching are highly influenced by working conditions and overall efficacy, with a concomitant impact on student achievement.

**Sociology and Psychology of Teaching**

An historical perspective on the social, political, economic and personal forces influencing the teaching profession confirms that each of these, and many other factors, conspire to create ‘the teaching experience’ and leave their mark on the overall satisfaction that teachers derive from their profession. History shows us that many variables influence efficacy and
provides a foundation for a review of contemporary literature on the dynamics of professional efficacy in education. A sociological perspective explores teachers as members of the community in which they live and work their sense of themselves in the profession, and the relationship between their self-identity and well-being, or absence of it, as an outcome of their work. Snyder and Spreitzer (1984), citing Blumer (1969), address the sociology of teachers on the college level, but their observations are relevant to the K-12 professionals as well. Snyder and Spreitzer cite a “symbolic interactionist” framework with three foci: “Human beings act toward things on the basis of subjective meanings; the meanings of such things are derived from social interactions; and these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process in coping with objects” (p. 151). The interactionist framework is based on the assumption that individuals are mindful of their behavior and not simply reactionary to it; commitment to teaching, for example, involves self-reflection with the concomitant question of the degree to which the individual derives satisfaction from their work. Snyder and Spreitzer also cite Deci (1973) and Csikszentmihalyi (1975) in stating that, “One factor affecting commitment to the teacher role is the sheer intrinsic enjoyment of the subject matter and the sense of efficacy in having done something well…the human is an active animal who enjoys performing a task that is challenging, yet within one’s capacity to perform” (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1984, p. 153). The question of teacher job satisfaction and retention is tied to these sociological principles insofar as they raise the question of why teachers remain in the profession: is remaining a teacher the by-product of intrinsic or extrinsic commitment? Clearly, Snyder and Spreitzer continue, “the ideal motivation in teaching is intrinsic—to find pleasure, satisfaction and even joy in the classroom” (p. 154). Distinguishing those with intrinsic motivation from teachers with extrinsic motivation, these authors tellingly suggest, “A teacher with extrinsic
motivation is similar to those who occupy low-status jobs with a typically low level of
investment in work” (p. 153). A well-researched investigation of job satisfaction among teachers
surfaces the critical importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors: Do teachers who
are primarily extrinsically motivated experience a different degree of satisfaction from those
intrinsically motivated? The question is further complicated by the experience of rewards;
Synder and Spreitzer point out that, “teacher effectiveness is likely to be enhanced by the
prestige that is gained from being cited as a ‘good teacher’ by students and colleagues” (p. 155),
so that we must consider both motivation and rewards in examining satisfaction and its effect on
student learning.

Teachers work in a sociologically prominent role in communities, so it comes as no
surprise that they undergo particularly exacting community scrutiny, given their influence on and
contact with children. This scrutiny has a reflexive effect on teachers; their sense of self-worth
and self-satisfaction may be dependent on their perception of how well they are received and on
the reality of how well they are received, or not, in the classroom and community in which they
work. Christopher Day and his colleagues examine this notion in “The Personal and
Sumson (2002) who have noted that “Teacher identities are not only constructed from technical
and emotional aspects of teaching (i.e. classroom management, subject knowledge and pupil test
results) and their personal lives,” but also (citing Sleegers & Kelchtermans, 1999) “as the result
of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and
institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis” (Day, 2006, p. 603). Day
(2006) further notes Nias’s research (1989) which “draws attention [to the] tensions and
contradictions in the primary teacher’s role, which are principally produced through the
opposition between the impulse and requirement to ‘care and nurture’ and the impulse and requirement to control” (Day, 2006, p. 605). Further, according to Day, Beijaard’s work (1995) drawing on Sikes (1991) identified “three main features of secondary school teachers’ professional identities: the subject that teachers teach, their relationship with pupils, and their role or role conception” (Day, 2006, p. 605). The salient conclusion Day and colleagues draw from examining prior research into the question of the psychology of teaching suggests a distinction between the primary and secondary experience:

Research, then seems to reveal different but connecting notions of teacher identity. It is clear, for example, that primary school teachers’ personal and professional identities are closely connected and that they contribute to motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. For secondary school teachers, subject and its status are related more closely to identity. For all teachers, identity will be affected by external (policy) and internal (organizational) and personal experiences past and present, and so it is not always stable (Day, 2006, p. 610).

The suggestion that teachers’ work experiences are not always dependent on stable factors is essential to the question of satisfaction, retention, and performance. Variables in external, internal and personal stimuli are likely to be significant to professional (and personal) identity and efficacy. The importance of Day’s work (2006) is evident in his assertion that, “A significant and ongoing part of being a teacher, then, is the experiencing and management of strong emotions. We know, for example, that the emotional climate of the school and classroom will affect attitudes to and practices of teaching and learning. Teachers (and their students) experience an array of sometimes contrasting emotions in the classroom,” and further, “Because
of their emotional investments, teachers inevitably experience a range of negative emotions when control of long-held principles and practices is challenged, or when trust and respect from parents, the public, and their students is eroded” (p. 612). Day concludes that, “the architecture of teachers’ professional lives is not always stable” (p. 613), but simultaneously, “some teachers themselves do seek and find, in different ways, their own sense of stability within what appears from the outside to be fragmented identities” (p. 614). Both the sociological and psychological context offered by these researchers suggest the paramount importance of communal, professional and personal identity in shaping a teacher’s experience, and the likelihood of a relationship between that experience and satisfaction in the classroom. Psychology and sociology are bound to play a decisive role in how well a teacher performs and how well students learn in a satisfied or dissatisfied, teacher’s class.

The Trouble with Teaching

Literature on the teaching career suggests an inherent difficulty “in the nature of things” in the profession, i.e. that, teaching is a complex profession with variables that create particular challenges to achieving a sense of well-being and overall career satisfaction. Few titles offer a clearer snapshot of this complexity than a short piece in The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, entitled, “The Profession That Eats Its Young,” by Rebecca Anhorn. Anhorn (2008) goes right to the heart of the problem: “20%-30% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years,” with “most new teachers who leave, do[ing] so in the first 2 years” (p.15). Anhorn believes, “Difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, inadequate resources, isolation, role conflict and reality shock are some top reasons for the horrendous attrition statistics with the widespread ‘sink or swim’ attitude that is prevalent in so many schools” (p. 15). She cites a “pecking order” in which “experienced teachers often feel that they have paid their dues and that new teachers
must do the same” (p.16). New teachers often feel isolated in their classrooms (p. 16), a sentiment eerily reminiscent of the isolation experienced in nineteenth and early twentieth century schools as described by Rousmaniere, (1997), Cuban (1993) and Gardner (1999). Anhorn cites a study in 2007-08, in west and central North Dakota, in which new teachers shared experiences after their first year in the classroom. Participants cited many factors influencing their overall sense of satisfaction, among them that “Relationships with fellow teachers and other school staff were [considered] at the heart of the first-year teachers’ sense of belonging to the staff at their schools” (p. 19). Undermining this critical sense of relationship for some was the experience of “comments made to first year teachers about teaching strategies: ‘There you go, showing us up again’ and ‘Going overboard’” (p. 19). Anhorn’s article enumerates a core problem in teaching: the dispositions of some educators already in the profession toward “newbies” and the culture of competition generated among veterans in relationship to their fresh-faced counterparts.

Further evidence the relationship between overall satisfaction and working conditions in schools may be found with Johnson and Birkeland, (2003), who conducted a longitudinal study of 50 teachers entering the career, starting in 1999; follow-up interviews were conducted in 2001 and the results were reported in American Educational Research Journal in 2003. In their introduction to the study, the authors explain their study of 50 new teachers in Massachusetts who either stay where they are, move to another school, or leave the profession entirely, as rooted in the premise that, “Teachers who felt successful with students and whose schools were organized to support them in their teaching…were more likely to stay in their schools, and in teaching, than teachers whose schools were not so organized” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 581). Citing numerous earlier studies of teaching as a professional career, the authors begin with
the notion that, “Teaching in the United States has long had precarious professional standing” (p. 583); they reference Sykes (1983) in observing that, “there is a long-standing taint associated with teaching and corresponding doubts about people who choose the profession” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 583) and they further reference Lortie (1969), who labeled teaching a “semi-profession” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 583). Although it may be less true in the current economic climate, Johnson and Birkeland believe “The sheer number of teachers needed annually discourages competitive and selective hiring, thus reinforcing the view that there is little quality control in public school teaching. From the public’s perspective, therefore, teaching is not highly esteemed work”; furthermore, “teachers have no assurance that they will succeed in the classroom because teaching, by its very nature, is unpredictable work (p. 583). Anhorn cites one teacher discouraged in his work in the North Dakota study, who said, “I look down the hall, and all the doors are closed”; “and they’re all too busy” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 17); Johnson and Birkeland’s study (2003) coincides with Anhorn’s observations when it notes, “Our respondents reported that achieving success in their teaching depended largely on a set of school-site factors—the role and contributions of the principal and colleagues, the teachers’ assignments and workload, and the availability of curriculums and resources” (p. 594). Among those available or unavailable resources are colleagues in the department or school—those whose classroom doors may be closed, as a measure and a signal of their desire to protect the insular space of the classroom, where a teacher feels empowered to control in an overarching environment of feeling a lack of control of their work. Reporting on a group they call “The Leavers” in their 2003 study, Johnson and Birkeland note “The Leavers repeatedly listed the same set of factors that drove them out of public school teaching…they described principals who were arbitrary, abusive or neglectful, and they spoke of disappointment with colleagues who failed to support them as they
struggled to teach” (p. 594). If we are to address the extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing
teacher efficacy, overall school climate and how teachers are treated in the first years of their
careers weigh heavily; if teaching is regarded as a “semi-profession” relative to other lines of
working requiring an advanced degree, and if within the profession a culture of “hazing” informs
the atmosphere for first-year teachers, there is much about which to be concerned before we have
even reached the classroom door or student performance within the classroom. Surfacing from an
historical view, and an initial review of literature on teacher job satisfaction, we see that there are
considerable variables at play that will influence overall satisfaction and retention; further
inquiry to the literature on this topic shows continued development of factors that will impact
teacher experience and student success.

Given the challenges inherent in teaching, the question of those who stay and why they
do, those who leave the profession, and the impact of overall satisfaction presents much to
consider in studying those who teach at elementary and secondary levels. Hanushek, Kain, and
Schools Lose Teachers” and in their abstract, state, “Teacher mobility is much more strongly
related to characteristics of the students, particularly race and achievement, than to salary,
although salary exerts a modest impact once compensating differentials are taken into account”
( p. 326). They wisely point out that the decision to teach is actually a series of decisions insofar
as, “Teacher labor supply aggregates a variety of decisions made at different points in time based
on different information and influences” ( p. 327). Among these phases are the decision to enter
the profession and train for teaching, followed by application and job matching, culminating in
actual experience in which both teacher and school are involved in retention decisions (p. 327).
Their study, submitted in 2002 based on data gathered from the Texas Education Agency of
teacher mobility and salary trends through the 1990’s and published in 2004, provides a longitudinal study of labor markets in Texas and comes to the stark conclusion that, “The results in this paper confirm the difficulty that schools serving academically disadvantaged students have in retaining teachers, particularly those early in their careers” ; furthermore, “Teacher transitions are much more strongly related to student characteristics than to salary differentials, and this is especially true for female teachers” (p.347). The data in this study raises relevant questions in a study of teacher retention rates today: to what extent do the demographics of a school district and the teachers in that given district play a role in satisfaction, retention, and student performance? In designing a methodology for analyzing the profession and its impact on students, we must ask how significant are the genders and races of teachers, relative to that of students, as determiners of efficacy and performance? While it might be suggested that a study of teachers in one state (Texas) does not qualify for generalizing about the relationship between school and teacher demographics, such a relationship is worthy of study in many schools and districts throughout the country and remains relevant to a conversation about teacher job satisfaction. The sociology of students and teachers is likely to play a central role in how teachers experience their work and students their performance.

Certo and Fox (2002) conducted a study entitled “Retaining Quality Teachers,” looking at teacher attrition and retention in seven Virginia school districts, using focus groups of those who remained and those who left the profession within these districts, in which they affirm that, “Work environment clearly leads to levels of teacher job satisfaction. Researchers have linked a number of aspects of job satisfaction to teacher retention, and there is general agreement that all of these aspects are a part of the teacher retention puzzle” (p. 57). Citing Yee (1990), and echoing Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004), Certo and Fox continue, “teachers highly involved
in their work attributed their decision to stay in teaching more to supportive work conditions than to pay; other highly involved teachers reported unsupportive workplace conditions as the main reason they left the field” (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 58). Not surprisingly, time plays an additional and major role in overall satisfaction; they note Darling-Hammond (1996), in asserting, “Most secondary teachers in the U.S. have around five hours each week to prepare for six hours of classes each day. Elementary teachers typically have even less preparation time—three or fewer hours per week. Teachers therefore do not have time….” (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 58). Certo and Fox carried out a qualitative study focused on questions about why teachers stay in their school divisions, reasons that colleagues of those who stay give about those who leave, and reasons given by those who move or leave the profession. They focused on teachers who have been in schools less than eight years and conducted interviews using a “Teacher Retention Focus Group Discussion Guide,” asking those who stayed why they did, and asking those who stayed why they thought those who had left had done so. They also employed an “Exiting Teacher Telephone Interview Protocol.” Results of qualitative interviews “revealed that teacher attrition and retention variables are highly interrelated. Reasons for leaving and reasons for staying often act as inverse variables [for example, a teacher may leave because of poor administration or stay because of quality administration]” (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 59). Reflecting Darling-Hammond (2000) they report, “Elementary teachers reported of a lack of planning time more often than did secondary or special education teachers” (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 59). Within this study, the authors learned that among the reasons given for staying in their schools, “included a commitment to the profession, stemming from a commitment to children and/or the subject matter” and, significantly for this paper’s inquiry, “Elementary teachers and teachers of special education students expressed a greater commitment level than secondary teachers” (Certo & Fox,
Citing specific reasons reported for teacher retention, the authors note, “The strong presence of collegial relations…support received from central office…and more commonly, administrative support in their individual school buildings” (p. 60). When asked their perceptions of colleagues who have left the profession, responses suggested “salary…first as a reason…lack of administrative support, both at the district and the school level” (p. 60). Teachers who were polled during the exit interview process reported reasons for leaving similar in content to their colleagues’ speculation as to why they left. These polls revealed that a “lack of administrative support, hectic/stressful schedules, insufficient salary and no opportunities for job sharing/childrearing” (p. 65) as chief among these first-person accounts. In concluding their study, they authors note that, “Because rates of attrition are so much higher in teaching than in other professions…it is likely that committed and quality teachers are also leaving,” and that, “There are multiple influences on teacher attrition, and they vary with the individual” (p. 69). Clearly a trend emerges in this study, suggesting a link between perceptions of administrative support, demands of the profession, time and salary are all linked to teacher attrition.

When we examine specific demographic and building-level groups within the broader title of ‘teacher’, the issue of attrition may be examined distinctly among elementary and secondary teachers and among varying demographics within those groups. Perrachione, Rosser, and Petersen (2008) examined elementary teachers in 2007-08, starting with the compelling observation that, “according to NCTAF, teacher attrition problems cost the nation in excess of $7 billion annually for recruitment, administrative processing and hiring, and professional development” (p. 1). Their study in The Professional Educator (2008) cites numerous prior studies showing that the outcomes of retention, attrition and absenteeism along with the variables of demographics, job role and work experience correlate with job satisfaction and teacher
retention (p. 2). They cite Ma and MacMillan’s (1999) study showing “that older and more experienced teachers expressed significantly less satisfaction with their professional role than their younger and less experienced colleagues” (Perrachione et al., 2008, p. 2). They also reference Bolger’s work (2002) showing that, “Female teachers tended to be more satisfied than male teachers” [and that] “Elementary teachers were more satisfied than secondary teachers” (Perrachione et al., 2008, p. 2). The Conceptual Framework of Perrachione’s study (2008) states that “teachers’ job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, commitment and intent to remain in the profession, and demographics are directly related to teacher retention” (p. 3). Their study identified variables that influence job satisfaction of Missouri public elementary school teachers and the extent to which variables influenced teachers’ retention rates (p. 3). Using a survey instrument and analysis applying multiple linear regression, along with six open-ended questions, the study found that, “intrinsic variables (e.g. working with students, job satisfaction, personal teaching efficacy)...as well as extrinsic variables (e.g. good students, teacher support, positive school environment, personal teaching efficacy) appear to influence teacher job satisfaction, [while] only extrinsic factors were found to influence teachers’ dissatisfaction (e.g., role overload, low salary, parent support, student behavior, large class size)” (p.7). The authors conclude this survey as follows:

This study identifies factors that influence job satisfaction and ultimately retention, which may provide solutions for promoting teacher retention. Those individuals (e.g. school boards, legislatures, policy decision makers) who shape the conditions in which teachers work could take a major step in promoting teacher retention by ensuring that teachers have a positive school environment, adequate support, and small class sizes. Furthermore, other key issues such as low salaries, role overload, and student behavior must be
vigorously pursued…By closing the teacher job-satisfaction gap, educators may then have a tool for closing the student achievement gap (p. 13).

A compelling observation in this study suggests a relationship between teacher efficacy and student performance, a relationship worthy of careful study and consideration.

Additional research into teacher job satisfaction among various demographic groups or among those within a specific geographic cohort (urban, suburban, rural groups) suggests the factors that influence teaching professionals share similarities among these cohort groups. Huysman’s 2008 study of rural teachers in Florida in The Rural Educator, used a mix-method approach, conducted in one rural Florida district with three schools countywide (p. 32). Eighty-five teachers took part, with a response rate of 95.5% of the 89 eligible. Using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire to measure intrinsic, extrinsic and general satisfaction and the Rural Teacher Satisfaction Survey (RTSS) for demographic data, the study, “confirmed prior research suggesting that multiple factors influence job satisfaction with intrinsic satisfaction factors being the best predictors of overall job satisfaction and extrinsic factors most likely to predict dissatisfaction” (p. 35), and echoing Certo (2002) and Perrachione (2008) “Teachers often found themselves discouraged at work because of the unrealistic expectations placed on them by peers, administrators, community members, and even themselves” (Huysman, 2008, p. 36). Tye and O’Brien (2001) surveyed teachers in California in spring, 2001, having decided, “to …find any evidence that the growing discontent and increasing attrition among experienced California teachers could be attributed to the test mania that now pervades the state” (p. 25). Their study (114 respondents, 12.6% of the sample) produced a rank-order of reasons why they had left or would consider leaving the profession. Those who had already left “ranked the pressures of
increased accountability (high stakes testing, test preparation, and standards) as their number-one reason for leaving”; among those who would consider leaving the profession but are still in it, accountability ranked number four. For both groups, increased paperwork, unresponsive administration, student attitudes, and low status of the profession were among the top reasons for leaving or considering departure from the profession (Tye & O’Brien, 2001, p. 27). The authors note that, “Alienation appears widespread among teachers today…it’s not how a teacher has been prepared but the school environment that he or she encounters that contains the alienating forces—a conclusion that confirms the findings of other studies that all kinds of teachers feel alienated at school” (p. 26). The problems with teaching appear to be numerous and growing: a sense of disaffection migrating toward alienation, pressure from interest groups, assessments as a benchmark of teacher success, and the status of the profession in the professional world are merely a handful of problems besetting the classroom teacher today. The trouble with teaching is actually a raft of problems, and the increased use of data-driven instruction and federal mandates is only serving to exacerbate the problems inherent in the profession.

Potential Solutions.

Susan Lynn (2002) suggests in her article “Winding Path” a “Career Cycle of Teachers,” a dynamic progression through stages of teaching that include induction, competency building, enthusiasm and frustration, followed by stability, wind-down and exit. The “frustration” stage, “reflects a lack of job satisfaction…Historically this frustration occurs during career midpoints; however, such feelings are on the rise among teachers in the relatively early years of their careers, particularly among teachers who face the continual threat of job loss due to budget cuts or those who face environmental problems too severe to overcome” (Lynn, 2002, p.181). “Environmental problems” is a term resonant with the “extrinsic factors,” those forces that drive teachers from
the profession, including student attitude, lack of administrative support, accountability, and the like, as cited in previously discussed studies. Lynn concludes that, “educational leaders should…provide in-service and professional growth opportunities in light of [a teacher’s] career cycle phase” (Lynn, 2002, p. 182). Integrating beginning teachers, for example, to the social fabric of a school, “helps the beginner to recognize and manage the debilitating effects of isolation, self-doubt, stress, and anxiety often associated with the first year of teaching” (Lynn, 2002, p. 182). Within Lynn’s conceptualization of the career cycle of teachers, each phase needs an accompanying level of professional development designed to meet the needs of teachers at particular points in their careers. She extends the availability of staff and professional development “to include concern for the personal needs and problems of teachers, such as financial loss, divorce, illness of loved ones, and chemical abuse by a family member” (Lynn, 2002, p. 182), though the economic realities and current climate surrounding the profession make this latter suggestion unlikely (aside from those supports offered through a health insurance plan), in my professional opinion.

Susan Marston’s paper presented at American Educational Research Association in 2004 asks if elementary and high school teachers are “birds of a feather,” insofar as they are “seen as representing a single profession and are generally treated as such by the school districts that employ them,” hoping to “shed light…by comparing the motivations of three groups of teachers for remaining in the classroom” (Marston, 2004, p. 470). Citing Perie and Baker (1997), Marston reports that, “elementary teachers tended to be more satisfied than secondary teachers [but] that workplace conditions had a positive relationship with a teacher’s job satisfaction regardless of whether a teacher was elementary or secondary” (Marston, 2004, p. 470). Marston’s data set is three groups of teachers: a high school sample from northern California, an elementary school
from the same district, and a third sample from two districts in eastern Pennsylvania (p. 471).
Her findings demonstrate that, “elementary teachers from both California and Pennsylvania expressed [a] higher degree of satisfaction than their high school counterparts”; she speculates that one reason for these differences, “the elementary teacher groups include a far higher percentage of females than the high school group: Perhaps females tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than males,” though she goes on to point out that the statistical analysis of satisfaction measures suggested that the difference was not significantly different (p<.05) from male teachers, and needs further examination (p. 474). Among her conclusions in the study is this relevant observation: “There do not appear to be substantive differences between elementary and high school teachers in the degree to which they identified students (or children or ‘kids’) as a primary reason for staying in the classroom. All three groups of teachers clearly saw the students as the sine qua non for remaining in teaching” (p. 478).

The literature of teacher job satisfaction repeatedly comes back to the relationship teachers have to both extrinsic and intrinsic factors in their work; students are, perhaps, at the root of the most intrinsic of these factors, to the extent that the relationship many teachers have to students is likely to form the basis of much of the inner satisfaction derived from the profession. Citing Brunetti’s (2001) analysis of high school teachers, Marston (2004) notes that, “most teachers stated that working with young people was the most important motivator that kept them in the classroom (Marston, 2004, p. 477). Marston additionally reports that imparting social goals are among those cited by both elementary and high school teachers as having value; among high school teachers, “helping students develop good habits, learn how to make good decisions, and be more confident in themselves,” was connected to well-being, while, “The elementary teachers saw building self-esteem as an important social goal” (p. 479). A study of teacher
satisfaction, this suggests, is going to lead us to a discussion of relationships between teachers and students, a largely, though not entirely, intrinsic component of teacher experience that is informed by extrinsic or behavioral events and circumstances. Most tellingly, Marston reports that, “Only one teacher in our study commented on the importance of mentoring new teachers. A fourth-grade teacher stated that she had an ‘increased responsibility [for] helping the younger teachers,’” while one high school English teacher “valued mentoring, but identified the outcomes in terms of her own growth” (p. 480). This outcome suggests that teachers may see other teachers as extrinsic factors in the total picture of their professional selves. The question of teacher to teacher relationships in overall job satisfaction is worthy of further exploration and consideration as a signifier of the total teacher employment experience.

Smith and Ingersoll reported on induction mentoring in their study published by the American Educational Research Association (2004). Their data source was the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 685); their underlying assumption, “that elementary and secondary school performance relies on adequate staffing with qualified teachers” (p. 685) looks to the relationship between effective mentoring and retention as a solution to staffing issues, with a concomitant outcome of greater student success. They also accept the premise that “teacher turnover rates have an important effect on student performance,” accepting general organizational theory and literature on employee turnover, showing that low turnover leads to better overall worker productivity in a well-managed organization (p. 686). Their extensive quantitative study reveals that, “Nearly 3 in 10 new teachers move to a different school or leave teaching altogether at the end of their first year in the occupation,” but that among effective activities toward retaining teachers in the profession, among “The most salient factors were having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in
the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being part of an external network of teachers” (p. 706). This study shows that one “solution” to the high attrition rates among new teachers, a product of low job satisfaction, is more effective mentoring of those new teachers. Of course in the scheme of overall job satisfaction among teachers, proper induction of new teachers is but one of many factors influencing the overall landscape of the profession; yet, the literature suggests that the first years of teaching have a major impact on overall experience, satisfaction, and (we may infer) on student performance.

Ingersoll’s *Who Controls Teachers’ Work* (2003) offers a highly detailed analysis of the work lives of teachers, centered on the question of the title and examining the myriad forces at work in determining control agents in education. While further referenced in the discussion in Chapter 5 of this paper, Ingersoll’s insights are highly significant in a review of literature on teacher work satisfaction. Ingersoll observes, for example, that, “On the one hand, the work of teaching—helping prepare, train, and rear the next generation of citizens—is both important and complex. But on the other hand, those who are entrusted with the training of this next generation are not entrusted with much control over many of the key decisions in their work” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 221). Given this absence of teacher control in the work environment of schools, the question of how teacher work satisfaction is impacted is both obvious and essential. Echoing many of the educational historians cited in this review of literature, Ingersoll’s study further observes that, “The data show that the degree of teacher control does indeed make a difference in how well schools function” and that, “Schools with empowered teachers have less conflict among students, faculty and principals, and less teacher turnover” (p. 223). A study of teacher satisfaction, therefore, may surface responses regarding the extent to which teachers feel they have a say in the work environment of their schools, both inside and outside their classroom
doors, especially given Ingersoll’s assertion of the relationship between a sense of control and teacher retention, a central question of this paper. Ingersoll (2003) further conducted a statistical analysis, “to see whether teacher control was connected to teachers’ sense of commitment, efficacy, job satisfaction and engagement,” and concluded, “The control held by teachers in schools was strongly related to these measures of faculty alienation and engagement” (p. 203).

The relationship between teachers’ sense of control of both their classrooms and school policies and decisions impacting the classroom has an impact on teacher work satisfaction; Ingersoll’s conclusions are highly significant to an overarching understanding of the forces underpinning satisfaction in the teacher work experience. Remarkably, whether examined historically or from a contemporary perspective, teacher work satisfaction is interwoven with feelings of autonomy, a sense of control and a highly personal relationship teachers have to the work they do.

It is fitting to conclude a literature review by considering an often overlooked influence in the job experience of teachers: the role of humor, specifically principals’ humor, as it informs school climate. Hurren’s (2006) article on the relationship between teacher humor and job effectiveness further substantiates the importance of school climate on job satisfaction; Hurren notes that, “An organization’s climate is a result of the day-by-day behavior of the leader and other significant people in the organization” (p. 374), and that, citing Koonce (1997), “In a study of humor styles and school climate, it was concluded that elementary school principals who are producers of humor in their schools will have an advantage in creating a more positive and healthy school climate” (Hurren, 2006, p. 375). Hurren’s study of the effect of humor on teacher job satisfaction sampled 650 teachers in Nevada, of which 471 were returned (72.5%). Participants completed the “Teachers’ Job Satisfaction Scale” and the “Principals’ Frequency of Humor Questionnaire.” Using an ANOVA parametric test, the study “support the position that a
principal’s use of humor plays a role in teachers’ job satisfaction” and that furthermore, “teachers experience higher job satisfaction when their principals use humor more during private meetings, small meetings, large meetings, and overall” (Hurren, 2006, p. 382). Despite the risks inherent in using humor in formal organizational work settings (principal tells a joke that no one finds funny; joke is misinterpreted or found offensive; humor may cause an unnecessary distraction), Hurren concludes that, “teachers who are more satisfied with their jobs will be more excited about their teaching” (p. 383). Studies show that teacher satisfaction impacts student performance, and because Hurren’s study “has found a strong relationship between principal’s humor and teachers’ job satisfaction, there exists the possibility that students’ achievement will improve as their principals share more humor” (p. 384). When all is said and done, the very human experience of humor, as communicated by a principal to a corps of teachers, may well have an impact on the job satisfaction of those teachers and the success of students in a given school. We may be less than shocked at the notion that the most fundamental of human experiences, that of humor and all it implies (a relaxed culture, a measure of trust) may have a profound impact on efficacy and outcomes in a school setting.

Conclusion: An Overview of the Literature

Considering teacher job efficacy from an “aerial view” of history suggests that whether we examine the profession as it was practiced in the nineteenth, twentieth, or is practiced in the twenty-first century, core influences govern the teaching experience and are essential to the examination of professional satisfaction among educators. Essentially, teachers two centuries ago and today have held and continue to hold multiple roles; they are at once educators, employees, child-developers, social workers, and surrogate parents. They are asked to simultaneously teach the children of long (and well) established citizens and the children of recent immigrants who
barely, if at all, know the primary language of American culture. Kate Rousmaniere observes in *City Teachers* (1997) that in the nineteenth century, teachers’ work was, “built on layers of historical practice and deeply embedded social relations, physical working conditions, and personal dynamics of the local workplace” (p. 4). Rousmaniere’s perspective shows that historically the effective teacher has been one who brings relational expertise, managerial ability, and “personal dynamics” to the schoolhouse door and classroom. We know that while there were many inhibitions to personal job satisfaction for teachers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, those most satisfied were able to work in adequate physical spaces, manage their classrooms, and establish positive relationships with students, while keeping administrative and bureaucratic demands outside the classroom door. Missing from these historical accounts, however, is the perspective of students; as Dams, Depaepe, and Simon point out in the first chapter of *Silences and Images*, (1999) “One can say that the pupil’s perception is the most important element [but that] the perceptions we speak of are usually reconstructed by an adult” and furthermore, that “only isolated testimonies are available [from the 1880’s]…these testimonies gain immensely in weight [because] one witness becomes the spokesperson for hundreds of thousands of pupils” (Dams, et al., 1999, p. 19). Teacher job satisfaction in the early history of organized schools and school districts, while more difficult to quantify, held many of the same qualities then as today. Research in the latter part of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first century gives a more comprehensive detail as to the factors influencing teachers’ dispositions toward their work. Certainly, student perspective is vastly more available today, as shown in Walker’s 2008 qualitative study, *Twelve Characteristics of an Effective Teacher*, which sought student responses regarding their perception of effective teachers. Walker surveyed college-aged, pre-service students in schools of education, using writing assignments and
discussions, to elicit their perceptions of the most effective teachers from their prior (elementary and secondary) school experience, defining “effective” as “[those] teachers made the most significant impact on their lives (p. 61). Walker observes, “Semester after semester, year after year, a common theme emerged…students emphasized the personal (qualitative) traits of memorable teachers rather than academic (quantitative) qualifications” (p. 64). Among the qualities listed, class preparedness, positive attitudes, high expectations, creativity, and fairness were listed among the top five characteristics of an effective teacher (p. 64). We may conclude that, while much has changed about teaching over the past two centuries, the essence of it has not, and that the question of effectiveness is closely linked to overall teacher satisfaction, given that job satisfaction is likely to translate to the very qualities students consider those of highly effective teachers.

