

Invitational Education Theory and Teacher Retention: Problems and Practices in Minnesota

Dr. Amy Christensen and Dr. Michele Barron-Albers

St. Cloud State University

Abstract

Numerous studies have identified research to practice gap regarding teacher retention (Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Carver, 2003; CCSESA, 2016). In Minnesota, teacher retention is a concern as 51% of professional licensed teachers were not working as either a public or charter school teacher during the 2019-2020 school year. (PELSB, 2021). The objective of this study was to identify and address common themes that exist across multiple groups of educational professionals (pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and administrators). In an effort to understand why half of the state's fully licensed teachers have left the classroom and/or the field, this study analyzed responses of participants in Minnesota utilizing an Invitational Education Theory lens to inform preparation program content, alleviate the research to practice gap, and provide recommendations to help improve teacher retention rates.

Keywords: Invitational Education Theory, Teacher Retention; Mentorship; Teacher Induction; Teacher Supports; Teacher and Administrator Preparation

Introduction

Each year, a high rate of teachers in the United States leave the profession. With annual attrition rates averaging 8%, school districts around the country are faced with hiring tens of thousands of new teachers each year to replace the beginning or mid-career teachers who leave the field (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Garcia & Wiess, 2019). This depletes economic resources that could be utilized in another capacity. A school district spends, on average, approximately \$21,000 to fill a vacancy (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This unintentionally disinventing practice can be seen nationwide, with most school districts struggling to retain quality teachers due to many factors such as difficult working conditions, including low wages and dissatisfaction with administrative support (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Nguyen et al, 2020).

Both students and teachers are detrimentally affected by the lack of teachers in the United States' public education system. Without qualified teachers, students' learning is threatened. Furthermore, students in disadvantaged socioeconomic school settings are not provided an equitable education due to teacher attrition (Garcia & Wiess, 2019), as well as a lack of teacher effectiveness (Ronfeldt, et al., 2013; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Kraft & Papay, 2014; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Garcia & Wiess, 2019). As a profession, the field of education is constantly under attack, which also continues to exacerbate the rate of teacher attrition (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Garcia & Wiess, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

This Invitational Education Theory research and practice seeks to understand why teachers are leaving the field in the state of Minnesota and what can be done to alleviate this phenomenon. Results show that there is misalignment between perceptions of teachers and administrators in terms of priority of needs. By working intentionally to create a more effective communication model between teachers and administrators and fostering a sense of agency and autonomy in individuals, administrators can support the creation of an environment where everyone feels empowered to share their ideas and perspectives. This intentional and respectful communication encourages others to express themselves freely and engage in meaningful dialogue to help build trust. Teachers and administrators must strive to build healthy, trusting relationships, which will lead to better school culture and climate. As a result, teacher effectiveness can increase due to positive, supportive environments, whereby teachers are provided needed supports and practices.

Invitational Education Theory allows for creating environments that nurture positive interpersonal relationships and facilitate personal and collective growth. By doing so, teachers will be encouraged to remain in the field of education as their needs will be prioritized and met.

This paper examines domains that support positive environments designed to increase teacher retention through the examination of policies, processes, practices, and supports for teachers, their working conditions, and teacher mentorship and retention programs.

Factors Related to Teacher Retention

Two themes were found in Borman and Dowling's (2008) meta-analysis on teacher retention: personal characteristics and school characteristics. Both were found to be significant predictors of teacher turnover. Additional research by Nguyen, Pham, Crouch, and Springer (2020), expanded on the meta-analysis by Borman and Dowling (2008). Nguyen, et.al. (2020)

noted teacher turnover correlated with personal factors, school factors, and external/policy factors. These three factors align with the powerful IE domains of People, Places, Programs, and Policies.

Concerning school factors (school organizational characteristics, resources, and student body characteristics), Nguyen et al. (2020) found that schools with less favorable working conditions and with weaker administrative supports had increased teacher turnover. Working conditions encompass both the physical environment and the cultural atmosphere within a workplace, which aligns with the Invitational Education Theory domains of both Places and People. The physical space includes factors such as safety and accessibility, while the cultural aspect involves the attitudes, values, and behaviors that shape interactions and work dynamics. Both elements are crucial in creating a supportive and productive work environment.

