

The Causes and Effects of Teacher Attrition Amongst Secondary Educators

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Abstract

This paper will examine the research on teacher attrition rates across schools in the United States and around the world. This project examines three themes in the literature on teacher attrition in middle and high school: teacher age and inexperience, workload, and high levels of teacher burnout. Working conditions affect the likelihood of teacher attrition, and without addressing issues in the working environment, more and more teachers will leave the profession. This paper goes on to examine specific causes and effects of teacher attrition by examining data and studies from countries around the world like Chile, Sweden, Australia, Canada, and the United States. The data from the research also has the potential to explore implications for future research and transform practices regarding the prevention of teacher attrition.

Keywords: teacher attrition, workload, burnout, job dissatisfaction, teacher retention

The Causes and Effects of Teacher Attrition Amongst Secondary Educators

In this literature review, I will be exploring the causes and effects of teacher attrition among secondary educators. This issue is crucial to me because when I was a child, I thought being a teacher would be the easiest and most enjoyable occupation in the world. You are with children all day, you get recess, and you have summers off; meanwhile, you make a difference by helping children to learn. Once I became a middle school teacher in 2018, I realized how exasperating and challenging being a teacher is, and there was a time when I felt that maybe I should leave the classroom and pursue a different career. After surviving my first year, I had a new appreciation for veteran teachers, and I realized that teachers leaving the profession is not a new phenomenon. Schools are losing promising and experienced teachers. In this thesis, I am going to examine the research on why educators who want to work in education and who want to help children are leaving the classroom.

State Impact

Last year, of the eight teachers who left the school I work at, five of these incredibly gifted teachers left the teaching profession for good. Each teacher was a highly qualified educator in good standing with the district and staff in the building. According to one recent news report, Washington is experiencing high rates of educators leaving the classroom, and more specifically, there is a 1.6 % increase in teacher attrition rates between 2021 and 2022 (Chavez, 2023). Not only is this an issue in the state of Washington, but the teacher exodus is also a concern nationally. Currently, teacher attrition rates are at an all-time high—according to one source, there are approximately 100, 000 teachers less than we need, and by 2025 that number is expected to increase significantly (Torgerson, 2022). More teachers are expected to leave and there is a need to protect public education and keep teachers in the classroom.

School Impact

I work at Title 1 public middle school in King County, and 73 percent of students are eligible for free reduced lunch services. Before COVID-19 and even before I started teaching in 2018 there had always been high turnover and attrition amongst teachers and administrative staff at my school. This high level of attrition negatively impacts the sustainability of the culture and community of our middle school. According to one report, the teacher turnover and attrition rates are around 50 percent higher in high-poverty, urban, and low-performing schools than in majority-white and affluent schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2012, p. 1). When our teachers leave, these absences impact our students' academics, behavior, and well-being. From personal experience, often our students blame themselves for our teachers' decisions to leave and there is no reason to place blame or guilt onto our scholars.

Personal Importance

I resonate with this topic because I am uncertain if I will see myself as a teacher in the next few years. From my perspective, teaching has aged me, and I am constantly prioritizing my workload over my health and self-care. According to a report that investigated the correlation of occupational stress to attrition—teachers who have five years of experience or less in the classroom and who exhibit daily and weekly anxiety, panic attacks, and dissatisfaction are more likely to quit (Mack et al., 2019, p.3). This profession has been the root of my anxiety and depression for the past five years and never thought that I would be just another statistic. I experience the ramifications of burnout, and I am curious if other teachers out there have the same experiences as me.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to explore the causes of teacher attrition and examine possible solutions. In doing so, schools across the world can aim to strengthen teacher retention and make schools a more supportive environment not only for their staff but, through them, a better place for families, students, and teachers like me who do not want to depart from this profession.

Focal Questions

Through the course of this project, I will examine and answer these focal questions:

- What are the underlying root causes of teacher attrition rates?
- How can we address the root causes to prevent current or future educators from leaving the classroom?
- If teacher attrition rates continue to rise over time, then what are the implications?

Literature Review

This literature review will examine the research on teacher attrition rates across schools in the United States and around the world, with a specific focus on teacher attrition rates amongst secondary educators. The teacher attrition rate refers to the percentage of educators who are leaving the teaching profession entirely due to an array of underlying circumstances. Teacher attrition also applies directly to teachers exiting the occupation before the eligibility for retirement (Kelchtermans, 2017, p. 962). In this research, it is important to highlight the actual experiences of teachers around the world. For example, one high school math teacher expresses how the everyday pressures of being a teacher are both emotionally and mentally exhausting and teachers are in constant survival mode; meanwhile, another middle school teacher states that being underpaid and under-appreciated is a hard pill to swallow (Walker, 2022). This review gives light on the actual data that supports the feelings of teachers like this.

For this review, there will be a focus on three key contributors toward teacher attrition in middle and high schools: teacher age and inexperience, demanding workload, and high levels of teacher burnout. Educators who are younger and inexperienced are more likely to leave within the first few years of their careers - around 30 percent or more of new educators leave the profession on a national level by the end of their fifth year of teaching (Bolich, 2000, p. 4). Teachers are also leaving due to the unrealistic workload— unrealistic workload can refer to things like teachers feeling obligated to work outside their contracted hours and/or using their resources to support their classrooms. Lastly, this job takes a mental, physical, and emotional toll on its teachers, which can lead directly to burnout – the feeling of apathy towards their work and a general sense of lack of motivation.

Teacher Age and Inexperience

In this section, I will be discussing how novice teachers are more likely to be susceptible to teacher attrition. One key theme that emerges from the literature is that teachers who are younger and have less experience in teaching are more likely to leave the teaching industry. Richard Ingersoll (2001) who is known for his research in education claims that teachers who are less than thirty years of age and/or teachers who have less than five years of teaching under their belt are more likely to suffer from teacher attrition than older and veteran educators (p. 518). Ingersoll's study intended to evaluate the trends of teacher shortage and turnover found through a series of regression models that age is the determining factor for attrition. One statistic that illustrates this phenomenon highlights that the relative odds of the departure of young teachers are 171% higher than for middle-aged teachers (p. 518). Ingersoll and team found that, from a sample of 6,733 educators within the 1991 to 1992 school year, 1,962 educators left the profession; moreover, this data demonstrates the challenges to retain new teachers (p. 508) One

would assume that younger teachers would outpace their older constituents; however, that is not the case.

It is not only the younger teachers who are leaving but also teachers who have less than 5 years or less of teaching experience. Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels conducted a study that examined the factors influencing retention and resignation within the United States. From their findings they also highlighted how teachers tend to leave the profession in the early stages of their career – they found that the retention rate after 5 years is only 61 percent (Kersaint et al., 2005, p. 776). In Texas, alone, it costs around 329 million dollars to replace educators, and due to the financial pressure districts hire people as quickly as they can (p. 775). Due to this urgency, districts are prioritizing the quantity of teachers to fulfill these discrepancies, and often hire people with limited teaching experience. As a result, this approach continues the cycle of teacher shortage because this leads to more resignations among novice teachers. Kersaint's team implemented the Theory of Planned Behavior to study the predictors of teacher attrition rates among teachers with limited teaching expertise. For three years, the team targeted a sample of 51 teachers who left two specific Floridian school districts over 2 years and asked 36 questions, and from their responses administrative support and financial benefits are the primary reasons for departure (pp. 782-786). Schools across the country prioritize finding new teachers rather than investing in our current teachers and providing them with the skills and resources they need to be successful in the classroom.

There is a huge need to retain qualified teachers in schools across the world, especially for those new to the profession. Beatrice Avalos and Juan Pablo Valenzuela led a study from the University of Chile to assess the trajectory of retention amongst new teachers between 2000 and 2008. This study aimed to investigate the attrition rates among educators who have five years or

less of experience; more specifically, the research team sampled 157 teachers who were eligible to participate in this analysis of teacher attrition rates. The study emphasized the concept of teacher trajectory, and this research team described teacher trajectory as teachers who change their professional identity due to present working conditions and overall dissatisfaction with their occupation (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2014, p.280). This study conducted a thorough investigation of the data (Table 1) and the factors that lead these new teachers to leave.

Table 1

Attrition Data from Chile

Year of entry	Proportion of new teachers who leave teaching at the end of the first year (accumulated percentage)								
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
2000	9%	22%	22%	35%	40%	45%	49%	53%	56%
2001 ^a	20%	20%	35%	40%	45%	49%	52%	55%	
2002 ^a	1%	20%	28%	36%	41%	46%	49%		
2003 ^a	31%	31%	31%	41%	45%	48%			
2004	12%	23%	30%	36%	40%				
2005	19%	31%	38%	43%					
2006	22%	32%	39%						
2007	20%	30%							
2008	18%								

^a Data for these years are not compatible with other years and are treated with caution. Source: Chile Ministry of Education, Encuesta de Idoneidad Docente, years 1999–2009.