This review of literature has attempted to contextualize the conversation about teachers and their relationship to work, with consideration of how that relationship impacts retention rates and student success. Obviously the conversation becomes multi-layered when we consider historical perspectives, contemporary working conditions, and the changing nature of teacher work in a rapidly changing society. The literature suggests numerous variables that play a role in teacher efficacy: induction/ mentoring, collegiality, administrative and professional development support, geography, demographics of students, physical locations and conditions of schools, motivations for entering the profession and years of service in the classroom, are just some of the myriad factors the literature indicates play a role in overall efficacy. From Anhorn’s disturbingly titled article, *The Profession That Eats Its Young* (2008), (a title derived from Halford, 1998) we learn of first year elementary teachers who characterize themselves as “Overwhelmed, hectic, isolated, beaten down, unsupported, scared, humiliated, afraid, stressed, and drowning” (Anhorn,
2008, p. 15), hardly terms suggesting even an ounce of job satisfaction. From Susan Lynn’s description of the career cycle of teachers, we read of a one named Betsy, in the wind-down phase of her tenure, “approaching her final year with a deep sense of satisfaction. She reflects on her career feeling good about the children whose lives she has influenced and grateful for having had the opportunity to make a difference” (Lynn, 2002, p. 181). Rousmaniere, Gardner, Cuban and Markowitz, among other historians, have given a stark rendering of the tumultuous history of teachers working, oftentimes, under harsh and physically demanding conditions, yet staying with the profession as a path both for themselves and their students toward greater social and economic stability. Teaching has forever been a profession unlike any other, given that it intersects with children during their developmental years and plays a major role in the path many of those same children will follow in life. If we believe the premise that education is crucial to a child’s development, we must also believe that educators are crucial within the construct of society. Hence, teachers are highly individualized, yet are lumped together; they engage in what is essentially very private (and sometimes lonely) work under the gaze of public scrutiny. Understanding the different influences on satisfied and dissatisfied teachers will go a long way toward creating a more effective teaching force, with, it is hoped, better educational outcomes for students.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Many teachers speed through their work days at a meteoric pace; they dart through schoolhouse halls, dash to Xerox machines, eat lunch at their classroom or office desk area, if they stop to eat at all. They respond to bells, announcements and notices, and stop, when they can, to catch their breath for a few precious moments. Among teachers’ core priorities is that of time; in designing a methodology for this study, therefore, my most immediate concern was time. Harnessing teachers to set aside the minutes to respond to a survey or to be interviewed would present a challenge in a good year, but during the school year 2012-13, which was seriously impacted by the super storm of October 2012, achieving the participation of school districts and the teachers in them was especially challenging. Nevertheless, thanks to the cooperation of administrative colleagues and the generosity of a cohort of 133 teachers, I was able to schedule a survey administration with six cooperating districts, which are described below, and was able to conduct interviews with participant teacher-volunteers, based on information given by survey respondents on the survey form. The full methodological procedure for this study is detailed following a restatement of the research questions.

Restatement of Research Questions

To examine the lived experience of teachers, their attitudes about their work, levels of satisfaction, and likelihood of retention, three research questions govern this study:

1. How do the factors of entry to teaching, climate and support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession?
2. Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach, specifically the elementary and secondary levels?

3. How does job satisfaction at these levels relate to teacher retention rates at each level?

Details regarding the relevance of these questions and the relationship they have to my overall study was discussed in Chapter 1 of this paper. Given that there are numerous intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing teacher satisfaction and retention, I chose, in designing this study, to limit the scope of my inquiries regarding factors influencing satisfaction to five factors that impact teachers from the beginning to the end of their careers: (1) choice of entry to the profession, (2) school climate, (3) elements of workplace support, (4) professional development, and (5) perceptions among teachers as to how they are perceived in the communities in which they work.

**Research Design**

In order to examine the work experience of teachers I used a mixed methods approach. The study was conducted in two phases: the administration of a survey designed to yield quantitative data, followed by a series of interviews to add teacher-narrated, qualitative accounts of work experiences, centered on the level of teacher satisfaction as influenced by the factors presented in the survey and correlated to retention. My use of a mixed method approach was based in the belief that using a survey to have teachers report their responses regarding the relationship between five factors and overall satisfaction and retention has significant value and following up with interviews gives volunteer participants the opportunity to discuss their feelings and experiences. Creswell (2009) observes that a mixed methods approach “is more than simply
collecting and analyzing both [quantitative and qualitative] data: it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research” (p. 4). Picciano (2004) notes that in the mixed methods approach, “structured interviews are used to enhance the survey results and to provide a more complete description or picture...a combined approach might take advantage of the best aspects of the two (p. 28). Creswell (2009) defines a sequential mixed methods approach in which, “the researcher seeks to elaborate or expand on the findings of one method with another method” (p. 14); this study of teachers and work used a survey instrument to examine the relationship of five factors to satisfaction, and the relationship of satisfaction to retention, followed by interviews with volunteer respondents. Further, Creswell (2013) references the value of interview research questions that are “open-ended, general, and focused on understanding [the] central phenomenon in the study” (p. 163). Such questions give the interviewee latitude in responding while maintaining focus on the intent of the study. Disruptions to the 2012-13 school year, previously referenced, contributed to my decision to conduct interviews over the phone, a method Creswell (2013) suggests, “provides the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals” (p. 164). Although direct access to participants was not the insurmountable issue, time constraints made the use of telephone interviews the most efficient method for accessing interview volunteers. By conducting interviews over the phone I was able to introduce flexibility as to the time of day or evening I spoke to each respondent. Using the protocol Creswell (2013) outlines of (a) deciding on research questions (b) identifying interviewees who can best answer questions [and] (c) developing an interview protocol or guide (pp. 163-164) interviews were conducted between March and April, 2013. Of particular importance in my preparing for interviews was Creswell’s (2013) noting Kvale and Brinkman’s
(2009) discussion of the power asymmetry inherent in interviews, in which, “the nature of an interview sets up an unequal power dynamic between interviewer and interviewee” (Creswell, 2013, p. 173). Creswell further cites Kvale and Brinkman (2009), noting they, “suggest more collaborative interviewing, where the researcher and the participant approach equality in questioning, interpreting and reporting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 173). To achieve this type of collaborative interviewing, interviews conducted over the phone had the beneficial effect of protecting the anonymity of the subject and allowed for a more conversational tone in the interviews. Complete analysis of the interview protocols is given in Chapter 4.

**Pilot Study**

In June, 2012, prior to conducting research in the field, I administered a pilot of the survey in my home district of Maples, Long Island (actual names of all districts are substituted in this paper with pseudonyms). I sought and received the assistance of fellow administrators and teachers to surface volunteers in my home school district to participate at both the elementary and secondary level, so as to mirror the target groups of my actual survey administration and study. The pilot study consisted of the survey with 25 questions based on the five factors of choice of entry to the teaching profession, professional development, perceptions of teaching, school climate and overall support. A total of 14 teachers participated in the pilot, 7 elementary and 7 secondary teachers, providing a balance of elementary to secondary teachers consistent with the population target goal of my actual study. Over a three day period near the end of the 2011-12 school year, these volunteer teachers were given the pilot survey and a questionnaire about their experience of taking the survey (see Appendix A). The following are two significant outcomes of the pilot administration:
Survey Testing: Pilot Study

1. The pilot used a Likert Scale with the following header response identifiers for each of the 25 questions regarding experience in the profession and the 5 questions regarding retention in the profession: Strongly Agree; Somewhat Agree; Agree; Somewhat Disagree; Strongly Disagree. The pilot, therefore, did not have a midpoint on the Likert scale. Questionnaire responses to the pilot indicated the absence of the midpoint confused respondents, as did the range of Somewhat Agree / Agree, insofar as “Somewhat Agree” was understood by respondents as less a degree of agreement that “Agree” but was actually located on the Likert Scale closer to the “Strongly Agree.”

Remediation: To remediate the confusion reported by the placement of the terms, “Somewhat Agree” relative to “Agree,” and to create a midpoint, the scale term “Agree” was replaced by “No Opinion.” This change created a midpoint on the scale and eliminated the confusion reported by pilot respondents regarding “Somewhat Agree” relative to “Agree.”

2. The pilot mirrored the section identifiers in the actual survey: Section A: 25 questions about factors influencing teaching; Section B: 2 questions about overall satisfaction; Section C: 5 questions about retention; Section D: demographic questions. Based on pilot responses, changes needed to be made to questions in each section.

Remediation: A total of 8 questions in Sections A, B and C warranted re-wording or revision, based on feedback from pilot participants. See Appendix B for full detail on the changes made from the pilot to actual survey.
Survey Instrument

Final Research Design

Following the administration of the pilot survey and the revision of items, I proceeded with the administration of the final, edited version of the survey (see Appendix C). The survey consisted of four sections, labeled and including as follows:

Section A: Teaching Experience Questions: This section consists of 25 questions constructed on a 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, No Opinion, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree) and measuring the subscale factors of Climate (5 items), Support (5 items), Choice of Entry to Teaching (5 items), Professional Development (5 items) and Perceptions About Teachers (5 items).

Section B: Satisfaction Questions: Following the 25 question Section A, Section B asked participants 2 mixed-response questions regarding satisfaction, using a 5-point Likert Scale (Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied), followed by an open-ended response, “Why” for each item. Participants were invited to qualify their responses to the satisfaction questions in order to enrich the analysis of levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with teaching as a profession (open-ended item B1) and current teaching assignment (open-ended item B2).

Section C: Retention Questions: Following the satisfaction questions, 5 items asked participants about a sixth subscale, Retention, defined as the likelihood of a participant’s remaining in the teaching profession to full pension-eligible retirement age or in the event of achieving independent financial security prior to reaching full retirement age. The heart of one of my research questions is to determine the relationship between the five factors’ influence on
satisfaction and the relationship of satisfaction to retention; the questions on retention were
designed to act as a measure of teacher’s beliefs about how long they would remain teaching,
that is, if they would remain to retirement or if financial security would permit them to leave the
profession prior to full retirement age.

**Section D: Demographics:** 14 items in this section asked demographic questions regarding age,
gender, number of years in the teaching profession, race or ethnicity and experience of teaching
at two distinct levels: primary school, defined as grades K-6, or secondary school, defined as
grades 7-12. For the purposes of this study, this question was critical, given that one of my
central research questions asks whether teachers at the primary or secondary levels experience
greater levels of satisfaction.

To protect the anonymity of survey participants I used a numerical coding system known
only to myself that identified the districts in which each set of surveys was distributed. Each
survey in a given district was hand-numbered to assure that, in the event pages became separated
during the course of analysis, individual respondent’s pages could be tracked. Initially, a
tracking redundancy was to have participants code each page of the survey with the first letter of
their first names and the first two letters of their last names. However, in the course of discussing
this redundancy with a member of my dissertation committee, a concern was raised as to whether,
from the perspective of participants, this might compromise anonymity. Given this caution, I
instead asked participants to instead write any three letters in the designated spaces on each
survey page. This revised secondary coding had the intended effect of maintaining the
redundancy while assuring participant anonymity.
The surveys also asked participants to indicate, on the last page, whether they were willing to take part in an interview following the survey administration. Participants were asked to indicate a preferred method of contact, by email or phone, if they were so willing.

Further details regarding the survey instrument are included in Chapter 4, “Findings.”

**Participating School Districts: Nassau County, New York**

My initial goal was to survey approximately 160 to 170 participants from demographically and socio-economically diverse school districts in Nassau County on Long Island, New York. Although Long Island is largely considered a suburban area east of New York City, over the past fifty years it has become a demographically highly diverse region of New York State. Nassau County is one of the two counties comprising the geographic region traditionally known as Long Island. The choice of Nassau County for this study was influenced by several additional factors:

1. My familiarity with the region and the geographical accessibility of potential participating districts.
2. A belief that I would be able to easily find willing participants through my work with colleagues in school districts in the county.
3. The knowledge that, given the growing diversity of Nassau County and the demographic profile of school districts, I would be able to locate participants who work in a diverse cross-section of school districts.

Table 3.1 provides demographic data from the 2012 census for Nassau County:
Table 3.1
Demographic Data for Nassau County, New York, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black/ African American</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaskan Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Hispanic (any race)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,349,223</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In order to reflect the demographic diversity of Nassau County in this study, I chose six school districts whose student populations included three with significantly white populations (Cedars, 77% White; Oaks, 82% White; Pines, 81% White), two with significantly Black and Hispanic populations (Frasers, 88% Black and Hispanic combined; Willows, 98% Black and Hispanic combined) and one with a significantly Asian population (Jades, 36% Asian). Table 3.2 details the complete demographic and socio-economic status of each school district. The table also includes information about the number of teachers in each participating district, the turnover rate among teachers with fewer than five years’ experience per district, and the turnover rate of all teachers in each of the participating districts. As Table 3.2 indicates, districts chosen for participation in this study include two with a relatively high needs population (Frasers and Willows, both with 54% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch), two with moderate high needs populations (Oaks, with 11% and Cedars, 19%) and two with low numbers of high needs students (Jades and Pines, 3% and 4% respectively).
Table 3.2
Demographic and Socio-Economic Status of School Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Districts</th>
<th>Cedars</th>
<th>Frasers</th>
<th>Jades</th>
<th>Oaks</th>
<th>Pines</th>
<th>Willows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>6367</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td>5836</td>
<td>4888</td>
<td>6376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency (LEP)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Teachers</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Rate of Teachers with Fewer Than Five Years’ Experience</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover Rate of All Teachers</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://reportcards.nysed.gov

Participants:

Following the administration of the pilot and adjustments to the survey items based on its administration in June, 2012, I initiated a search for survey participants. Following protocols from the Institutional Review Board, I first obtained permission from district administrative personnel to conduct research in each district. Once permission was obtained, I contacted colleagues in each district with whom I’ve collaborated in the course of my work as District
Coordinator for English Language Arts in the Maples School District. To solicit volunteers for interviews, I asked these colleagues to distribute a letter of introduction to teachers at department and faculty meetings. Once letters of introduction were distributed I visited each district to administer surveys or to leave them with my colleagues to distribute to teachers. Surveys were either completed under my supervision or were completed and returned to a designated individual in each school. In five of the six districts solicited, participation rate was very high; of approximately 170 total surveys distributed 133 or 78.2% were completed and returned.

**Interviews:**

Following survey administration I examined the responses of individuals indicating a willingness to participate in the interviews. Positive responses to the invitation on the survey for follow up interviews totaled 44 affirmatives of 133, or 33.1% of those surveyed. A spreadsheet was used to record the potential participants’ three-letter code, survey number, district, grade level taught, responses to items B1 and B2 (open-ended questions regarding level of satisfaction), demographic information and contact information. I examined each of these to select interview participants with varying demographics, years of experience, district and school-level (elementary or secondary). Of the 44 respondents indicated willingness for interview participation, I selected an initial group of 18 respondents who were contacted using the following protocol:
Table 3.3
Protocol for Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>An email was sent to each potential interviewee, asking if they were still willing to participate, with a letter attached detailing what would be involved in the interview. Individuals were asked to respond to this email if willing to be interviewed, and to include their name and address in the response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Each positive respondent to the first email was mailed three items via postal mail: The IRB Consent Form, which they were to sign and return, a second form asking for convenient times and dates for telephone interviews, and a list of interview questions. (See interview questions below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>When the participant returned the signed Consent Form and time/date sheet, each was sent a second email with a suggested date and time for the interview; once the time was set via email exchanges, I sent a final confirmation email to the participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>On the specified date and time, each participant was called; interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and the speaker phone setting on the interviewer’s phone. Following the interviews, each was digitally transferred to a .wav file, and then transcribed for analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This protocol yielded a total of ten participants, four of whom were elementary-level teachers and six secondary level teachers. A second attempt to contact the eight who did not respond to the first interview request did not yield any further responses, leading to a second set of emails to additional candidates from among the 44 who had indicated willingness. While the initial survey had yielded a healthy percentage of teachers willing to be interviewed (33.1%), the follow-up requests suggested the challenge with which any researcher may have to contend, that of lack of participant follow-through. When no further responses were forthcoming, I considered using the ten affirmative responses as the complete pool of interviews. However, following consultation with members of my dissertation committee, I determined it would be both necessary and prudent to find five more teachers in order to achieve a reasonable sample size of teachers relative to the total number of teachers surveyed. I then decided on a different course of action to obtain additional teacher feedback on satisfaction and retention by contacting
colleagues in five of the six districts where surveys had been conducted. The sixth district, Jades, had such a low percentage of teachers participating in the survey (3.8% total of respondents) and no volunteers for the interviews, leading me to exclude that district from further consideration in the follow-up search for additional interview volunteers. Therefore, I contacted colleagues in Willows, Frasers, Oaks, Cedars and Pines to solicit volunteers from teachers in these districts who had not completed the surveys but who might be willing to participate in an interview. This presented a methodological variation from my original intention of interviewing only survey participants, but it also presented an opportunity for teacher feedback from a different pool of teachers, a group outside those surveyed, as a way of expanding responses regarding satisfaction and retention among teachers. Thanks to the assistance of these colleagues, I was able to contact five additional participants, four of whom are elementary teachers, and one of whom is split between elementary and secondary in her current assignment. These five additional teachers are from three of the six districts in this study (see tables following). Contact was made with this group of five teachers using an expedited process of emailing, establishing an appropriate time, obtaining IRB consent forms, and conducting the interviews. This brought the total number of teachers interviewed to 15. Using the guidance suggested by Picciano (2004) that, in a quantitative study, “Subsequently, a modest amount of qualitative data may be collected to support interpretations [of statistical analysis]” (p. 52), interviewing ten teachers who completed the survey and five who did not would provide a sufficient number of interviews to support statistical analysis of the surveys and, by virtue of the five non-surveyed teachers, provide an informal test of the consistency of responses regarding influences on teacher satisfaction and retention.
Table 3.4 provides demographic data regarding each of the 10 teachers who initially agreed to be interviewed:

Table 3.4
Teachers Interviewed following Survey Solicitation of Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Elementary or Secondary</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Profession (Ques. B1)</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Current Teaching (Ques. B2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 3.4 shows, the initial group of interview participants included six secondary and four elementary teachers, seven females and three males, and nine Caucasians and one Hispanic participant. Table 3.5 shows the demographics of the teachers who agreed to be interviewed from the second pool, those not surveyed but volunteering for interviews. This cohort of teachers, insofar as they did not take the survey, did not directly answer survey questions B1 (Satisfaction with Teaching Profession) or B2 (Satisfaction with Current Teaching Assignment). During the interviews, these teachers, along with the ten who initially volunteered to be interviewed, were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with teaching using a verbally-administered 5-point Likert Scale using the following question: “Overall, how satisfied are you as a teacher on a scale of 1 to 5, with one representing ‘very satisfied’ and five ‘very dissatisfied’?”

Table 3.5
Non-Survey Takers Agreeing to Interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District or Secondary</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction with Teaching (1-5 Verbal Scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWS</td>
<td>Willows Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2 (Somewhat Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOA</td>
<td>Oaks Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPI</td>
<td>Pines Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Willows Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>3 (Between Satisfied and Dissatisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Pines Elementary/Secondary (split)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the addition of this additional cohort of teachers, four elementary and one split position teachers were added, one of whom is African-American. The addition of one African-American voice to the conversation made a nominal contribution to maximum variation sampling. The five added interviews also provided a greater balance between elementary and secondary teachers and the voice of one teacher who current assignment is a split position between elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) teaching. With a total of 15 achieved, the basic demographic profile of those interviewed is shown in Table 3.6:

Table 3.6
All Teachers Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>K to 6</th>
<th>7-12</th>
<th>K-6 / 7-12 split</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>African-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview questions were designed to be open-ended and to reflect the analysis of factors of the survey, i.e. analysis how five factors influence teachers’ experiences of satisfaction and how satisfaction predicts retention. Picciano (2004) suggests that, “Open-ended questions also allow the interviewer to pursue a line of questioning and to follow up with additional questions when the interviewee has mentioned something interesting or provocative” (p 22). Four interview questions were designed to elicit responses about the five factors measured in Section A of the survey: *Reason for Entering the Profession, Support, Climate, Professional Development and Perceptions about Teachers*. Another question asked participants about likelihood of remaining in teaching to mirror the questions in Section C regarding retention. One interview question sought a response regarding motivation for choosing specific grade level of
teaching (elementary or secondary); and another mirrored the open-ended questions on the survey (questions B1 and B2) about overall satisfaction as a teacher. A last question invited an open ended, opinion-based response as to whether the participant believed elementary or secondary teachers experience greater satisfaction. Table 3.7 lists the interview questions and the intended response factor of each:
Table 3.7

Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Factors under Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe your initial motivation for entering the teaching profession and whether, if you were starting your career today, would you still be likely to become a teacher?</td>
<td>Reason for choice of entry to the teaching profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current disposition regarding choice of profession (Choice of Profession)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why did you choose the level of teaching (elementary/secondary) that you did? Do you believe in hindsight this was a good choice?</td>
<td>Reason for choice of teaching level (elementary or secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current disposition regarding choice of teaching level (Choice of Level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe the major factors that contribute to and those that take away from your sense of well-being as a teacher.</td>
<td>Workplace and experiential factors (include levels of support, professional development and school climate) that influence respondents’ feeling about their work (Climate, Support, Professional Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you think teachers are regarded by the community in which you work? Do you believe there is a difference between the ways teachers are regarded and the way in which other professionals are perceived?</td>
<td>Perceptions about how teachers are regarded in the participants’ work school community; comparison of how teachers are regarded in the work community compared to how other professionals are regarded (Perceptions about Teachers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your professional life as a teacher; explain your level of satisfaction and what contributes to or takes away from your feeling satisfied.</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction and factors contributing to that level (Level of Satisfaction and Reason for Level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, why have you considered doing so, and if not, why have you decided to remain a teacher?</td>
<td>Retention and staying or leaving the teaching profession (Retention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you believe that elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied in their profession?</td>
<td>Open-ended, opinion-based question about what participant believes about levels of satisfaction in teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since all interviews were done by phone, I never met participants face-to-face, which preserved a measure of privacy for respondents and maintained a consistent interview structure,
although respondents for the most part were quite candid in their responses and more than willing to discuss their experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their work as teachers.

Before proceeding with the interviews I reviewed the literature on qualitative research design to assure an approach consistent with best practice in the field. Marshall (2006) suggests that “Qualitative, in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories” and further, “The participants perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective)” (p. 101). Marshall also cautions that interviewing has weaknesses, one of which is that it is premised on cooperation; but also that, “Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore” (p. 102). To caution against this unwillingness, I assured each interviewee at the beginning of each conversation of (a) the confidential nature of the conversation and (b) the use of pseudonyms for both districts and individuals in analysis of transcripts. Fortunately, all 15 participants in this study were more than willing to give candid and fully developed responses to the interview questions. My sense, also articulated by many teachers during these interviews, was that they welcomed the opportunity to speak their minds about their work, degrees of satisfaction and the daily factors that play a role in their teaching experience. During the first several interviews, for example, teachers were so keen to speak about how they felt that the interviews were quite lengthy, up to almost 50 minutes. In the latter interviews I worked to keep the conversation focused on responses to questions asked and politely guided the conversation back on topic when it threatened to continue to areas beyond the specific scope of these questions and this study.
Interview Coding

Using Auerbach (2003) as a guide, I developed a coding system for the interview transcripts. Auerbach suggests a staircase approach to coding in which the researcher reads raw text to discern relevant text and repeating ideas. These repeating ideas form the basis for themes, leading to theoretical constructs and narratives, culminating in conclusions regarding research concerns (Auerbach, 2003, p. 35). Critical to the process is cutting down the raw text to relevant, “text that is related to your specific research concerns” and developing themes, “an implicit topic that organized a group of repeating ideas” (Auerbach, 2003, pp. 37-8). Once themes are developed to theoretical constructs, these constructs form the basis for theoretical narratives, “the bridge between the researcher’s concerns and the participants’ subjective experience” (p. 40).

Insofar as the interviews for this paper were conducted as part of a mixed-methods study (Creswell, 2009; Picciano, 2004), I adapted Auerbach’s coding schema which is the design for a fully grounded theory, exclusively qualitative study. For example, while multiple coders are customarily employed in an exclusively qualitative study, I undertook the coding of interview transcripts myself, given the data already available from the statistical findings and the relatively limited number of interviews conducted for the qualitative portion of this paper. Marshall (2006) indicates, “Codes may take several forms: abbreviations of key words, colored dots, numbers—the choice is up to the researcher” (p. 160). Using different colored highlighters, I read through each teacher transcript, coding responses to questions so that responses to questions 1 and 2 (Choice of Teaching; Choice of Level) were marked in one color, those for questions 3 (Climate, Support and Professional Development) in another, question 4 (Perceptions of Teachers) in a third, question 5 and 6 (Satisfaction and Retention) in a fourth color, and question 7 (Opinion as to greater level of satisfaction) in a fifth color. This system allowed me to then cluster responses
to each question for analysis and for drawing conclusions relative to the statistical data developed through the survey responses. Following the coding of responses, I organized them into clusters, based on each question or set of questions, for further analysis. The methodology of reading through raw transcripts and clustering responses by question allowed for the third and final step of analysis: extracting relevant text from individual teacher responses into a separate table, which enabled me to read targeted, specific responses to each question and to look for patterns of response among interviewees. Using a color-coding scheme, I discovered there were clear patterns of responses to many interview question as well as responses that were outliers to the majority. During the analysis of these text clusters, I examined responses relative to the findings from the survey for further evidence of or divergence from the data findings. The results of this part of the study are detailed in Chapter 4.

**Ethical Considerations and Conclusion**

The methodology employed in this study assured protection of the confidentiality of participants. All survey respondents received notification prior to survey administration of the nature of the study, how the findings would be used, and how confidentiality would be protected. Surveys were coded to assure confidentiality of responses. In the interview phase, respondents signed a consent form and were verbally told that the responses were being recorded. All participants were further assured that in the report of findings both school districts and individual participants would be referenced by pseudonyms. Institutional Review Board guidelines were followed in all procedures and IRB permission was obtained for each component of the study. The actual identity of school districts was known only to the Principal Investigator and Doctoral Dissertation Committee.
The findings of this study are reported in Chapter 4, with a discussion of implications of these findings in the concluding chapter of this paper.
Chapter Four: Findings

Pilot Survey

The pilot version of the survey contained 42 closed-ended and 2 mixed questions (open- and closed-ended parts). The teachers participating in the pilot were able to respond to 30 of the closed-ended questions using a 5-point rating scale: strongly agree (5), somewhat agree (4), agree (3), somewhat disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). Asked at the start of the survey, these items explored the teachers’ experience in their current school, professional development, perception of the school’s climate and level of support, and reasons for entering and remaining in the profession. The two mixed questions held a different 5-point Likert-type rating scale: very satisfied (5), satisfied (4), neutral (3), somewhat dissatisfied (2), very dissatisfied (1). These items focused specifically on the teachers’ level of satisfaction with the profession overall and with their current teaching assignment/situation. After each of these two questions, teachers were able to answer “Why?” in writing. The remaining 12 questions of the survey asked demographic information of the teacher such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, total number of years as a teacher (not specifically stating part-time and full-time), total number of years at each level (elementary K-5, middle 6-8, and high 9-12), certification, and tenure.

Because I had developed and piloted this survey on my own, I wanted to test its reliability with the population of teachers from which I would be sampling (Litwin, 1995). I assessed the internal consistency reliability of the pilot survey and its subscales using the RELIABILITY procedure in SPSS (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The internal consistency reliability measures from -1.0 to 1.0 how well or reliably different items measure the same concept or idea (Litwin, 1995). I used Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (\(\alpha\)) to measure reliability as
it is typically used when several Likert-type items are summed to make a composite score a
summated scale (Cronbach, 1951; Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008; Litwin, 1995). Positively-
worded items were scored positively while negatively-worded items were scored negatively.

The standardized alpha for the 29 items in total was .91 with $M = 115.88$ and $SD = 14.86$. Because one item A9 “I chose to become a teacher even though I don’t particularly like working with young people” had 0 variance, SPSS removed it from the overall scale. Therefore, 29 of the 30 items were used to calculate alpha. The survey overall has very good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha \geq .90$). The subscale internal consistency reliabilities ranged from very good (Support) to problematic (Professional Development). See Table 4.1 for subscale definitions and reliability. One scale was good ($0.80 \leq \alpha < 0.90$), two were acceptable ($0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.80$) with the remaining being questionable ($0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.70$) to poor ($0.50 \leq \alpha < 0.60$). One scale, Professional Development, was problematic, showing a negative reliability—a violation of assumptions.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>17.56</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>25.19</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Profession</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception about Teachers</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>16.69</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the internal consistency reliability was very strong for the overall scale and moderate to strong for half of the subscales, the change in the rating scales will make it difficult to compare reliabilities from the pilot survey to the finalized survey. There is a conceptual difference between the pilot and the final survey response scale. The 5-point rating scale of the
final version provided balance between agreement and disagreement with the center point 3 being “No Opinion.” This was not the case with the pilot survey where the center point 3 was “Agree,” making 3 out of the 5 points agreement, and 2 out of 5 disagreement. The rating scale of the final version is an improvement over that of the pilot. The change is validated by some of the teachers’ comments about the pilot rating scale, including confusion over “strongly disagree” and “somewhat disagree” and suggestions to change “Agree” to “Neutral” or “No Opinion” or “Not Sure” for balance.

**Final Survey**

The final version of the survey contained 41 closed-ended, 3 open-ended, and 2 mixed questions (open- and closed-ended parts). See Appendix C for the final version. The teachers were able to respond to 30 of the closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale: strongly agree (5), somewhat agree (4), no opinion (3), somewhat disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). Asked at the start of the survey, these items explored the teachers’ experience in their current school, professional development, perception of the school’s climate and level of support, and reasons for entering and remaining in the profession. The 2 mixed questions held a different 5-point Likert-type rating scale: very satisfied (5), satisfied (4), neutral (3), somewhat dissatisfied (2), very dissatisfied (1). These items focused specifically on the teachers’ level of satisfaction with the profession overall and with their current teaching assignment/situation. After each of these two questions, teachers were able to answer “Why?” in writing. The remaining 14 questions of the survey asked demographic information of the teacher such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, total number of years as a teacher (part-time and full-time), total number of years at each level (elementary and secondary), certification, and tenure.
Variables

For the survey, the independent variable germane to my research questions is school level. School level is operationalized as the current school level (elementary or secondary) at which the teacher is teaching at the time of the survey. It is considered an attribute independent variable because the attribute (school level) was preexisting and did not systematically change (in this case, at all) during the study (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The dependent variables in this survey germane to my research questions are satisfaction and retention. Retention is operationalized as the composite score of the five retention subscale items and satisfaction is operationalized as the composite score of the levels of satisfaction with teaching as a profession and with the present teaching assignment or situation. The 30 closed-ended questions comprised six subscales: climate, support, choice of profession, professional development, perception about teachers, and retention (with respect to financial regard).