Nguyen et al. (2020) noted schools that provided induction and/or mentoring and had good in-service professional development had teachers who were more likely to stay (p. 9). Effective mentoring programs may play a pivotal role in implementing Invitational Education Theory as they provide personalized support, addressing individual needs and promoting positive self-concept. Continuous monitoring ensures these programs align with the foundational goals of Invitational Education Theory, which will enhance their effectiveness.

This meta-analysis by Nguyen, et al. (2020) added External/Policy factors, which included accountability and workforce (p. 3). Accountability encompassed: “teacher evaluation, merit pay, teacher effectiveness, federal or national policies, and principal effectiveness” (p. 9). Purkey (1991) noted that policies, including procedures, codes, and rules, whether written or unwritten, regulate the activities of individuals and organizations. In the context of education, these policies communicate the value, ability, and responsibility of teachers, linking directly to accountability through teacher evaluations. Effective teacher evaluations, guided by clear policies, are essential in enhancing teacher effectiveness and ensuring high educational standards.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) reported that teacher attrition in the United States was about twice as high as compared to countries such as Finland and Singapore, with 90% of vacant teaching positions created by teachers leaving the field. Of the approximately 66% leaving education for reasons other than retirement, most teachers cited dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. In the first year, 9.5% of new teachers leave the classroom and nearly half of new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (2021) released the 2021 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota data from 2015 – 2020 which showed there is “a relatively consistent 11% attrition after one year, 17% after two years, and 22.5% after three years. Nearly a third of new teachers leave teaching within the first five years in the profession” (p. 44). During the 2019-20 academic year, there were 2,300 Minnesota teachers who left their previous position. These teachers identified reasons they were no longer employed; more than 43% were listed as “unknown” or “personal reasons,” while 31% reported being an educator in a different district (p. 45).

Centering on Invitational Education Theory domains of People and Places, Purkey and Novak (2008) noted that mutual respect between teachers and administrators as well as intentional dialogue and shared professional opportunities lead to a rewarding career.

Practices and Supports to Aid in Teacher Retention

Induction programs have been shown to address recurrent themes regarding teacher attrition, including administrative support, professional development, and mentorship program implementation (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Conley & You, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018). Induction programs are defined by California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, otherwise known as CCSESA (2016) as “post-hire, in-service training programs completed during the few years of employment – provide additional support and foster skill acquisition among teachers and administrators” (p. 3).

The probability that new teachers remain in the profession improves with effective induction programs. This includes onboarding, professional development, observations and evaluations, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Across the United States, induction programs fluctuate greatly. As of 2019, 62% of states require induction and mentoring support for new to the profession teachers (Evans, et. al, 2019).

In Minnesota, The Teacher Support Partnership worked to create state induction guidelines in 2008 including professional development and induction systems, mentoring, and resources. The New Teacher Center (2015) completed a policy analysis to determine quality induction program characteristics, review current policies and practices aligned with the indicators, and provide recommendations to increase induction program effectiveness. This analysis found in 2013, that 84% of schools reported they offered some form of formalized teacher induction program. Of the percentage reporting to provide induction, there was a steady decline and by year three, only 18%

of those schools offered some form of formalized programming. The reported induction activities included new teacher seminars or workshops, formative assessment training, mentor training, and evaluation measures.

During the New Teacher Center (2015) review of laws, regulations, and policies, strengths and weaknesses were recognized. Strengths included “encouragement of induction, the availability of professional development funding to support district programs, an existing set of induction guidelines, and the publication of the annual staff development report” (p. 7). Weaknesses included “the absence of an explicit state induction program requirement, the absence of state criteria for mentor selection and training, a lack of alignment to teacher licensing, and the absence of state evaluation of induction activities” (p. 7).

Prior to July 1, 2021, Minnesota State Statute 122A.70 (2020) stated schools were *encouraged* to provide teacher mentorship programs. This statute changed, as of July 1, 2021, to state “school districts must develop teaching mentoring programs...” (Minnesota Legislature, 2021).

Induction and mentoring programs play a crucial role in implementing Invitational Education theory. When programs are continuously monitored and aligned with Invitational Education principles, they create a supportive and inclusive environment that addresses the holistic needs of beginning teachers. This positive environment, enhanced by experienced mentors, not only boosts new teachers' confidence and professional growth but also significantly improves their retention by fostering a sense of belonging and purpose within the educational community.