Note. Data is from “Education for All and Attrition/retention of new teachers: A trajectory study in Chile” by B. Avalos & J. P. Valenzuela, 2014, p. 283.

The most important takeaway was that 46 percent of teachers with five years of experience were leaving the profession (p. 282). The sample of teachers disclosed their explanations for leaving the profession and the team found seven commonalities among their testimonies: professional expectations, working conditions, school leadership & management, school climate, professional autonomy, self-efficacy perception, and personal reasons (p. 284). Concerning working conditions, these educators perceived that they had too much responsibility, and could not self-advocate for better working conditions. More specifically, these first-year or second-year teachers had an overall low sense of self-efficacy around the skills of attending to student needs,

increasing student motivation, helping students understand the value of their education, and implementing various teaching strategies. (p. 284). The lack of preparation, confidence, advocacy, and meaningful professional development leads qualified early career teachers to consider leaving the profession.

A study from Sweden also focuses on teacher attrition rates amongst young and inexperienced teachers. Lindqvist took a slightly different approach from the previous one mentioned above because he focused on the repercussions of younger and early experience teachers leaving the classroom. More specifically, the issue of retaining these early career teachers creates an issue of securing a sustainable and reliable teaching workforce for the future (Lindqvist, 2014, p. 95). The study aimed to examine teacher attrition in a longitudinal data approach to assess the attrition rates. Researchers conducted a 20-year study and had the opportunity to follow 87 Swedish teachers who answered questions that aligned with longitudinal items. Over the course of 19 years—1993 to 2012—teachers answered questions and in 2013 the team conducted interviews based on their responses. The questionnaire encompassed participants' teaching information and surveys about their experience, expectations of the job, and perception of their teaching trajectory (p. 97). The study followed a mixed methods approach by adopting qualitative and quantitative styles to illustrate a better picture of teacher attrition. Within their findings, they found that some of the younger people had plans to leave the profession early or some just wanted to try it to see if it was a good fit. Others left because they felt that teaching school or preparation programs did not authentically prepare them for this job.

A quantitative study was conducted in the Netherlands, van der Wal and his team aimed to study how tensions (stresses and/or uncertainties) impact teachers' decisions and feelings in

the classroom. Within the introduction of this study, the team articulates how professional identity is challenging for inexperienced teachers to acquire because they try to incorporate their own experiences, beliefs, and values into their roles, but often the unrealistic professional expectations impede them to be the best teachers that they can be (van der Wal et al., 2019, p. 59). Due to the work-related stress, early career teachers react in different ways and unfortunately, the pressures manifest this subgroup of teachers to quit. This team wanted to better understand how novice educators respond to these series of tensions, and whether the stress impacted their daily functioning and/or opportunity to learn from and grow (p.60). The team was able to find a sample size of 42 early career teachers who were around 20 to 26 years of age. In the school year of 2015-2016, each participant had to respond to reflective journal entries that depicted their actions and feelings related to the stress that they experienced with teaching; as a result, the team was able to collect 126 journal entries. From their findings, 25 percent of teachers perceived ongoing minor tensions led to more serious experiences of anxiety, which led to sleepless nights and poor mental health; meanwhile, 49 percent of teachers typically use reflective behavior responses to assess, cope, or adjust how they reacted to these series of tensions (pp. 63-64). Of course, there is a need for teachers to be able to reflect on their behavior and aim to improve; however, research illuminates how reflective practice will not solve these issues of the demands and unrealistic expectations of being a teacher (p.67). Well-being affects teachers' professional identities and if one does not have a stable or positive sense of self, then they will find it much more difficult to apply teaching with fidelity.

Some studies and records dating back to the 1950s also illustrate the struggles that beginner teachers encounter and the reasons why they choose to leave the industry for good. Nelson and Thompson (1963) made a powerful statement by declaring that in 1963 the United

States will encounter a major teacher shortage crisis due to the issues of retaining qualified educators (p. 467). As you would expect, the literature stresses how workload and burnout are the major contributors to teacher attrition; however, they also mention other factors that contribute to this issue. Nelson and Thompson highlight how this subgroup of teachers experiences different challenges from their veteran colleagues. Typically, beginner teachers are given poor and undesirable teaching positions or assignments due to seniority; more specifically, these teachers are placed in challenging grade levels or subjects, and often, they do not have enough preparation to take on this role with fidelity (p. 468). Not only do they not acquire the appropriate position, but they are also not equipped to manage discipline problems due to the lack of preparation, confidence, mentorship, and experience (p. 469). Classroom management takes years to master, and these teachers are left with no resources, guidance, or support to learn how to build relationships and a strong classroom culture. Since the 1950s, novice teachers have encountered an astounding number of impediments, which leads them to feel defeated and no longer want to pursue education. Due to the inability to retain newly acquired educators, the United States has been facing a teacher shortage dilemma for years. It is very telling that, half a century later, school districts across the country are still full of teachers with similar complaints.

Novice teachers are more likely to suffer from attrition because these specific educators who enter their careers earlier in their adulthood have more agency to change career paths. They also realize that the working conditions, stressors, and demands of the job are not beneficial for their overall mental or physical well-being. These teachers are not fully prepared to become educators in the real world, and they are not supported to thrive in the classroom. This attrition has serious implications because schools across the country are in a crisis to retain a future supply of teachers.

Demanding Teacher Workload

In this section, I will explore how the literature approaches teacher workload and how these demands are causing teachers to quit. Graham Butt and Ann Lance (2005) address the debacle of secondary teachers' workload, and how teaching does not only include working with students and families - there is also a demand for teachers to fulfill bureaucratic tasks due to an array of reasons that stem from societal and systemic issues (pp.405-406). This case study analyzes how workload is a leading factor in teacher attrition, and how the Transforming the School Workforce: Pathfinder project was initiated to better understand the problems of the excessive workload. The literature has depicted that workload is derived from job dissatisfaction, lack of trust, work intensification, balkanization, and burnout (pp. 405-406). This team sent out surveys to these educators and then utilized quantitative data to depict secondary teachers' perspectives of the workload. An overwhelming majority reported that non-teaching tasks (copying, paperwork, and other clerical work), grading, substituting obligations, and government-school initiatives vastly consume their time, resources, and endurance (p. 415). Teachers report that reliable planning periods are absent, inconsistency regarding the longevity of curriculum initiatives, and a school staff (paras, full-time substitute teachers, and teacher assistants) shortage.

There has been an increase in workload responsibility; however, teachers are expected to meet these demands with inadequate support and time allocated to complete these tasks. Timms and his team led a study to assess this issue, and they found that the quantity and rigor of the work have increased tremendously while the amount of support and time given to complete these tasks has decreased. Teachers no longer have the stamina to be creative, to perform to the best of their abilities, and to do their job with fidelity (Timms et al., 2007, pp.570-571). They collected

298 surveys from teachers from Queensland, Australia, and used the Areas of Work Life Survey (AWLS) as the foundation for their research. The studies highlight how participants in the current survey tend to be passionate about their jobs, they also feel that demands made on teachers have extended to an unsustainable level. One participant revealed in their survey how work intensification is driving the good teachers away, and their absence is impacting student achievement, teacher turnover, and curriculum overload (pp. 582-583). Teachers are passionate about their occupation; however, they cannot keep up with the pace of these unrealistic demands and tasks that do not help them become better educators. This crisis is causing not just “average” teachers to leave, but experienced and highly qualified educators to leave and their absence highly impacts students and community stakeholders.

Jamie Beck led a narrative inquiry study to assess teachers’ work intensification. In the study, Beck refers to work intensification as “heavy hours” because they encompass the time that teachers must complete all duties and tasks in one given day. This study emphasizes the correlation between heavy hours and work intensification; more specifically, this article encapsulates the experiences of increased amount and responsibilities from a Deweyan perspective (Beck, 2017, p. 618). Deweyan bases the emphasis on how experience impacts identity, and in this case—unsustainable working conditions impact our teachers’ confidence. Teachers who had lived in the Western Canadian province, and who had more than seven years of experience in teaching were invited to partake in this narrative inquiry study. For a period of 1 year, this sample met over monthly dinners to collaboratively discuss their teaching experiences and stories (p. 621). Over time, the team was able to collect several recorded testimonies of different teachers’ experiences working in public, private, elementary, or secondary schools. Within these two-hour conversations, the normal format would include questions, prompts, and

activity; however, there was a need for the conversations to organically be open to raising topics too (p. 622).