Exploratory Data Analysis

I conducted exploratory data analyses on all of the variables using descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation) to check for any problems with the data (e.g., data entry errors, data coding errors, or outliers), check whether statistical test assumptions (e.g., normality, independence of observations, homogeneity of variances) were being met, and examine relationships (correlations) between variables (Fink, 2003a; Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003). Assumptions explain when it is reasonable or not to perform a specific statistical test (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). If the normality assumption is violated, then nonparametric tests may be necessary to use.
To test normality, I looked at skewness (i.e., lack of symmetry in a frequency distribution). The skewness value indicates that the data are normally distributed if it is between -1.0 and +1.0 (Keppel & Wickens, 2004; Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). However, I also visually inspected the distribution in histograms and boxplots, because although skewness values may indicate normality, the data may have multiple modes, extreme scores, or actual skewed distributions (Keppel & Wickens, 2004; Newton & Rudestam, 1999). I also conducted a statistical test of normality called the Shapiro-Wilk Test. Significant results for this test ($p < \alpha$ where $\alpha = .05$) indicate that the null hypothesis of normality is to be rejected, and that the variable’s distribution is non-normal. After reviewing the descriptive statistics, graphics, and tests, 25 of the 36 dependent variables suggested non-normal distributions as these distributions were either skewed or appeared bimodal.

However, regarding assumptions, some statistical tests such as the t-test and F-test have been shown to be robust such that assumptions can be violated without damaging the validity of the test statistic or the results if the sample size is sufficiently large (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008; Newton & Rudestam, 1999). Because of the central limit theorem, it is standard practice to assume that the sample mean from a random sample is normal (Keppel & Wickens, 2004). Although random sampling would have been the best way to avoid selection bias, it was not feasible for this study. (Random sampling is often not feasible in practice especially in educational settings (Keppel & Wickens, 2004).) Teachers who participated in this study were from a convenience sample. Accessible from the schools that were solicited as part of the study, these teachers volunteered to complete the survey.

The schools serve as the sampling units since they were selected for the study and the teachers are the units of analysis since it is the teachers’ survey data to be examined statistically
(Fink, 2003b). To be able to make reasonable generalizations, I tried to ensure that the sample and target population of teachers did not differ statistically on important demographic variables such as race/ethnicity, gender, and years of teaching across school levels (Fink, 2003b; Keppel & Wickens, 2004). See Table 4.2 for demographic percentages across school level for the sample. The race/ethnicity categories in Table 4.2 are the same as were used by state department of education in the district profiles at the time of this study.
Table 4.2
Demographic Percentages across School Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>17.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics

In all, 133 teachers (63 elementary school and 70 high school) completed the survey, out of 170 surveys distributed, for a response rate of 78.2% The surveys were distributed across 12 schools in 6 school districts—one elementary school and its namesake high school in each district. There are approximately 57 school districts in this county, where these 6 districts
represent upper, middle, and lower-income student populations. See Table 4.3 below for statistics for each participating district and school.

Table 4.3
Frequencies of Participants by School and School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>District Economic Level</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cedars Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Cedars Elementary School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cedars High School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Poor or</td>
<td>Frasers Elementary School</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Frasers High School</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jades Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Wealthy</td>
<td>Jades Elementary School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jades High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Oaks Elementary School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oaks High School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pines Central</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Pines Elementary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pines High School</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willows Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Poor or</td>
<td>Willows Elementary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Willows High School</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 133 100.0

Ethnically, the large majority of teachers self-identified as white (114 or 86.4%) with the remaining 19 teachers self-identifying as Hispanic (8 or 6.0%), African American (7 or 5.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1 or .8%), or American Indian/Alaska Native (1 or .8%). The ages of the teachers showed a slightly normal distribution with a low majority of teachers (32.1%) between 36 and 45 years of age followed by 28.2% 35 years of age and under, and approximately 19% each for 46 to 55 year of age and 56 and older. Nearly all of the teachers held master’s degrees with two teachers having earned their doctoral degrees and two teachers having earned bachelor’s degrees only.
The total number of years teachers have taught, including part-time and full-time teaching, ranged from 1 to 42 years with an average of 17.16 years ($SD = 8.92$ years), median of 15 years, and mode of 13 years. Of the two school levels in question, more teachers had taught mostly at the secondary level (Grades 7-12, 54.1%) than the elementary school level (Grades K-6, 45.9%). See Table 4.4 for statistics by year grouping. Only 9 teachers (6.8%) were untenured. Although 23.5% were licensed as Special Education teachers, only 12.1% were currently working as a Special Education teacher. Because some teachers indicated having taught at both elementary and secondary levels, the total of all responses (157) exceeds the total of survey respondents (131) in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouped Years of Teaching by School Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 9 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy-seven percent (77.7%) of the teachers identified as female and 22.3% as male. Nearly the same percentage (78.8%) was married or partnered, followed by 15.2% single or never married, and 6.1% widowed, divorced or separated. Nearly 7 of 10 (69.7%) were parents.

**Response Ratings**

Two sets of Likert-type rating scales were used in this survey as response ratings. To help increase the reliability of the survey, I positively-worded 20 of the 30 survey items with the
remaining 10 being negatively-worded. Positively-worded items are phrased so that an agreement with the item represents a relatively high level of the attribute being measured, in this case, professional development: “Professional development opportunities are readily available for teachers in my district.” On the other hand, negatively-worded items are items that are phrased so that agreement with the item represents a relatively low level of the attribute being measured, in this case, administrative support: “School administrators are not very supportive of the teachers in my school.”

Before computing total scores, I reverse-scored the negatively-worded items so that all of the items were consistent with each other with respect to what agreement and disagreement mean in value. For example, for the subscale Support, the score for “School administrators are not very supportive of the teachers in my school” cannot be totaled with the other 4 items within the subscale as it originally stands because the scores do not mean the same. A score of 5 (strongly agree) for “School administrators are not very supportive of the teachers in my school” indicates high negative feelings about support in the school while a score of 5 (strongly agree) for “I feel professionally supported by other teachers in the school in which I work” indicates high positive feelings about support in the school. Essentially, the values for all of the questions must be in the same direction.

**Internal Consistency Reliability**

I assessed the internal consistency reliability of the final survey and its subscales using the RELIABILITY procedure in SPSS (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The standardized alpha for the 30 items in total was .88 with $M = 112.60$ and $SD = 16.24$. The survey overall has good internal consistency reliability. The subscale internal consistency reliabilities ranged from good (Retention) to poor (Professional Development). See Table 4.5 for subscale definitions and
reliability. Four out of the subscales are considered acceptable ($\alpha \geq .70$) with the remaining being questionable ($0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.70$) to poor ($0.50 \leq \alpha < 0.60$). However, further refining and testing of the entire scale and subscales in future studies may well increase all reliabilities to good ($0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.80$) or excellent ($\alpha \geq .90$) (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 4.5
Subscales, Definition, Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Intended to measure…</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Overall atmosphere of the school; level of safety; working environment; relationships among stakeholders (students/ teachers/ administrators)</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Availability of resources; time valued for collaboration among teachers; administrative support regarding student management, curriculum development and teacher concerns</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>22.90</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Profession</td>
<td>Why the teacher entered the profession; weight of consideration of other professions; work prior to entering teaching</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>22.94</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Availability of conferences, workshops, and instructive professional collaboration, internally and externally</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>16.74</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception about Teachers</td>
<td>How teachers are regarded in the community in which the teacher works; the extent to which teachers feel respected as professionals within the school and district community by adult stakeholders</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>13.82</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Intention to remain in teaching through the teacher’s working career until age-eligible retirement or remaining in teaching despite financial independence.</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 1: How do the factors of entry to teaching, climate, workplace support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession?

First, I wanted to explore how the following factors influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession: entry to teaching, climate, workplace support, professional
development, and perceptions about teaching. I looked at the correlation of these five subscales and teacher satisfaction, and then the five subscales and retention. The correlation coefficient is bounded with values from -1.0 to +1.0, where values that are closer to +1.0 indicate a strong, positive correlation and values that are closer to -1.0 indicate a strong, inverse correlation (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). A strong, positive correlation indicates a consistent tendency for respondents who have relatively high scores on one variable to have relatively high scores on the other (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). The same applies to low scores. However, a strong, inverse correlation indicates a consistent tendency for respondents who have relatively high scores on one variable to have relatively low scores on the other, and vice versa (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). Correlations close to 0 indicate weak or no consistent tendencies between the two variables. Correlations are considered small/weak for \(|.10| \leq r < |.30|\), medium/moderate for \(|.30| \leq r < |.50|\), large/strong for \(|.50| \leq r < |.70|\), and much larger than typical for \(r \geq |.70|\) for the social sciences (Cohen, 1992).

All of the correlations between the five subscales and retention and satisfaction were statistically significant, positive, and moderate to strong. See Table 4.6 for correlations and significance levels. This indicates that as the teachers’ satisfaction grew, their feelings regarding their school’s climate, support, professional development, and perception grew more positive. Also, as their feelings about their choice of entry into the profession were positive, so were their levels of satisfaction and retention.
Table 4.6

Correlations of Retention and Satisfaction between Remaining Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Retention Pearson r</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Satisfaction Pearson r</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>.245**</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.447**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.214*</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.419**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.201*</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>.323**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>.314**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.428**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01.

To explore the possible influence of the five subscales on retention and satisfaction separately, I conducted a multiple regression. I first examined the correlation between the five subscales and found high correlations ($r > .60$) between three of the subscales: climate, support, and development. High correlations among predictors or composites of variables indicate a likely problem with multicollinearity—a condition where two or more predictors or composites have much of the same information or are highly overlapping concepts (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008; Newton & Rudestam, 1999). This may occur when several predictors taken together are related to some other predictors (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). To reduce multicollinearity, researchers have suggested eliminating one of the highly correlated variables, forming a composite variable, or analyzing each separately (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008; Newton & Rudestam, 1999). Therefore, I combined climate and support first because conceptually they made a meaningful composite. Multicollinearity was still an issue; thus, I combined development with climate and support to form the composite
ClimateSupportDevelopment. After aggregating those three subscales, multicollinearity was less of a problem.

I checked to make sure assumptions of linearity, normal distribution of errors, and non-correlation of errors were met. The combination of variables—ClimateSupportDevelopment, choice of entry, and perception—significantly predicted satisfaction, $F(2, 129) = 23.59, p < .001$. The adjusted $R^2$ value was .26, indicating that 26% of the variance in satisfaction was explained by the model. The effect size of $R = .51$ is large according to Cohen (1992). The beta weights $\beta$ suggest that the composite ClimateSupportDevelopment ($\beta = 0.35, p < .001$) contribute most to teachers’ composite satisfaction followed by perception of teachers ($\beta = 0.23, p = .02$). Choice of entry does not contribute to teachers’ composite satisfaction.

I repeated the same steps for the five subscales on retention. The combination of variables—ClimateSupportDevelopment, choice of entry, and perception—significantly predicted retention, $F(2, 129) = 12.82, p < .001$, although not as strongly as for satisfaction. The adjusted $R^2$ value was .21, indicating that 21% of the variance in retention was explained by the model. The effect size of $R = .48$ is moderate to high according to Cohen (1992). Interestingly, the beta weights $\beta$ suggest that choice of entry ($\beta = 0.35, p < .001$) contributes most to teachers’ retention followed by perception of teachers ($\beta = 0.19, p = .05$). ClimateSupportDevelopment does not contribute to teachers’ retention.

I also examined the correlation between the five subscales and school level. To test the correlations between the subscales composite scores and school level, a biserial correlation test would be most appropriate; however, SPSS does not calculate biserial correlation. Therefore, I used Kendall’s tau-b ($\tau_b$), a common nonparametric statistic used with ordinal and interval data
(Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008), to test the correlations at $\alpha = .05$. All of the correlations with school level are inverse and statistically significant except for retention and satisfaction. The strengths of the statistically significant correlations range from weak ($r = -.16$) to moderate ($r = -.35$). See Table 4.7 for correlations and significance levels.

Table 4.7
Correlations between School Level and All Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Level</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>-.307**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>-.347**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Profession</td>
<td>-.156*</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>-.221**</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception about Teachers</td>
<td>-.163*</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01.

**Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach (elementary and secondary level)?**

To determine if there was a significant difference in satisfaction between teachers at the elementary level and the secondary level, I conducted an independent samples t-test at significance level $\alpha = .05$. On the composite satisfaction score, the elementary school teachers ($n = 62, M = 4.33, SD = 0.77$) rated higher on average than the high school teachers ($n = 70, M = 4.15, SD = 0.83$). Although the sample sizes were unequal, Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances was not statistically significant. Therefore, equal variances were assumed and the mean difference of 0.18 of the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not
statistically significant ($p = .20$). Statistically, there was no difference in overall composite satisfaction between elementary and high school teachers.

To take a closer look at satisfaction, I conducted an independent samples t-test on each individual item B1 and B2 across teaching levels also at $\alpha = .05$. I used the nonparametric Mann-Whitney $U$ test since the dependent variables B1 and B2 are ordinal and have skewed distributions. The Mann-Whitney $U$ assess whether the mean ranks of two groups (instead of the means) are equivalent in the population where high ranks are given for high scores (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). For item B1, “Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?”, the elementary school teachers ($n = 63$, Mean Rank = 68.15) had higher mean ranks than the high school teachers ($n = 70$, Mean Rank = 65.96). For item B2, “Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?”, the elementary school teachers ($n = 62$, Mean Rank = 73.00) had higher ranks mean ranks than the high school teachers ($n = 70$, Mean Rank = 60.74). The difference in mean ranks, however, was only statistically significant for B2 ($U = 1767.0$, $z = -.35$, $p = .03$) with small effect size $r = -.26$ and not for B1 ($U = 2132.5$, $p = .73$). Effect size $r$ was calculated by converting $z$ to $r$, where $r = z / \sqrt{N}$ (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008).

I next conducted a paired samples t-test to see if there was a difference of teachers’ responses between items B2 and B1 (i.e., did teachers indicate more satisfaction for their assignment over the profession?). I used the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test which tests whether two related samples have equivalent ranks (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008) or distributions (Wilcox, 2003) in the population. The difference in ranks was statistically significant for elementary school teachers ($z = -4.04$, $p < .001$) with large effect size $r = -.50$ and also for high school teachers ($z = -2.99$, $p = .003$) with moderate effect size $r = -.36$. Again,
effect size $r$ was calculated by converting $z$ to $r$, where $r = z / \sqrt{N}$ (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). Therefore, statistically both elementary and high school teachers were more satisfied with their present teaching assignment than with teaching as a profession.

To determine if there was any correlation between the individual satisfaction items B1 and B2 with school level, I calculated the Spearman’s Rho ($r_s$) rank correlation coefficient instead of the Pearson correlation coefficient since the assumptions of the Pearson correlation coefficient were markedly violated (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The Spearman’s Rho ($r_s$) rank correlation coefficient is a nonparametric statistic which handles ordinal data (both variables are ordinal), adjusts for rank ties, and protects against outliers (Wilcox, 2003). I tested for correlations at significance level $\alpha = .05$.

The correlation between school level and B1 (teaching as a profession) was not statistically significant ($r = -.03, p = .73$) while the correlation between school level and B2 (present teaching assignment) was statistically significant ($r = -.19, p = .03$). The correlation, however, between school level and B2 was inverse with a small effect size of .19. Effect size is considered small/weak for $|.10| \leq r < |.30|$, medium/moderate for $|.30| \leq r < |.50|$, large/strong for $|.50| \leq r < |.70|$, and much larger than typical for $r \geq |.70|$ for the social sciences (Cohen, 1992). This indicates that as school level increases teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment. The correlation between school level and teaching as a profession is also inverse yet not statistically significant. See Table 4.8.
Table 4.8

Correlations between School Level and Satisfaction Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>B1. Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?</th>
<th>B2. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>-.192*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation

To test the correlation between the composite satisfaction score and school level, a biserial correlation test would be most appropriate; however, SPSS does not calculate biserial correlation. Therefore, I used Kendall’s tau-b (τb), a common nonparametric statistic used with ordinal and interval data, and found the correlation τb = -.11 to not be statistically significant (p = .17) at α = .05. There was no correlation between school level and the composite satisfaction score.
Research Question 3: How does job satisfaction at these levels correlate with teacher retention rates at each level?

Next, I wanted to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention. For all teachers, on average, satisfaction ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.80$) was slightly higher than retention ($M = 4.11, SD = 0.88$). Because satisfaction was negatively skewed, I calculated the Spearman correlation coefficient $r_s = .62$ which was statistically significant ($p < .001$) at $\alpha = .05$. Therefore, overall, there is a significant, positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention, meaning that the more satisfied teachers are with their assignment and teaching as a profession, the longer they will stay in teaching, and vice versa. Controlling for school level, the correlation between satisfaction and retention was positively and strongly correlated ($r = .60$) and statistically significant ($p < .001$) at $\alpha = .05$. Across school levels, satisfaction and retention were also positively and strongly correlated at $\alpha = .05$: elementary school teachers ($r = .55, p < .001$) and high school teachers ($r = .63, p < .001$).

Controlling for years teaching, the correlation was also positive and strong ($r = .60$) and statistically significant ($p < .001$) at $\alpha = .05$. And, taking a closer look at years teaching in groups of years, the correlations were positive, moderate to strong, and statistically significant for teachers who had been teaching between 6 and 20 years. However, for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, correlations were not statistically significant. See Table 4.9 for statistics for each group.
Table 4.9

Correlation to Years of Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Retention (M)</th>
<th>Satisfaction (M)</th>
<th>Correlation $r_s$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inter coder Reliability on Survey Written Response Coding

For the two mixed questions on job satisfaction, I employed structural coding methods on the teachers’ written responses. Structural coding is a question-based code that is particularly appropriate for studies with multiple participants, standardized or semi-structured data-gathering protocols, hypothesis testing, or exploratory investigations to gather topics, lists, or indexes of major categories or themes (Saldaña, 2009). Structural codes lend themselves to various types of analyses such as, but not limited to, content analysis, frequency counts, illustrative visuals, thematic analysis, and within-case and cross-case displays (Saldaña, 2009).

I coded the responses to both questions, at first obtaining 42 codes for the first question “Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?” and 54 codes for the second question “Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?” The written responses to the same questions varied in depth and breadth of detail with 87
teachers answering either or both questions with a clear, single sentence up to a paragraph and the remaining 46 teachers leaving no response.

I asked a research colleague to assist me in the validation process of my response coding. I explained the process and how long it could take. To start the training, I gave the coder the code list I had developed and asked her to read through it carefully to familiarize herself with it before she started coded. I explained that she was only coding the responses and that a unit of text to code would be anything that represented a single message, a different idea, or change of subject (Kurasaki, 2000). Therefore, one question may have more than one code if more than one message or idea was expressed in the written responses, which happened often. Codes were to be written to the side of each unit of text. We coded the training sample simultaneously yet independently without consultation (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). For the training, I randomly selected 25 teachers who had answered at least one of the questions. This produced 50 units of text to be coded, which followed the rule of thumb for sample size when assessing intercoder reliability (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002).

I decided to serve as a coder also even though some researchers (as cited in Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 590) have suggested that such a practice weakens the argument that other independent judges can reliably apply the coding scheme. I believe the contrary; independent application of the codes can be established through the independent coders used during the validation process while the researcher is able to strengthen the codes by her or his intimate knowledge of the data and context. It took two hours to complete the training.

We discussed discrepancies in our coding for the training sample, and upon closer inspection and deeper discussion about the text and the codes, we streamlined the codes,
consequently finalizing 52 codes in total—22 for question B1 and 30 for question B2. Although some of the codes for each question were the same, I decided to keep them separate as the questions were different regarding setting. More than 50 codes may seem excessive for only two written question responses on a survey; however, it is not uncommon that “most qualitative research studies in education will generate 80-100 codes that will be organized into 15-20 categories which eventually synthesize into five to seven major concepts” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 20).

For both training and actual samples, I assessed intercoder agreement---measures of agreement between independent coders about how they apply codes to units of data, whether fixed and predetermined, or free-flowing from open-ended interview questions (Kurasaki, 2000). For nominally categorized data, intercoder agreement is simply the percent of agreement between coders on codes or categories they assign to units of data (Cohen, 1960). See Table 4.10 for intercoder agreement for both training sample and actual sample. Satisfied with the reliability for the actual sample, I coded the rest of the written responses using the tested codebook.

Table 4.10
Intercoder Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of units coded</th>
<th>Intercoder Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Sample</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Sample</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Written Responses to Satisfaction Questions

Using the codes, I conducted a mixed analysis on the written responses so as not to lose potential information and to try to avoid misleading conclusions about the teachers (Bazeley, 2009). The mixed analysis involved “quantitizing” (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009) the (written) qualitative data from the two satisfaction questions into dichotomous and categorical variables. Transforming the written responses of 87 of 133 teachers (65.4%) to numerical data added to the overall picture, understanding, and analysis of their sense of satisfaction.

For question B1, “Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?”, on average, teachers were somewhat satisfied ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.07$) with 42.9% indicated somewhat satisfied, followed by very satisfied (35.3%), neutral (8.3%), somewhat dissatisfied (10.5%), and very dissatisfied (3.0%). Because one or more codes could be assigned to each teachers’ written response, percentages will not add to 100%. Over a quarter of these teachers (26.4%) love teaching, particularly, love helping students grow and learn (17.2%) and see their work environment as positive (3.4%) with professional development opportunities (8.0%). However, the heavy emphasis on testing (23.0%), anti-teacher climate (17.2%), state interference (12.5%), the new teacher evaluation process (10.3%), and feeling disrespected by their board of education and administrators (5.7%) make teaching less satisfying for them. Chapter 5 explores telling anecdotes reflective of the above percentages.

Interestingly, teachers expressed a greater regard for their present position than for the profession overall. For question B2, “Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching situation or assignment?”, on average, teachers were somewhat to very satisfied ($M = 4.48$, $SD =$
0.90) with 65.9% indicated very satisfied, followed by somewhat satisfied (25.0%), neutral (2.3%), somewhat dissatisfied (5.3%), and very dissatisfied (1.5%). (The mean difference between B2 and B1, as reported above, was statistically significant.) Teachers’ satisfaction appears to stem mostly from their enjoyment of their particular grade level and subject (13.8%), positive work environment (12.6%), motivated students (11.5%), supportive school administration (10.3%), and their love of teaching (9.8%). Satisfaction was lowered on a smaller scale by the fact that teaching is a demanding profession (5.7%), in particular with increasing administrative tasks, too much state interference (5.7%), and overcrowded classrooms (4.6%). Chapter 5 explores telling anecdotes reflective of the above percentages.

Summary of Findings

The following summarizes the results of data analysis based on surveys of 133 teachers across the six school districts participating in this study.

Research Question 1: How do the factors of entry to teaching, climate, workplace support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession?

Analysis of survey data shows that the combination of three variables — ClimateSupportDevelopment, plus choice of entry to teaching, and perception teachers have about themselves as professionals—significantly predicted teacher work satisfaction. The data further suggests that the composite ClimateSupportDevelopment contribute most to teachers’ composite satisfaction followed by the variable perception of teachers. However, choice of entry to teaching does not contribute to teachers’ composite satisfaction. The data further showed that, the combination of three variables—ClimateSupportDevelopment, plus the variables of choice of entry to teaching, and perception of teachers—significantly predicted retention, although not as
strongly as for satisfaction. This analysis lastly suggests that choice of entry contributes most to teachers’ retention followed by perception of teachers, whereas ClimateSupportDevelopment does not contribute to teachers’ retention.

**Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach, specifically the elementary and secondary level?**

Survey data shows that statistically, there was no difference in overall professional satisfaction between elementary and high school teachers. However, analysis of responses to open-ended responses B1 and B2 showed that statistically both elementary and high school teachers were more satisfied with their present teaching assignment than with teaching as a profession. The correlation between school level and B1 (teaching as a profession) was not statistically significant while the correlation between school level and B2 (present teaching assignment) was statistically significant. This indicates that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment. These findings are further explored in the interview section of this study.

**Research Question 3: How does job satisfaction at these levels correlate with teacher retention rates at each level?**

The findings show that, controlling for school level, the correlation between satisfaction and retention was positively and strongly correlated and statistically significant. Across school levels, satisfaction and retention were also positively and strongly correlated. Controlling for years teaching, the correlation was also positive and strong and statistically significant. Taking a closer look at years teaching in groups of years, the correlations were positive, moderate to strong, and statistically significant for teachers who had been teaching between 6 and 20 years. However, for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, correlations were not
Therefore, overall, there is a significant, positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention, meaning that the more satisfied teachers are with their assignment and teaching as a profession, the longer they will stay in teaching, and vice versa.

**Interviews**

Choosing a sample size and sampling scheme for this study was an iterative process and based primarily on my research questions, followed by my reflection on the process, study context, interviewing, and type of generalization(s) to be made (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Thomson, 2011). I followed established sample size guidelines to decide the sample size of interviews. For interview studies, it has been suggested that “little new comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people” (as cited in Mason, 2010). With 15 participants recommended as the minimum for all qualitative research, the guidelines pointed to data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy as the indicator for maximizing the number of participants (Mason, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005, 2007; Thomson, 2011). Theoretical saturation is reached when “(a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212, as cited in Thomson, 2011). The sampling process was iterative because considerations of sample size and teacher selection were made before and during the interviews.

Of the 133 teachers who completed the survey, 44 (or 33.1%) indicated they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview regarding their experience in the teaching profession, satisfaction, and retention in the profession. The distribution of elementary and high school
teachers willing to be interviewed was nearly equal—23 elementary and 21 high school. Initially, I considered conducting a stratified random sample where I would first divide the teachers into two strata—elementary and high school—and randomly select a number of teachers to satisfy the guidelines (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). However, since a high majority (37 of 44, or 84.1%) of the teachers was white, I wanted to ensure inclusion and representativeness (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) of the Hispanic, African American, and American Indian voices in the sample.

Therefore, I chose purposeful sampling as it allows focus on depth of information and richness of data (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Specifically, stratified purposeful sampling was conducted such that on each stratum (level) of teachers, maximum variation sampling (one type of purposeful sampling) was applied (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Maximum variation sampling allows representativeness or comparability of participant interview data (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) since a “wide range of individuals, groups, or settings is purposively selected such that all or most types of individuals, groups, or settings are selected for inquiry [and] multiple perspectives of individuals can be presented that exemplify the complexity of the world” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 112).

As outlined in Chapter 3, initially eight elementary and eight high school teachers with varying demographic profiles were selected to be interviewed as a minimum to begin analyzing transcripts for theoretical saturation. After three rounds of email requests for interviews were sent to the first sample of teachers, requests were then sent to a second sample of teachers as 8 teachers in the first sample did not respond to the request. This process continued for several weeks until 10 teachers agreed and were interviewed in total. Following a review of methodological procedures, I contacted a second set of teachers through collegial contacts to
increase the pool of interviewees to 15. Tables 4.11-13 reiterate the demographic profile of each cohort of teachers:

Table 4.11
Teachers Agreeing to Be Interviewed from Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Elementary or Secondary</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Profession (Ques. B1)</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Current Teaching (Ques. B2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.12
Non-Survey Takers Agreeing to Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District or Secondary</th>
<th>Elementary or Secondary</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction with Teaching (1-5 Scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2 (Somewhat Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>3 (Between Satisfied and Dissatisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Pines and Secondary</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13
Demographics of All Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Interviewees</th>
<th>Elementary Teachers</th>
<th>Secondary Teachers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>African-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before conducting the first interview, I tested the audio recorder for functionality and quality of playback. The interviews, conducted over the phone were on average 30 minutes long.
The shortest of the interviews was 20 minutes long and the longest 48 minutes long. As detailed in Chapter 3, all of the teachers provided written consent to the interview being audiotaped.

**Interview Findings**

To facilitate the study of interview responses, interview questions were clustered to five groups: questions 1 and 2 on choice of teaching and choice of level were treated as a set, question 3 on factors influencing satisfaction and question 4 regarding perceptions teachers have about how they are professionally regarded were analyzed discreetly, questions 5 and 6 on overall satisfaction and retention were analyzed as a set, and question 7, in which interviewees were asked their perceptions of whether elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied, was analyzed individually. For the purpose of reporting responses, each question or question cluster is reiterated, followed by responses drawn from the complete transcript text. A full discussion of these responses relative to survey findings may be found in Chapter 5 of this paper.

**Questions 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Factors under Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (a) Describe your initial motivation for entering the teaching profession and (b) whether, if you were starting your career today, you would still be likely to become a teacher.</td>
<td>Reason for choice of entry to the teaching profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why did you choose the level of teaching (elementary/secondary) that you did? Do you believe in hindsight this was a good choice?</td>
<td>Reason for choice of teaching level (elementary or secondary)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to these two questions produced remarkably parallel sentiments about initially entering teaching and still choosing the profession today, especially among those in elementary
teaching positions. In reporting excerpts from these responses, I indicate each interviewee’s three-letter identity code, preceding their answers to part “a” of question 1: “Why did you become a teacher?” The second part of question 1, “Would you still likely become a teacher today if you were starting your career?” is indicated as response “b.” The following excerpts are taken from full transcripts of the nine elementary teachers interviewed.

KWA: (a) My mom is a teacher. (b) If I were able to continue in lower grades would still teach…but not necessarily in upper grades.

KWE: (a) I’ve always had a feeling, a good feeling about being around children. I gravitate towards children. (b) Things are different today. Today it seems more like a business. Everything has to seem like it’s scripted. I would, only because I still love what I do.

DGO: (a) I’ve always worked with children from a young age. I tutored them. (b) I would definitely still go into that career today if I were starting over.

DPM: (a) I always loved working with kids. I always had my babysitting jobs. I was always my mother’s helper and I loved working with children. The thought of actually teaching children was just an amazing thing to me. (b) I would… so many things have changed…just the pressure we put on children.

BCM: (a) I got frustrated chasing down and arresting little kids. . .I visited schools when I had a regular day off. . .and I said this is what I wanna do (b) It was the best decision I’ve ever made in my life. Yeah…I am very very very very very very pleased with the profession.

DWS: (a) I always loved children…I always have been passionate about teaching and making a difference. (b) I really love seeing the growth from the beginning of the school year to the end.
**RFS:** (a) My brother has special needs. My brother was the main focus of why I wanted to teach. (b) Yes and no. It’s definitely a no when it comes to the mainstream. If I could financially quit now, I would. I’m really disgusted at the way education has become a business, and the focus has been completely taken away from the children.

**KFW:** (a) I actually came from a family of teachers. But no one in my family was elementary. (b) You’d want to go down to K/1st/2nd grades where there are no state assessments.

**MPG:** (a) I knew at a very early age I wanted to be a teacher. I just found myself gravitating to kids. I was a very good student and I always found myself gravitating to the students who struggled. (b) 100% yes. Without fail.

Among these elementary (K-6) teachers, responding as to why teaching had been chosen as a profession, eight of nine indicated an affective motive as to why they chose teaching as a profession: either because of the influence of a family member or because they have always loved working with children. Five of these same respondents also indicated concern or displeasure with the profession today, primarily having to do with state testing or its having become more of a ‘business.” In other words, among the elementary teachers interviewed, the motivation for entering teaching was largely intrinsic and affectively motivated, while hesitation about choosing the profession if starting over is driven by extrinsic factors, primarily the externals of state testing and accountability, which two respondents indicate is making teaching more like a “business.” Respondent BCM started his career as a police officer and was encouraged to pursue teaching when he identified that he wanted to be more of a positive influence on youngsters, yet his motivation was similarly intrinsic and affective to those of his
peers: he wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of young people by becoming a teacher after leaving the police department.

Among secondary school teachers interview responses to both parts of question 1 bore similarity to but were not the same as their elementary counterparts. While K-6 teachers emphasized loving to work with children, having come from a family with connections to teaching, or wishing to make a difference in young people’s lives, secondary teachers spoke about the importance of or their relationship to their subject area as a component of their motivation to teach. The following are responses from the six secondary teachers interviewed:

**BFB:** (a) I’m a business teacher. When I was in high school, my favorite classes were business classes. For some reason I just connected with those teachers in the business department. So that’s how I ended up teaching. (b) It’s hard to say...probably yes...having the time off...out of my [seven] siblings only one other one has a job with a pension and benefits and can retire.