Instructional Supports

Borman & Dowling (2008) have established that when organizations institute formal structures that give beginning teachers support and mentoring, teacher retention rates increase. There are many challenges faced by new teachers including classroom management issues, motivation of students, and alienation and isolation (Shernoff, et.al, 2011). A top reason that beginning teachers give for leaving is classroom management and student misbehavior (Ingersoll, 2001). Another predictor of beginning teachers leaving the classroom is the perception of students as unmotivated or disengaged (Ingersoll, 2001).

One way to address these challenges is through the ICORT elements (intentional, caring, optimistic, respectful, and trustworthy) as noted by Purkey & Novak (2016). Being intentional with instructional strategies and supports, along with fostering caring, respectful, and trusting

relationships with students may likely result in students that demonstrate motivation and engagement in the classroom (Anderson, 2024). As educators, differentiation must occur to meet the individual needs of our learners. This includes employing appropriate materials and teaching methods suitable for each learner's ability.

Administrative Supports

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found “effective leadership is at the heart of every school and drives high-quality support for new teachers and improved teaching conditions” (p. 34). A strong correlation was found between a perceived lack of administrative support and high levels of teacher turnover, with those teachers being more than twice as likely to leave the school or the teaching profession all together. Teacher satisfaction increased with effective instructional leaders who created positive school cultures with high expectations. According to Smith & Ingersoll (2004), effective administrators provided consistent feedback through teacher observation and evaluation. It has also been shown that better collaboration with other teachers helps keep beginning teachers in the classroom. Research from Conley and You (2017) noted that teachers intended to stay in education when they experienced meaningful peer and administrative support. Administrators who align the five essential elements of ICORT: intentionality care, optimism respect, and trust (Purkey & Novak, 2021) have the tools to create an optimal environment in which novice teachers can thrive.

Working Conditions

Johnson and Birkeland (2003), in a seminal study on teacher retention and attrition, found that teachers showed a proclivity to leave their positions when the school's working conditions created by administrators and mentors did not cultivate an ability for them to effectively support and serve their students, nor feel a “sense of success” (p. 609). Education policy and leadership research over the past decade demonstrated that appropriate and positive working conditions matter in terms of instructional quality and a teacher's ability to effectively and meaningfully promote gains in student achievement (Johnson et al., 2012; Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015).

Research further indicated that teacher effectiveness was supported through appropriate working conditions and a positive school climate. Positive working conditions fostered by administrators may influence teachers to demonstrate their knowledge and use of effective

instruction (Billingsley & Bettini, 2017). Positive working environments support a teacher's ability to provide all students high quality instruction (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), maintain sound mental health, and engage in high quality and effective teaching (McLean, Abry, Taylor, Jimenez, & Granger, 2017).

Teacher Mentorship

The terms mentorship and induction are often used interchangeably, as induction supports are often managed by the mentors. Teacher mentorship roles most frequently cited in related literature reviews include providing emotional support, strategies for handling job-related stress, (Gold, 1996; Whitaker, 2000), and facilitation of professional supports, focused on instruction, curriculum alignment to content standards, behavior and classroom management, and school policies (Algozzine et al., 2007).

Research notes that new teachers are at an increased risk of leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching, therefore beginning teacher supports are of great importance. Their optimism for their work may be quickly erased by dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the stark realities of teaching. Beginning teachers often struggle with countless issues such as classroom management, student behavioral concerns, working with difficult parents, and thriving without sufficient support from peers and administration (Gold, 1996).

COVID-19 and Teacher Retention

An unexpected contributor to the teacher retention emergency was the COVID-19 pandemic which created an unparalleled disruption across the country for educators and the students they serve. As noted by Rosenberg & Anderson (2021), the stress of the pandemic was the cause for nearly 50% of the public-school teachers who reported leaving the profession since March 2020. In a study of nearly 1,000 former public-school teachers, Dilberti et. al (2021) found that the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to have aggravated the high levels of stress that teachers were feeling pre-pandemic. The COVID-19 shutdown forced teachers to work longer hours, learn alternative teaching delivery modalities almost overnight, and manage their own health concerns. The study also found that stress was the most common reason given for why teachers were leaving the profession earlier than anticipated, with stress being reported nearly twice as often as insufficient levels of pay. As reported by Bacher-Hicks, et. al (2023), "these pandemic-related

challenges had the potential to alter both the retention of the existing teacher workforce and the supply of new teachers willing to enter the profession” (p. 219).