After the year-round narrative inquiry process, Beck and her team re-listened and cross-referenced teachers' stories to other academic research regarding the issues of work intensification. According to Beck and her findings, work intensification is caused by rapid decision-making, insufficient time and space for actual teaching, and the inability to process the social-emotional concerns of students and themselves (pp. 625-629). Teachers must make quick decisions to manage the complexities of the learning environment; in other words, teachers must make professional teacher judgments to better serve their students, which means changing their lessons in real time, needing to meet their students in private due to an array of reasons, or modifying the student assignment (pp. 623-626). It is an unspoken requirement for teachers to anticipate the unthinkable and to derive from their lesson plans, which adds an extra layer of work intensification. There are a lot of hiccups within a typical school day, and it is hard to utilize learning time the most effectively. Between classroom management, substitute coverages, and fire drills, there are a lot of interruptions that contribute to the workload. Lastly, the physical, social, and emotional complexity that is embedded within the heavy hours that most people outside of teaching would not understand. The heavy hours do not get better, and the weight of being a teacher prevents educators from experiencing healthy boundaries between work and home (p. 633). These responsibilities consume the mental capacity of our educators, and this is another form of work intensification that teachers experience daily.

There is too much on educators' plates, and teachers must sacrifice their time and effort to complete a myriad of different tasks. Due to the workload, these teachers are more prone to stress, burnout, and even experience mental illness. Masakazu Hojo (2021) who is known for her

studies and research regarding teacher issues in Japan has stated that 60 percent of teachers in 2018 took a leave of absence due to the inability to keep up with the demands (p. 1). Not only are the long hours a predictor of teacher attrition but also the student-teacher ratio; more specifically, Hojo conducted an empirical study and used the results from the Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) to assess how the working hours and student-teacher ratio contribute to attrition. The database comprised 3,308 elementary and 3,555 secondary teachers, and Hojo was able to include a sample size of 2,761 and 3,006 teachers (p.2). This sample size had to answer several questions regarding the hours spent on completing school-related tasks and their relation to the student-teacher ratio. The survey results revealed that, on average, teachers are working 54-56 hours a week and that, for each oversized class, teachers are spending an additional three hours of work per week (p.6). The high student-teacher ratio correlates to teachers working longer hours to meet the demands. Student ratio plays a huge role in the problem with the teacher workload.

There are serious challenges regarding the student-teacher ratio, and there are negative ramifications for both teachers and students. These results were also found by John Alspaugh who also studied the correlation between school efficiency and student-teacher ratio in the United States. In his study, he emphasized how high-student teacher ratio affects student achievement in high schools more than in primary schools (Alspaugh, 1991, p.1). Alspaugh cited other case studies about this topic in the literature and stated examples of how class size and educational outcomes are affected in states like New Jersey and New York; meanwhile, he highlights how student enrollment affects the school district budget, which impacts teacher salaries (p.2). Later in the article, he narrows his focus to 226 school districts in the state of Missouri and uses a random sample of twelve schools to assess the correlation between class size

and student outcomes. After the administration of the state exam, the Missouri Mastery and Achievement Test (MMAT), there is a noticeable discrepancy among 10th-grade students' performance due to the sudden increase in student enrollment (p.3). Alpsaugh believes that the scores reflect the struggles that teachers must encounter with large classes, which not only affects teachers' workload but also student achievement.

Teachers want to prioritize teaching, yet these demanding expectations and high degrees of accountability make it difficult to focus on their jobs. Another Australian study led by Jackie Manuel and her team explored 211 secondary English teachers' perspectives on teacher workload. Within the process of collecting quantitative and qualitative data from a 28-questionnaire survey, the team had to breakdown the category of "workload" into numerous sub-categories, such as average workload, face-to-face teaching, planning and preparation directly related to teaching and learning, meetings, marking (grading), extra-curricular commitments, professional collaboration, administration, engagement with students and parents, and weekend work. (Manuel et.al, 2018, pp. 12-14). The workload alone entailed 10 agenda items or more, and within their findings, 93 percent of respondents believed that workload is a crucial issue. This group worked an average of 57 hours within a span of one week, which means that they worked 19 hours outside of their contracted hours (p. 8). Most educators perceive workload as a serious issue because the tasks at hand are not feasible to complete with fidelity.

The survey results, from Manuel's case study, illustrate that educators are consumed with many other responsibilities than just preparing lessons and monitoring student growth. These items are put on the back burner because teachers do not have the time or stamina to serve students to the best of their abilities. In the reflection of the study, the team of experts makes the analogy that these secondary English teachers are like the characters from *Animal Farm* because

they continue to “work harder,” but they are becoming increasingly aware that the systematic challenges cannot be solved on the backs of individual teachers’ efforts (p. 19). Educators are working hard, but at what price? The requirement of the job leads teachers to feel overworked, underappreciated, and burnt out; hence, leaving the profession entirely.

High-Levels of Teacher Burnout

In this section, I will be analyzing what the research says about how teachers regardless of age, subject area, or even specialty have experienced some degree of burnout and its relation to teacher attrition rates. Burnout can entail feelings of being overworked, overwhelmed, and underappreciated, and teachers often leave due to this sensation alone. Research indicates that burnout affects teachers’ psychological well-being and job satisfaction, and burnout also affects the likelihood of teacher retention (Droognebroeck et al., 2021, p. 219). Teachers are emotionally exhausted and feel that their efforts are never enough, and this emotional toll is a driving force toward educators leaving the classrooms. The school context impacts the likelihood of burnout, which leads teachers to depart the profession. Areas such as a lack of collaborative school culture, high emphasis on the social comparison (big-fish-little-pond phenomenon), and collective exhaustion highly impact the possibility of burnout (p. 302).

Madigan and Kim conducted a meta-analysis study of burnout aiming to examine the relationship between burnout and teacher attrition. The study started with utilizing online databases to search terms like “teacher burnout” and they were able to find 1575 articles. The team conducted a series of coding to sort out the level of credibility and measurability (quantitative scales used to measure burnout and intentions to quit). Consequently, 24 articles remained-and these studies were submitted to calculate the meta-analytic effective sized and confidence intervals to predict the likelihood of teachers quitting due to burnout. Two procedures

were used while trying to determine the prediction correlation matrix. As a result, these calculations explained the attributable predictors regarding this correlation. Based on the data, the team can conclude that exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of accomplishment are linked to teachers' intention to quit (Madigan & Kim, 2021, p.10). Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are the two major symptoms of burnout, and there has been an increase in these strains of burnout throughout the years due to an increase in hours and responsibilities.

A separate study led by a team of Canadian researchers from the University of Calgary explicitly discussed and studied the parallels between burnout and attrition. The team summarized burnout as an ambiguous catalyst that causes teachers both inexperienced and experienced to quit (Williams et al., 2022, p. 3). There are underlying symptoms that over time lead to teachers feeling isolated, misunderstood, and incompetent to be the best version of themselves. There is this fight, flight, or freeze mechanism that is activated when teachers must combat the chronic work stress of teaching. Regardless of how teachers react to burnout, it is common among teachers to experience it daily. Typically, burnout is framed as an issue of individualistic failure when there may be structural practices that are also at play (p.7). The current systems and expectations of being a teacher are impossible to overcome. In 2018, the team conducted a qualitative study that captures the themes of burnout and attrition. The team wanted to study teachers' overall well-being (mental, physical, and social-emotional). To study this abstract topic, the team sent out letters to current Canadian student teachers and these participants had to reflect solely on their health, attitudes, and behaviors. 85 out of the 172 participants were secondary teachers, and this study took over the course of two years (p.9). The method heavily focused on a qualitative approach and use of an inductive team analysis—which included coding and analyzing overall themes. As a result, from their findings, there was a sense

of anticipatory burnout, in which these student teachers are already worried about the demands of teaching (p. 11). Once these teacher candidates enter the classroom, they reflected through their letters that some felt defeated due to the frustrations of teaching. The pragmatics, workload, and responsibilities lead to burnout, stress, and leaving the program entirely.