**DOC:** (a) I really wanted to become a teacher, specifically an English teacher, when I was in the 10th grade. I remember my teacher approaching me and asking me if I would help another student who was having some trouble...and that feeling that I got of satisfaction was something that, that really made me think, maybe I could do this and be a teacher. And that’s when I knew I wanted to be a teacher, a high school teacher specifically. (b) I get a lot of satisfaction from what I do every day. I enjoy going to work.

**RWH:** (a) My aunt was a teacher . . . I always admired her... I used to play school with my friends and I was always the teacher. It was something I just always wanted to do. Role models also encouraged me to become, you know, a teacher too. (b) I honestly don’t have a definite yes
or no… I always wanted to be a teacher, but I might be swayed by some of the negative reactions... of teachers themselves…

**RCS:** (a) I had the advantage of starting out on string instruments when I was very young so... [it] fit into teaching strings in a school. I found myself in a career quite happily. (b) yes... to do what you do best and find a way to serve society at the same time, again, you know, teaching will give you that way to go.

**DPK:** (a) I was forced into teaching. It was not my first choice. I was forced... but it was not a chore for me... I had a lot of respect for my own high school teachers who were... exciting to be with. (b) Absolutely not.

**MCW:** (a) I’ve always had a passion for literature. And I wanted to share that passion with others. I really saw teaching as an opportunity to be able to do that... I was able to bring that passion to other people. ...the desire to share that passion with others. (b) That’s all I really know how to do... difficult to answer. I’ve become more frustrated in the last two to three years... but I still have passion.

Respondents BFB, DOC, RCS and MCW speak about the influence of their specific subject or discipline in influencing their choice of becoming a teacher, whereas subject area was not a major consideration among elementary teachers’ reasons for entering the profession. Respondent DPK is an outlier in this group and remains such throughout all of the interview questions: this respondent has had a very negative experience in recent years as a teacher such that her answers are either based in a negative perception, or were off-topic, or were unintelligible for transcription. Other than DPK, most secondary teachers willingly chose the profession from a combination of affinity for a subject and the attraction of their own positive
experience with teachers during their schooling years. Similar to the elementary cohort, some secondary teachers indicated hesitation about becoming a teacher today. MCW cites being “frustrated in the last two to three years.” RWH speaks of “negative reactions” among teachers to the profession today. BFB speaks of discouragement, but also cites the benefits associated with teaching as a reason to consider the profession today.

Responses to question 2 regarding choice of level (elementary or secondary) and whether that was a good choice in hindsight struck similar chords to those emerging in question 1. Elementary teachers cite a preference for working with younger children while secondary teachers again refer to their subject or discipline as a significant factor in their choice of secondary school teaching.

These are excerpts of the elementary responses to question 2:

**KWA:** I find I have more control over those kids. I have a better disciplinary style. I was interested in elementary and lower elementary…It’s so much pressure with the results from test taking.

**KWE:** I liked working with younger children.

**DGO:** I always loved working with younger children. I just like doing hands-on projects. I like decorating, arts and crafts. They don’t have that anymore in school. Now 15 years later I could definitely do the high school too…it’s so much demand and pressure for the elementary school teachers.

**DPM:** I love working with younger children … that look on their face when you’ve taught them something…priceless . . . I’m creative and I love the projects . . . and working in groups.
BCM: Chose level {elementary level} to make me employable. … it was a tight job market even then.

DWS: I enjoy the younger ones. I’m happy in the elementary school. I’m better with elementary children and feel that’s where I could see myself making more of a difference.

RFS: This age before they go into the junior high school… I feel it’s one of the last chances you can kinda influence them and mold them into becoming a good learner.

KFW: I feel more comfortable at the elementary level… I like being with the younger students and having the opportunity to do more, you know, hands on learning.

MPG: It’s almost like it chose me…I was brought over (from secondary) with this wave of teachers . . . I’m in a 5-8 building.

These are excerpts the secondary teachers’ responses to the same question:

BFB: My favorite classes were business classes . . . if I was going to be a teacher . . . it would have to be at the secondary level, no choice. I just couldn’t connect with young children the way I feel I do with the teenagers.

DOC: I just think that we’re all built differently. I particularly like teaching high school because of the level of literary analysis that I can do with them. And I like, I like working with teenagers.

RWH: The older the better. [Teenagers] it’s my favorite age group to teach. They’re tough but I love it. . . I love working with that age group.

RCS: My other specialties are in subject matters that are far more accessible for older students. It was a real easy fit for me to come up to the middle/high school.
DPK: I had no babysitting experience, no younger siblings, . . . my subject, my gift, was something they didn’t give in elementary school. I didn’t want to wipe noses and skinned teeth and break up fights. I know I didn’t want to do that.

MCW: It was a no-brainer to me. It was high school right from the get go. It was just more where my mind was.

Across all the districts from which interview participants were found and across teacher demographic variables, remarkably similar responses again emerge to the question of choice of grade level. Five elementary teachers state that they like, prefer, or love working with younger children. Several cite the opportunity to influence younger minds, to make a difference at an age when students are more accessible or receptive to learning. Only one, BCM, states that he chose the elementary level to make himself more employable: as a male, he was advised he would more easily find a job in an elementary school, where males are underrepresented among teachers. Secondary teachers cite the opportunity to teach a subject as influencing them. BFB names her business classes while a student as influencing her to enter the secondary level; RCS speaks of subject matter appropriate for older students; DOC cites the level of literary analysis she can bring to secondary teaching. Interestingly, several of these teachers also mention a personal preference for working with teenagers and lacking the patience to work with younger children. Respondents BFB, DOC, RWH and MCW explicitly state this preference; DPK, in her unique style, cites not wanting to wipe noses or break up fights as her rationale for secondary teaching.

From this overview of responses to questions 1 and 2 we see the emergence of a distinction between elementary and secondary teaching regarding the factors of choice of
profession and choice of teaching level. A majority of elementary teachers interviewed were primarily drawn to the profession and their teaching level by a love of younger children, an affinity for the affective relational experience and creative opportunities at this level, and are distressed by the encroachment of testing and external accountability to their teaching. Secondary teachers were attracted first to their subject areas, then to the preference for working with the specific age level of teenagers. This distinction between elementary and secondary motives for choosing the teaching profession will be of interest in further examination of retention and overall satisfaction further in the review of interview transcripts.

Question 3

Interview Question

3. Describe the major factors that contribute to and those that take away from your sense of well-being as a teacher.

Factors under Discussion

Workplace and experiential factors (include levels of support, professional development and school climate) that influence respondents’ feeling about their work (Climate, Support, Professional Development)

The purpose of this question was to elicit responses as to how workplace factors, including but not limited to school climate, administrative support and professional development opportunities contribute to or take away from teacher satisfaction. Data from the survey indicated that the composite of these three variables, clustered as ClimateSupportDevelopment, significantly predicted teacher work satisfaction and, although to a lesser degree, retention. In reporting teachers’ responses regarding these factors, excerpts are included regarding factors that both contribute to and diminish work satisfaction. The following are responses to question 3 from among elementary teachers interviewed.
**KWA**: If you have administrators’ support…it makes you feel like, ok, I’m doing a good thing…if you have a bad administrator, then you don’t really feel the support. The teachers are pretty well known for collaborating…professional development. I think it’s a little waste of time for us.

**KWE**: I get satisfaction out of seeing growth from my students.

**DPM**: It’s going to your higher [administrative] levels, and when you work with people who are really there to support you, I think that makes a huge difference. I think in my district everybody is very helpful. There have been professional developments that I’ve learned a lot from. There have been ones when I find that people are disorganized. And I have no patience for that to be honest.

**DGO**: I get satisfaction out of seeing growth from my students. . . Most times our administrators do not listen to what we have to say. Professional development…Ah sometimes they’re good. Other times they’re a waste of time.

**BCM**: For me, it’s the human aspect, the relationships. My principal is fine. I don’t have a problem with her…I don’t have a high regard for administrators. I find that to be an administrator…you had to prostitute yourself.

**DWS**: The satisfaction is working with the children daily….seeing the growth that they make…and I feel the administration plays a large part in it too. Just hearing some verbal praise or thank you…really sometimes makes a huge difference. Professional development…we don’t have a choice of what type of development we receive.
KFW: I would definitely say it’s crucial to have the appropriate resources and materials to use. Professional development on a regular basis is beneficial.

RFS: When past students come to visit and they tell me how they’re doing...Ohhh! That’s better than a cup of coffee. I don’t feel good when, you know, teachers are just made to be the problem. It’s very rare that we get a good (emphasized good) professional development.

MPG: The factors that contribute to satisfaction… I owe, I would say like 99% of all our satisfaction to our principal, who is a gift from the educational gods above. He really sets a magnificent tone in our building. It’s above him [the principal]…I’m gonna be perfectly honest, you know, there’s these crazy (emphasized crazy) demands for these very long (emphasized long), unnecessary, unproductive meetings.

The following are excerpt from secondary school teacher responses to question 3 regarding factors contributing to and diminishing satisfaction:

BFB: I would say the things that make me feel good are when ... when I have a class that, you know, it’s a positive relationship day in and day out. Then you have a class and you feel like you see the growth. Certain principals…are…very good at what they do at supporting teachers. And others where it’s the total opposite. Professional development? If I had to come up with a percentage, I would say that 85 or 90 percent waste of time. I guess a lot of them are not well executed.

DOC: The major thing that I think contributes to teacher satisfaction, to my satisfaction, is based on to which administrators are supportive. It’s essential that administration is supportive. I just feel like it’s very supportive at my school. Professional development in our district is strong. We are offered a lot of courses that are helpful and practical in our classrooms.
**RWH:** I’m deeply affected by the reaction to my students, the reactions that they have to me. I love it when we can all laugh together. My immediate supervisor is terrific. I think she is incredibly supportive. I think she is very, very understanding. I think she gets what teachers need to hear and do. Building administration umm…I never fail to be astounded at the level of incompetence that I sometimes see. I thought it [professional development] was [in the past] fine. The last two years it has been, it’s been hell.

**RCS:** This place to me…this is, this is a dream job. It’s a wonderful place to work. We don’t really have behavior problems.

**MCW:** The greatest one, you know, is my passion for the subject. There is still to this day a certain degree of autonomy that comes with teaching. I don’t always have a supervisor over my shoulder looking at what I’m doing.

**DPK:** Did not offer a direct response to this question.

Responses to question 3 regarding the major factors contributing to satisfaction and dissatisfaction included the impact of climate, support and professional development on teacher satisfaction, to which there was a range of responses, but greater overall response consistency is found between elementary and secondary teachers than was evident in questions 1 and 2. The greatest consistency in responses to this question on both levels is directly linked to the relationship or impact teachers have on students. Six of nine elementary and three of six secondary teachers directly reference their impact on students, or their work in the classroom, as contributing significantly to satisfaction. On both school levels, administrative support, or the lack of it, also has a major impact on work satisfaction experience. Elementary teacher KWA cites administrative support as suggesting she is “doing a good thing”; MPG discusses her
principal’s setting a “magnificent tone” in the building and secondary teacher DOC echoes these responses, “It’s essential that administration is supportive at my school.” MCW, another secondary teacher, cites the autonomy of the classroom, suggesting that administrative support expressed by an absence of over-supervision, as a source of satisfaction, while RWH states her “immediate supervisor is terrific…I think she is incredibly supportive.” Teachers on both levels who articulated the specific impact of administrative support cited understanding, listening, and the role administrator’s play in creating an overall climate of support as essential to their work experience.

Conversely, evidence from interviews indicates that unsupportive administration has a major negative impact on satisfaction at both levels; administration is broadly cited at the building, district and state level as having a debilitating impact when they do not support teachers. DGO, an elementary teacher, states, “Most times our administrators do not listen to what we have to say”; BCM calls administrators, “businessmen” and, using stronger language, suggests you have to “prostitute yourself” to become an administrator. DWS indicates that when administration fails to “some verbal praise that you did a good job, or thank you…when you don’t get that, it’s very discouraging also.” MPG, who loves her building principal, cites administrators “above him” [the principal] as a source of dissatisfaction, with “these crazy (emphasized crazy) demands for these very long (emphasized long), unnecessary, unproductive meetings” indicating that one source of dissatisfaction is a climate of administrative over-control of teacher time. RWH says, “Building administration umm…I never fail to be astounded at the level of incompetence that I sometimes see.” RWH distinguishes between her immediate curricular supervisor and the building-level administration, those responsible for operational procedures and student behavior in her district. These excerpted responses support findings from
the data that climate and support play a daily role in the work satisfaction of teachers at both elementary and secondary school levels. Verbal support, perceived competence, and a climate that allows for teachers’ to interact with students in a meaningful way are at the core of teacher work satisfaction.

Regarding the role of professional development, teachers on both elementary and secondary school levels have decidedly mixed feelings about the contribution of professional development to composite satisfaction. Every teacher, both elementary and secondary, who commented on professional development, cited positive and negative impacts of this aspect of their work; more comments tended toward the negative when professional development was imposed, contractually mandated or provided by a staff developer who did not meet the expectation of the teacher. Elementary teacher DGO summarizes this experience succinctly: “Professional Development…Ahh, sometimes they’re good. Other times they’re a waste of time.” The words, “waste of time” are articulated by three teachers (KWA, DGO on the elementary level and BFB on the secondary level) and similar if not stronger sentiments (RWH: “the last two years it’s been hell”) are expressed by other interviewees on both levels. Professional development’s contributing to satisfaction is expressed by the words of MPG, an elementary teacher, stating “If it was 18 hours to create lesson plans, that, to me, would make more sense,” and of DOC on the secondary level, “We’re offered a lot of courses that are helpful and practical in our classrooms” suggest that across elementary and secondary levels, the value of professional development is consistent with the extent to which teachers control the content and use of that time. Chapter 5 will examine more closely the relationship between these interview responses and the data analysis from surveys, but initially, question 3 responses indicate that inter-level response consistency regarding the role of school climate, administrative support and teacher-
drive professional development in influencing overall satisfaction supports the data from the survey: the factor of ClimateSupportDevelopment play a significant role in composite satisfaction among teachers at both elementary and secondary levels.

**Question 4**

**Interview Question**

4. How do you think teachers are regarded by the community in which you work? Do you believe there is a difference between the ways teachers are regarded and the way in which other professionals are perceived?

**Factors under Discussion**

Perceptions about how teachers are regarded in the participants’ work school community; comparison of how teachers are regarded in the work community compared to how other professionals are regarded (*Perceptions about Teachers*).

The purpose of this question is of particular interest to my overall study. Teachers on both elementary and secondary levels expressed, as they did in responding to question 3, varied perceptions of how they are regarded by local community members and the larger work community. To present a manageable summary of responses to this question, I excerpt below response types clustered by interviewee, first statements of positive and then of negative perceptions. In several instances (DOC, negative, and MCW, positive) there was no response given that fit the descriptor. Not every teacher interviewed is quoted here, as in some cases, response types were very similar to those reported, and in one case (DPK) the response was irrelevant to the question. As these excerpts indicate, significant patterns emerge in how teachers believe they are viewed by the local community and larger work force.

Below are elementary teachers’ perceptions of how they see themselves professionally regarded, both positively and negatively.
KWA:

**Positive**: I’m the bilingual teacher. I think they’re [parents of bilingual students] much more respectful of the profession. I think they respect the education even if they’re not quite equipped to help at home.

**Negative**: Others come out and argue that we’re doing the wrong things.

DGO:

**Positive**: In my community, they’re good with the teachers...they back what we say and they look at us and at their children and say how important.

**Negative**: [Parents say] you know, they have an easy job. They have the summers off. They leave at 3:05. I feel [in the larger community] that a lot of people look down on teachers.

DPM:

**Positive**: There are parents who can’t do enough for us…and the teachers are highly regarded here.

**Negative**: There are people that think we get paid too much money for just, you know, for working six hours a day. It’s that whole summer thing. We work 184 days but they don’t understand what’s going into those 184 days.

DWS:

**Positive**: I feel that we are appreciated more by the community than we’re not.
**Negative:** I do feel that a lot of times teachers get less respect than people in other professions and we still have that bad rap that we got into the teaching profession not necessarily because we want to educate and help children but we want to work 10 months out of the year and we want to work from September to June and work 8 to 3.

**RFS:**

**Positive:** I think that there’s a lot of parents that are very accepting and thankful for the teachers that their kids have.

**Negative:** At the same time there are a lot of parents who, you know, think that they know more than the teacher does. Now it’s like, you gave my daughter 50, I’m gonna go straight to the superintendent.

A sample of secondary teacher responses follows regarding positive and negative perceptions:

**DOC:**

**Positive:** I do feel that way that they [the parents] do regard us as professionals…unsupportive parents…this is not an issue here.

**Negative:** No negative perceptions reported

**RWH:**

**Positive:** I would say that the majority of the parents and community members that I’ve encountered think a lot of teachers, very highly of teachers, praise us, tell us what a difficult job we have and how they admire us.
Negative: A very vocal, very small percentage of parents and community members who really are negative about teachers… You know, you get that one parent who, no matter what you say, you’re automatically at fault because my kid didn’t do so well and you’re the reason.

RCS:

Positive: We are…we are (emphasized are) treated with respect. I get the positive feedback! I get people coming up to me and telling me you’re a wonderful person.

Negative: I think that there are people who are out there that honestly feel that the teachers here do a great job but we just don’t wanna pay them. You know, this idea that people are saying, you know, that you guys just check in at eight and check out at three every day…on the board and people around the community who feel that, you know, the teachers had it too good financially and that the community can no longer support that.

MCW:

Positive: No positive experiences of perception of teachers articulated.

Negative: They [the community] believe we’re overpaid. We’re overpaid public employees…and believe that we should make less. When they see we’re making $100,000, let’s say, there’s no way that. They don’t believe we deserve that. They see it very much as blue-collar.

Findings from the survey administration indicated that perceptions of teachers followed ClimateSupportDevelopment as significant in predicting composite teacher work satisfaction and that such perceptions significantly predicted retention, though not as strongly as for satisfaction. Interview excerpts suggest strong patterns (further explored in Chapter 5) regarding how teachers
believe they are viewed. KWA articulates a positive perception, emanating from a culturally based belief among bilingual families in the importance of teachers. KWA continues in the interview to mention how parents will come dressed up to parent-teacher nights out of respect for teachers. Other elementary teachers state or suggest that positive perceptions are grounded in a parent-teacher relationship centered on the value of the teacher to the well-being and education of the child. DGO says, “They look at us and at their children and say how important.” RFS echoes that: “parents…are thankful for the teachers that their kids have.” On the secondary level, positive perceptions are similarly rooted in the interactions between parents and teachers. Interviewee DOC notes, “the parents do regard us as professionals” and RWH, “parents…think a lot of teachers, very highly of teachers.”

Negative perceptions are reported with remarkably similar language and beliefs of how others perceive teachers. While several speak about the negative encounter with a parent over a child’s performance, three of five elementary, and two of four secondary teachers from the sample interviews speak to their perception that parents or the larger community believe teachers are over-compensated relative to their work year, the nature of their work, or the public employment (blue collar) level of teachers. MCW summarizes this perception: “We’re overpaid public employees…” and RCS articulates negative perceptions that teachers “check in at eight and check out at three every day.” To the extent that teachers experience satisfaction from how they are perceived, these interviews suggest satisfaction is relationally based, i.e. the relationship they establish with students and parents contributes to satisfaction. Negative perceptions of teacher are largely expressed as rooted in resentment of compensation or employment terms, the suggestion that the terms of teaching employment, the length of the work day and year, do not merit the level of compensation of these teachers.
Questions 5 and 6

**Interview Question**

5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your professional life as a teacher; explain your level of satisfaction and what contributes to or takes away from your feeling satisfied.

6. Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, why have you considered doing so, and if not, why have you decided to remain a teacher?

**Factors under Discussion**

- Overall level of satisfaction and factors contributing to that level (*Level of Satisfaction and Reason for Level*)
- Retention and staying or leaving the teaching profession (*Retention*)

Questions 5 and 6 in the interviews are central to this overall study, to examine the relationship between teacher work satisfaction and retention on the elementary and secondary school level. To review data from the survey findings, controlling for school level, the correlation between satisfaction and retention was positively and strongly correlated and statistically significant. Across school levels, satisfaction and retention were also positively and strongly correlated. Controlling for years teaching, the correlation was also positive and strong and statistically significant. Taking a closer look at years teaching in groups of years, the correlations were positive, moderate to strong, and statistically significant for teachers who had been teaching between 6 and 20 years. However, for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, correlations were not statistically significant. The survey data showed, therefore, there is a significant, positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention, meaning that the more satisfied teachers are with their assignment and teaching as a profession, the longer they will stay in teaching, and vice versa. To thoroughly examine teacher responses to the satisfaction and retention questions during the interviews, responses are given in a chart form in Table 4.14. In the left column teacher identification codes are followed by the teaching level and number of years in the profession of each respondent. During the interviews I
suggested to each teacher that they respond, using a Likert-like scale of numbers from 1 (satisfied) to 5 (dissatisfied) to indicate their level of satisfaction with teaching. Under the Level of Satisfaction column, the self-reported number on the 1 to 5 rating scale is given, followed by teachers’ reports as to why they rated themselves as they did on the 5 point scale. Under the right column, teachers were asked to explain whether they ever considered leaving teaching and to give reasons why they either never considered doing so, or did think of leaving.

Table 4.14
Teacher Satisfaction and Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Code</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction: (1) Satisfied to (5) Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Retention and Reason for Staying or Thinking of Leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>I’ll say a two. I think I’m very satisfied overall. I’m just a little nervous about this APPR and accountability.</td>
<td>I’ll definitely stay in. I mean I’ve built my credits and built up my salary. I think that’s the main reason. Salary and the vacation time. It gets really exhausting but I still like the kids. I do love to see their growth and their progress and just kind of molding them to a different person by the end of the year, seeing them with more skills and more sophistication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1-9 Years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>I’m gonna put myself at a two. Umm you know what? If I were getting into it now, I wouldn’t know any different. You know, I wouldn’t know of how wonderful it could be but because I’ve been through it from beginning to now.</td>
<td>Nooo, I’m not ready to go yet. Because, again, at the end of the day I still love what I do. And would I change some things? Most definitely. But because I’ve been doing this for a while, I’ve seen the changes from when I first started to where I’m at now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>Elementary 10-19 Years</td>
<td>One. And it’s almost for me, I love my job, (inaudible) and everything we deal with Common Core and everything else that’s going on, and I still love it very much.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>Elementary 10-19 Years</td>
<td>I think we have, I have a great life. I have my job. I think it’s great. I’m very satisfied as a teacher. [No specific number given]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Elementary 20-29 Years</td>
<td>Okay, I’ll put myself at a two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Elementary 10-19 Years</td>
<td>Umm I’m in the middle, three. Umm like I said, everything that’s come down from the state this year with the new Common Core State standards… Umm that also comes back to my building. You mentioned professional development. We’re never trained in professional, professional development in how to implement the new Common Core Standards with our umm the lack of support from administration, also. Definitely plays a large part of it. Umm yeah, so that’s probably why I’m on the fence right in the middle this year. This year I’m doing, you know, it’s</td>
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probably my least favorite year. It’s hard for me but I do you want me to be honest.

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<tr>
<th>RFS</th>
<th>Uhh, as of now it would probably be a four. It has nothing to do with my students. They make my day. (chuckling) It’s everything else that surrounds them. When I’m in my classroom, it’s like I’m in a bubble. And I’m happy. It’s like don’t bother me. Let me do my thing. (Chuckled). And then, you know, it’s all the extra stuff that comes along with it.</th>
<th>Yes, I have [considered leaving the teaching profession]. Last year and this year. These were the three years that I really ahhh, you know, considered it and this year, I actually looked into doing different things and uhh, and unfortunately, there there are two things that are really keeping me that is that I almost feel that if I leave, whoever was supposed to be in my class next year, won’t benefit as much as if I were there. And at the same time, and I also… I can’t afford to leave. Not that I’m saying that there’s not anybody better than I am, because I’m sure there is. I’m sure that there’s a lot of people better, but I just feel that the way I (emphasized I) do it, the way I put my… I treat these kids and teach these kids like as if they were my own. Umm but it is such that umm my stomach turns when I think of, what else can I do? Cuz all of ever known was doing this, and all I’ve ever wanted to do was this.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary 10-19 Years</td>
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<tr>
<th>KFW</th>
<th>Umm I would say. I would say, I’d say very satisfied, a one. So, it’s just very rewarding as a teacher to have that umm to have that happen. Umm I also have students, my first group of students are freshmen in college and most of them have actually came back to visit at some point or have tried to reach out to contact me and just tell me what’s going on in their lives, and they even remember things that we did in sixth grade.</th>
<th>Okay, I have had thoughts about leaving only this year. And thoughts. I don’t think I would ever follow through with it. Umm only because umm so I teach four subjects in fifth-grade, the four main subjects. And three out of the four, the curriculums changed this year because of Common Core. And again, no one really seems to know what this Common Core meant. Umm the whole evaluation system change this year which really didn’t bother me but the observation process changed. It was actually a lot of paperwork. Umm to see my pre-observation, my observation, and my post-observation, the document was about 25 pages long. As opposed to last year where it’s, you know, you make a lesson plan, you talk about your lesson plan, and that’s it. I found personally to be very tedious and I was actually very annoyed and bothered because I felt it was</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary 10-19 Years</td>
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</table>
wasting my own time. And if you want to see how I’m doing, you can come in and watch me any day of the week. I don’t really understand the paper trail. So, there were some challenges that really affected me this year. I have to say really stressed me out and I was very frustrated where I did find myself saying I don’t know if I could do this for the rest of my career because it’s not what I believe in. It’s not what I signed up for. Umm so these are a lot of the things that I really have been passionate about this year. Umm I don’t think I would leave education. I absolutely love what I do but I would definitely be more involved in fighting for what’s right.

| MPG | I’m able to balance like motherhood and my professional career very, very well. So I’m a one. I’m very satisfied. I’m really, if you could give me like, you know, if carte blanche I could change anything, you know, or if you said I could have three wishes, what would you change? In all honesty it, I really wouldn’t change much. You know, of course I wouldn’t do what the state has done. You know, I would pull back on some of testing and the requirements and the stress that it’s causing these kids but in all honesty, I’m a 1. I really wouldn’t change much. I’m very, very happy. I think a lot of the contributing factors is also how I’m able to manage everything else in my life. |
| Elementarya and Secondary 10-19 Years | Umm I never considered leaving. I did take off a year for each of my pregnancies. So if you take off a year for each, but only as a maternity leave, I was actually eager to get back into it when that year was up. I never considered stopping to work or to leaving the career and choosing a different one. It’s just so much a part of my craft like I wouldn’t even know what else to do. It would be nothing else that could measure up to this. |

| BFB | I guess probably like right in the middle. I guess a three. |
| Secondary 20-29 Years | Never [thought of leaving teaching]. Umm, well I, it’s the kind of job that even when I’m not too satisfied and things aren’t great, and I’m feeling frustrated, there’s still, you know, a big part of it that I really do find rewarding. |
Actually my situation, my life situation, no. I never really felt like I had a choice. To move on. I was the primary breadwinner. I felt in many ways, not that I felt, not that it really was true, but you know, like stuck. You know like this is what I chose. So if I was really miserable, it would’ve been rough because I didn’t see a way out because my family situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOC</th>
<th>10-19 Years</th>
<th>Ahh, it would be one, very satisfied.</th>
<th>I have not [thought about leaving teaching].</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Yeah, I would say that I was...between a one and a two. I mean overall my career has been fabulous. If you asked me about the last 5 to 7 years, I would say I was close to a five. It was very frustrating. That and one other thing. The fact that we are inundated with forms and, and surveys and, and having to do this a certain way and have to do that a certain way that we spend so much time filling things out and, and reporting and explaining... And, and not having time to...you know, if we want to be creative, you have to do it for home. I mean I spend an awful lot about was at home on the computer coming up with ideas because during the school day, even though they supposedly allow me prep time and whatever, I’m either calling parents because of problems or I’m completing forms and, and nonsense to deal with issues. You know, and it’s crazy.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Well, a qualified one. Ahh, you know...yeah, absolutely. This is a dream job.</td>
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Okay, again this is sort of a two-part answer... Because I am retiring. I now know my retirement date. I am going out within the next couple of years. I’m not going on this year. And, did I think about leaving, did I ever want to leave teaching because I was dissatisfied? No. Did I ever think of retirement sooner? No. However, I would say that in the last several years it started changing, I believe, for the negative, there were times when I thought, boy, I, I’m getting a little, you know, I’m feeling my energy waning a little bit... And I don’t think this because of age. I think it’s because of frustration. Umm and maybe I won’t last as long as I thought. I mean I said for years that I would go until I was 65. Umm, and, and there’s no reason for me...as long as I’m eligible and not be penalized, I prefer to go out because I don’t know how much more of the nonsense I can take without becoming, you know, snappy at people. Yeah, because I’m not happy in it now. Umm and now I’m gonna be going out, I’m turning 62 this May. I’ll go out next June and, you know, that’s a couple years earlier than I actually from the early days said that I would go. Umm but, but you know there are no immediate plans to go. I have a sneaking suspicion, again, and I know
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>for somebody such as myself. But, but… again, I’m comparing myself to the guy who’s busting ass playing at weddings or whatever trying to make a living and crying teaching private lessons to 40 kids a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Two. But do I like teaching? I like it. I do like it. I can’t say that I don’t like it. Umm but would I rather be doing something else? Yes, I would. And if I had had the opportunity, yes I would’ve. I have good kids this year. In general, 99% of those kids are respectful, helpful. I can’t carry a package out to my car where someone doesn’t take it out of my hands. They don’t cut. They don’t bring their cell phones to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Three. I can’t…I can’t lie. And I love what I do and I put in so much time but, you know, if I, if I had a better offer uhhh I would take it because like I said, I don’t know where this profession is going. I think it’s in limbo right now. I don’t know where it’s going and umm I’m also very much dissatisfied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>I’m working til 70. My husband is going to need every dollar of his money. I would like to get out of the public school and go work in a private school. You know, they wouldn’t drain me with the APPR. If finances were not an issue, I would get the hell out of here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Yes [I have considered leaving teaching]. You know what? You know what, Pat? I have a love-hate relationship with it. Alright. It, it, it’s more love than hate but I do have a love-hate relationship with it. That’s the best way to describe it, you know?</td>
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</table>

These extensive excerpts from the interview transcripts show that a majority of both elementary and secondary teachers are satisfied with their jobs, and most have not thought of leaving the profession prior to retirement. Among the nine elementary teachers interviewed,
three indicated they were “1—satisfied”: (DGO, MPG, KFW) one teacher (DPM) verbalized herself (without giving a number) as being very satisfied, three (KWA, KWE, BCM) indicated they were “2,” suggesting they were satisfied with some qualification attached, one teacher (DWS) indicated “3” and one (RFS) “4,” meaning this teacher is relatively dissatisfied with her work as a teacher. The majority of elementary teachers (6 of 9) have been teaching for between 10-19 years, with two having between 20-29 years’ experience and one with 1-9 years’ experience. These latter teachers both indicated they were “2” on the satisfaction scale suggested during the interviews. Among all nine elementary teachers, three have considered leaving the profession: one teacher (BCM), who has 20-29 years’ experience, considering leaving in year eleven. Teachers RFS, with between 10-19 years, and a satisfaction rating of 4, has considered leaving. So has KFW, with 10-19 years and a self-given satisfaction rating of 1, has also thought of leaving, though this teacher also indicates, “I don’t think I would ever follow through with it.”