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze educational professionals’ reflective writings to expand insights regarding teacher retention in Minnesota. The intent was to examine the supports provided to beginning in-service teachers and to explore what additional supports would be the most beneficial to aid in retention of new teachers.

Study Sample

Effective July 1, 2021, Minnesota Statute 122A.70 Subdivision 1 related to Teacher Mentoring, Induction, and Retention Programs was revised to state that rather than being encouraged to, “school districts must develop teacher mentoring programs for teachers new to the profession or district, including teaching residents, teachers of color, teachers who are American Indian, teachers in license shortage areas, teachers with special needs, or experienced teachers in need of peer coaching” (Minnesota Legislature, 2021). Due to this change in legislation, this study sample data was split into two collection periods; one during the spring of 2021 (prior to the legislation change) and one during the fall of 2021(after the legislation change).

The spring 2021 study sample consisted of 185 practicing administrators and 70 beginning in-service teachers (within their first three years of teaching) in the state of Minnesota, and 21 student teaching candidates enrolled in the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) School of Education. Of the spring 2021 student teachers at SCSU, 21 out of 90 completed the online Qualtrics survey for a 23% return rate. Overall, 179 beginning in-service teachers completed the Qualtrics survey, with 70 meeting criteria of being within the first three years of teaching.

The fall 2021 study sample consisted of 156 practicing administrators, 190 beginning in-service teachers in the state of MN, and 19 pre-service teacher candidates enrolled in the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) College of Education and Learning Design. Of the fall 2021 student teachers, 19 out of 92 completed the online Qualtrics survey for a 21% return rate. Overall, 863 beginning in-service teachers completed the Qualtrics survey, with 483 meeting criteria of being within the first three years of teaching.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

For this qualitative study, Qualtrics surveys were created for the three sample groups (pre-service, beginning in-service, and administrators). The three survey instruments were piloted during the fall of 2020 with each sample group. The revised Qualtrics surveys were administered to all three sample groups during the spring of 2021 and reminders to non-completers were sent in the Fall of 2021. The data provided feedback on the perceptions of the three groups of participants regarding why new teachers are leaving the field, what supports are being provided to new teachers, and supports wished for new teachers which could impact teacher retention rates in Minnesota.

Data Analysis

Data from three sample groups were gathered in this qualitative study. The data were collected in narrative transcripts, and recurring patterns or themes were identified and coded in the responses. These responses provided descriptive insights of each participant's perceptions of their experiences related to the three questions listed below.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings will report results for the following questions:

1. Why are teachers leaving the field?
2. What induction/mentorship supports are being provided to new teachers?
3. What induction/mentorship supports do you WISH would be provided to new teachers?

Regarding question 1, “**Why Are Teachers Leaving the Field**” results from the spring 2021 respondents suggested, as seen in Table 1, that all three groups perceived working conditions, burnout, and support as the top reasons that teachers leave the field.