Trauma also coincides with the problems that teachers experience with stress and burnout. More often, teachers are susceptible to experiencing second-hand trauma from their students or events at school. The New Orleans Trauma-Informed School Learning Collaborative utilized a mixed methods approach to better analyze how secondary traumatic stress (STS) affects teachers' abilities to function and perform tasks. The team utilized the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) to measure the effects of trauma and burnout on this sample of caring professionals; more specifically, there were two samples of educators who participated in this study. The first group, 131 teachers, received all-staff trauma-informed professional training during the 2015-2016 school year; meanwhile, the second group, 145 educators, received trauma-informed training or interventions the next school year, 2016-2017 (Fleckman et al., 2022, pp. 935-936). Both groups, regardless of obtaining trauma-informed professional development, were required to answer a 30-item questionnaire regarding STS and burnout; as a result, 117 teachers stated that the emotional, behavioral, and physical impacts of burnout are attributable to secondhand trauma (p. 941). Teachers are reporting feelings of exhaustion, which is making it extremely difficult to focus, complete tasks, and maintain routines that promote a healthy work-life balance; furthermore, out of 61 of the 117 teachers, they indicated that they tend to cope negatively with unhealthy eating and an increase in drinking to cope with this behavior (p. 941). This study is important because burnout does not only stem from the exhaustion of the workload but also from the emotional duress of the job.

Not only do teachers feel the impact of burnout, but students notice it too. According to Eva Oberle and her team (2020) who focused on the association between teacher burnout and student success, they found that 46 percent of teachers in the United States report high levels of stress daily (p.2). Due to this feeling of stress, exhaustion, and depersonalization, students are not able to receive the care and attention they need from their teachers. This team used a multilevel approach to investigate students' perceptions of their teachers' burnout and around 555 sixth and seventh graders participated in this study (p. 5). Students had to answer a 5-point Likert rating rubric based on the 6-item Students' Perceptions of Teacher Social-emotional Competence scale, and teachers also had to a questionnaire that assessed teachers' feelings regarding depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. As a result, teachers who self-reported higher levels of burnout were perceived as less socially and emotionally competent by their scholars (p. 10). This signifies that while students might not be able to identify what "burnout" is, they can infer the implications of a teacher's sense of occupational stress and are aware of which teachers are suffering the most.

Burnout stems from the exhaustion to meet daily demands like monitoring behaviors, teaching engaging lessons, connecting with families, and navigating the anxieties of the workplace. In a related study, Daniel Madigan and his team (2023) wanted to examine how teachers consider their own mental and physical well-being when determining if they should stay in the profession (p.1). This specific study used a systematic review to measure teacher burnout and physical outcomes, and in total, 5,267 teachers participated in this study. The participants on average were 43 years old, mostly female, and ranged from 1 to 14 years of teaching experience (p.8). The team discovered that burnout manifested into serious health concerns like illnesses, voice disorders, cortisol imbalances, cytokines, and heart function indices (p. 9). Burnout has

also been correlated with health conditions like insomnia, heart disease, and depression. Teachers also experience cognitive overload periodically, and the constant stresses of the job can lead to burnout, resentment, and mental health concerns. Exploring mental health is such an important factor in this teacher attrition project and unfortunately, the evidence certainly suggests that the work itself might be the catalyst for teachers feeling fatigued, depressed, and anxious.

Teacher Salaries and Other Economic Pressures

In this section, I will be discussing how teachers' salaries – and lack of adequate compensation – relate to teachers leaving the profession. Granted, the overall themes of this topic heavily emphasize that novice educators, workload, and burnout contribute to attrition; however, I thought it was important to also mention how compensation impacts a teacher's decision to leave the classroom as well. To preface, I will not be offering a list of action steps to help alleviate these issues.

Sean Kelly (2004), who closely examined teacher attrition in the 1990s, emphasized the most significant contributor to teacher attrition is salary (p.196). Typically, those who want to pursue becoming a teacher initially prioritize intrinsic and ancillary rewards rather than financial benefits until these teachers have no other choice but to work an extra job to pay the bills (p. 197). Other times, once teachers join the field, they realize that schools are exploiting their efforts, and they are not receiving the compensation they deserve. This issue of compensation leads teachers to compare their job to other professions, and high-performing teachers or science teachers leave to pursue better career opportunities (p. 197). In 1990-1991, Kelly conducted a Schools and Staffing Survey to assess teachers' feelings regarding the issues of salaries and teacher tracking. Within the sample size of 4,761 educators, 30.6 percent consists of teachers

who quit their job after the '90-'91 school year. The data from this longitudinal study, correlated academic salary to years of experience, hours worked, grade level, and advancement in education or certification, and Kelly's findings concluded that a greater salary is more likely to lower the levels of attrition (pp. 205-210). He also found that early career teachers are more likely to attrite, due to the pay salary scales and this subgroup lacks years of experience and certification. Special education, science, and male teachers were also more likely to leave due to areas of salary disparities.

Another article analyzes the debate on teacher pay, and whether teachers are getting paid too little or too much. Eunice S. Han (2020) investigates the relationship between teacher pay and teacher quality by tracking the wages and working conditions of both teachers who have remained in teaching and others who have changed career paths (p. 251). This study focuses on the *Current Population Survey Merged Outgoing Rotation Group (CPS)* data from 2001 to 2018, and Han uses empirical analysis to evaluate the wage gap between these two groups and found that public school teachers earn 6.5 percent less than their non-educator counterparts (pp. 259-263). There is also data to support how there is a disparity between the working conditions because non-teachers get paid more per hour than teachers do. Ironically, teachers work more hours than non-teachers do, and yet educators can be paid less. More specifically, the reason for this disparity is that teachers do not receive overtime pay (p. 267). As mentioned previously, educators under thirty are the most vulnerable to suffering from attrition, and this study exemplifies how pay is another contributing factor. Compared to a first-year teacher and a first-year non-educator, this specific educator would receive only a 2.3 percent increase in weekly earnings compared to the non-educator who would receive a 5.1 percent increase (p. 267). This alone would persuade early career educators to pursue different career paths. This study further

proves that wage disparity is an important contributing factor to teacher attrition.

In the United States and England teachers who typically work in low-income schools have the highest level of teacher turnover or attrition rates compared to middle-class or high-income schools. Two School of Education departments from the Durham and Warwick universities conducted a longitudinal study about the teacher attrition rates within these Title 1 schools in the United States and England (Huat See et al., 2020, p. 681). Within this process of screening literature that followed the criteria and purpose of this study, only 20 reports were deemed as credible and a common contributing factor from these studies concluded the importance of financial incentives (pp. 683- 685). From the literature, there is a discrepancy regarding the pay scales of Title 1 schools and non-Title 1 schools. Not only does the pay scale affect issues like attrition and turnover, but also highly impacts the teacher shortage. Incoming teachers do not want to work at these Title 1 schools due to the salaries, alone. Within this study, the team deemed Glazerman's study of the impact of the Talent Transfer Initiative as the strongest. Glazerman provided financial incentives for high-performing teachers to teach and to stay at low-performing schools for two years or more; more specifically, these "movers" received an additional 20,000 paid installments; meanwhile, the teachers who were already teaching at these specific schools received an additional 10,000 paid installment (p. 687). As a result, retention after one year was 93 percent, and the year prior retention was only 44 percent (p. 687). This study does offer a solution; however, financial incentives are not a quick fix to this problem. Firstly, bonuses do not have a long-life expectancy; hence, they last for a two-year period. Secondly, the cost is something that many districts cannot implement with fidelity, especially if the expectation is to raise bonuses. Lastly, teachers would rather invest the funds in

recruiting paras and teacher assistants, as well as investing in improvements to the school climate.

Ji Liu analyzed the correlation between wages, well-being, and attrition rates among educators in China. Liu took into consideration two important topics of research, which included occupational choice and teacher attrition. These two areas of research were imperative for Liu to utilize because these works illustrate how individuals make decisions regarding their career choice and the factors that make teachers want to quit teaching. As a result of analyzing the two bodies of literature, Liu (2021) found that compensation is the most important contributor to occupation choice and attrition (p. 810). Not only did Liu examine the literature, but also pursued an empirical study regarding wages and well-being among teachers and non-teachers in urban areas of China. Liu utilized the data from the China Household Income Project (CHIP), and with the information from this project, Liu was also able to send out surveys to households with questions about their occupation. 40 percent of the educators who responded intended to leave teaching due to stress, low salary, lack of substantial breaks and vacations, workload, and discipline; more specifically, within the research there was a strong correlation between teacher pay and the likelihood of permanently withdrawing from teaching (p. 812). The study also conducted regression testing, which revealed that teacher's wage gaps are an important marker of occupational choices and retention disparities; more specifically, each 10 percent increase in wage gaps correlates to an 8 percent decrease in the probability of teacher retention (p. 824). Pecuniary means is not only a determining factor, but also the well-being of educators influences their decision to leave teaching. Often, policy is what dictates funding and focus, which can have the potential to alleviate the obstacles to recruiting and retaining educators (p. 825).