Among the six secondary teachers, three (DOC, RWH, RCS) indicated their level as “1” on the scale of 1 to 5, (satisfied to dissatisfied); two others, BFB (20-29 years’ experience) and MCW (10-19 years), indicated a “3,” and DPK, with a score of “2” also said she’d “rather be doing something else.” Of these six, only MCW, with 10-19 years and a satisfaction level of 3, said she had actively considered leaving teaching, articulating a “love-hate relationship with it.” Teacher RWH is actively considering leaving because she has already determined her retirement date; this teacher also indicates, though, that recent trends in teaching have influenced her decision; she notes, “I would say that in the last several years it started changing, I believe for the negative…” In Chapter 5, a more detailed analysis of these questions regarding satisfaction and retention will be discussed.

Question 7
Interview Question

7. Do you believe that elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied in their profession?

Factors under Discussion

Open-ended, opinion-based question about what participant believes about levels of satisfaction in teaching.

The final interview question is one that I felt would offer teachers an opportunity to intuitively and experientially contribute to one of the central questions of my research, whether elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied with their work. I asked each teacher whether he or she believed that elementary or secondary teachers were, overall, more satisfied in the profession. This question struck a chord with every respondent, leading to extensive explanations from them as to why they felt as they did regarding this question. Here are excerpts from these extensive responses:

Elementary Teachers Who Believe Elementary Teachers More Satisfied:

**KWA:** I would guess the elementary teachers. I think we’re a little harder worked (?) than secondary teachers. But I think that, umm, that’s kind of in the nature of an elementary teacher to be a rule follower, and a team follower, and I think we like that kind of thing. We follow all the rules and we do all the paperwork and … Cleaning things. I think it’s just we’re used to little kids. We like organizing and we like to follow along, and I think that, I think were happier in that role. And then the secondary teachers, I think when you’re given more leeway, you take more leeway, you’re more likely to be unhappy.

**KWE:** I just know there’s a very big difference between elementary and secondary. I find that here on the elementary level is more of a nurturing, you know, go-for-broke type of situation where as in, you know, secondary and high school, I just feel like, you know, there’s not that
same momentum, you know. I think so [that elementary teachers are more satisfied] because I think at a certain point when kids leave elementary school, they seem a little, I don’t want to say jaded but they don’t have the same ambition, the same drive, the same motivation or eager to please.

**DGO:** I think elementary has more satisfaction with their job. . . I think it’s more rewarding in the elementary level umm because we’re with them a lot longer. We’re with them all day. Even though I’m departmentalized, I still see them, you know, 90 minutes a day. You get to know them better and you develop more of a bond. And, you get to develop a bond with them where in high school and middle school, they’re with you for 40 minutes, 40 minutes a day, and uhh you know, they’ll teacher four or five classes, where we’re with them the entire day. A 40 minute break and that’s it, and lunch.

**BCM:** Elementary teachers. You know, I was just at the high school yesterday for a meeting and yeah, elementary teachers tend to be much more satisfied. It’s a different mindset. A high school teacher and an elementary school teacher are two completely different animals. You really can’t compare the two of them. I think high school teachers carry with them a superiority in the field of education…Umm when it comes towards elementary teachers. They [high school teachers] do think, they do think their stuff doesn’t stink. They see themselves as professionals, hot academian extraordinaire. But the school board does not see them that way. They’re no different than the guy who cuts the grass on the football field. Wherefore us as elementary teachers, little kids look at the teacher and love their teacher.

**DWS:** I would have to say, for myself, I would think it would be elementary. You know, being that you do see so much growth with them that their young impressionable ages, I really do feel
that umm you know, we make a big difference. I may feel different if I we’re in high school, I
don’t know, I can only speak from my own experiences. I’m told that the elementary school
teachers work a lot harder than the middle school and high school teachers.

And umm you know, there’s always a difference between building and administration but we’re
told that elementary teachers work a lot harder and longer days and hours than the middle school
and high school teachers do.

**Elementary Teachers Who Believe High School Teachers Are More Satisfied**

**RFS:** I think that, honestly, I think it’s both the same even though as an elementary school. I
guess they have more immediate gratification than we do. You know, where it would be one
subject not four other ones. So you have to do about, you know, prepare for 5, 5, 6 lessons a day
and they all have to be different whereas in high school, at least those teachers can definitely
master, you know, if they’re a social studies teacher, they obviously have mastered whatever it is
they teach and math, they know exactly how to teach and went to teach it. So I feel that they are
a little more satisfied because they know…there’s only so much can be dumped on them that
would be new. Umm so, maybe slightly higher in the high school that they would be more
satisfied.

**MPG:** Oh, I 100% think that secondary teachers are more satisfied. It seems like they go in, they
do their job, they go home. And they do well. And there’s a lot less drama. Maybe they have to
be so (emphasized so) much more creative, and you know, tap dance a little more for the
younger ones. I’m not really sure what it is. But I definitely think that secondary teachers are a
lot more satisfied. Just, the basic answer is listening to the complaints of the elementary level
teachers and they come off as very negative to me and I feel like they’re always (emphasized
always) complaining about something. And then you speak to secondary teachers and they’re just really teachers, you know, they’re just there to teach. And I think that there’s so much less drama, with maybe the young kids, and the crying and the fighting, maybe they just feel like a lot of that is eliminated at the secondary level.

**Elementary Teachers Who Believe Satisfaction Depends on Particular Circumstance of Teaching:**

**DPM:** So I think it’s like a 50-50 question. It’s a question where, you know, somebody’s opinion. For me, I don’t know what it’s like to be in 7-12. I only know what I know. So I would say elementary. Hmm, more satisfied? I think that, umm, if you speak to me, I would say that I’m more satisfied. If you speak to the 9th grade teacher, they would say that they’re more satisfied. But I think there’s two sides to every story.

**KFW:** I honestly think it depends on the students that you have. Ahh each year you get different groups of students. I really think it’s how you approach teaching and, and what you’re willing to, what you’re willing to do. Can you close the door and still teach the way believe in? Or are you going to just do test prep and, you know, pretty much do what you’re being asked to do? I think it really depends on the teacher. I also think now it depends on the level of stress. Ahh it depends on the type of teacher, you know, the person is.

Of the nine elementary teachers interviewed, five believed elementary teachers are more satisfied, two believe secondary teachers experience greater work satisfaction, and two respondents, DPM and KFW, did not take a position toward one school level or the other in their responses insofar as they thought satisfaction was more related to the actual classroom experience or the teacher’s personality rather than a product of any particular level.
Secondary Teachers:

Secondary Teachers Who Believe Elementary Teachers Are More Satisfied:

BFB: I guess what I’m thinking is that, since I teach in such a big building, with so many, you know…it’s a large student population and faculty. And, usually elementary schools aren’t like that. I feel that when you’re in a smaller environment, with…you’re only exposed to certain number of kids a day instead of hundreds or thousands… Everybody was, you know, more of a family. That that is a little less overwhelming.

RWH: Oh, elementary teachers! No question! (laughing). I mean and the funny thing is, I think almost all teachers think that. I think that elementary teachers… a couple of us have actually discussed this at times…perhaps because they have to be very, very routinized with their children to help them learn routines, to help them follow along, and they themselves a more like that. So they fall in line a little bit better…They may become scared about new things. The may become terrified that this is gonna change and that is gonna change, but I think it’s at the secondary level that we open our mouths and speak, and that at at the primary levels, I think that they’re less likely to make waves. They may talk among themselves but, you know, I think they’re less likely to. I think overall they’re more satisfied. Well, you know, I think there are silly little things but I think that they matter. I think that elementary teachers receive a lot more praise from parents. I think as the kids get older, the parents with some exceptions, but I would think overall the parents don’t come running up as often.

MCW: Alright, I mean I don’t have a lot of contact [at the elementary level] but my hunch would say probably greater satisfaction [in the elementary school] just because I think that they’re…it’s almost like…you have your own issues, of course, that are unique to the elementary
level. But by the time a kid gets to you, middle school, even high school, if they’re turned off, they’re turned off. You know, in the early years, I almost feel like you have your own issues that are challenges but you still have them [the students], right? You still have them. But sometimes they get so unfocused and by the time they come into my classroom, they’re done and there’s nothing I can do to change that. Every experience they’ve had up until that point isn’t good enough to make them completely, you know, disenchanted. But I think there’s a greater degree of cynicism and pessimism and apathy [at the secondary level].

**Secondary Teachers Who Believe Teachers Are Equally Satisfied or That It Depends on Specific Circumstance**

**RCS:** Ooh. Wow. Umm…that, you know, my experience at the elementary level with pre-ELA…Yeah, I don’t know what the vibe is down in the elementary building. Umm…I, I…I don’t know…I…I think…I…when I was down there, I did see evidence of little people, little problems. Then, with bigger people, obviously the issues get larger. Umm the people, I think there’s probably equal… equal satisfaction and dissatisfaction depending on the issue.

**DOC:** I think that they’re, that they’re equally satisfied. They’re equally satisfied just as are the elementary school teachers. I believe that umm they’re equally satisfied because I can’t imagine…I mean…Let’s put it this way: if you’re unhappy with what you’re doing, then you should change what you’re doing. So if…I would never assume that an elementary school teacher is dissatisfied. I would assume that they are satisfied because they remain teachers. I don’t find that high school teachers walk around, you know, disgruntled about things. Umm I guess what I’m saying the high school teachers in my department in my district, that people are very happy here.
Secondary Teacher Who Believes Grades K-2 and 9-12 Are More Satisfied

DPK: I have to tell you I think that the teachers of K-2 and teachers of high school are more satisfied then teachers of 3-8. The teachers 3-8, when I go to a union meeting, we get all of the schools so I know a lot of the elementary school teachers and middle school…when they come in, all they do is whine about whether or not they have to put student work on the wall. Umm, they’re all about being inconvenienced in some manner. The high school teachers are very, very heavily invested in their subject. When you teach a subject as opposed to a broad spectrum of subjects, it’s different for you. It really is because your subject matter is interesting to you. So it’s always more job satisfaction. The lowest grade level, those people who are doing K-2, are doing pure developmental business with these children. The subject matter is so much less important than socializing the children, and that’s their gift. K-2 is teaching them to own their behavior and their interactions with the subject matter. 3-8 is more showing them subject. So I would say that at the very top and the very bottom. And even in the high school, I must tell you, the teachers of the alternate ed and special ed, those in particular, know what a difference they’re making and what a service they are providing. So, getting teachers doing their gift in K-2 like in 9-12. In the middle, it’s like you’re going through the motions.

Summary:

Of particular note here is that of the six secondary teachers interviewed, three believe elementary teachers are more satisfied, one believes that teachers in grades K-2 and 9-12 are more satisfied, and two believe that satisfaction is teacher or circumstance specific and not tied to working on one school level or the other. In the composite, here is how the teachers line up on this question:
The total number of teachers who believe definitively elementary teachers are more satisfied: 8 (five elementary, three secondary)

The total number of teachers who believe definitively secondary teachers are more satisfied: 2 (both elementary).

The total number of teachers who believe satisfaction cannot be determined by school level, but is personality or circumstance based: 4 (two elementary and two secondary).

The total number of teachers who believe satisfaction is “split” between early elementary and secondary teachers: 1 (secondary teacher).

Further examination of these transcripts in Chapter 5 will discuss the relevance of these responses to the data from survey responses and the research questions of this paper. Clearly, teachers who were interviewed have strong feelings about degrees of satisfaction on each level and how they come to believe as they do regarding teacher work satisfaction. Of note here, is that more than 50% (8 of 15) of those interviewed believe elementary teachers are more satisfied, and that only two teachers, both from the elementary level, believe that secondary teachers are more satisfied with their work. Among secondary teachers none expressed an outright belief that secondary teachers are more satisfied, although DPK came close in her belief that teachers in grades K-2 and 9-12 are more satisfied than those in grades 3-8.

The extensive responses of the 15 teachers interviewed led this researcher to one definitive conclusion: when given the opportunity to talk about their work and how they feel about it, teachers are quite garrulous. In the discussion of findings in Chapter 5, a more extensive analysis of these responses will look at the relationship between what teachers say in
an interview setting relative to the findings of the survey and in light of the three research questions governing this paper.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The endeavor of this paper is to explore factors teachers encounter in the workplace, and specifically how these factors contribute to or diminish their satisfaction and the influence of satisfaction on retention in the profession. Previously explored literature on this subject suggests a teacher’s work experience is influenced by many factors, both tangible and intangible that satisfaction has an impact on retention and the lack of teacher retention is costly (NCTAF, 2010). Further, conditions that create teacher dissatisfaction are sure to take a psychological toll on teachers, a pedagogical toll on students, and a financial toll on school districts. Not surprisingly, there is a dramatic cost tied to teacher attrition in The United States. On one level, then, the goal of this study might be interpreted as looking to unearth conditions that influence satisfaction with long-term recommendations for reducing attrition as a way of saving educational dollars.

Through a survey of 133 teachers in six school districts on Long Island, New York, and interviews of 15 teachers (10 of whom were also surveyed), this paper attempts to mine a deeper understanding about unpacking the lived realities of elementary and secondary school teachers, toward painting a broad canvas of understanding of their work lives, with specific focus on the three research questions governing this study.

A discussion of the findings from the surveys and interviews shows that the surveys revealed some aspects of factors influencing satisfaction and retention, the open-ended response questions in the survey revealed others, and the interviews, in which teachers were able to be more expansive in their responses, add further to this paper’s inquiry. To organize this discussion, the following section of this chapter reviews the survey subscale items, survey population, participation rate in each district, profile of each survey participant, and each of the
interview questions. Then, each research question is restated, followed by a discussion of the findings from the surveys, the open-ended responses (specifically focusing on B2 from the survey), and the 15 interviews. This chapter concludes with a statement of limitations of this paper, recommendations, and a final reflection.

**Review of Survey Study**

Following the piloting of my survey in my school district of employment, Maples, I made one significant adjustment to the Likert scale (by creating a mid-point) prior to the administration of the survey and several adjustments to survey questions for clarity. For the final survey, the independent variable germane to my research was school level, i.e. the current school level at which teacher is teaching at time of taking the survey. Therefore, as initially explained in Chapter 4, school level was an attribute independent variable because school level is pre-existing and did not change during the study. Dependent variables were satisfaction and retention. Retention was defined as the composite score of five retention subscales and satisfaction was operationalized as composite score of levels of satisfaction with teaching as a profession. Thirty closed-ended questions comprised six subscales: (a) climate (b) support (c) choice of entry to teaching (d) professional development (e) perceptions teachers have about how they are seen in the communities in which they work and (f) retention. Table 5.1 below provides a review of the operational definitions of each subscale.
### Table 5.1
Subscales, Definition of Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Intended to measure…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Overall atmosphere of the school; level of safety; working environment; relationships among stakeholders (students/ teachers/ administrators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Availability of resources; time valued for collaboration among teachers; administrative support regarding student management, curriculum development and teacher concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of Profession</td>
<td>Why the teacher entered the profession; weight of consideration of other professions; work prior to entering teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Availability of conferences, workshops, and instructive professional collaboration, internally and externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception about Teachers</td>
<td>How teachers are regarded in the community in which the teacher works; the extent to which teachers feel respected as professionals within the school and district community by adult stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Intention to remain in teaching through the teacher’s working career until age-eligible retirement or remaining in teaching despite financial independence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Review of Survey Population

In total, 133 teachers out of 170 who were solicited responded, a rate of 78.2%. Table 5.2 reviews each district and the number of participants from each school:
Table 5.2
Frequencies of Participants by School and School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>District Economic Level</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cedars Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Cedars Elementary School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cedars High School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Poor or</td>
<td>Frasers Elementary School</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Frasers High School</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jades Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Wealthy</td>
<td>Jades Elementary School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jades High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Oaks Elementary School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oaks High School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pines Central</td>
<td>Suburban/ Middle Class</td>
<td>Pines Elementary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pines High School</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willows Union Free</td>
<td>Suburban/ Poor or</td>
<td>Willows Elementary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Willows High School</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnically, the large majority of teachers self-identified as white (114 or 86.4%) with the remaining 19 teachers self-identifying as Hispanic (8 or 6.0%), African American (7 or 5.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1 or .8%), or American Indian/Alaska Native (1 or .8%). The ages of the teachers showed a slightly normal distribution with a percentage of teachers (32.1%) between 36 and 45 years of age followed by 28.2% 35 years of age and under, and approximately 19% each for 46 to 55 years of age and 56 and older. Nearly all of the teachers held master’s degrees with two teachers having earned their doctoral degrees and two teachers having earned bachelor’s degrees only.

The total number of years teachers have taught, including part-time and full-time teaching, ranged from one to 42 years with an average of 17.16 years median of 15 years, and mode of 13 years. Of the two school levels in question, more teachers had taught mostly at the
secondary level (Grades 7-12, 54.1%) than the elementary school level (Grades K-6, 45.9%). Only 9 teachers (6.8%) were untenured. Although 23.5% were licensed as Special Education teachers, only 12.1% were currently working as a Special Education teacher. Seventy-seven percent (77.7%) of the teachers identified as female and 22.3% as male. Nearly the same percentage (78.8%) was married or partnered, followed by 15.2% single or never married, and 6.1% widowed, divorced or separated. Nearly 7 of 10 (69.7%) were parents.

**Review of Interviewees and Interview Questions**

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 provide a review of the teachers who agreed to be interviewed, both from among survey participants and those outside the survey pool. Table 5.5 summarizes the demographics of all interviewees.
### Table 5.3

Teachers Agreeing to Be Interviewed from among Survey-Takers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Profession (Ques. B1)</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Current Teaching (Ques. B2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.4

Review of Non-Survey Takers Agreeing to Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Elementary or Secondary</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction with Teaching (1-5 Scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2 (Somewhat Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>3 (Between Satisfied and Dissatisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 (Very Satisfied)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5

Review of All Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Interviewees</th>
<th>Elementary Teachers</th>
<th>Secondary Teachers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>African-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile of Interviewees

Examination of teachers interviewed indicates of the 15, nine are elementary school teachers and six are secondary school teachers. For operational purposes, “elementary” was
defined as grades K-6 and “secondary” as grades 7-12. Among the nine elementary teachers, eight are female and one is male, while one teacher self-identified as African-American and one Hispanic. The remaining six elementary teachers are Caucasian. Examining years of teaching experience in this group, one teacher has taught for 1-9 years, six for 10-19 years, and two for 20-29 years. Among the secondary teachers, four are female and two male; all six secondary teachers are Caucasian. Years of experience among this group of six secondary teachers indicates two have from 10-19 years’ experience and three between 20-29 years’ experience. One secondary teacher indicated she had between 40 and 49 years of teaching experience.

**Review of Research Questions**

The three research questions I developed for this study were designed to probe the work experience of teachers and to examine the relationship between factors that all teachers experience in their working lives (choosing to enter teaching, school climate, support, professional development, perceptions of teachers) and satisfaction, the question of whether greater satisfaction is experienced on the elementary or secondary level, and the influence of satisfaction at each level on retention at each level. The following discussion looks to peel the onion of teacher work experience, based on survey findings and interview outcomes.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Research Question 1: How do the factors of entry to teaching, climate, workplace support, professional development, and perceptions about teaching influence teacher satisfaction and retention in the profession?**

The survey indicated that all of the correlations between the five subscales and retention and satisfaction were statistically significant, positive, and moderate to strong. This indicated
that as the teachers’ satisfaction grew, their feelings regarding their school’s climate, support, professional development, and perception grew more positive. Also, as their feelings about their choice of entry into the profession were positive, so were their levels of satisfaction and retention (see Chapter 4 for statistical analyses). A multiple regression analysis explored the possible influence of the five subscales on retention and satisfaction separately. The combination of variables—ClimateSupportDevelopment, as well as choice of entry, and perception—significantly predicted satisfaction, and the composite ClimateSupportDevelopment contribute most to teachers’ composite satisfaction, followed by perception of teachers. However, the survey analysis indicated that choice of entry does not contribute to teachers’ composite satisfaction. While the survey indicated that choice of entry does not contribute to composite satisfaction, during the interviews for this study, I developed a series of questions to further explore a potential relationship between choice of entry and work satisfaction.

The interviews examined each of these subscales in some detail; teachers were asked about their reason for becoming teachers (choice of entry) experience of school climate, support, professional development and perceptions about teachers. If the survey offered insight to the relationships of these factors to satisfaction and retention, the interviews provided depth and breadth, insofar as interviewed teachers were quite willing to offer extensive responses about how these factors influence their work experience. The following discussion examines the interview responses, by level, of interview participants in light of their open-ended survey (B1 and B2) responses and interview responses.
**Research Question 1: Elementary Teachers**

Examining the nine elementary teachers interviewed (four from survey group and five outside the survey group) we see a pattern of overall satisfaction with the profession. In the group of elementary teachers also surveyed, responses to survey question B1 indicate two of four (KWA, KFW) are somewhat satisfied with the profession and one (BCM) is very satisfied, while one (RFS) is somewhat dissatisfied. Among these same teachers all are either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with their current teaching assignment (survey question B2). Of the five additional elementary teachers who were interviewed but not surveyed, four are either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied; only one (DWS) is poised between satisfied and dissatisfied (the question about satisfaction was asked in two discreet ways: those surveyed were asked both on the survey (B1 and B2) using the 5-point Likert Scale (1= Very Satisfied; 2= Somewhat Satisfied; 3= Neutral; 4= Somewhat Dissatisfied and 5= Very Dissatisfied) and again during the interview, where they were verbally asked to rate their overall satisfaction on a similar scale of 1 to 5; those not surveyed were asked only in the interview to rate themselves verbally from 1 to 5.

During the interviews, as a composite, the nine elementary teachers indicated significant levels of satisfaction: four teachers indicated or suggested they were “1-very satisfied”, three indicated they were “2-somewhat satisfied”, one was a “3” (between satisfied and dissatisfied) and one teacher a “4” (somewhat dissatisfied). No elementary teacher indicated they were very dissatisfied (5) with teaching as a profession during the interviews. Significantly, those most satisfied indicate reasons such as “I love my job” (DGO), “I have a great job” (DPM) and “I wouldn’t change much” (MPG). Those indicating less than total satisfaction express a concern about newly instituted New York State testing mandates tied to Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), the instituted teacher evaluation system in New York State.
Interviewee RFS states (as to why she is “4,” somewhat dissatisfied), “It has nothing to do with my students. It’s everything else that surrounds them,” and this sentiment emerged in a number of the interviews conducted for this study, as detailed in the following discussion.

As previously stated, the survey indicated that all of the correlations between the five subscales and retention and satisfaction were statistically significant, positive, and moderate to strong, indicating that as satisfaction grew, feelings regarding their school’s climate, support, professional development, and perception grew more positive. Also, as teachers’ feelings about their choice of entry into the profession were positive, so were levels of satisfaction and retention. Therefore, if we examine these same elementary teachers’ responses regarding these five subscales, we may see whether the interview responses are consistent with survey findings as applied to the elementary cohort of teachers.

Examining the elementary teachers’ responses to the question of why they entered the profession shows a strong affective or relational influence regarding choice of entry. The interview questions expanded this study by asking about initial motivation for becoming a teacher and also whether a respondent would still become a teacher today, if they were starting a career. A second interview question asked why respondents chose the level of teaching they did, and whether that choice, in hindsight, was a good one. Regarding why teaching was initially chosen, there is a remarkable consistency among the nine elementary teachers: all nine became teachers either because they worked or wished to work with young children, because the love children, or because of the influence of a family member. Three respondents specifically cite family influence (RFS, KFW and KWA) five use terms such as “good feeling,” “love” “gravitating,” [to kids] and one respondent (BCM) uses a negative experience to describe what is nevertheless a positive intent, i.e. that he was “frustrated chasing down and arresting little kids”
in his former career as a police officer. These responses suggest that elementary teachers, across demographic variables and regardless of type of school district, were affectively motivated to become teachers. The predominance of statements suggesting an affective reason for entering teaching also suggests this cohort was largely intrinsically motivated, i.e. because they found it interesting and appealing and it professionally satisfied an internal desire, in this case to work with children. Among these elementary teachers, responses suggest—that choice of entry to elementary teaching was closely tied to relational and personal factors.

While the survey analysis indicated that choice of entry does not contribute to teachers’ composite satisfaction, given the strong emotional language elementary interviewees used to describe their reasons for becoming teachers, further study of a potential link between choosing teaching and ongoing satisfaction was warranted. To explore this further in the interviews, I posed a second question: “If you were starting your career today, would you still be likely to become a teacher?” While this question does not definitively link choice and satisfaction, I posit that it suggests one: interviewees were asked to use lived teaching experience (up to the present moment of their careers) to consider whether they would still choose teaching. In other words, teachers were asked to consider ‘choice of entry’ from a present day, experienced perspective, one which might inform whether they still consider teaching a good idea. I anticipated that, if a teacher were dissatisfied currently, they would respond to this question with negative indications regarding becoming a teacher. This was not the case. While several elementary teachers qualified their responses (KWE: “today it seems more like a business”; DPM: “so many things have changed”; KFW: “[I would go to grades] where there are no state assessments”), overall, eight of the nine elementary teachers indicated they would still become teachers today, if choosing a profession today. Responses such as, “100% yes; Without fail” (MPG), “I am very very very
very very very very pleased with the profession (BCM) and “I would [although] today it seems more like a business…I still love what I do” (KWE) give indication that these elementary teachers’ satisfaction is reciprocal to their consideration of choice of entry, given the chance to reconsider that choice. One elementary teacher (RFS) indicated the strongest negative response to this question, giving the reason that she is “disgusted at the way education has become a business, and the focus has been completely taken away from the children.” Within this teacher’s indication of preferring to leave teaching if it were financially viable, the reason given is rooted in the affective connection between this teacher and children, believed to have been lost with education having become a more of a business and less connected to the well-being of students.

To deepen my exploration further regarding the factor of choice of entry to teaching, I posed another question to all interviewees: “Why did you choose the level of teaching (elementary/secondary) that you did? Do you believe in hindsight this was a good choice?” My goal with this question was to gain insight as to whether elementary and secondary teachers had differing motives about the level of teaching they chose and whether they still considered that choice a good one, perhaps suggesting whether they were still satisfied with the teaching level choice they had made at the start of their careers. The nine elementary teachers interviewed again gave consistent responses: seven responded that they made a good choice of level because they like or love working with young children, or because the elementary classroom is more suitable to their teaching or disciplinary styles, and that this is the level at which they belong in teaching; only one teacher indicated the possibility of teaching at the secondary level. Responses to question 2 essentially mirror those given in question one regarding initial entry to teaching: KWE: “I liked working with younger children”; DPM: “I love working with younger children”; DWS:” I enjoy the younger ones; KFW:” I feel more comfortable at the elementary level”; MPG:
“It’s almost like it (the elementary teaching level) chose me.” Only one teacher, DGO, suggested she could imagine teaching at the secondary level today, primarily because there is, “so much demand and pressure for the elementary teachers.” One teacher, BCM, a former police officer, took a more pragmatic view of his choice of teaching level, i.e. because as a male it made him more employable.

The results of the interviews of nine elementary teachers suggest a relationship between choice of entry to teaching and current satisfaction not indicated by the survey. Survey findings indicate no correlation between choice of entry to teaching and satisfaction, but the interview of these nine elementary teachers indicates that, when asked about still becoming a teacher today, most would still become a teacher, and most are satisfied with teaching because of their love of working with children. Still wishing to become a teacher from the “present tense” perspective some years into their careers gives indication that for those interviewed, choice of profession and teaching level (elementary or secondary) has influenced satisfaction insofar as a majority of elementary teachers interviewed indicate ongoing satisfaction, both with their choice of profession and with the at the level at which they teach.

Examining elementary teachers’ responses regarding the combined factors of Climate, Support, Professional Development and Perceptions of Teachers indicates a close relationship between these factors and satisfaction among elementary teacher. The composite of three factors, clustered as ClimateSupportDevelopment, significantly predicted work satisfaction in the survey findings. Perceptions of Teachers also predicted satisfaction, but to a lesser degree than ClimateSupport Development. During the interviews, I asked about work place influences in an open-ended question, “Describe the major factors that contribute to and those that take away from your sense of well-being as a teacher,” to allow for a wider range of responses and to probe
the potential factors impacting work experience beyond the scope of the survey factors.
Consistent with their responses to factors influencing overall satisfaction and choice of entry to
teaching, four of the elementary teachers interviewed made direct reference to the children they
teach as their primary source of professional well-being. Interviewee KWE, who works in a
high-needs district (Willows) cites, “satisfaction out of seeing growth from my students”; DGO,
from a middle class district (Oaks), uses almost the exact same language to describe the major
factor contributing to well-being: “I get satisfaction out of seeing growth from my students.”
BCM, the former police officer and who portrayed himself as something of the “tough-guy” in
the interviews, also cites the human dimension: “For me, it’s the human aspect, the relationships.”
The coded responses to survey questions B1 and B2 (see Appendix D for Codes List)
substantiate the role of affective factors in teacher work satisfaction. Of 42 codes developed from
survey question B1 “Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?”, 12 refer to
affective reasons for satisfaction, or 28.5% of coded responses. For question B2, “Overall, how
satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?” 10 of 54 refer to affective
reasons for satisfaction with present teaching assignment, or 19% of responses. Among both
surveyed and interviewed teachers, positive responses regarding satisfaction significantly link
satisfaction to relationships with students, working with students and influencing the lives of
students.

The sphere of relationships to which teachers surveyed and interviewed significantly
includes working conditions resulting from influences and interactions with colleagues,
administrators and parents. Codes for survey question B1 and B2 indicate that 9 of 42 for B1
(21%) and 10 of 54 for B2 (19%) refer to adult interactions or climate and support factors
influenced by adult decisions, whether positively or negatively (i.e. “Overcrowded classrooms”).
Interviewees also referred to the influences of adult relationships or work circumstances or conditions influenced by adult decisions or interactions. KWA (Willows) links administrative support to the feeling that, “ok, I’m doing a good thing” or, in the case of a “bad” administrator, “then you really don’t feel the support.” KWA’s response suggests a necessary link between administration and support: if one is good, so is the other, and the reverse holds as well: bad administrator means a lack of support. DWS (Willows) echoes this feeling: “Just hearing some verbal phrase of thank you...really sometimes makes a huge difference.” DGO (Oaks) sees a lack of administrative support as occurring when, “they do not listen to what we have to say.” MPG (Pines) refers to her principal as a “gift from the educational gods above. He really sets a magnificent tone in our building.” but she nuances her response to indicate that administrators above the principal (i.e. Central Office administrators) are problematic: “there’s these crazy (emphasized crazy) demand for these very long (emphasized long) unnecessary, unproductive meetings.” Coded responses to B1 and B2 support these interview responses; surveyed teachers referred to the negative impact of “Disrespect by BOE and administrators” (B1, Code 25) and the positive impact of “Excellent staff morale” (B2, Code 39) as influential in their experience of satisfaction.

As indicated in Chapter 4, all teachers surveyed, including elementary teachers, have mixed feelings about the factor of Professional Development in their work experience. Four elementary teachers surveyed cited professional development as a negative or waste of time: KWA (Willows); DPM (Pines); DGO (Oaks); RFS (Frasers); two had positive responses (DPM and KFW) and DPM, who weighed in on positive and negative feelings about professional development. DWS simply indicated that “we have no choice in the [professional development]
we receive” which, while an essentially neutral response, suggests that the mandated time and topics to which teachers in that district are subjected may be seen as much an intrusion as a help.