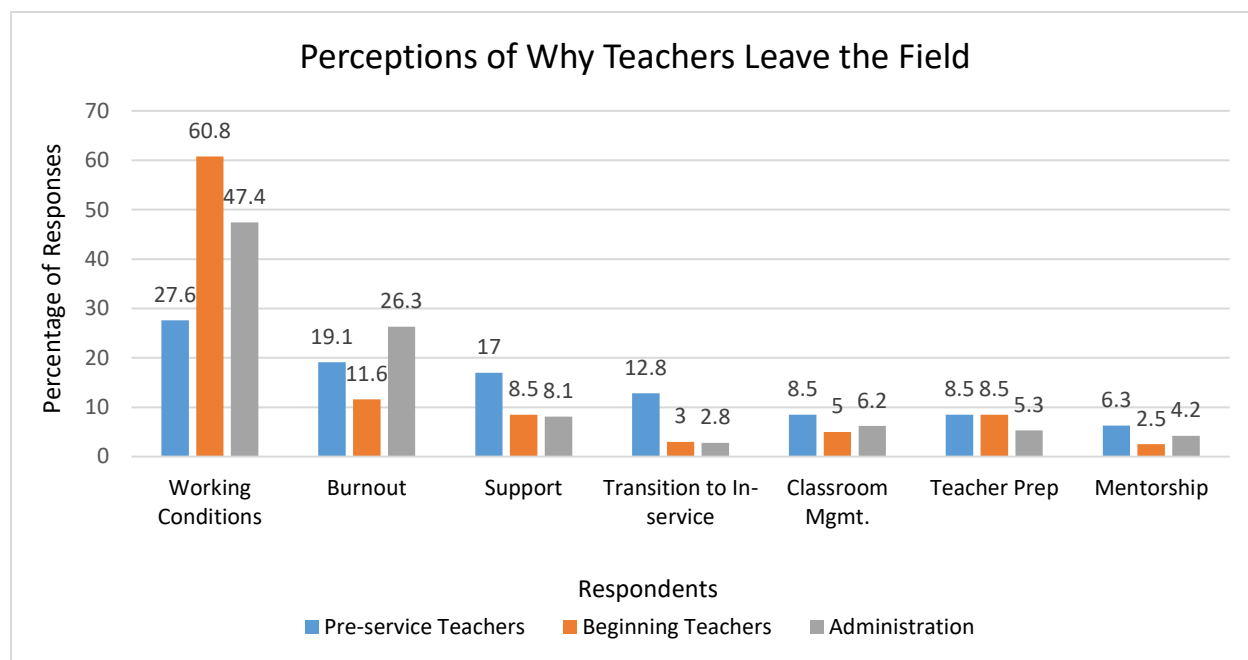


Table 1

Looking specifically at the top response of working conditions, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-service teachers imagine “large workload with little time to complete it” and “challenging expectations and responsibilities.”
- Beginning teachers note “high demands with low salary” and “The work life balance is impossible, and the pay is terrible. We are overworked, over stressed and under paid.”
- Administrators comment “low pay for poor treatment of professional status” and “Demands outweigh the time provided.”

Regarding question 1, “**Why Are Teachers Leaving the Field**” results from the fall 2021 respondents suggested that all three groups perceived working conditions and support as the top reasons that teachers leave the field, as seen in Table 2.