Lastly, Elyashiv and Navon address how there is a need to assess the issues of attrition from an economic perspective. Typically, teachers spend their own money on certification requirements and degrees aim to advance their careers; however, not all teachers can afford to enroll in these programs (Elyashiv & Navon, 2021, pp.3-4). Teachers aspire to receive these degrees or certifications to move up on the pay scale, but this highlights an issue regarding economic equity. Most would assume that those who do have the financial support, or the means would stay in the profession; meanwhile, those who do not have the luxury of advancing in their education might be more likely to attrite (p.4). Elyashiv and Navon conducted their study in Israeli to predict the trends of teacher attrition based on an educator's sociodemographic characteristics, terms of employment, and human capital, which includes, academic degree, the field of study in higher education, and the type of alma mater (teacher-training program, academic college, or traditional university) (p. 8).

The team implemented the files of teachers from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics who taught between the years 2000 to 2010; hence, the sample size consisted of 10, 340 Israeli teachers (p. 7). Through a series of descriptive statistics and logistic regression models, found the following: 13 percent of this sample of first-year teachers quit, and a couple of years that followed attrition rates averaged from 2.5 to 5 percent (pp. 9-10). Ironically, the results of this study illuminated how those with advanced degrees were more likely to drop out of teaching than those without these prestigious degrees. More specifically, 23 percent of teachers specialized in the fields of science, and even 17.5 percent of teachers who earned higher education diplomas decided to quit (p. 11). Overall, there is a correlation between high rates of attrition and high levels of advancement in education, and this study later reveals that people who do have these degrees feel that they are more financially secure to change their occupation (p. 16). In Israeli,

the teaching salary is not dependable and changes from year to year. This study stresses the concerns regarding teaching salaries around the world, if the salary is undesirable or unstable, then promising educators will be more likely to pursue other occupations and career paths.

Summary

Teacher attrition is a current issue in the United States and other parts of the world. Teaching is becoming more of an unsustainable and undesirable profession, due to unrealistic expectations and demands. New teachers are leaving within a matter of a few years within the classroom because they, themselves, do not see the benefits of staying within this profession for the long haul. This occupation is driving promising teachers away due to unnecessary stress and frivolous responsibilities. The workload is unfeasible, and teachers are constantly working around the clock and not getting paid or appreciated for their efforts. Teachers need to plan lessons, grade, contact home, participate in numerous amounts of meetings, collaborate with colleagues, collect data, and so much more within a school day. These requirements are leading teachers to feel incompetent, overwhelmed, and burned out. The mental exhaustion of being a teacher leads to serious health issues, and the inability to perform the job to the best of one's ability. Burnout can hinder teachers' decision-making and ability to regulate their emotions both inside and outside of the classroom. Working long hours, not getting enough breaks, and feeling overworked these facets can lead teachers to feel mentally, emotionally, and physically fatigued. Not only are teachers working tremendously hard without time or support, but they also receive no additional or adequate compensation for their hard work. Currently, teachers feel disrespected, dissatisfied, and more importantly, insecure with their compensation. They are not paid for after contracted hours, and sometimes these teachers need to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. These promising educators are willing to go back to school, to find a new job. Both

veteran and non-veteran educators are partaking in the teaching exodus in droves due to serious underlying systemic and societal pressures.

Action Plan

This literature review examines the root causes and solutions to combat teacher attrition among secondary educators. More specifically, this paper outlines guiding questions that analyze how teacher attrition is a systemic issue across the world and what the implications of this attrition may be. The questions highlight action steps to prevent and to motivate teachers to stay in the classroom. The research from this paper details realistic and evidence-based strategies to encourage aspiring and experienced educators to stay in this profession.

At my Title 1 public middle school, staff members like teachers and administrators ultimately end up leaving education for several different reasons. Our district tends to recruit young and early experienced teachers, and unfortunately, these educators leave within the first few years of their careers. Not only does this present an issue, but the demanding workload also presents another reason why our educators are leaving the district. The work is unfeasible, and educators have limited resources and time to finish lesson plans, grading, and other necessary tasks. The action tables summarize the research regarding solutions to help novice teachers to feel more secure in their career choice and strategies to reduce the teaching workload.

Retaining Beginner Teachers

In this table, I will look at research recommendations regarding the retention of teachers during their first five years. Teachers who have less experience in the classroom and who are under 35 years of age are more likely to leave the profession than more experienced and older teachers. Within a span of five years in the classroom, this specific demographic of teachers is

more likely to suffer from teacher attrition for various reasons. These reasons can include stress, insufficient compensation, and not feeling supported.

Table 2

Mentorship Action Table and Teacher Voice

Research	Practices	Recommendations
There is a strong correlation between teacher retention and mentorships. Research implies that mentorship can have the following positive effects: consistent collaboration, ongoing communication, and networking. These interventions can reduce the likelihood of attrition. Mentors can help inexperienced teachers to gain support, access resources, utilize time more effectively, and cultivate more skills like classroom management and teaching protocols. Mentors can provide safe spaces for these mentees to be more vulnerable and self-reflective. By establishing a strong rapport, these teachers can receive feedback, and goals, and express their uncertainties in a positive environment. (Harris, 2015; Smith, 2004; Stapp et al., 2019).	Regarding mentorship services, the district provides opportunities for first-year teachers to meet with their mentors and other beginner teachers. Teachers can build more rapport with their mentors during these sessions and would relate to other beginning teachers. In my experience, the sessions helped better inform my practice and helped build community. Unfortunately, these programs only cater to first-year teachers.	The district provides support for first-year teachers, which is an excellent first step toward retention. There is a need to encourage and support our first-year teachers immensely; however, the district can improve its teacher retention by ensuring that teachers with two to five years of experience also have mentorships. Statistically, teachers are more likely to contribute to attrition around their fifth year of teaching. Mentorships during these tough years of teaching can offer incredible benefits to these educators, thereby benefiting students, and the district too.

Teacher voice involves the ability of teachers to communicate their ideas, suggestions, and opinions related to work-related issues without the fear of repercussions. Teacher voice also catalyzes school decision-making and fosters positive relationships between administrators and teachers. Typically, beginner teachers feel that their opinions do not matter, due to the lack of experience. This strategy can help these teachers to express their concerns and aim to find solutions without the fear of being judged by the evaluators or colleagues. These educators can also partake in the role of a school leader by contributing their ideas regarding school policies. (Hopkins, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021).	At my school, a select few teachers can collaborate with administrators to make decisions for the building. Only 15 out of the 65 staff members have the true power to utilize their teacher voices to express concerns about topics such as school safety, social-emotional learning, and academics to our principal. Within this subgroup, none of them are beginner teachers and most have worked at the school for more than five years. Meanwhile, most of us feel that we do not have the time or space to even ask questions, let alone share our insights or experiences.	The district can teach administrators how to incorporate more opportunities for teacher voice into our school culture. Right now, there needs to be a change in our staff norms and climate to encourage teachers to speak up and administrators to listen. With direct training from the district, administrators can implement an environment where all teachers, especially new teachers, can feel empowered to use their voices to express their attitudes regarding work-related issues, and later be able to use their voices to make decisions regarding policies.
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Demanding Workload

In this table, I will look at research recommendations regarding teacher workload.

Teachers experience an overbearing workload, and many are leaving this profession due to this reason alone. Educators are overworked and overwhelmed with responsibilities and duties like preparing lessons, creating teaching materials, managing class sizes and students' needs, and much more. Unfortunately, labor intensification is the root of this problem because teachers are

expected to complete numerous amounts of tasks with a limited amount of time, support, and resources.