Findings from the survey administration and interviews suggest a relationship among elementary teachers between ClimateSupportDevelopment and satisfaction; this relationship suggests the interconnectedness of these factors, satisfaction and the classroom. We see that the surveys indicated a strong correlation between satisfaction and the composite of these three factors, but it is striking that in the interviews, relationships with students again emerged as a most important factor in response to the interview question, “Describe the major factors that contribute to and those that take away from your sense of well-being as a teacher.” In other words, responses suggest that climate and support (and to some degree, professional development) may be significant factors in determining satisfaction for elementary teachers, but mainly to the extent that they contribute to or diminish the ability of the teacher to work in an environment that fosters productive, nurturing relationships with students. Responses to questions B1 and B2 and interviews suggest that support of teachers is a factor influencing satisfaction to the extent that administrative supervisors acknowledge the efforts of teachers; climate is informed by the extent to which teachers feel supported, or the extent to which their relationships with adults are positive and affirming toward the goal of creating an environment supporting respect for teachers and a classroom environment that permits student learning. Interestingly, elementary teachers interviewed did not significantly address the matter of school safety or discipline as a significant component of school climate; climate is consistently linked to support, and support is defined in affective and relational terms. Professional development is a mixed bag for elementary teachers (as it is for secondary teachers): it has value when it is
perceived as organized and targeted to new learning, but a waste of time when it is mandated from supervisors in such a way that teachers feel they have no control over it.

As discussed in Chapter 4, perceptions of teachers, i.e. how they believe they are perceived in the community in which they work, are strikingly similar in the interview findings among elementary and secondary teachers. Survey findings indicate that perceptions of teachers influences satisfaction, but to a lesser extent than ClimateSupportDevelopment and more than choice of entry to teaching. Nevertheless, interview responses as to how teachers believe they are perceived produced strong responses from teachers, specifically with reference to how their work with students is appreciated but the terms of employment are often used against them in the court of public opinion. Given that elementary teachers’ satisfaction has been seen as tied to relationships with students, student success and overall climate and support that allows the work environment to foster student success, elementary teachers report a particular sensitivity regarding how they see themselves perceived.

In the discussion of findings in Chapter 4, sample elementary teacher responses to the question, “How do you think teachers are regarded in the community in which you work?” were reported as either negative or positive perceptions that teachers have. Again, consistency of responses points to positive perceptions as rooted in a relational interaction with parents and community members. One interviewee notes a cultural norm in her teaching community (Willows) where the parents of students in a bilingual program in which she teaches are, “much more respectful of the profession…they respect the education.” Other teachers report a similar experience in middle class districts, such as DGO and DOC in Oaks, who report respectively, “They [the parents] back what we say and they look at us and their children and say how important” and “They do regard us as professionals.” In addition to KWA, cited above, RFS, in
another high needs district, similarly reports, “I think that there’s a lot of parents that are very accepting and thankful for the teachers that their kids have.” Elementary teachers in low needs/higher income districts say virtually the same thing: DPM, in Pines, indicates, “There are parents who can’t do enough for us…and the teachers are highly regarded here.” These comments are representative of elementary teachers’ beliefs that they are supported in the community in which they work relative to the important role they play in the lives of the children of that community.

With such a strong, relational connection to the children of community members, and a belief that they are highly regarded by community members, we may wonder why, among elementary (and high school) teachers, perceptions of teachers correlated less to satisfaction than ClimateSupportDevelopment. The answer may lie in the consistency among elementary teachers regarding negative perceptions they believe exist of themselves as professionals. Responses to this interview question in which teachers were asked to indicate negative perceptions produced a majority of responses in which teachers believe they are perceived as having jobs that pay too well, offer too many benefits, and involve a too-short work year. Respondent DGO, from middle-class Oaks, says, “[Parents say] you know, they have an easy job. They have summers off. They leave at 3:05. I feel that a lot of people look down on teachers.” DPM, from upper middle class Pines, says, “There are people that think we get paid too much money for just, you know, for working six hours a day. It’s that whole summer thing. We work 184 days but they don’t understand what’s going into those 184 days.” DWS, from a high-needs district Willows, echoes these same sentiments: “I do feel that a lot of times teachers get less respect than people in other professions and we still have that bad rap that we got into the teaching profession not necessarily because we want to educate and help children but we want to work 10 months out of
the year and we want to work from September to June and work 8 to 3.” For elementary teachers, a paradox emerges that impacts the influence of the factor of perceptions on their work satisfaction: they believe that they are highly prized when it comes to their role in the lives of children, while they believe they are resented for the terms of their employment. The extent to which elementary teachers are givers (of nurturing, education) they are perceived (in their view) favorably; the extent to which they draw a salary or negotiate favorable working conditions, i.e. the extent to which they draw from the community, they see themselves perceived negatively. Further discussion of the role of perceptions of teachers as influencing satisfaction will take place with analysis of secondary teachers’ responses.

Elementary teachers’ interview responses to questions regarding the subscale items of Choice of Entry, ClimateSupportDevelopment and Perceptions of Teachers relative to satisfaction suggest a strong measure of consistency among interviewees in responses to the role of ClimateSupportDevelopment and Perceptions. Choice of Entry, while not significant to teacher satisfaction in the survey, emerges as significant in the elementary interviews insofar as a majority of elementary teachers, who are either very or somewhat satisfied, indicate they would still choose teaching today because of their affective relationship with students and learning, suggesting that choice of entry is a related to satisfaction more than the survey indicates.

**Research Question 1: Secondary Teachers**

Examining the responses of secondary teachers relative to survey findings and elementary teachers’ responses reveals a similar overall pattern regarding the five factors and satisfaction but some differences in how secondary teachers experience their work lives. Among the six secondary teachers interviewed, survey responses to open-ended items B1 (Satisfaction
with Teaching Profession) and B2 (Satisfaction with Current Teaching Assignment) show that for B1, three are very satisfied (DOC, RCS, DPK), two somewhat satisfied (BFB, RWH), and one is somewhat dissatisfied (MCW). For B2, two secondary teachers are very satisfied (DOC and RWH), three are somewhat satisfied (BFB, RWH, MCW), and one is somewhat dissatisfied (DPK). A pattern of satisfaction among secondary teachers is similar to that of elementary teachers: among secondary teachers, five of six are somewhat or very satisfied with the teaching profession and five of six are somewhat or very satisfied with their current teaching assignment.

Moving to examination of secondary teachers’ responses to the interview questions relative to the survey findings shows that choice of entry to teaching again, as with elementary teachers, plays a stronger role in satisfaction than the survey findings suggest. Among secondary school teachers interview responses to both parts of question 1 bore similarity to but were not the same as their elementary counterparts. As noted in the initial discussion of the interviews in Chapter 4 and earlier in this chapter, elementary teachers indicated choice of entry motivated by a love of work with children, familial connections to teaching, or wishing to make a difference in young people’s lives. Secondary teachers’ responses about choice of teaching indicate the importance of or their relationship to their subject area as well as their relationship with one of their own high school teachers as primarily motivational. For example, BFB says, “I’m a business teacher. When I was in high school, my favorite classes were business classes. For some reason I just connected with those teachers in the business department. So that’s how I ended up teaching.” On a similar note, DOC says, “I really wanted to become a teacher, specifically an English teacher, when I was in the 10th grade,” and RCS indicates, “I had the advantage of starting out on string instruments when I was very young so ... [it] fit into teaching strings in a school. MCW links the subject with his desire to connect with students: “I’ve always had a
passion for literature. And I wanted to share that passion with others. I really saw teaching as an opportunity to be able to do that. I was able to bring that passion to other people.” Even DPK, who says she was, “forced into teaching,” also allows, “I had a lot of respect for my own high school teachers who were…exciting to be with.”

Respondents BFB, DOC, RCS and MCW speak about a connection to a specific subject or discipline in influencing their choice of becoming a teacher, whereas subject area was not a major consideration among elementary teachers’ reasons for entering the profession. These secondary teachers willingly chose the profession from a combination of affinity for a subject and the attraction of their own positive experience with teachers during their schooling years. Regarding whether secondary teachers interviewed would choose teaching today, a greater degree of uncertainty is evident than was indicated by elementary teachers. MCW cites being ‘frustrated in the last two to three years.” RWH speaks of “negative reactions” among teachers to the profession today. BFB indicates, “It’s hard to say” from the pedagogical perspective, but also cites the financial benefits associated with teaching as a reason to consider the profession today if considering a profession for the first time. Although secondary teachers interviewed identify an affinity for their subject area as motivational toward becoming a teacher, interview responses suggest less of a relationship between choice of entry and current satisfaction for these secondary teachers.

Examining secondary teachers’ responses to interview question 2 regarding choice of level (elementary or secondary) and whether that was a good choice in hindsight reveals similarities to their responses in question 1. Secondary teachers again make first reference to their subject or discipline as a significant to the factor of choice. BFB captures this with her observation, “My favorite classes were business classes. If I was going to be a teacher…it would
have to be at the secondary level, no choice,” and DOC says, “I particularly like teaching high school because of the level of literary analysis that I can do with them.” Likewise, RCS refers to his subject as having influenced his choice of teaching level, “My other specialties are in subject matters that are far more accessible for older students. It was a real easy fit for me to come up to the middle/high school.” MCW captures her affinity for high school with, “It was a no-brainer to me. It was high school right from the get go. It was just more where my mind was.” Again, while the survey analysis indicates no correlation between choice of teaching and composite satisfaction, interview responses among secondary teachers suggests a motivational consistency among them, tying their choice of entry to their love of a subject or discipline, followed by their desire to work with young people.

Survey results indicated that, among teachers, ClimateSupportDevelopment, taken as a composite factor, significantly contribute to teachers’ overall satisfaction. Secondary teachers’ responses to question 3, “Describe the major factors that contribute to and those that take away from your sense of well-being as a teacher” suggested that, as with the elementary teachers, their ability to establish and maintain a positive working relationship with students in their classrooms suggests their understanding of a positive climate (insofar as, in responding to the question, they link satisfaction to classroom environment and relationships with students); support is linked to administration, and professional development receives mixed reviews, but is primarily seen as valuable relative to how productively time is used. In the interviews question 3 allowed for an open-ended consideration of factors influencing teachers. BFB defines “feeling good” as a teacher as, “when I have a class that, you know, it’s a positive relationship day in and day out. Then you have a class and you feel like you see the growth.” RWH echoes this when she says, “I’m deeply affected by the reaction to my students, and the reactions they have to me. I love it
when we can all laugh together.” RCS brings in the student behavior factor to the conversation, “This place to me…this is a dream job. It’s a wonderful place to work. We don’t really have behavior problems.”

Given the open-ended nature of interview question 3, the response of three of five teachers directly responding to this question (one teacher did not respond to this question directly) shows that a primary consideration among the factors that influence satisfaction for secondary teachers is the availability of an environment that allows for positive relationships and that positive relationships with students allow for successful teaching. MCW, echoing secondary teachers’ responses regarding the factor of choice of teaching, cites “my passion for the subject” but adds the presence of “a certain degree of autonomy” as primarily influencing his satisfaction. MCW’s response also hints at the second of the composite factors, support, which MCW suggests is evident to the degree he is permitted to carry out his teaching work without intrusive oversight. DOC, RWH, and BFB define support as derived from administrative or supervisory dispositions: DOC says flatly, “It’s essential that administration is supportive”; RWH says [Her] “immediate supervisor is terrific…I think she is very, very understanding.” BFB cites supportive principals as contributing to her satisfaction; RWH suggests the opposite perspective on building administration, “I never fail to be astounded at the level of incompetence that I sometimes see.”

These responses are consistent with the pattern of coded responses to survey items B1 and B2 and discussed previously, indicating that for these teachers satisfaction with teaching as a profession and with current teaching assignment is interestingly linked to overall climate and support, and, to a lesser degree, professional development. Professional Development among secondary teachers in the interviews receives the same lukewarm reception as it does among elementary teachers and is consistent with survey results indicating the role of
ClimateSupportDevelopment in teacher composite satisfaction. DOC cites “strong” professional development, which she defines that way because the courses offered, “are helpful and practical in our classrooms.” BFB indicates, on the other hand, that “85 to 90 percent [of it is] a waste of time. I guess a lot of them are not well executed” and RWH echoes this with, “The last two years it has been, it’s been hell.”

Secondary teachers’ responses to question 4 in the interview phase of this research as to how they are perceived in the communities in which they work again correspond with the influence of perception of teachers in the survey data and with interview responses of elementary teachers. Secondary teachers’ responses were categorized as “positive” and “negative” as were their elementary counterparts; one secondary teacher, DOC, had only a positive perspective on this factor, stating that “unsupportive parents…this is not an issue here.” Other positive perceptions are built around the belief that “community members…think a lot of teachers, very highly of teachers” (RWH) and that “we are treated with respect” (RCS). While one secondary teacher had no negative perceptions to report, one other (MCW) had no positive perceptions to report. Instead, and strikingly similar to negative perceptions reported among elementary teachers, MCW says, “They believe we’re overpaid. We’re overpaid public employees…and [they] believe that we should make less. They see it [teaching] very much as blue collar.” RCS reports a very similar perception: “People are saying…you guys just check in at eight and check out at three every day…the teachers had it too good financially and that the community can no longer support that.”

Survey findings indicated a relationship between the factor of perceptions of teachers and satisfaction. The role that perceptions of teachers play in teacher satisfaction is further suggested by the extensive responses to this question in the interview phase of this study. Responses
reported in this paper have been significantly edited, but among elementary and secondary teachers there emerges a consistent belief that, when it comes to how the parents of their students perceive them, perceptions are positive, but when it comes to a wider communal or cultural perception of teachers, negative perceptions emerge regarding the work responsibility teachers have relative to their salary, benefits, and work year. Elementary teacher DGO captures this dichotomy: “I think as a whole they [the professional world] don’t look at us equal as other jobs. It’s just not as prestigious. But in our community, they’re good with the teachers…they back what we say, and they look at us and at their children and say, ‘how important.’” RCS, on the secondary level, echoes DGO with the observation, “I get people coming up and telling me, ‘you’re a wonderful person’…and then, so, so it’s a weird dichotomy going on here where I don’t think it ends. You know, this idea that people [are] saying…that you guys just check in at eight and check out at three every day…there’s still some people out there who still feel that way.” Findings from both the survey and interviews suggest that teachers’ satisfaction is impacted by how they are perceived; interviews suggest specifically that teachers live in a duality of positive reinforcement for their work on the local, classroom level, but with a negative reinforcement based on how they see themselves viewed in the wider work culture.

**Survey Factors and Composite Satisfaction**

My first research question asked how the factors examined in the survey administration influenced teacher satisfaction and retention. Analysis of survey data shows that the combination of three variables —ClimateSupportDevelopment, plus choice of entry to teaching, and perception teachers have about themselves as professionals—significantly predicted teacher work satisfaction. The data further suggested that the composite ClimateSupportDevelopment contribute most to teachers’ composite satisfaction followed by the variable perception of
teachers. However, choice of entry to teaching does not contribute to teachers’ composite satisfaction. The data further showed that, the combination of three variables—ClimateSupportDevelopment, plus the variables of choice of entry to teaching, and perception of teachers—significantly predicted retention, although not as strongly as for satisfaction. The survey findings also interestingly suggested that choice of entry contributes most to teachers’ retention followed by perception of teachers, whereas ClimateSupportDevelopment does not contribute to teachers’ retention. To further explore the relationship between these factors and satisfaction and retention, I posed two questions to the 15 teachers interviewed. These two interview questions, while examining the relationship between overall satisfaction and retention, did not directly ask about a relationship between the five factors of Choice, ClimateSupportDevelopment and Perceptions and Retention. Nevertheless, the discussion of how these five factors influence satisfaction showed that ClimateSupportDevelopment and Perceptions did, in the survey, influence satisfaction, while in the interviews, all five factors influenced satisfaction. Because interview questions 5 and 6 provide supporting evidence for a relationship between satisfaction and retention among the 15 teachers interviewed, they also suggest a relationship between the five factors and retention.

**Satisfaction and Retention**

To examine more closely a direct relationship between satisfaction and retention, I asked teachers interviewed two questions (see numbered questions 5 and 6 in Chapter 4). The first question, “Overall, how satisfied are you with your professional life as a teacher? Explain your level of satisfaction and contributes to or takes away from your feeling satisfied” was intended to elicit responses regarding overall levels of satisfaction and factors contributing to that level. The second question asked directly about retention: “Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If
so, why have you considered doing so, and if not, why have you decided to remain a teacher?”

As detailed in Chapter 4, the findings from the survey administration showed that, controlling for school level, the correlation between satisfaction and retention was positively and strongly correlated and statistically significant. Across school levels, satisfaction and retention were also positively and strongly correlated. Controlling for years teaching, the correlation was also positive and strong and statistically significant. Taking a closer look at years teaching in groups of years, the correlations were positive, moderate to strong, and statistically significant for teachers who had been teaching between 6 and 20 years. However, for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, correlations were not statistically significant. The survey data showed, therefore, there is a significant, positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention, meaning that the more satisfied teachers are with their assignment and teaching as a profession, the longer they will stay in teaching, and vice versa.

Table 5.6 is an edited version of Table 4.14, first presented in Chapter 4, followed by the analysis of responses taken from Chapter 4. This chart is presented here again in order to provide convenient access to information regarding teachers’ level of satisfaction and retention responses. In the left column teacher identification codes are followed by the teaching level and number of years in the profession of each respondent. During the interviews I requested to each teacher that they respond, using a Likert-scale of numbers from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied) to indicate their level of satisfaction with teaching. Under the Level of Satisfaction column, the self-reported number on the 1 to 5 rating scale is given, followed by teachers’ reports as to why they rated themselves as they did on the 5-point scale. Under the right column, teachers were asked to explain whether they ever considered leaving teaching and to give reasons why they either never considered doing so, or did think of leaving.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Code:</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction:</th>
<th>Retention and Reason for Staying or Thinking of Leaving?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>I’ll say a two. I think I’m very satisfied overall.</td>
<td>I’ll definitely stay in. I mean I’ve built my credits and built up my salary. I think that’s the main reason. Salary and the vacation time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>I’m gonna put myself at a two.</td>
<td>Nooo, I’m not ready to go yet. Because, again, at the end of the day I still love what I do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>One. And it’s almost for me, I love my job.</td>
<td>Uhh no [have not considered leaving] because I love my job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>I’m very satisfied as a teacher. [No specific number given]</td>
<td>I always stuck through it and I always ended up with a job every September. No matter what. I do love what I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Okay, I’ll put myself at a two.</td>
<td>Year eleven I considered going. Umm it was around my 11th year in teaching I was looking to go. I definitely needed a change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Umm I’m in the middle, three.</td>
<td>You know, it is what I’ve always wanted to do and I do love it and hopefully I’ll get that passion back. It’s the career path that I chose. It’s my profession. Even though I’m not happy right now, I really can’t see myself doing anything different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>Uhh, as of now it would probably be a four.</td>
<td>Yes. I have [considered leaving the teaching profession]. Last year and this year. These were the three years that I really ahhh, you know, considered it and this year, I actually looked into doing different things. And at the same time, and I also… I can’t afford to leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>Umm I would say. I would say, I’d say very satisfied, a one.</td>
<td>Okay, I have had thoughts about leaving only this year. And thoughts. I don’t think I would ever follow through with it. Umm I don’t think I would leave education. I absolutely love what I do but I would definitely be more involved in fighting for what’s right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Years</td>
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<td>MPG</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
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<td>BFB</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>40-49 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As reported in Chapter 4, these edited excerpts from the interview transcripts show that a majority of both elementary and secondary teachers are satisfied with their jobs, and most have not thought of leaving the profession prior to retirement. Among the nine elementary teachers three indicated they were “1— very satisfied”: (DGO, MPG, KFW) while one (DPM) simply verbalized that she is very satisfied. Three teachers (KWA, KWE, BCM) indicated they were “2,” suggesting they were satisfied with some qualification; one teacher (DWS) indicated “3” (between satisfied and dissatisfied) and one (RFS) “4,” meaning this teacher is somewhat dissatisfied with her work as a teacher. The majority of elementary teachers (6 of 9) have been teaching for between 10-19 years, with two having between 20-29 years’ experience and one with 1-9 years’ experience. These latter teachers both indicated they were “2” on the satisfaction scale suggested during the interviews. Among all nine elementary teachers, three have considered leaving the profession: one teacher (BCM), who has 20-29 years’ experience, considered leaving in year eleven. Teacher RFS, with between 10-19 years, and a satisfaction rating of 4, has considered leaving. So has KFW, with 10-19 years and a self-given satisfaction rating of 1, has also thought of leaving, though this teacher also indicates, “I don’t think I would ever follow through with it.”

Among the six secondary teachers, three (DOC, RWH, RCS) indicated their level as “1” on the scale of 1 to 5, (satisfied to dissatisfied); two others, BFB (20-29 years’ experience) and MCW (10-19 years), indicated a “3,” and DPK, with a score of “2” also said she’d “rather be doing something else.” Of these six, only MCW, with 10-19 years and a satisfaction level of 3, said she had actively considered leaving teaching, articulating a “love-hate relationship with it.” Teacher RWH is actively considering leaving because she has already determined her retirement date; this teacher also indicates, though, that recent trends in teaching have influenced her
decision; she notes, “I would say that in the last several years it started changing, I believe for the negative…”

Analysis of the relationship between satisfaction and retention, based on interview responses and statistical data, suggests a professional ambivalence regarding retention among teachers. If satisfaction is strongly correlated to retention on elementary and secondary levels among teachers in the profession between 6 and 20 years, but not among those between 1 and 6 or more than 20 years, we might examine the responses in the interviews of teachers in these groups. The interview group did not surface a sufficient sample size to draw a definitive conclusion about teachers new to the profession (using the range of 1-9 years), but it is interesting that the one elementary teacher interviewed and in this group reports she will “definitely stay in. I mean I’ve built my credits and built up my salary. I think that’s the main reason, salary and the vacation time.” This teacher indicated she is “2” (while verbalizing she is “very satisfied”) but her motivation for remaining in the profession is measured by monetary and time considerations rather than by professional or affective considerations, as is the case among most of her elementary counterparts. In the elementary group interviewed, one teacher, RFS, indicates she is “4,” or somewhat dissatisfied, and she has considered leaving, indicating she has gone as far as to “look into other things.” On the other end of the experience spectrum, BFB, 20-29 years a teacher, RWH, 20-29 years, and DPK, 40-49 years, all secondary teachers, indicate qualified levels of satisfaction: BFB is “3,” though she has never thought of leaving; RWH is “between a one and a two” but, at the time of interview, was planning her retirement, and notes that, while she never thought about retiring prior to eligibility, says “it [the profession] started changing,” suggesting a concern with the direction of the profession as she approaches retirement. DPK, the senior teacher interviewed, indicates she is “2,” somewhat satisfied, but
adds significant qualifiers: she would “rather be doing something else” and “if finances were not an issue [she] would get the hell out of here.” Since four of the six secondary teachers interviewed have been teaching for more than 20 years, the responses of the two who have been teaching for fewer than 20 but more than 10 years indicates different responses to this same question: DOC is very satisfied but has not thought about leaving teaching, while MCW, indicating “3,” at the mid-point between satisfied and dissatisfied, has considered leaving teaching, but has a “love-hate relationship with it [the profession…it’s more love than hate, but I do have a love-hate relationship with it.”

Conclusion: Research Factors, Satisfaction and Retention

I believe the sentiments of MCW capture the lived experience of a sizeable population of teachers: they work in an environment that fosters significant professional ambivalence and, on the extreme of this ambivalence, they both love and hate what they do. The survey data shows a significant correlation between satisfaction and retention on both elementary and secondary levels among teachers in the group with between 6-20 years of experience. The interviews show that most teachers in this same group are satisfied with teaching and are not thinking of leaving, that the sentiment also exist (RFS) that something else might be preferable, but financial considerations make that impossible. Similarly, while statistically there is no correlation between satisfaction and retention for those at the start of their careers, retention for one interviewed teacher is tied to monetary considerations. Those in the latter part of their careers, also satisfied or very satisfied, have mostly not thought of leaving but, where they have, monetary constraints again play a role in retention. It is this researcher’s belief, based on these findings, that satisfaction is both personally and institutionally driven on both elementary and secondary levels, and that retention is personally and financially driven. In other words, satisfaction in multi-
layered (driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as those examined in the survey and interviews) and correlates with retention for intrinsic and extrinsic motivational reasons: because many teachers love what they do, they stay in teaching, and when they are ambivalent or have soured to the teaching profession, at whatever experience level, they stay either because they are too close to retirement no matter how satisfied or dissatisfied they are or because they can’t afford to leave the profession.

Survey findings indicated that all of the correlations between the five subscales and retention and satisfaction were statistically significant, positive, and moderate to strong, and that satisfaction was correlated with retention for teachers on both elementary and secondary levels for teachers in the mid-years of their careers. Interview findings suggest there are many nuances within these statistical conclusions: interviewed teachers are generally satisfied at both elementary and secondary levels, most have not thought of leaving the profession, and even if they have, financial considerations prevent them from doing so. Satisfaction is tied to both emotional influences (love of teaching, of students, of a subject) and external influences (climate, support, professional development) but largely to the extent that the external factors influence emotional or intrinsic factors.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach (elementary and secondary level)?

The extensive discussion of research question 1 included aspects of the discussion of questions 2 and 3, specifically regarding job satisfaction and retention at elementary and secondary teaching levels (see previous section of this paper). To further explore research
question 2, we first review the survey data for research question 2. Statistically, findings for question 2 show there was no difference in overall professional satisfaction between elementary and high school teachers. While on the composite satisfaction score, elementary teachers rated higher on average than the high school teachers, assuming for equal variances, the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not statistically significant. However, analysis of responses to open-ended responses B1 and B2 showed that statistically both elementary and high school teachers were more satisfied with their present teaching assignment than with teaching as a profession. The correlation between school level and B1 (teaching as a profession) was not statistically significant while the correlation between school level and B2 (present teaching assignment) was statistically significant. This indicated that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment.

To explore these findings further, in the interview phase of this study, I posed a question to all 15 respondents as follows: Do you believe that elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied in their profession? The intent of this question was to ask an open-ended, opinion-based question about what participants believe about levels of satisfaction in teaching corresponding to teacher level. This question, which I felt was one of the more intriguing of this study, invited an examination of teacher satisfaction and teaching level from the inside out: what do teachers think about teacher satisfaction at the elementary and secondary teaching levels? Would responses to this question surface information to support data from the surveys or would it show variance from the survey findings? While survey findings showed the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not statistically significant it also showed that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment. Did teachers perceive that as well? As documented in Chapter 4,
this question resonated with every interview respondent, leading to extensive explanations from
them as to why they felt as they did regarding satisfaction at each school level. To analyze
responses to this question further, the edited excerpts below include in parentheses, for each
respondent, the satisfaction rating they gave themselves in response to interview question 5:
Overall, how satisfied are you with your professional life as a teacher (using a rating scale of 1,
Very Satisfied to 5, Very Dissatisfied), followed by their responses to question 7, “Do you
believe that elementary or secondary teachers are more satisfied in their profession?” Responses
are categorized in the same manner as they were in Chapter 4, by grade level of respondent and
type of response within each grade level:

**Group 1: Elementary Teachers Who Believe Elementary Teachers Are More Satisfied
Than Secondary Teachers:**

**KWA:** (“Two. I’m very satisfied overall”) I would guess the elementary teachers. I think
we’re a little harder worked than secondary teachers… And then the secondary teachers, I think
when you’re given more leeway, you take more leeway, you’re more likely to be unhappy.

**KWE:** (“I’m gonna put myself at a two”) I just know there’s a very big difference between
elementary and secondary. I find that here on the elementary level is more of a nurturing, you
know, go-for-broke type of situation where as in, you know, secondary and high school, I just
feel like, you know, there’s not that same momentum, you know.

**DGO:** (“One...I love my job”) I think elementary has more satisfaction with their job. I think
it’s more rewarding in the elementary level umm because we’re with them a lot longer. We’re
with them all day... where in high school and middle school, they’re with you for 40 minutes,
40 minutes a day.
BCM: ("I'll put myself at a two") Elementary teachers tend to be much more satisfied. It’s a different mindset. A high school teacher and an elementary school teacher are two completely different animals. You really can’t compare the two of them.

DWS: ("I’m in the middle...three") I would have to say, for myself, I would think it would be elementary. You know, being that you do see so much growth with them that their young impressionable ages, I’m told that the elementary school teachers work a lot harder than the middle school and high school teachers.

Group 2: Elementary Teachers Who Believe High School Teachers Are More Satisfied

RFS: ("As of now it would probably be a four") I think that, honestly, I think it’s both the same even though as an elementary school. I guess they [secondary teachers] have more immediate gratification than we do… Umm so, maybe slightly higher in the high school that they would be more satisfied.

MPG: ("I’m a one") Oh, I 100% think that secondary teachers are more satisfied. It seems like they go in, they do their job, they go home. And they do well. And there’s a lot less drama. I’m not really sure what it is. But I definitely think that secondary teachers are a lot more satisfied. You speak to secondary teachers and they’re just really teachers, you know, they’re just there to teach.

Group 3: Elementary Teachers Who Believe Satisfaction Depends on Particular Circumstance of Teaching:

DPM: (No number indicated, but indicates “very satisfied”) So I think it’s like a 50-50 question. It’s a question where, you know, somebody’s opinion. Hmm, more satisfied? I think
that, umm, if you speak to me, I would say that I’m more satisfied. If you speak to the 9th grade teacher, they would say that they’re more satisfied. But I think there’s two sides to every story.

**KFW:** ("I’d say very satisfied, a one") I honestly think it depends on the students that you have. Ahh each year you get different groups of students. I really think it’s how you approach teaching and, and what you’re willing to, what you’re willing to do. Ahh it depends on the type of teacher, you know, the person is.

**Group 4: Secondary Teachers Who Believe Elementary Teachers Are More Satisfied:**

**BFB:** ("Right in the middle…three") I guess what I’m thinking is that, since I teach in such a big [secondary] building…it’s a large student population and faculty. And, usually elementary schools aren’t like that. I feel that when you’re in a smaller [elementary] environment, with…you’re only exposed to certain number of kids a day instead of hundreds or thousands.

**RWH:** ("Between a one and a two") Oh, elementary teachers! No question! (laughing). I mean and the funny thing is, I think almost all teachers think that. I think that elementary teachers… a couple of us have actually discussed this at times…, but I think it’s at the secondary level that we open our mouths and speak, and that at the primary levels, I think that they’re less likely to make waves.. I think overall they’re more satisfied.

**MCW:** ("Three") Alright, I mean I don’t have a lot of contact [at the elementary level] but my hunch would say probably greater satisfaction [in the elementary school] just because you have your own issues, of course, that are unique to the elementary level. But by the time a kid gets to you, middle school, even high school, if they’re turned off, they’re turned off…I think there’s a greater degree of cynicism and pessimism and apathy [at the secondary level].
Group 5: Secondary Teachers Who Believe Teachers Are Equally Satisfied or That It Depends on Specific Circumstance

RCS: (“A qualified one”) Ooh. Wow. When I was down there, [elementary school] I did see evidence of little people, little problems. Then, with bigger people, obviously the issues get larger. Umm the people, I think there’s probably equal… equal satisfaction and dissatisfaction depending on the issue.

DOC: (“One…very satisfied”) I think that they’re, that they’re equally satisfied. They’re equally satisfied just as are the elementary school teachers. I believe that umm they’re equally satisfied because I can’t imagine…I mean…Let’s put it this way: if you’re unhappy with what you’re doing, then you should change what you’re doing.