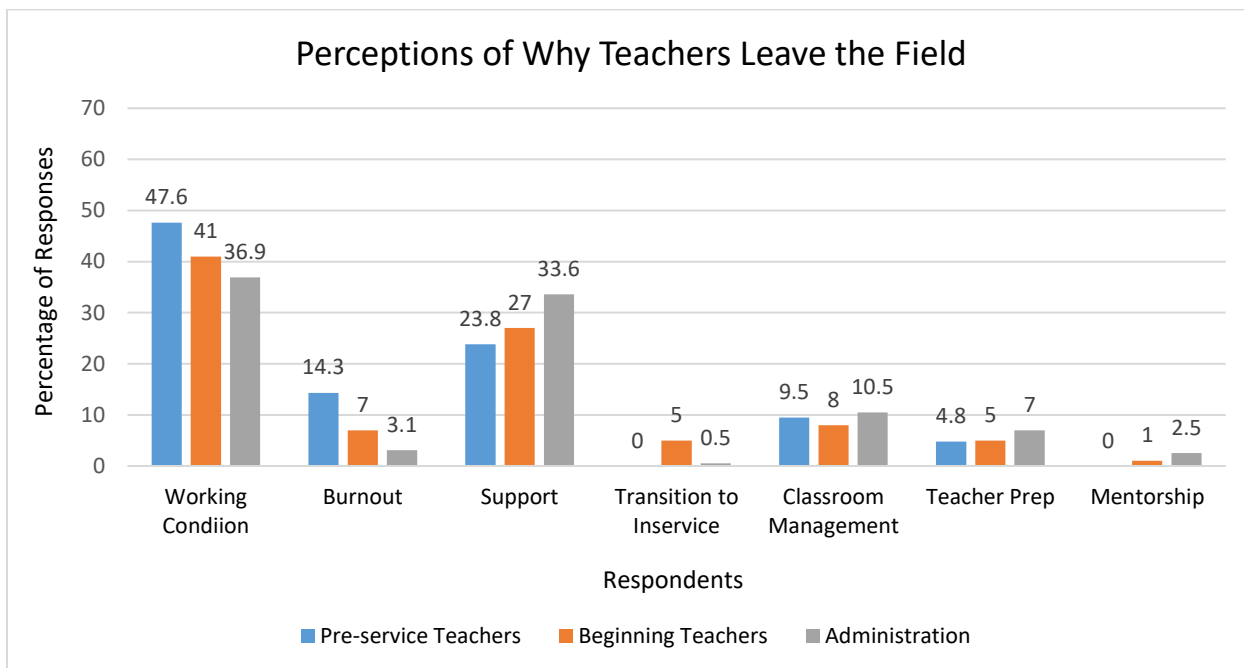


Table 2

Looking specifically at the top response of working conditions, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-service teachers predicted they will “feel unappreciated for their work” and “are overworked.”
- Beginning teachers face “unreasonable expectations” with “low pay” and “lack of supports.”

- Administrators reflect that teachers are “underfunded, while being over-burdened and demoralized” and “there is a disconnect with their perceptions of what teaching will be like vs. actual needs.”

Regarding question 2, “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Are Being Provided To New Teachers**”, the results from spring 2021, as seen in Table 3 below, indicated having a mentor as the top support provided to new teachers. For beginning teachers, 29.4% relayed it as a negative mentor experience, while 25% commented on a positive mentor experience.

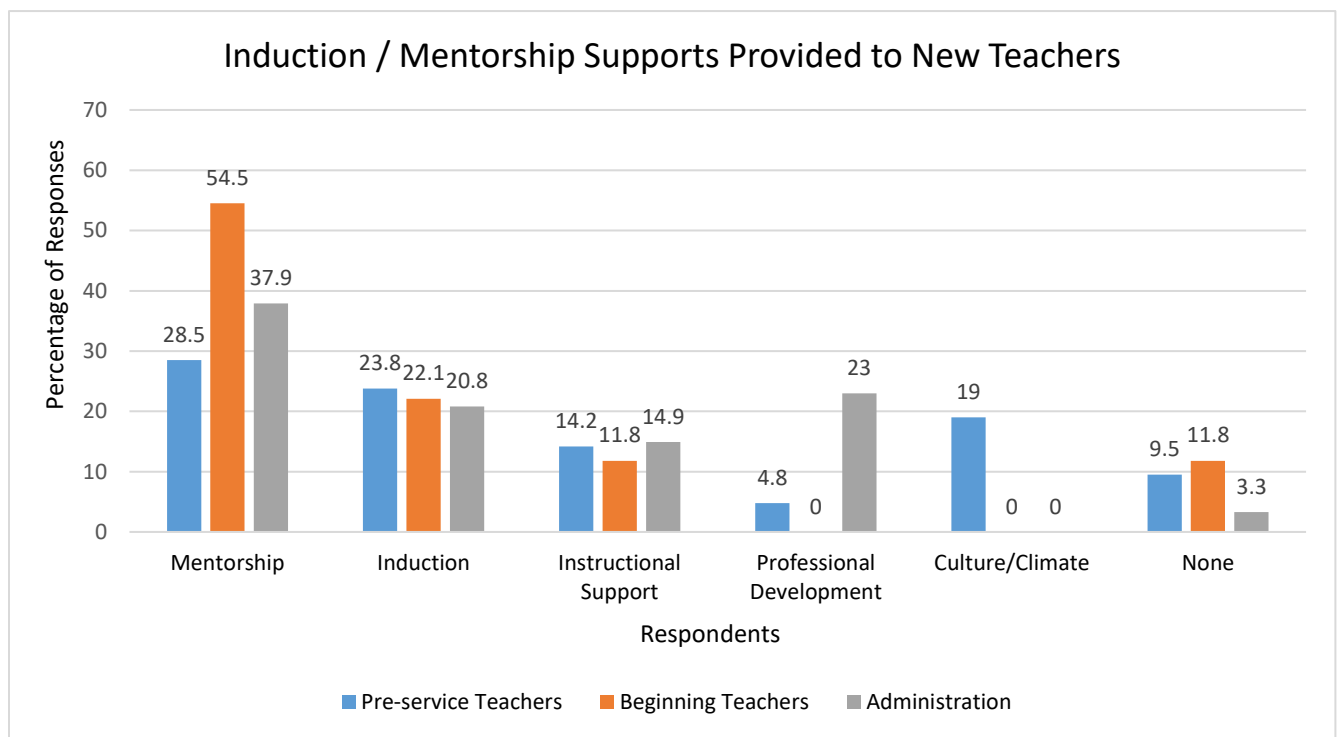


Table 3

Looking specifically at the top response of mentorship, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-Service teachers envision that they will “have a mentor teacher in the district that I can go to if I have questions and/or concerns.”