Table 3

Extended Planning Time and Time-Saving Technology

Research	Practices	Recommendations
Teachers feel they do not have time within their contracted hours to complete all their discretionary work for several reasons. Research indicates that completing work without time constraints and being paid for time spent doing work outside of contracted hours can make a positive impact. If teachers are given more time and structure to collaborate with others regarding instruction, sharing materials, and preparation time to accommodate students' needs, then more teachers would more likely stay in the profession. (Certo & Fox, 2002; Kyriacou, 2006; Nilsson et al., 2016).	Currently, all teachers in this district are given one hour to plan, and often teachers cannot rely on their planning period due to other responsibilities like substitute coverages or meetings. Currently, professional developments in this district do not provide ample time for teachers to collaborate or plan with one another.	Luckily, next year the district will provide weekly early releases for teachers to get more accomplished during their contracted hours. This is an effective first step toward combating the demanding workload by utilizing their time more effectively. One recommendation for the district is to ensure that professional development sessions do not interfere with teachers' time to lesson plan, grade, and collaborate with their peers.
ICT can help teachers with lesson prep, finding materials, and providing more opportunities for engagement among students. Teachers can save time, collaborate with others, and differentiate. Most importantly, ICT provides efficient ways to communicate and collaborate with families. ICT also	Our district provides ICT for all teachers. These online platforms enable teachers to collaborate, complete tasks like attendance and report cards, and utilize specialty programs like Lexia and i-Ready to track and accommodate students' needs. The district also equips its teachers with multiple opportunities to connect with families. Services like Remind,	The district needs to continue and enhance its ICT program for teachers and even for students. The pandemic has allowed many districts including mine to revamp their ICT programs to make them more accessible for all parties. The district needs to prioritize providing 1:1 technology for students. The school provides all these services; however, the students need their computers or

grants technology opportunities for students. ICT can provide all students with access to laptops or other electronic devices. Approximately 95 percent of teachers believe that ICT is a part of the solution (Dorit, 2018; Perifaniou et al., 2022; Selwood & Pilkington, 2005).	Zoom, dual language programs, and more allow teachers to communicate with families more quickly and efficiently. These online and communication services help limit the quantity of the workload because teachers can often reuse, share, and tweak instead of starting from scratch with each new lesson, assignment, or newsletter. Regarding communication, teachers do not have to rely on calling parents or mailing letters home—they could use instant messaging systems to communicate more efficiently.	electronic devices to navigate digital platforms at school and at home. Allowing all students to have these devices helps with the teacher's workload. Teachers do not have to depend on printing papers, writing out feedback, or using the chalkboard. They can provide all the materials online in a matter of seconds.
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Teacher Burnout

In this table, I will look at research recommendations regarding teacher burnout. Burnout entails the state of consistent stress that affects the physical, emotional, and mental capacities of our educators. Typically, there is a tendency to blame the individual teacher for not managing their work-related stress; however, burnout is caused by systemic structures and expectations. Due to the demands, teachers cannot practice a healthy work-life balance to reduce stress and anxiety.

Table 4

Efforts to Improve Work-Life Balance and Improving Teacher Autonomy

Research	Practice	Recommendations
Schools need to enhance their current policies and infrastructure to help teachers improve their work-life balance. The literature suggests that districts can improve work-life balance by	The district does not have enough staff like paraeducators or office managers to keep up with the demands of teaching and supporting children. Tasks that could be managed by	The district needs to offer more support for teachers to complete bureaucratic tasks, which includes teacher assistants, paras, and more office staff. Having these support systems can greatly

including enhanced teacher training, employing additional staff, and providing access to different types of leave. Additionally, improving class sizes, protecting teachers from exploitation, and allocating more funding for public education are other examples to improve the work-life balance. Teachers will use their time and effort more effectively, and this strategy can help with the work-life balance. (Butt & Lance, 2005; Gunter & Rayner, 2007)	these personnel are then shouldered by classroom teachers. There is not enough time to complete these tasks without interfering with our time off the clock. Also, teachers feel that they cannot take wellness days due to the absence of substitute teachers – many classroom teachers have their planning periods taken up by internal coverage. Currently, class sizes in my district are unmanageable in both the middle and the high schools. High school classes are around 32-36 students in each class, and this puts a huge demand on teachers. There are too many responsibilities, and many teachers, like me, are burned out and do not have enough stamina to work effectively.	help teachers to prioritize lesson planning, differentiation, and relationship building. The district also needs to re-evaluate its policy regarding student overload. Not only should teachers be compensated for additional students, but there is also a need to analyze the current infrastructure of our workforce. Solutions include adding more teachers, being creative with spaces and layouts, and altering school schedules. Adopting a policy that better protects a teacher's contracted hours can help teachers to prioritize what to accomplish within their contracted time.
Lack of autonomy can lead to teacher burnout. Autonomy-supportive interventions can help teachers feel motivated to stay in the classroom. These interventions both help teachers to have the autonomy to make decisions for their classroom; meanwhile, teachers have access to personal-professional resources to better serve their students. The literature emphasized practices like work-shop-orientated training, capitalizing on professional development opportunities, and giving teachers more resources, teachers felt they	The district provides a GVC, a Guaranteed Viable Curriculum, which all teachers are expected to use daily. The GVC provides lessons, tests, and projects for teachers to implement in their classrooms. Originally, the GVC was intended to help teachers, but, led teachers to feel stressed. Teachers are tied to this curriculum, and it is frowned upon if teachers do not follow the curriculum exactly. This district mandates that all teachers follow the pacing guide, and principals must ensure that teachers are using the assessments every two weeks.	Luckily, next year the district will be improving the GVC to ensure that there is more flexibility with the pacing guide. One recommendation I would advise the district to implement for next year is to ensure that teachers feel supported when administering this new curriculum for next year. It is important to provide check-ins, resources for teachers to use in conjunction with the updated GVC, and meaningful professional development that aligns with the new curriculum.

had more control over what they taught and felt supported. These interventions can improve teacher efficiency, satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation among teachers (Bonneville-Roussy et.al, 2020; Cheon et. al, 2017).	The lack of autonomy makes teachers feel that they are not making the best decisions for their students, and teachers feel that they have no control or support in the classroom.	
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Summary

As discussed above, I have examined the ways my district meets and does not meet the recommendations of the literature. I have tried to outline some simple or basic recommendations that might support the district to reduce attrition rates. Currently, my site is initiating efforts to alleviate the work burdens for the next school year by extending more planning time; however, there is a need for my site to improve in other teacher retention areas as well. Within the discussion section, I will address the root causes and suggestions to prevent teacher attrition. In the upcoming section, I will also explore the predicaments of the ongoing teacher attrition research, which affects both teachers and students.

Discussion

Teacher attrition is a serious issue because there is a need for schools across the globe to retain qualified, experienced, and dedicated educators in the classrooms. According to the literature review educators who have limited experience, who experience a demanding workload, and who suffer burnout are more likely to quit. I have been a teacher for five years, and there have been times when I have felt overworked, burned out, and discouraged about my career choice. Throughout the course, other teachers like me also experience these sensations, and there is data to support how the workload and burnout contribute to teacher attrition. This paper outlines studies and statistics regarding the ongoing crisis of teacher attrition, and this project

aims to find solutions to prevent more teachers from leaving the profession. Not only are people leaving this industry, but there are also not enough people who are attempting to join the field, hence there is a teacher shortage. The teacher shortage and teacher attrition go hand in hand; however, I limited my focus to teacher attrition because there is a need to address the factors that make teaching unsustainable for current educators. In the section below, I will discuss my findings, implications, and limitations regarding the causes and effects of teacher attrition among secondary educators.

Discussion of Findings

I aim to examine and answer the following questions regarding the causes and effects of teacher attrition (1) what are the underlying root causes of teacher attrition rates? (2) how can we address the root causes to prevent current or future educators from leaving the classroom? (3) if teacher attrition rates continue to rise over time, then what are the implications? In addition to answering these questions, I am also going to end by examining how teacher attrition affects Title 1 school communities. Within the beginning phases of my research, I focused on finding the catalysts that contribute to teacher attrition, and most of the literature points to demanding workload and sensations of burnout as the major two contributors. There was also an abundance of literature regarding the subgroup that is most vulnerable to attrition: novice teachers who are either young or have less experience in teaching. This subgroup is most likely to resign within the first few years of their career.

Underlying Root Causes of Teacher Attrition

My first question aims to examine the root causes of teacher attrition. The research emphasizes how teachers tend to leave the profession due to burnout. The major causes of burnout include unsustainable working conditions, a feeling of lack of preparation, and an

absence of support. Teachers with five years or less of classroom experience are particularly susceptible to burnout, which is the root of attrition. So, just how many teachers are leaving? One report that studied the factors of teacher resignation highlights that in the United States, the teacher retention rate after five years is only 61 percent (Kersaint, 2005, p. 776). This statistic highlights the overall purpose of my project, and after examining other research, this is not only an issue within the United States, but also considered to be an issue in other countries like Chile, Sweden, the Netherlands, and many more.

Teachers are emotionally and physically exhausted, due to the pressures of the workload and other outside factors. The unsustainable working conditions like overcrowding classrooms, not enough breaks, and even school safety can perpetuate this degree of fatigue and job dissatisfaction known as burnout, and it is recognized as another driving force of teacher attrition. According to the literature, burnout is not caused by that one individual teacher, but structural practices like school leadership, the rigid schedule, and unrealistic expectations cause the teacher to feel burnout, then eventually quit (Williams et al., 2022, p.7). Hence, the literature points to a need to shift the current systematic and structural practices. Educators do not have time to feel prepared to teach, yet alone have the time and energy to practice self-care and work-life boundaries. Teachers are experiencing cognitive overload periodically, and these constant stresses of the job can lead to burnout resentment, and mental health concerns.