Group 6: Secondary Teacher Who Believes Grades K-2 and 9-12 Are More Satisfied

DPK: (“Two…But I would rather be doing something else”) I have to tell you I think that the teachers of K-2 and teachers of high school are more satisfied then teachers of 3-8 The high school teachers are very, very heavily invested in their subject. When you teach a subject as opposed to a broad spectrum of subjects, it’s different for you. It really is because your subject matter is interesting to you. So it’s always more job satisfaction. So I would say that at the very top and the very bottom.

Nine elementary teachers answered the question about which group (elementary or secondary) they believe are more satisfied. Within this group of nine, five believe elementary teachers are more satisfied than secondary teachers, and among these five, four teachers rated themselves in response to question 5 as “satisfied” (self-score of “2”) and one of these indicated a level of “3,” midway between very satisfied and very dissatisfied. Two elementary teachers
believe secondary teachers experience greater work satisfaction, and these two are close to opposite ends of the spectrum of self-reported satisfaction, with one indicating a rating of “4” (somewhat dissatisfied) and one a rating of “1” (very satisfied). Two elementary respondents, thought satisfaction was more related to the actual classroom experience or the teacher’s personality rather than a product of any particular level, and both of these are “very satisfied” as teachers.

Six secondary teachers answered the question about which group (elementary or secondary) they believe are more satisfied. Within this group of six, three believed elementary teachers are more satisfied than secondary teachers, and among these three, two teachers rated themselves in response to question 5 as midway between very satisfied and very dissatisfied (self-score of 3), while one teacher self-scored as “1”—very satisfied. One teacher believes that teachers in grades K-2 and 9-12 are more satisfied, with those in grades 3-8 less satisfied, due to pressures imposed by state assessments; this teacher’s response to the self-satisfaction question was inconsistent, insofar as she rated herself a “2,” satisfied, but also said she’d “rather be doing something else.” Two secondary teachers believe that satisfaction is teacher or circumstance specific and is not tied to working on one school level or the other; both of these teachers rated themselves as “1,” very satisfied.

This research question, “Is there a significant difference in overall professional satisfaction among teachers, correlating with the level at which they teach (elementary and secondary level)?” may be examined in several ways, based on survey responses and responses to question 7 in the interviews. According to the survey findings the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not statistically significant. Of the nine elementary teachers interviewed, seven are satisfied or very satisfied, one is between satisfied and dissatisfied, and
one is somewhat dissatisfied. Of the six secondary teachers interviewed, three are very satisfied, two are midway between satisfied and dissatisfied, and one is somewhat satisfied, but gave an inconsistent follow-up response, “but I would rather be doing something else.” Self-reported composite satisfaction is consistent between the two teacher groups interviewed: the majority of teachers in both elementary and secondary schools are somewhat to very satisfied as teachers.

Survey results showed, at the same time, that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment. Looking at the perceptions the interviewed teachers have of satisfaction on the elementary and secondary level, of 15 total teachers, eight believe elementary teachers are more satisfied, five of whom are elementary teachers, and three of whom are secondary teachers. Therefore, although the interview question asked more generally about perceptions of satisfaction at each level, the interviewed teachers’ responses resonate with the survey: the majority of interviewed teachers believe elementary teachers are more satisfied, and the survey indicates that as school level increases, teachers are less satisfied, from which we may surmise that elementary teachers tend to be more satisfied according to both the survey and the teachers interviewed. Interestingly, two teachers of the 15 interviewed believe secondary teachers are more satisfied, and both of those are elementary teachers, meaning that none of the secondary teachers believe that secondary teachers are more satisfied with their work. These interview opinions, while not explicitly asking for a response reflecting perceptions of current teaching assignment, bear a consistency with the survey findings that as school level increases, teachers are currently less satisfied.

The remaining five teachers interviewed either believe satisfaction cannot be determined by school level, but is personality or circumstance based. Two elementary and two secondary teachers indicated this response and one interviewee believes satisfaction is “split” between early
elementary (grades K-2) and high school teachers (grades 9-12). These responses suggest factors such as teacher personality, a given student body, specific issues generated at each level, or personal happiness or unhappiness are the driving factors of individual satisfaction. The teacher who splits satisfaction between the primary and high school grades believes the pressures of state testing and the need to provide a basic academic education in those grades decreases satisfaction among teachers in those grades relative to the other grades.

To examine further why, as survey results showed, that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment, I examined the responses of all teachers to survey question B2, “Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?”, then examined a selection of secondary teachers’ written responses to this same question. Table 5.7 shows the coded responses to survey question B2, the frequency of the response, and the percentage of total respondents (elementary and secondary combined) who responded to the question under that code.
Table 5.7
Responses to Survey Item B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A rewarding profession</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished goals and demands</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-teacher climate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding profession</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy grade level and subject</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy having own classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy supervisory/management role</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reason</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great mixture of students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion model</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love helping students grow and learn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love teaching</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowded classroom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor prior student preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive work environment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to differentiate instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced to just a job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School disorganized and unsafe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.7 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe behavior problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group learning more effective</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive administration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many administrative tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much emphasis on tests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much state interference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want new teaching opportunity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 5.7 shows, the majority of responses indicate reasons for satisfaction in teaching, consistent with the findings of this study that overall, teachers surveyed and interviewed are satisfied with their jobs and overall, there is no difference in composite satisfaction between elementary and secondary teachers. However, if we isolate the coded responses, indicated in italics, where respondents indicate a negative experience or dissatisfaction with current teaching assignment (Survey Item B2), we find the following codes and frequencies among teachers who completed the open-ended portion of B2, “Why” [have you indicated the level of satisfaction with your current teaching assignment that you did?], outlined in Table 5.8.
Table 5.8
Codes and Frequencies to Open-Ended Question B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-teacher climate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowded classroom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor prior student preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced to just a job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School disorganized and unsafe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe behavior problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want new teaching opportunity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much emphasis on tests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much state interference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many administrative tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses indicate that dissatisfaction with current teaching assignment among surveyed teachers center working conditions (i.e. overcrowded classroom), state interference, specifically tied to testing and teacher evaluations, and anti-teacher climate. Next, as indicated in Tables 5.9 and 5.10, respectively, sampling written responses from elementary and secondary teachers in a cross section of districts (affluent, middle class and high needs) from survey responses to question B2 provides this information:
Table 5.9
Sample of Responses of Elementary Teachers Indicating Negative Response regarding Current Teaching Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District and Survey Number</th>
<th>Type of District</th>
<th>Sample of Elementary Responses to Survey Item B2, Open-Ended Response Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pines #45</td>
<td>Affluent</td>
<td>I just wish everyone wasn’t so test driven and assessment based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pines #51</td>
<td>Affluent</td>
<td>Eventually, with all the state demands, I might want to get out of the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedars #69</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Many behavior problems on top of all the new standards and APPR very stressful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers #31</td>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>The number of students in the classroom makes it hard to maintain classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers #42</td>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>I’m disheartened by how much the state dictates what happens. I’m waiting for the day I receive a script of exactly what I should say each and every day. I feel we are losing the creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.10

Sample of Responses of Secondary Teachers Indicating Negative Response regarding Current Teaching Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District and Survey Number</th>
<th>Type of District</th>
<th>Sample of Secondary Responses to Survey Item B2, Open-Ended Portion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pines #11</td>
<td>Affluent</td>
<td>It’s become merely a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers #14</td>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>Being a new teacher is overwhelming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers #16</td>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>Albany/those in charge at the state and federal level are ruining the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers #21</td>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>I am often overworked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedars #78</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>There isn’t enough time in a day to prepare as well as I want to while keeping up with grading, parent communication, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We see that while statistically as grade level increases satisfaction with current teaching assignment decreases, among elementary and secondary teachers, a sample of responses to open-ended question B2 suggests that the reasons for dissatisfaction are strikingly similar on each level. Teacher dissatisfaction centers on both levels and across types of districts on the demands of the job (“I am often overworked”; “The number of students in the classroom makes it hard to maintain classroom management”), and on the mandates surrounding state testing and the perceived intrusions to the lives of teachers from those far removed from the classroom. Responses such as, “Eventually, with all the state demands, I might want to get out of the classroom” and “I’m disheartened by how much the state dictates what happens. I’m waiting for the day I receive a script of exactly what I should say each and every day. I feel we are losing the creativity and out-of-the-box thinking” are reflective of elementary teachers’ thinking. Responses
from secondary teachers, “It’s become merely a job” and, “Albany/those in charge at the state and federal level are ruining the profession” suggest similar roots on the secondary level to those of elementary teachers experiencing dissatisfaction: a sense that the creativity and joy of teaching has been stolen from the classroom, that testing, external accountability and teacher assessment under the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) mandate are creating disaffection to the point that, “It has become merely a job” for at least one secondary teacher and “I might want to get out of the classroom” for at least one elementary teacher.

**Conclusion: Satisfaction and Teaching Level**

Statistically, findings for question 2 show there was no difference in overall professional satisfaction between elementary and high school teachers; the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not statistically significant. Analysis of responses to open-ended responses B1 and B2 showed that statistically both elementary and high school teachers were more satisfied with their present teaching assignment than with teaching as a profession. But the correlation between school level and B2 (present teaching assignment) was statistically significant, which indicated that as school level increases (elementary to secondary level) teachers are less satisfied with their present teaching assignment. Further examination of all coded responses to B2 suggest high levels of satisfaction among all respondents, but where dissatisfaction exists, both elementary and secondary teachers indicate similar reasons for dissatisfaction. The statistical difference for current teaching assignment indicates that, while secondary teachers are more dissatisfied than elementary teachers, the responses to B2, and previous analysis of interviews in this chapter, show that satisfaction and dissatisfaction is significantly influenced by similar factors across grade levels: working conditions, climate and
support, perceptions of teachers, and the influence of external agents (state testing and mandates) all play a significant role in teacher work satisfaction.

**Research Question 3: How does job satisfaction at these levels correlate with teacher retention rates at each level?**

Discussion of research questions 1 and 2 have included analyses that are also at the heart of question 3. Findings from the survey administration showed that, controlling for school level, the correlation between satisfaction and retention was positively and strongly correlated and statistically significant. Across school levels, satisfaction and retention were also positively and strongly correlated. Controlling for years teaching, the correlation was also positive and strong and statistically significant. Taking a closer look at years teaching in groups of years, the correlations were positive, moderate to strong, and statistically significant for teachers who had been teaching between 6 and 20 years. However, for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, correlations were not statistically significant. Therefore, overall, there is a significant, positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention, meaning that the more satisfied teachers are with their assignment and teaching as a profession, the longer they will stay in teaching, and vice versa. Table 5.11 reviews the correlation between years of teaching, retention and satisfaction.
Table 5.11
Correlation between Years of Teaching, Retention and Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Retention (M)</th>
<th>Satisfaction (M)</th>
<th>Correlation $r_s$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings suggest that my original research question regarding satisfaction and retention at elementary and secondary levels revealed that years of teaching more than school level creates a correlation between satisfaction and retention. Returning to the interview transcripts, also referenced in the discussion of question 1, we see that across school levels, most teachers interviewed intend to remain in teaching, no matter their level of satisfaction. Table 5.12 reviews the essential statements of each interviewee regarding satisfaction and retention and is presented again for convenient access to these responses.

Table 5.12
Satisfaction and Retention Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Code: KWA</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction: (1) Satisfied to (5) Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Retention and Reason for Staying or Thinking of Leaving?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary 1-9 Years</td>
<td>I’ll say a two. I think I’m very satisfied overall</td>
<td>I’ll definitely stay in. I mean I’ve built my credits and built up my salary. I think that’s the main reason. Salary and the vacation time. It gets really exhausting but I still like the kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Elementary/Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>20-29 Years</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10-19 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| RWH    |              |                       | Yeah, I would say that I was…between a one | Okay, again this is sort of a two-part answer…Because I am retiring. I now know my retirement
A variable in the findings of this study emerges from the statistical analysis of satisfaction and retention and the interview transcripts: the quantitative data indicates years of teaching more than teaching level influences satisfaction and retention, while the qualitative data shows that most teachers, despite years in teaching, intend to remain as teachers, whether very, somewhat, or not very satisfied with their work, and neither qualitative nor quantitative findings directly correlates school level to satisfaction to retention. While satisfaction is correlated to retention at both levels, the study does not show a distinction between school levels on the question of satisfaction and retention. One reason for this limitation emerges in a review of the population of teachers surveyed and of those interviewed, as indicated in Table 5.13.
Because some teachers indicated having taught at both elementary and secondary levels, the total of all responses (157) exceeds the total of survey respondents (131) in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13

Grouped Years of Teaching by School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Elementary (K-6)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Secondary (7-12)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 9 yrs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19 yrs</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29 yrs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 yrs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey question on years of teaching asked one open-ended question regarding years of teaching experience: “Question 9: For how many years have you taught at each of the following levels? Grades K-6__________Grades 7-12_________.” Teachers filled in the number of years they have taught at each level. Table 5.13 groups teachers on the basis of cluster responses between years 1-9, 10-19, etc. However, in the analysis of correlations between satisfaction and retention, it was among the group of teachers for years of teaching fewer than 6 years or greater than 21 years, where correlations were not statistically significant, while those between 6 and 20 years were statistically significant. Table 5.14 shows the number of years of experience of interviewed teachers, by level and years of experience:
Table 5.14
Interviewed Teachers by Level and Years’ Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>Elementary or Secondary</th>
<th>Number of Years as Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWA</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFW</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGO</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPM</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWS</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Elementary/Secondary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWE</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>20-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCM</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>20-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCW</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWH</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPK</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>40-49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we see, eight of the interviewed teachers have between 10 and 19 years’ experience, five have between 20 and 29 years’ experience and one has between 1 and 9 years and one between 40 and 49 years. Despite the statistical correlation for teachers between 6 and 20 years between satisfaction and retention, and the predominance of interviewed teachers (50%) in that range of experience, the interview responses of those teachers do not match the statistical analysis of that range of teachers in the survey. One explanation for this is that the sample size of interviewed teachers is significantly smaller than the survey size. In Chapter 3 of this paper I explained the challenge of following up with teachers who had indicated on the survey they would be willing to be interviewed but who, when contacted, did not respond to the request to set
up an interview date and time. When only ten surveyed teachers responded to the request for interviews, I reached out to five more teachers who were not surveyed, through contacts I had in each of the school districts in this study. It might be speculated that more teachers willing to be interviewed held a favorable feeling about their work and were willing to speak about it than those who were dissatisfied with their jobs, and that for those interviewed, years of experience is less of a factor (as it is in the survey) in a discussion of satisfaction and retention. This question is discussed further in the “Limitations” section of this paper.

**Conclusion: Satisfaction, Retention and Teaching Level**

Despite the variables in the findings of this question, there is still information that suggests, in both the statistical analyses and interview transcripts, a relationship between teacher satisfaction and retention. My survey of 133 teachers in six districts in Nassau County, New York indicates that for both elementary and secondary school levels the correlation between satisfaction and retention was significant. This paper has explored in detail the relationship between the factors of choice of teaching, climate, support, professional development, and perceptions of teachers (how they see themselves perceived) and satisfaction. From the survey results we see that ClimateSupportDevelopment, followed by perceptions of teachers, correlate to satisfaction. We also see in the interview findings a qualitative relationship between choice of entry to teaching and satisfaction. The survey results also indicate that, as school level increases, teachers are less satisfied with their current teaching assignment, although statistically the composite satisfaction score between teaching levels was not statistically significant and both elementary and high school teachers were more satisfied with their current teaching assignment than with the profession. Both elementary and secondary teachers identified, in responses to survey items B1 and B2, and in interviews, that external pressure from community, parents, state
mandates, testing and teacher performance evaluations increase dissatisfaction, while satisfaction is tied to affective factors such as love of teaching as a profession, relationships with students, and a sense of personal and professional well-being achieved with student growth and success. (See Appendix D)

To explore a possible correlation further, from a chosen group among a randomized selection of survey responses to open-ended survey question B1, “Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession? Why?” [did you choose the Likert-scale response from “Very satisfied to “Very dissatisfied”] the following responses, outlined in Table 5.15, suggest why teachers, by and large, and despite significant reason for dissatisfaction tied to external pressures previously discussed, remain as teachers.
Table 5.15
Survey Item B1: Selection of Randomized Responses Indicating Reasons for Satisfaction with Teaching as a Profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Number (Randomized)</th>
<th>B 1: Why (are you satisfied or dissatisfied with teaching as a profession)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>I am given the opportunity to be creative in my classroom while meeting the standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I enjoy the collaborative part of working with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>I love to teach and I am very satisfied when my students meet their academic goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>I went to school because I love the learning process. I still love the learning process and am fascinated by it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>On a personal level, there is nothing I can imagine that would have been more fulfilling than my work as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>I love to come to work every day. I find teaching a rewarding profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Every day, I touch another life that I make better. Nothing is more satisfying than that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>I love teaching. It is an opportunity to experience a sense of contributing to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Teaching for the past 27 years has fulfilled me both professionally and personally. It has allowed me to work with children, my earliest passion, and to support my family both financially and with time to be with them. Teaching is a wonderful profession!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>I have always wanted to be a teacher and consider it a vocation rather than a career choice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these excerpts in response to open-ended survey item B1, there emerges a relationship between satisfaction and retention, based on these articulations. Striking in these responses are sentiments regarding creativity (Survey 50), love of teaching and learning (Surveys 122, 73, 66, 86), positive influence on students (Survey 122, 51, 86) and teaching as more than a
job, or as a vocation (Survey 55). In Chapter 1, a theoretical framework was explored for this paper, centered on Self-Determination Theory as developed by Gagné and Deci. Gagné and Deci, in *Self Determination Theory and Work Motivation* (2005) cite Porter and Lawler’s (1968) “proposed model of intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation [according to which] people [do] an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 331) and continue, “Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. When people engage an activity because they find it interesting, they are doing the activity wholly volitionally (e.g., I work because it is fun)” (p.334). Gagné and Deci (2005) also suggest a relationship between work satisfaction and the perceptions of others regarding the value of the work performed: “When people are autonomously motivated at work they tend to experience their jobs as interesting or personally important, self-initiated, and endorsed by relevant others. When people perform effectively at these jobs, they experience satisfaction of the basic psychological needs and have positive attitudes toward their jobs” (p. 353).

Based on Self-Determination Theory, selected responses from teachers to open-ended item B1 on the survey, and previously examined responses to interview questions about satisfaction and retention, we may conclude that satisfaction is tied to retention because satisfied teachers have an intrinsic, affective relationship to their students and their work, leading to “satisfaction of basic psychological needs” and “positive attitudes toward their jobs” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 353). Satisfaction is tied to retention across school levels because teacher satisfaction, where it exists, is so deeply personal that it is tied to the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for a human sense of personal importance and endorsement. Retention is also influenced by financial factors, as described by survey response 27, and articulated in the
interviews by interviewees KWA and RWH. However, for the majority of teachers on both elementary and secondary levels, satisfaction is intrinsic and retention is a foregone conclusion: despite the numerous challenges and a creeping sense of intrusion to the profession, satisfied teachers cannot imagine not being teachers and they consider remaining a teacher a lifelong commitment.

**Recommendations, Limitations and Conclusion**

Carroll and Foster’s 2010 report for the National Commission on Teaching and America’s future (NCTAF) paints a bleak picture of the future of the teaching workforce in the United States. Their article, “Who Will Teach? Experience Matters” suggests a severely diminished teaching workforce in the 21st century:

In addition to hemorrhaging teaching talent at the beginning of the career, we are about to lose accomplished teaching talent at the veteran end of the career on an unprecedented scale. The teaching career pipeline is collapsing at both ends. Even our highest performing schools and districts are about to lose much of the expertise that has been at the core of their success for decades. Teaching effectiveness in virtually every school district in the country will be affected, just as we are challenged with educating a 21st century workforce that can keep us competitive in a global economy. (p. 4).

Further, Fulton, Yoon, and Lee (2005), writing for NCTAF on induction to teacher learning communities, cite NCTAF’s own estimate, “that, every year, America’s schools lose approximately $2.6 billion to teacher attrition,” but they continue that, “We believe this is a low estimate” (p.8). The impact of teacher turnover is costly, they contend, not only in terms of
dollars, but in human costs. They also note, “Districts lose the momentum of reform initiatives when their teachers leave. Schools lose the continuity and consistency that are essential to the fabric of their communities. Students are forced to adapt to a passing parade of teachers, severing the emotional bonds formed with some of the most important adults in their daily lives.” (pp.8-9).

Hill and Barth (2004) also cite numerous studies regarding the devastating impact of teacher attrition on schools and students. Citing Ingersoll (2002) they note that, “teacher attrition and shortages are due largely to teacher dissatisfaction and pursuit of other jobs” (Hill & Barth, 2004, p. 175) and they further cite Fimian and Blanton (1986) who “found stress and job dissatisfaction as compelling reasons to abandon teaching careers (Hill & Barth, 2004, p. 175). To compound matters, Hill and Barth (2004) conclude that, “Teaching is stressful. Yet new and excessive stress has been generated by NCLB. Teachers worry about the law’s vague but omnipresent threats” (p. 178). NCLB is an acronym for No Child Left Behind, the title of federal legislation (2001) preceding the current Race to the Top federal guidelines (2009) for teacher evaluation systems based on student achievement on standardized testing, guidelines which have been the sources of much stress for teachers across the country. As noted in the analysis of teacher responses to questions B1 and B2 in the survey for this study, and in the interviews conducted, teacher evaluation systems based on student test scores, and the increasing influence of state mandates on teachers’ work experience, have been the source of much distress and professional anxiety for many educators.

The intent of this study has been to examine the relationship between five factors teachers encounter in their work experience, their influence on satisfaction, the relationship between satisfaction and retention, and the question of whether teachers are more satisfied on one teaching level over another (elementary vs. secondary levels). Because of the pedagogical and
emotional cost of teacher dissatisfaction and the financial cost of attrition, the questions of how districts might better understand the teacher work experience, of how to keep qualified teachers in the classroom and of how to formulate recommendations for further research have been at the heart of this paper. Of note is Ingersoll’s study of teacher turnover and shortages from an organizational perspective (2001), where he explains that his analysis “indicates that teacher characteristics, such as specialty field and age, are strongly related to turnover. But, net of the effects of these teacher characteristics, there are also significant effects of school characteristics and organizational conditions on turnover that have largely been overlooked by previous research” (p. 501). Ingersoll, in this study, reviews the research on teacher turnover, noting the factors of individual teacher characteristics, subject-areas taught and age as significant in prior research. Ingersoll indicates that, “researchers have consistently found that younger teachers have very high rates of departure. Subsequently, as those remaining ‘settle in,’ turnover rates decline through the mid-career period and, finally, rise again in the retirement years” (p. 502). Ingersoll’s 2001 study probes further into teacher attrition as he examines “the role of school characteristics and organizational conditions in teacher turnover” (p. 507). Interestingly, at the conclusion of his study of attrition from an organizational analysis perspective, Ingersoll reports, “Among the least prominent reasons for [teacher] turnover is retirement” (p. 521). Ingersoll’s study finds the most prominent reasons for attrition is dissatisfaction, “due to low salaries, lack of support from school administration, lack of student motivation, and student discipline problems” (p. 522). Finally, Ingersoll’s data shows that “neither large schools, public schools in large school districts, urban public schools, nor high-poverty public schools have the highest rates of teacher turnover” but that, “in contrast, small private schools stand-out for their relatively high rates of turnover”; Ingersoll’s underlying premise is that “high levels of
employee turnover are tied to how well organizations function” (p. 526). Both Ingersoll’s study and NCTAF’s findings suggest possible limitations of this paper and recommendations for further research of the critical question of teacher work experience.

**Limitations**

One significant question suggesting a limitation of this paper lies between prior research on teacher retention and the findings of this study. Ingersoll’s (2001) extensive work on teacher work satisfaction and the organizational reasons for attrition, and the NCTAF report (2010) on teacher attrition which notes high teacher turnover at over 30% percent in the first five years’ of teaching careers, vary from the findings in this study, which showed significance between satisfaction and retention in teachers who have between six and twenty years ‘experience, but not among those with prior to 6 or over 20 years’ experience. The following discussion outlines potential factors that contribute to this disparity.

If we review the schools used in conducting the survey, Table 5.16 provides information relevant to this discussion.
Table 5.16
School Districts Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Enrollment/Free and Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Turnover Rate of Teachers with Fewer Than Five Years’ Experience</th>
<th>Turnover Rate of All Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cedars</td>
<td>1413 / 19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frasers</td>
<td>6367 / 54%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jades</td>
<td>3025 / 3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>5836 / 11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>4888 / 4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willows</td>
<td>6376 / 54%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [https://reportcards.nysed.gov](https://reportcards.nysed.gov)

Data from the New York State Education Department’s 2012 annual report card of school districts within the state shows that the six districts from which participants came did indeed have high turnover rates of teachers within the first five years of teaching. Interestingly, Ingersoll’s (2001) discussion of data notes that larger public schools, larger school districts and high poverty schools do not have the highest rate of teacher turnover and that well-functioning organizations have lower rates of employee turnover (p. 526). Consistent with these findings, of the six districts surveyed, the two with the highest need, based on free and reduced lunch eligibility, showed the lowest teacher turnover rates (Frasers: 15%; Willows, 20%). So why, then, was there limited correlation in the survey between new teachers and retention, and little indication among survey respondents of thoughts of attrition? I hypothesize that even though
both the survey and the interviews indicated considerable concern among teachers regarding the direction of the profession, those who volunteered for the survey and the interviews represent a population potentially less disenfranchised than the general population of teachers. In other words, while survey responses to the Likert questions and open-ended items B1 and B2, and those in the interviews, were candid, they were coming from a population of teachers whose personalities are inclined to cooperate upon request (such as in volunteering for a survey or interviews) or to respond to requests for cooperation from immediate supervisors. Ingersoll (2003) observes that, “Research on occupational choice and values has shown that an unusually large proportion of those entering teaching are motivated by what is called altruistic or public-service ethic. Such individuals place… more importance on the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of society, to work with people, to serve their community, to help others—in short, to do ‘good’” (pp. 168-169). As noted in the methodology outlined in Chapter 3, survey volunteers were solicited through administrative colleagues of mine in the school districts participating in the study. Considering Ingersoll’s observation, a subset of teachers willing to participate in a survey or interview within a group possessing a service orientation might result in a population with a strongly cooperative orientation. Among those participating in the survey, 19% of whom have less than 10 years’ experience, the inclination of a significant percentage of this demographic group, if inclined to cooperate, might also have an orientation to persevere in teaching, despite challenges and obstacles. If volunteers for the survey and interviews exclude the most disenfranchised teachers, those most seriously considering leaving within the first five years, or those thinking most seriously of retiring, those groups are not fully represented in the study. To reinforce this hypothesis regarding these teacher groups, I recall the one teacher who revealed to me she was retiring the year following the interview (RWH) did so only on condition
of the complete preservation of her privacy, especially from her immediate supervisor. To add to
this potential limitation, among the 15 interviewees, only one teacher had less than 10 years’
experience, making it difficult to assess from those interviews a proportion among which
attrition would be likely. The personality orientation of novice and most experienced teachers in
this study may have influenced data and survey outcomes, presenting a potential limitation of the
study.

Ingersoll (2001) concludes that small private schools have the largest turnover, “almost
one-fourth of their faculty each year” (p. 526), attributable in part to compensation in smaller
private schools, forcing some teachers to leave because they cannot afford to remain (p. 527). If
we consider compensation, examination of the six school districts used in this survey shows they
are all within a specific geographic region of New York State: Nassau County, New York. Each
of the six districts, Cedars, Jades, Willows, Oaks, Pines and Frasers, are medium to large sized
suburban districts. None of them, however, is a low-paying school district. The suburbs of New
York City and in Nassau County specifically, are among the highest paying regions in the
country for teachers, with most districts paying $100,000 per year for teachers with ten years’
experience, and salaries reaching into the mid $100,000 range at the upper end of the salary
schedule, not including benefits. In fact, as discussed previously, several interview participants
referenced community perceptions of high teacher salaries as one of the causes of discontent
among community members in their districts: the perception exists that teachers in Nassau
County school districts are overpaid for the work they do and the scope of their work day and
year. A factor in this paper that may also be a limitation lies, therefore, in the profile of school
districts and population of teachers who participated. While the data and interviews surfaced
significant information about factors influencing satisfaction and between satisfaction and grade
level taught, the relationship between satisfaction and retention, though significant for teachers between 6 and 20 years, is not among those between 1 and 6 or more than 20 years, according to survey data. The findings from teachers surveyed and interviewed for this paper do not show the same outcomes as those from Ingersoll’s work or NCTAF’s report. For the lower end of the experience range, the reason may be that the population of respondents was skewed to those more cooperative and less likely to leave, despite levels of dissatisfaction. For the upper end, the population may be that group whose salary and benefits are simply too high to have them seriously consider attrition. For the group within the 6-20 year range, where significance did exist between satisfaction and retention, the simple fact may be that while they are relatively well compensated, distress surrounding dissatisfaction, added to the high number of years remaining in the careers of these teachers, surfaced more consideration of attrition prior to retirement eligibility in this population of surveyed teachers.

A second limitation of this study lies in the scope of investigation of the factors influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In creating the survey items, I asked questions to elicit responses regarding how choice of entry, school climate and support, professional development and perceptions of teachers influence satisfaction. The data and interviews show that these factors do influence satisfaction, but the survey directly asked only one question regarding teacher evaluation systems; question 14 states, “Teacher evaluation systems are based on a general perception that many teachers are not good at their jobs.” Based on open-ended and interview responses, teacher evaluation systems and mandated state testing tied to these evaluations are an especially important and disconcerting factor for significant numbers of teachers and contribute to dissatisfaction. It would have contributed to the findings to more directly examine the impact of Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) legislation in
the survey. I believe satisfaction may have correlated to retention for teachers between 6 and 20 years precisely because it is for teachers in those years that APPR is most significant. Teachers relatively new to teaching who might be thinking of leaving and those with more than twenty years in the classroom (and closer to retirement) may feel the implications of APPR and testing less than those in mid-career. Interview transcripts, previously examined in this paper, indicate that APPR is very much on teachers’ minds; a limitation of this study is that it asked questions about significant factors in teachers’ work lives, but not enough about one factor emerging as a game-changer in the profession, the factor of state-mandated, annual numerical rating of teachers, and the publication of those ratings to community members of the school district in which each teacher works. Further recommendation regarding research into the impact of performance review evaluations as mandated by APPR are included in the recommendations section of this paper which follows.

An overarching explanation of the variations of the findings of my study from previously cited literature is offered by considering the work of Linda Evans (1997) in a study of teacher morale and job satisfaction. Her work, conducted at an English primary school, explores the “Individuality of Morale and Job Satisfaction” in which she notes, “The individuality of human behavior, arising out of differences in life experiences and biographical factors, and which underpins the heterogeneity of teachers, is clearly the underlying reason for diversity of responses” (p. 840). Evans identifies three factors at play which are influential in teachers’ attitudinal responses: “Professionality …a professional-oriented perspective which incorporates values and vision…Relative Perspective …how [teachers] view their work in relation to other factors [including] comparative experiences, comparative insights, and the circumstances and events which make up the rest of their lives; their non-work selves…and Realistic
Expectations…those expectations which they feel are realistically able to be fulfilled” (pp. 840-842). Evans’ insight to the highly individualized nature of teachers’ work experience, coupled with the highly personal interaction teachers have with themselves as professionals, may offer further understanding of the findings of this study and those of Ingersoll, et al.. For as many teacher groups as exist, the individual, unique context of their work experience will influence their feelings about their work. For the population of teachers surveyed and interviewed in this paper, geographical considerations, the shifting demands of state and federal mandates, and the population of those willing to volunteer for the study are all factors playing a role in this study’s findings. Given the highly individualized nature of the teaching work experience, variations in findings are inevitable, although on a larger scale, findings frequently point to similar factors contributing to and diminishing satisfaction, most notably those providing sufficient resources and enabling a sense of autonomy and a feeling of being respected.