Within the literature, inexperienced teachers are dissatisfied with the high degree of responsibilities like grading, lesson planning, reaching out to families, taking care of the well-being of children, and more. More specifically according to a Chilean study, within their sample of first-year or second-year teachers had an overall low sense of self-efficacy around the skills of attending to student needs, increasing student motivation, helping students understand the value

of their education, and implementing various teaching strategies (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2014, p. 284). These educators have limited experience and do not feel equipped to tackle these responsibilities without resources and support. Regardless of how long you have been a teacher—all teachers are held to these demanding expectations. According to the findings of a separate study, younger people tend to leave the profession early due to these challenging working conditions, inadequate preparation, and to pursue better career opportunities (Lindqvist, 2014, p.95). This demographic typically has more freedom to explore different career choices because these educators are not tied to a pension or retirement. These young educators realize that they can make more money and do less work than what teachers are expected to deliver. This group also feels blindsided when they enter the career because the preparation programs have not fully prepared them to take on the role of teachers.

The current working conditions and expectations that are placed on teachers stem from the issue of the workload. The teacher's workload includes the tasks and responsibilities that teachers must fulfill daily. The workload is another reason teachers leave the workforce. According to a separate study that focused on the workload among secondary educators, 93 percent of their teacher sample believed that workload is a crucial issue. On average teachers work around 57 hours within a span of one week, which means that they worked 19 hours outside of their contracted hours (Manuel, et.al, 2018, p. 8). The time that teachers dedicate to doing this job is not sustainable. Teachers are assumed to take their work home, and not get paid for their efforts. Why is there a need to take work home? Pointing back to the literature, the quantity of tasks is too excessive. As mentioned previously from the same source, the workload can be categorized into numerous categories, which is part of the problem. Teachers need to

teach, plan lessons, modify lessons, monitor behaviors, analyze student data, reflect on student data, attend meetings, buy supplies, make copies, and it does not stop there.

As I read through the various articles and documents that are a part of this literature review, I realized just how similar the experiences of early educators across the country are to my own. I majored in secondary education, and I completed the required courses and studied different theories of education, special education, multilingual learning, and classroom management, and I had student teaching experience. When I became a teacher for my current district, I was immediately struck by how little I truly knew about this job. This is a very emotionally taxing and physically demanding job, where you must learn how to collaborate with people who do not necessarily want to learn how to collaborate with you - and you must always anticipate the unexpected. At my district, I had to work longer hours compared to my veteran colleagues. I had limited time during the summer months and funds to decorate my classroom and even less time to navigate through the curriculum. My lack of confidence was rooted in the demanding workload and my sensations of burnout and emotional fatigue – a sentiment echoed throughout the numerous studies presented in this review.

Personally, as a fifth-year educator-I am still struggling with finding time to get tasks accomplished. Typically, I work on lesson plans until 9 p.m. and use my weekends to grade. The feeling unaccomplished and the pressure affects each day my overall mood and attitude toward teaching each. I do not have enough time to rely on my planning period to fulfill all my responsibilities, and the workload ties into my overall sense of burnout. The working conditions prevent me from teaching to the best of my abilities. I feel like I am a hamster on a wheel, and I am working tirelessly with no ending in sight. The burnout hinders me from enjoying my job, and I am constantly anxious, stressed, and overwhelmed with responsibilities. I feel so much

pressure to be perfect, to put a smile on my face, and not take the time for important things like making relationships with my students, prioritizing my health, and leaving work at school. I am not taking the best care of myself because I do not have the mental or physical bandwidth to do so. I am putting my job before everything else, and this is jeopardizing my health, my relationships with loved ones, and my uncertainties about my future. There is a need to evaluate our current systems that perpetuate teacher attrition because I have always wanted to be a teacher, and now I cannot recognize that person anymore.

Suggestions to Prevent Teachers from Leaving the Classroom

My second question intends to explore recommendations to prevent more teachers from leaving the classrooms. Mentorships, extended planning time, and giving teachers more autonomy are efforts that can help increase teacher retention. The literature recommends that educators, especially beginner teachers, need ongoing and effective mentorship opportunities. Mentorship programs are crucial for beginning teachers because they offer instruction regarding classroom management and teaching protocols, as well as provide opportunities for teachers to receive physical and emotional support during this new transition in their careers (Harris, 2015). Not only could mentorship increase this specific group of teachers' assertiveness in the classroom, but according to another study this specific intervention can dramatically increase the likelihood of teacher retention (Smith and Ingersoll, 706, 2004). The effectiveness of teacher mentoring programs can offer enduring teacher networking, collaboration and planning time, and supportive communication were attributes that made these teachers want to stay in the classroom. These teachers need and want more direct guidance, coaching, and the ability to express their feelings and frustrations in a safe place.

Teachers need to have their planning period time extended to meet the demands of their workload. Completing work without time constraints, being paid for time spent doing work outside of contracted hours, and receiving a support system for emotional or occupational stress had a positive impact on these educators to have a potentially better work-life balance (Nilsson et al., 2016, pp. 596-599). By providing more interventions like allocation of time, resources, compensation, and experts or aides to rely on, these efforts empower teachers to not feel overwhelmed or anxious about their demands and responsibilities. The workload creates unnecessary anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction for educators. Teachers want to work with children and want them to be excited about their learning; however, teachers do not have the bandwidth to be creative and passionate due to the other responsibilities that they must fulfill. Teachers deserve accommodation to combat the overdemanding workload.

The lack of autonomy is an issue that frustrates most educators. Schools need to allow teachers more opportunities to take ownership of what they teach and how they teach. Not only should teachers have a say regarding the curriculum, but they also need to be offered resources like strategies, materials, and support to better serve their students (Cheon et al., 2017). Educators need to have the opportunity to be creative, set their own pace for the classroom, and feel passionate about what they are teaching; meanwhile, they should feel supported in their decision-making by administrators and peers. Giving teachers choices can boost sustainability, independence, and freedom in the classroom.

Ramifications of Teacher Attrition

I cannot answer this third question from the literature, but from my personal experience attrition is affecting budget and low enrollment for upcoming teacher certification. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the ongoing research on teacher attrition, and there is a need to assess

the aftermath of the global crisis and its effects on teaching. Regarding finance—there are many negative ramifications of teacher attrition; more specifically, it costs around \$2.2 billion per year to replace teachers who leave, and the number is raised around \$4.9 billion per year (Shockley et al., 2005, p. 111). Districts are spending more of their time and finances to amend a teacher deficiency dilemma when there is a need to invest these funds to prioritize efforts to retain teachers in schools like investing in increasing salaries and funding extra resources for students. Currently, teaching has become less attractive over these past few years, and this has affected the enrollment of teacher certifications. According to one report, the United States is experiencing a worsening teacher shortage. Already, there are more than 100, 000 teachers less than we need, and that number is expected to increase significantly by 2025 (Torgerson, 2022, p.5). The current and unsustainable working conditions lead schools to lose money and prevent eligible teachers from joining the industry.

The Effects of Teacher Attrition on Title 1 Schools

In this section, I am going to talk about how higher attrition rates in Title 1 schools impact the budgets, lives, and working conditions of those working in those schools. Title 1 schools in the United States offer differentiated support for students who are from low-income housing. Unfortunately, most teachers who work at Title 1 schools are more likely to suffer from attrition than non-Title 1 schools. Typically, these schools serve our most vulnerable population of students, and these school systems do not provide adequate support for both scholars and educators. A team of researchers studied the predictors of teacher attrition in Title 1 schools in California and found that salaries, working conditions, and unconscious biases of students are the three main catalysts toward attrition (Loeb et al., 2005, pp. 45-48,). This presents a series of issues because these factors perpetuate the revolving door crisis. With high turnover amongst

staff—school climates and students suffer those consequences more than those departed educators. There is a culture of instability, low quality of instruction, and an absence of trust and positive rapport between students and teachers. Schools often must hire a short-term substitute teacher who often has little preparation and/or experience, and this negatively impacts the overall functioning of the classroom and can disrupt norms and leads to a weakening of a school’s “collective knowledge” (Loeb et al., 2005, p.49). The unreliable teacher pool impacts overall student achievement and dropout rates and let us not forget that this costs schools and districts across the state and country money.