**Recommendations for School Districts**

School districts face compelling challenges, given the pressures being brought to bear on public education, and thus on teachers, in the current political and economic climate. On the one hand, districts are mandated to carry out legislated reforms, specifically those emanating from Race to the Top federal funding: standardized tests and teacher evaluations based on specified performance measures. On the other hand, districts have to contend with the real-time impact of enacting these reforms, impacts which hit teachers hardest. Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Michelli, and Wyckoff (2006), writing on the pathways to teaching in New York City schools, capture one of the chief concerns in the current data-driven educational environment:

Many educators worry, with good reason, about the implications of using value-added
measures to make claims about teacher effectiveness. There are two particularly worrisome features of this approach. First, achievement tests measure only a small part of students’ learning. By focusing on these measures, we are missing many important aspects of learning, as well as other valued outcomes of schooling; this is an inherent limitation to these kinds of data. (p. 163).

While these researchers recognize that standardized testing does yield potentially useful information about how well students are learning specific, targeted, skills, their expressed caution goes to the heart of the challenge school districts face. Educators who worry about the use of value-added measures to rate teachers are wise to do so; there are so many variables that come into play with standardized test outcomes that the reliability of these measures is rightly called into question. Further, as these authors state, such tests measure a small part of what students learn in school. Herein lies the conundrum for school districts that attempt to pay attention to teacher work satisfaction and retention: districts are compelled to use test data to evaluate teacher effectiveness, while at the same time much of what constitutes the successful (and satisfied) teacher lies outside the measures of testing.

As this study has suggested, much of the core of teacher satisfaction lies in the qualitative relationship teachers have with students and with the subjects they teach. Intrinsic motivation, leading to satisfaction and a sense of professional well-being, is largely affectively driven. Interviewed teachers in this study chose teaching because of a family history in the profession or because they saw teaching as a way to propagate their own positive experiences as students. Districts that work to provide a positive climate, meaningful support, worthwhile professional development and a culture of respect in the local community for teachers are districts supportive of teacher work satisfaction. Districts solely invested in data-driven measures, student outcomes
on standardized tests, and teacher evaluation systems rooted in testing and assigning a number to teachers are those marginalizing the qualitative experience of the teacher in her classroom, each day, each period, with each student.

The one most salient recommendation from this study for school districts, therefore, is to find a balance between the mandates of Race to the Top legislation and the daily reality of how to create and sustain a supportive work environment for teachers. Such districts will allow teachers a voice in the creation of curriculum. They will provide professional development that is teacher-centered if not teacher-generated. They will listen to teachers and permit the one thing teachers crave most: a sense of autonomy around what they do in their classes and a sense of control among teachers regarding the overall work and mission of the school. Such districts will work to create program that supports best practice for student success on standardized tests: after all, if students to well on these tests and teacher evaluations are reflective of successful performance, teachers are likely to feel validated, and more satisfied, with those positive outcomes. If school districts find such a balance, teacher work satisfaction is likely to be sustained if not increased, and retention across the spectrum has a chance at being sustained. This, ultimately, leads to stronger, healthier school districts, more satisfied teachers, and ultimately a richer educational environment, from both a financial and a human capital perspective.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Recommendations for further study of teacher work satisfaction may be considered on both a macro and a micro level. Linda Evans’ (1997) study of teacher morale and satisfaction defines morale as “a state of mind determined by the individual’s anticipation of the extent of
satisfaction of those needs which s/he perceives as significantly affecting her/his total work situation” (p. 832). We may contrast Evans’ definition of morale with an excerpt from a well-publicized letter of resignation written by social studies teacher Valerie Strauss in April, 2013, to the superintendent of her school district in Syracuse, New York.

My profession is being demeaned by a pervasive atmosphere of distrust, dictating that teachers cannot be permitted to develop and administer their own quizzes and tests (now titled as generic “assessments”) or grade their own students’ examinations. The development of plans, choice of lessons and the materials to be employed are increasingly expected to be common to all teachers in a given subject. This approach not only strangles creativity, it smothers the development of critical thinking in our students and assumes a one-size-fits-all mentality more appropriate to the assembly line than to the classroom. Teacher planning time has also now been so greatly eroded by a constant need to “prove up” our worth to the tyranny of APPR (through the submission of plans, materials and “artifacts” from our teaching) that there is little time for us to carefully critique student work, engage in informal intellectual discussions with our students and colleagues, or conduct research and seek personal improvement through independent study. We have become increasingly evaluation and not knowledge driven. Process has become our most important product, to twist a phrase from corporate America, which seems doubly appropriate to this case. After writing all of this I realize that I am not leaving my profession, in truth, it has left me. It no longer exists. I feel as though I have played some game halfway through its fourth quarter, a timeout has been called, my teammates’ hands have all been tied, the goal posts moved, all previously scored points and honors expunged and all of the rules altered.
Strauss’ pained letter stands in stark contrast to Evans’ understanding of morale as linked to anticipation of satisfaction perceived as significantly affecting work; together, these set the stage for recommendations regarding further research on teacher work satisfaction. The impact of federal legislation under the titles of No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to the Top (2009) have had a seriously negative impact on teacher morale, ranging from dispirited comments offered by teachers surveyed and interviewed for this paper, to the dramatic and highly publicized letter written by Valerie Strauss. Kersaint, et al. (2007) describe the *joy of teaching* “[as relating] to the perception of teaching as an enjoyable occupation” and posit that, “it is reasonable to assume that if the other factors [in their study: time with family, family responsibility, administrative support, financial benefits, and paperwork/assessment] were adequately addressed teachers would find teaching more enjoyable” (p. 791). Further research must address the factors studied in this paper and those studied by researchers such as Kersaint and colleagues that diminish teacher morale and lead to dissatisfaction, with specific focus on the impact of legislatively mandated teacher-evaluation systems. For many teachers the letters APPR have become another four-letter word; they report feeling diminished by numerically-based rating systems tied to teacher observations and state assessments. APPR runs the risk of accelerating attrition, or just as dangerously, discouraging otherwise qualified individuals from entering the teaching profession at all. Significant research of the impact of APPR mandates is critically important to the literature in this field.

Carroll and Foster (2010), citing NCTAF’s analysis of data, note with alarm that, “Almost half of the teaching workforce is made up of Baby Boomers who are at or near
retirement. In 1976, when young Baby Boomers were flooding the ranks of teaching, the average teaching age was 36; in 2007-08 it was 42…We now have the oldest teaching workforce in more than half a century” (p. 7). Writing in 2003, prior to the full enactment of APPR legislation, Richard Ingersoll (2003) presciently observed the following:

> The use of student test scores to assess teachers has always been an extremely contentious issue. For decades, proponents of the view that schools lack sufficient organizational control have touted them as one of the best means of “weeding out” incompetent teachers and, hence, one of the best methods of ensuring the accountability of teachers. However, the use of student test scores to assess teachers has also been severely criticized for its inability to separate out the portion of student achievement gains that are actually attributable to specific teachers. There are numerous other factors that affect student achievement as well, not least of which are the background, aptitude, attitude, and effort of students. Assessments that do not take account of all these factors can unfairly hold teachers accountable for things out of their control. For this reason, teachers at the elementary and secondary, and also collegiate, levels have long been adamantly opposed to the use of student test scores to assess their performance (p. 114).

The combination of an aging teacher workforce and teacher dispositions regarding performance evaluation tied to student test scores does not bode well for satisfaction in the teaching profession. Teachers are getting older, aspiring teachers are seeing that the profession is “not what it used to be”, and those at all stages of their careers face mounting pressure to prepare students for standardized tests on which the teacher herself will be evaluated. Further research
must address the demoralizing effect of externally mandated teacher evaluation systems. As cited previously in this paper, teaching is at once a highly public and a highly personal profession; to add insult to injury (from a teacher’s perspective) the fact that a given teacher’s annual rating, according to APPR legislation, must be made available to the parents of students currently in a teacher’s classes is to many a galling reality. The highly personal craft of teaching is assessed by standardized tests, with the teacher’s rating available to the public. Further research will do well to examine the consequences of this perfect storm of factors likely to exponentially increase teacher work dissatisfaction.

On a micro level, further research on teacher work satisfaction needs to hone in on the daily work experience of teachers. This study has considered the impact of factors of choice of entry to teaching, school climate, support, professional development and perceptions about teachers on satisfaction and retention. Ingersoll’s (2003) seminal work on the teaching experience, *Who Controls Teachers’ Work* cites the never-ending debate generated by the organizational anomalies inherent in schools. Because schools are charged with providing a publically funded service for a mass clientele (p. 34), from a management viewpoint, a bureaucratic structure makes sense: administration seeks to carry out the mandate of providing the service of educating youth as efficiently as possible. When it comes to the daily experience of carrying out the mandate, however, the teacher’s needs and preferences are often at odds with the efficiency-oriented preferences of administration. Ingersoll (2003), in summarizing the work of Bidwell, Lortie and other educational sociologists, suggests, “Like other human-service occupations, teaching is inherently non-tangible, fluid work; it requires flexibility, give and take, and making exceptions. This is all the more true they [Bidwell, Lortie, et.al] argue, because the clients of schools are children and adolescents---they are neither mature adults nor voluntary
participants (p. 34). Further research regarding teacher work satisfaction needs to examine the nexus between administrative, bureaucratic goals for schools and the goals of classroom teachers who are directly delivering the “non-tangible, fluid work” of teaching. The intent of my study has been to examine two types of influences on satisfaction: one type is the overall disposition of teachers, as evidenced by their feelings about choosing teaching (and reflecting, in the interviews, on that choice from a present-day perspective) and the perceptions they have of how they are viewed by others. The second type of influence is the daily lived experiences of teacher as suggested by the factors of school climate, support, and professional development. These latter factors, coupled with the myriad influences on a teacher’s daily experience, beg for further study.

As many surveyed and interviewed for this study suggest, for teachers, there’s the world “out there” of the larger school community, the administration, the community, a board of education, and state and federal mandates; then there’s the world “in here” of the teacher’s classroom and students. Each day a teachers engages in the highly personal dynamic of teaching and relating to a group of young people. In turn, each student comes from and returns to a home, a community and set of values that may be quite disparate from each other, but within the frame of the teachers’ classroom, and under the control of the teacher, each of those students need to be guided toward a common goal of academic learning and social development. For the teacher, daily support (or the lack of it), worthwhile professional development (or the absence of it) and an appropriate school climate (or the disintegration of it) have a significant impact of the world “in here” of the teacher’s classroom. Further study of the micro-elements that have a major influence of a teacher’s work experience is essential to the literature and is strongly recommended.
Conclusion

A conclusion to this paper brings me back to opening pages of this study, where I noted an intriguing observation in *Silences and Images*. Grovesnor, Lawn, and Rousmaniere (1999) suggest that the history of teachers is shrouded, ironically, in the absence of sound: “There have been a great many ‘silences’ in the history of education across many cultures, silences about the practice, meaning and culture of the classroom” (p. 1). Further, these authors suggest, these “silences” are found in the stasis of empty classroom, filled with desks, books and this question hanging in the air. We may extrapolate these authors’ question, “What was the lived reality of teacher’s work and student’s lives in and around [those] classrooms?” (Grovesnor, et al., p. 1) to a question that has hovered over this study: What is the lived reality of teacher’s work in the classroom today? If we better understand that lived reality, and the factors that contribute to or diminish teacher work satisfaction, it is possible for this or any study of teachers work experience to contribute to better teaching and learning. Teaching has become a highly complex profession. Teachers are individualized, independent workers who job performance is on public display. They are members of an organization of their local school and district but enact their work in a largely autonomous environment of the classroom. They are called on to act *in loco parentis* but must observe countless cautions about their interactions with students. They are praised when students do well and vilified when they don’t. Inherently, there are myriad contradictions and tensions in teaching, but satisfaction, a sense of fulfillment, and joy are likely to create better teachers; the challenge for researchers and educational policy is to contribute to an environment that encourages a teacher’s reaching his or her greatest professional potential, one that paves the way for a teacher to be joyful about teaching. The effort of this study has been to delve into the lived experience of teachers, unearthing factors that contribute to satisfaction
and exposing those that don’t. While teachers’ work lives are never likely to subscribe fully to the refrain, “And they lived happily ever after,” ongoing research and understanding may lead to the implementation of policy to make teachers’ work more satisfying. If a future with more satisfied teachers is the outcome, the “aim” of this paper, and of any meaningful study of this most noble profession, will have been a success.
Appendix

Appendix A: Pilot Study and Questionnaire

June, 2012

Dear Pilot Study Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this pilot of a survey I am formally conducting in the fall regarding teacher job satisfaction and retention, a topic which has been a long-held interest of mine. I am currently working on my PhD at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and this survey is a part of my dissertation. In order to conduct the pilot, I would ask the following:

1. Take the survey at a convenient time and in a quiet location.
2. Read the cover sheet to see if the directions are clear (note the directions about coding each page at the bottom of the survey).
3. Keep track of how long it takes you to complete the survey.
4. Note any questions that seem unclear or misplaced in the survey.
5. On the last page you will see there is information regarding follow up interviews. While the interview stage is a follow-up to the actual study, for the purposes of the pilot I would ask you fill in the contact information and your name (names are only requested in the pilot study). I will send you an email in the last week of June or first week of July, with your permission, to ask you follow-up questions about taking the survey. If I need to speak to you by phone, I will ask in the email whether that is acceptable and a good day or time to call.
6. You do not have to fill in “Survey Number” on each sheet.
7. Keep all these sheets stapled together, including the follow-up questionnaire.

Again, my sincere thanks for your time at this busy time!

Regards,

Patrick O’Reilly

IMPORTANT NOTE: SINCE THIS IS A PILOT STUDY ONLY, NONE OF YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE FULL ANALYSIS OF THE ACTUAL SURVEY NOR WILL THEY BE SHARED WITH ANYONE. THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT IS TO SURFACE PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS WITH THE QUESTIONNAIRE ITSELF. IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PILOT AT ANY POINT, PLEASE SIMPLY DESTROY IT. THIS IS ENTIRELY A VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. ED VASTA IS AWARE AND HAS GIVEN THE ‘OK’ THAT I AM SOLICITING VOLUNTEERS FOR THIS PILOT HERE.
Directions to Respondents: Teacher Work Satisfaction and Retention Survey

The attached survey contains the following:

A. Twenty five questions about experience as a teacher.
B. Two questions about level of satisfaction as a teacher.
C. Five questions about remaining in the teaching profession.
D. Twelve questions about demographic details.

For **Section A**, bubble in the “O” that most closely corresponds to your experience, belief, or feeling about that item. Note the headers ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” and bubble the “O” under the column most closely associated with your experience or belief.

For **Section B**, bubble in the response that corresponds to your experience or belief. Note the range of responses and briefly explain your bubbled responses in the spaces provided.

For **Section C**, bubble in the responses that most closely correspond to your experience or future intention, using the column headers (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) as a guide.

For **Section D**, bubble in the appropriate circles corresponding to your demographic information.

**YOU MAY USE PEN OR PENCIL FOR THIS SURVEY.**

Please do not leave any items blank.

On each page of the survey you will note, on the bottom of the page, a space for you to indicate the first letter of your first name and the first two letters of your last name. (e.g. John Dewey = JDE). This simple coding method will allow us to keep track of each page of the survey and for follow-up correspondence directly with you if you elect to participate in the next phase of the survey. Otherwise, there will be no attempt to contact you or determine your identity. Thank you for completing these coding blanks on each page.

Once you have completed the survey, please seal it in the envelope provided and return it to the contact person in your school, who is **Patrick O’Reilly**. These surveys will be returned to me in the sealed envelope. If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact me at 917 202 5698 or at poreilly@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you,

Patrick O’Reilly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A: Teaching Experience Questions:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The relationships between administrators and teachers in my school are generally respectful and positive</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When starting my career I felt a stronger desire to be a teacher rather than pursue any other career.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My choice to become a teacher was influenced more by economic benefits than an inherent desire to teach.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional development opportunities are readily available for teachers in my district.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The community in which my school is located values the education of its children.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel professionally supported by other teachers in the school in which I work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Administrators in the school in which I work support my efforts in the classroom.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Choosing to become a teacher was motivated by my desire to work with students in schools.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I chose to become a teacher even though I don’t particularly like working with young people.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents in the community in which I work regard teachers as professional workers.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My colleagues and I regularly collaborate on methods and curriculum in the school in which I work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. School administrators are not very supportive of the teachers in my school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Students in my school generally do not treat teachers with professional respect.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. APPR teacher evaluation measures are based on a perception that many teachers are not successful at their jobs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. There are clear consequences in my school for classroom misbehavior by students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Parents do not consider teachers as professionals in the way they might consider doctors or lawyers professionals.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. If more professional development were available, I believe it would strengthen my skills in the classroom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Being a teacher today holds meaning for me as it did when I entered the profession.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Class sizes in my school are such that I am able to work effectively with my students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Supplies and materials are sufficiently available in my school for me to teach effectively.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The schools in my district provide a supportive work environment for teachers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Administrators in my school understand that successful teaching extends beyond student performance on standardized tests.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I believe if someone is planning to become a teacher today people will consider them foolish for entering this line of work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. My school provides a safe and orderly environment for me to do my work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Professional Development opportunities allow me to improve my instructional practice.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section B: Satisfaction**

Please completely fill in one circle for the following two questions AND explain your reason for each choice.
1. How satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Why?

2. How satisfied are you with your present teaching situation?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Why?
Section C: Retention. Please answer each question below by filling in the appropriate circle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If there were no financial implications of doing so, I would likely</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave teaching for another profession.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My main reason for remaining a teacher is the feeling that it’s too</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late for me to change careers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I were financially secure but still wished to work, I would</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remain a teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Remaining a teacher for one’s working life is a personally rewarding</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I anticipate remaining a teacher for the remainder of my working</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Demographics: Please completely fill in one circle O for each of the following questions.

1. What is your gender?
   - O Male
   - O Female

2. What is your marital status?
   - O Single, never married
   - O Married
   - O Widowed/divorced/separated

3. Are you a parent:
   - O Yes
   - O No

4. What is your ethnic background?
   - O American Indian/Alaska Native
   - O Asian or Pacific Islander
   - O African America/Black
   - O Hispanic
   - O Caucasian/White
   - O Other (please specify)
5. What is your age?
- O 35 or under
- O 36–45
- O 46–55
- O 56–65
- O 66 or older

6. What is the highest degree you earned?
- O Bachelor’s degree
- O Master’s degree
- O Doctoral degree

7. What is the number of years you have taught in education?
- O 10 or fewer
- O 11–14
- O 15–20
- O 21–25
- O 26 or more

8. What is the number of years you have taught at the elementary level (K-5)
- O Zero Years
- O 10 or fewer
- O 11–14
- O 15–20
- O 21–25
- O 26 or more

9. What is the number of years you have taught at the middle school level (6-8)
- O Zero Years
- O 10 or fewer
- O 11–14
- O 15–20
- O 21–25
- O 26 or more

10. What is the number of years you have taught at the high school level (9-12)
- O Zero Years
- O 10 or fewer
- O 11–14
- O 15–20
- O 21–25
- O 26 or more

11. Indicate whether you are tenured and in which area(s) you are tenured.
- O Untenured
- O Tenured, Elementary (K-6 General License or Elementary Specialist)
- O Tenured, Secondary (7-12 License, Subject Area or Special Education License/ Specialist)

12. Indicate the best descriptor for the population of the district in which you currently work:
- O Urban/ Large City
- O Suburban/ middle class
- O Suburban/ wealthy
- O Suburban/ poor or disadvantaged
Thank you for your participation. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview please indicate your contact information below. Interviews will take between 20 and 30 minutes and will be conducted at your convenience. A separate form will be sent prior to interviews being conducted. If you agree to be interviewed, I will contact you via the method(s) you indicate below and ask you for identifying information. Interviews will be held in confidence.

__________Yes, I am willing to participate in a follow-up interview regarding my experience in the teaching profession, satisfaction and retention in the profession.

PILOT STUDY ONLY: Please write your name here:__________________________________________

PILOT STUDY ONLY: Please indicate your school here: Munsey Park/Shelter Rock/Secondary

Contact method: Phone (indicate whether home, work, or cell)________________________________

Email (please print clearly)_________________________________________________________________

Pilot Study Participant Questionnaire

1. Name___________________________School Building_________________

2. Grade Level (Elementary) or Department (Secondary) in 2011-12:

3. Upon completion of the survey, please indicate:
   a. How long did it take you to complete the survey, including reading the directions
      ________________________________.
   b. Please indicate any concerns or confusion you experienced in the survey directions (cover sheet of the survey):
   c. Indicate any uncertainty or confusion about the format of the questions and response areas the range (of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) the ease of identifying the correct circles for bubbling, the position of questions in each section:
   d. Indicate any uncertainty or confusion about the questions in each of the following sections;
      Section A: (questions 1-25)
      Section B: (questions 1 and 2)
      Section C (questions 1-5)
      Section D (demographics)

Please make any additional comments on the back of this sheet and keep this sheet attached to your survey response. You may return to me with the survey via inter-office mail or by dropping it off with your building principal.
Appendix B: Changes to Survey Questions: Pilot Survey to Actual Survey

SECTION A

Question: 3

Pilot: My choice to become a teacher was influenced more by economic benefits than an inherent desire to teach.

Actual: My choice to become a teacher was influenced more by anticipated health and pension benefits than an inherent desire to teach.

Question: 9

Pilot: I chose to become a teacher even though I don’t particularly like working with young people.

Actual: I became a teacher even though I don’t particularly like working with young people.

Question: 14

Pilot: APPR teacher evaluation measures are based on a perception that many teachers are not successful at their jobs.

Actual: Teacher evaluation systems are based on a general perception that many teachers are not good at their jobs.

Question: 18

Pilot: Being a teacher holds meaning for me as it did when I entered the profession.

Actual: I choose to remain a teacher today for essentially the same reason as when I entered the profession.

Question: 21

Pilot: The schools in my district provide a supportive work environment for teachers.

Actual: I believe most professional development workshops are out of touch with teachers’ real needs in the classroom.

SECTION B

I added the word, “Overall” to each of the two questions in this section.
SECTION C: These five questions are about retention in the profession.

Question: 4

Pilot: Remaining a teacher for one’s working life is a personally rewarding experience.

Actual: I don’t anticipate changing careers at any time prior to my age-eligible retirement from teaching.

Question: 5

Pilot: I anticipate remaining a teacher for the remainder of my working career.

Actual: I believe that remaining a teacher for my pre-retirement working life is a good idea.

Finally, on the demographics, questions 7, 8, 9, 10/10A, 11/11A and 12 are revised from the pilot to the actual survey.
Appendix C: Final Survey Administered

Patrick O’Reilly/ City University of New York/ Urban Education Department
Directions to Respondents: Teacher Work Satisfaction and Retention Survey

The attached survey contains the following:

E. Twenty five questions about experience as a teacher.
F. Two questions about level of satisfaction as a teacher.
G. Five questions about remaining in the teaching profession.
H. Twelve questions about demographic details.

For Section A, bubble in the “O” that most closely corresponds to your experience, belief, or feeling about that item. Note the headers ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” and bubble the “O” under the column most closely associated with your experience or belief.

For Section B, bubble in the response that corresponds to your experience or belief. Note the range of responses and briefly explain your bubbled responses in the spaces provided.

For Section C, bubble in the responses that most closely correspond to your experience or future intention, using the column headers (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) as a guide.

For Section D, bubble in the appropriate circles corresponding to your demographic information.

YOU MAY USE PEN OR PENCIL FOR THIS SURVEY. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY:

1. Do not leave any items blank.
2. On each page of the survey you will note, on the bottom of the page, a space for you to indicate the first letter of your first name and the first two letters of your last name. (e.g. John Dewey = JDE). This simple coding method will allow us to keep track of each page of the survey and for follow-up correspondence directly with you if you elect to participate in the next phase of the survey. Otherwise, there will be no attempt to contact you or determine your identity. Thank you for completing these coding blanks on each page.

Once you have completed the survey, please seal it in the envelope provided and return it to the contact person in your school, who is ________________________________. These surveys will be returned to me in the sealed envelope. If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact me at 917 202 5698 or at poreilly@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you,

Patrick O’Reilly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A: Teaching Experience Questions:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The relationships between administrators and teachers in my school are generally respectful and positive.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When starting my working career I felt a stronger desire to be a teacher rather than pursue any other career.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My choice to become a teacher was influenced more by anticipated health and pension benefits than an inherent desire to teach.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional development opportunities are readily available for teachers in my district.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school district in which my school is located values the education of its children.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel professionally supported by other teachers in the school in which I work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Administrators in the school in which I work support my efforts in the classroom.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Choosing to become a teacher was motivated by my desire to work with students in schools.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I became a teacher even though I don’t particularly like working with young people.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Parents in the community in which I work regard teachers as professional workers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My colleagues and I regularly collaborate on methods and curriculum in the school in which I work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. School administrators are not very supportive of the teachers in my school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Students in my school generally do not treat teachers with professional respect.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Teacher evaluation systems are based on a general perception that many teachers are not good at their jobs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. There are clear consequences in my school for classroom misbehavior by students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Parents do not consider teachers as professionals in the way they might consider doctors or lawyers professionals.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. If more professional development were available, I believe it would strengthen my skills in the classroom.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I choose to remain a teacher today for essentially the same reason as when I entered the profession.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Class sizes in my school are such that I am able to work effectively with my students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Supplies and materials are sufficiently available in my school for me to teach effectively.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I believe most professional development workshops are out of touch with teachers’ real needs in the classroom.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Administrators in my school understand that successful teaching extends beyond student performance on standardized tests.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I believe if someone is planning to become a teacher today people will consider them foolish for entering this line of work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. My school provides a safe and orderly environment for me to do my work.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Professional Development opportunities allow me to improve my instructional practice.</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section B: Satisfaction
Please completely fill in one circle for the following two questions AND explain your reason for each choice.

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession?
   - Very satisfied
   - Somewhat satisfied
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied

Why?

2. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation?
   - Very satisfied
   - Somewhat satisfied
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied

Why?
### Section C: Retention. Please answer each question below by filling in the appropriate circle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If there were no financial implications of doing so, I would likely leave teaching for another profession.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My main reason for remaining a teacher is the feeling that it’s too late for me to change careers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I were financially secure but still wished to work, I would remain a teacher.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I don’t anticipate changing careers at any time prior to my age-eligible retirement from teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I believe that remaining a teacher for my pre-retirement working life is a good idea.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Demographics: Please completely fill in one circle O for each of the following questions.

1. What is your gender?
   O Male   O Female

2. What is your marital status?
   O Single, never married   O Married /Partnered   O Widowed/divorced/separated

3. Are you a parent:   O Yes   O No

4. What is your ethnic background?
   O American Indian/Alaska Native   O Asian or Pacific Islander
   O African America/Black   O Hispanic
   O Caucasian/White   O Other (please specify)_____________________

5. What is your age?
   O 35 or under   O 36–45   O 46–55
   O 56–65   O 66 or older

6. What is the highest degree you earned?
   O Bachelor’s degree   O Master’s degree   O Doctoral degree

7. What is the total number of years you have taught (include full and part time employment as a teacher)___________________

8. At which level have you mostly taught in your teaching career?
   O Grades K-6   O Grades 7-12
9. For how many years you have taught at each of the following levels?

Grades K-6______________ Grades 7-12______________

10. Indicate whether you are tenured and in which area(s) you are currently tenured.

O Untenured

O Tenured, Elementary  (K-6 General License or Elementary Specialist)

O Tenured, Secondary  (7-12 License, Subject Area or Special Education License/ Specialist)

10 A. If tenured as a secondary teacher, indicate the secondary subject area in which you are tenured______________________________

11. Indicate whether you are a licensed Special Education teacher: O Yes  O No

11 A. Indicate if you are currently working as a Special Education teacher : O Yes  O No

12. Indicate the best descriptor for the population of the district in which you currently work:

O Suburban/ middle class

O Suburban/ wealthy

O Suburban/ poor or disadvantaged

Thank you for your participation. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview please indicate your contact information below. Interviews will take between 20 and 30 minutes and will be conducted at your convenience. A separate form will be sent prior to interviews being conducted. If you agree to be interviewed, I will contact you via the method(s) you indicate below and ask you for identifying information. Interviews will be held in confidence.

__________Yes, I am willing to participate in a follow up interview regarding my experience in the teaching profession, satisfaction and retention in the profession.

Preferred contact method: Phone (indicate whether home , work, or cell)________________________

Email (please print clearly)___________________________________________
Appendix D: Survey Items B1 and B2: “Why” Codes List

B1: Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching as a profession? (positive and negative responses recorded for coding as to “Why” participant responded as they did)

1. Too much emphasis on tests
2. Love teaching
3. Anti-teacher climate
4. Decrease in benefits
5. Love working with children
6. Positive influence on children
7. Too much emphasis on tests
8. Misconceptions about teaching
9. Like to help children learn
10. Too much state influence
11. I hate the b.s.
12. Concerned about job security
13. Frustrated by lack of support
14. Like seeing students mature
15. A rewarding profession
16. New teacher evaluation process
17. Too many administrative tasks
18. Wanted to help children assimilate like I did
19. Enjoy collaborating with colleagues
20. Accomplished goals and demands
21. Opportunity to be creative
22. Positive Influence on children
23. Allows me to support my family
24. Professional growth
25. Disrespect by BOE and administrators
26. Supportive administration
27. Lack of a fair contract
28. Love the learning process
29. Positive work environment
30. Students unmotivated
31. Privatization of education
32. Contribute to society
33. Excessive accountability
34. Little regard for SPEDS and ELL students
35. School disorganized and unsafe
36. Only partially satisfying
37. Lack of home support from parents
38. Satisfied when students meet goals
39. Exciting and never boring
40. Way to learn and grow
41. Efforts appreciated by students
42. Attaining Board Certification
B2. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present teaching assignment or situation? (positive and negative responses recorded for coding as to “Why” participant responded as they did)

1. Supportive administration
2. Poor prior student preparation
3. Reduced to just a job
4. Love teaching
5. Overcrowded classrooms
6. Too much state influence
7. Enjoy supervisory/management role
8. Dislike inclusion model
9. Enjoy having own classroom
10. Being a new teacher is overwhelming
11. Like to help children learn
12. Overworked
13. Less suspect
14. Great mixture of students
15. Have mature students
16. Difficult to differentiate instruction
17. Have students want to learn
18. Have supportive parents
19. Like inclusion model
20. Respectful students
21. Accomplished goals and demands
22. Too much emphasis on tests
23. Not enough time
24. Small group learning effective
25. Opportunity to be creative
26. Reinvigorated by new assignment
27. Overwhelming
28. Too many administrative tasks
29. Positive work environment
30. Blessed to teach
31. Love working with elementary
32. Enjoy collaborating with colleagues
33. Severe behavior problems
34. Dislike inclusion model
35. A rewarding profession
36. Enjoy grade level and subject
37. Enjoy challenge
38. Supportive parents
39. Excellent staff morale
40. Not enough time
41. Have wonderful students
42. Teaching part-time is frustrating
43. Small group learning more effective
44. Students value my help
45. Would like a new position
46. Enjoy grade level
References