Implications for Teachers, Schools, Districts

In the following section, I will be discussing future action steps that are required to retain teachers in American Schools.

Action Steps to Retain Teachers

Several studies, as mentioned above, state the importance of implementing teacher voice into the school climate. Teachers, regardless of their experience, need to have their opinions and concerns heard and respected by principals and other administrators. Currently, teachers are afraid to speak their truth because they do not want to be judged by others. Not only do teachers need to speak up, but also teachers need to be a part of the decision-making process regarding school policies and other important matters. Only a few teachers are privy to using their teacher voices, and there is a need to make this more accessible to all teachers. Administrators need to set the tone by creating a safe climate that encourages teachers to use their voices – to speak freely without worry of judgment or retaliatory action by the administration. Administrators also need to be willing to listen to their staff and empower staff’s voices by including them authentically in decision-making processes. This can include creating committees of staff

interested in specific topics – like discipline, parent involvement, etc. – that have real decision-making power. By giving your staff members a platform, teachers will feel valued and that what they have to say matters. These efforts can increase the likelihood of teacher retention tremendously.

Action Steps for Districts to Retain Teachers

Districts can implement more mentorship programs, extend planning time, and provide more teacher autonomy to increase teacher retention. The literature cited four sources regarding the importance of mentorship, and the district has a strong mentorship program for first-year teachers. The district needs to extend the program for teachers for up to five years to prevent teacher attrition. Teachers typically leave the profession by their fifth year of teaching – districts should be supporting staff throughout the entirety of this crucial period, not just the first year of it. Mentorships have the benefit of strengthening teacher practices, collaboration, and self-reflection, and can also help teachers socially and emotionally because these mentorships provide safe places for teachers to vent and feel seen and heard. Districts need to ensure that teachers continue to have these mentorship opportunities for up to five years because these mentors can help these young teachers to feel confident and feel competent in their roles as teachers.

Districts also need to implement extended planning time for teachers to feel prepared enough to do their job and not take their work home. Several studies above suggested that preparation time is an issue for educators, and teachers cite the lack of time and resources to do their job with fidelity as a reason for changing careers or switching schools. Districts need to provide teachers with not only reliable, functional amounts of time for planning but also find ways to extend planning time within contracted hours for teachers that need it. If teachers are

given more time and structure to collaborate with others regarding instruction, sharing materials, and preparation time to accommodate students' needs, then more teachers would have one less reason to leave the profession. Luckily, next year, my district will provide weekly early releases for teachers to get more accomplished during their contracted hours. This is an effective first step toward combating the demanding workload by utilizing their time more effectively. One recommendation for my district and others is to ensure that professional development sessions do not interfere with teachers' time to lesson plan, grade, and collaborate with their peers.

Lately, districts in the United States have been giving teachers a GVC, Guaranteed Viable Curriculum, which has put a lot of stress and pressure on teachers to follow a script and to teach to a test. The GVC has stripped teachers of their autonomy in many instances, and teachers in this district are leaving due to this reason alone. The GVC also causes burnout due to the expectation of a relatively aggressive pace for material - they must administer tests and grades within two weeks and follow a pacing guide that does not meet the need of students nor accommodate for unexpected changes. My district will be administering a new curriculum next year, and I hope the upcoming GVC will provide teachers with more choices and flexibility and provide teachers with meaningful support and training to administer the GVC successfully.

Action Steps to Retain Teachers in Washington State

There are several action steps that the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction needs to take to keep teachers from leaving the classroom. Washington needs to prioritize the mental health of our educators; more specifically, they need to create policies that promote a healthy work-life balance for teachers and create incentives for school districts that implement these policies. The state can provide extra funding to pay additional staff like paraeducators and teacher assistants to tackle the bureaucratic tasks that teachers are forced to

do. The state can also make policies regarding class sizes to ensure that teachers have smaller class sizes to prevent them from working more hours and doing more tasks. Lastly, there is a need to invest in more technology like ICT state-wide for teachers to plan, differentiate, and find materials. ICT cannot only affect teachers, but the state can also mandate that each scholar has access to a laptop or an electronic device to improve their technology literacy, complete their assignments, and receive the differentiation that they need. The state has the power to change the infrastructure of education and the culture of schools across Washington. OSPI needs to ensure that there are efforts to protect its teachers – well-prepared educators lead to well-prepared students.

Implications of Research

There are three areas that research is required to be done. First, we need more studies about the ramifications of the pandemic and its impact on teacher attrition rates. None of the research that I have collected directly presents data or trends that illustrate attrition rates from 2020 to 2023. The lack of data makes it challenging for schools all over the world to understand how many educators are departing, and the reason behind their departure. Next, there needs to be more research to assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic within our Title 1 schools' populations. Before the pandemic, these schools would be more susceptible to teacher retention issues, and I can only assume that this predicament is only getting worse. Again, there are no studies to assert these notions, and there is a need to call to action for researchers to study how attrition affects all types of schools around the world, especially now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, there needs to be future research regarding the impact of local school management or school leadership on teacher attrition rate. There is enough evidence to support how systemic pressures and infrastructures perpetuate teachers to leave, but there is a need to

investigate the individual attributes that influence teachers to stay or leave. In this future research, there is a need to critically investigate the correlation between a principal or superintendent's actions to teacher attrition rates. By identifying these contributing factors, then these efforts can have the possibility of encouraging future teacher retention.

Limitations

For this study, I mostly focused on the issues of teacher attrition before 2020. The topic of teacher attrition is not a new concept, and throughout this process, I was able to analyze data from the 1960s to 2021. I also excluded the term or phrase, teacher turnover, in my study.

Turnover and attrition are related but separate topics, and often people mistakenly interchange these two terms. Turnover, as defined in the literature, refers to teachers who leave specific schools and move to other schools for various reasons. Turnover does not equate to attrition because these individuals want to continue to teach, and this is an important distinction. The purpose of this paper was to investigate the causes and effects of educators who do not wish to continue to stay in the profession – turnover is a topic that would benefit from its over-focused review.

As previously mentioned, in 2023 there remains insufficient evidence regarding how the pandemic has affected the trends of teacher attrition. This was a huge limitation, and within this process, I only had the opportunity to utilize and cite one peer-reviewed article from 2021. I wanted to analyze how the pandemic has altered the projection of teacher attrition and be able to compare the current attrition data from the past to the present. Not only did I want to get a better understanding of the statistics or trends, but I also wanted to explore if there were applicable, current solutions to navigate this post-pandemic world. I worked before, during, and after the pandemic—some elements have permanently changed the course of teaching, which no one truly

talks about, and I hope that there is urgency from researchers to examine this crisis in more detail. The factors of the pandemic impeded further investigation, as well as finding accessible literature from the University of Washington online library. The articles or studies I wanted to select for this project were unavailable due to licensing issues or limited content accessibility - there is also, quite simply, a lack of studies in general that focus on the effect of the pandemic specifically on teacher attrition.

In this study, I focused on the topic of teacher attrition, and I included studies from all over the globe. I did not want to restrict my findings to not only the United States. This process allowed me to realize how this is an international crisis, and teachers around the world need a change in their working conditions. In my project, I also focused on the teacher shortage because often the teacher shortage and teacher attrition go hand in hand. There are not enough teachers to recruit because teachers are either leaving or not enough people are entering the field because teaching is becoming an unattractive occupation. Lastly, I focused a lot of my energy on researching the causes of teacher attrition. I was so overwhelmed with the reasons regarding why teachers must decide to leave the classroom.

Conclusion

Teacher attrition is a pressing issue in the United States and other parts of the world; however, in America, every child is entitled to receive an education because it is a constitutional right. Without a sustainable supply of teachers, students will receive an ineffective and meaningless education, and they will not have the skills to later become productive members and leaders of our future society. The pandemic has affected this issue of teacher attrition, and teaching is becoming more of an unsustainable and undesirable profession. As of now, literature and studies are absent regarding attrition since the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the data

schools, districts, states, and the Department of Education cannot truly understand the problems of the current working conditions and attempt to brainstorm solutions. Currently, there are some solutions to combat teacher attrition; however, due to the lack of research post the pandemic we do not know which solutions will be the most effective. What we do know is that teachers cannot teach if they are overworked, overwhelmed, and underappreciated and students cannot learn if teachers cannot do their job with fidelity. As of now, there is a need to make this problem known and have the public realize that teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions. Teachers and students deserve to have their needs met and to thrive in our public schools, and up to this present moment education is in crisis, and our children are at risk. In this paper, I have tried to address the root causes of this crisis and suggested possible solutions to keep teachers from leaving the classroom.

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