- Beginning teachers comment “observation, constructive critique, an open door for any issues.” Others noted “a waste of time” and “a mentor who was overworked and too busy to help.”
- Administrators note “A mentor teacher within the school building. This is often a teacher who is within the same grade level or team.”

Regarding question 2, “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Are Being Provided to New Teachers**”, the results from fall 2021 indicated having a mentor as the top support provided to new teachers, as seen in Table 4 below. Of the 137 responses related to mentorship, only 5% explicitly noted that their mentorship was effective, while 37% reported their mentorship to be ineffective.

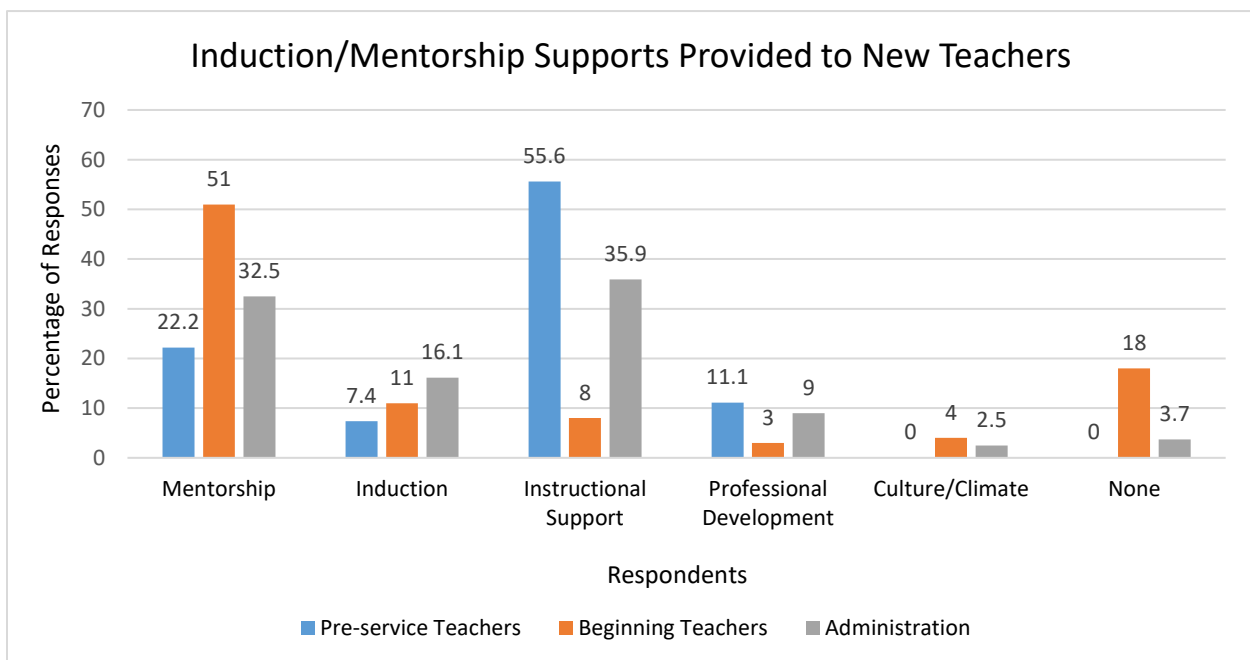


Table 4

Looking specifically at the top response of mentorship, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-service teachers note they anticipated having “a mentor to provide support and be able to go to for questions and concerns.”

- Beginning teachers’ responses vary between “I have a great mentor helping to guide me through some of the stressors involved with the profession” to “They didn’t assign me a mentor teacher, but instead mid year were like quick, let’s pretend you were given mentorship and fill this document out so we don’t get in trouble.”
- Administrators’ comments range from “we have a strong mentorship program” to “nothing although they say they have peer mentors.”

Regarding question 3 “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Do You Wish Would Be Provided to New Teachers**”, spring 2021 responses, as seen in Table 5 below, indicated supports they wished for were effective mentorship and support.

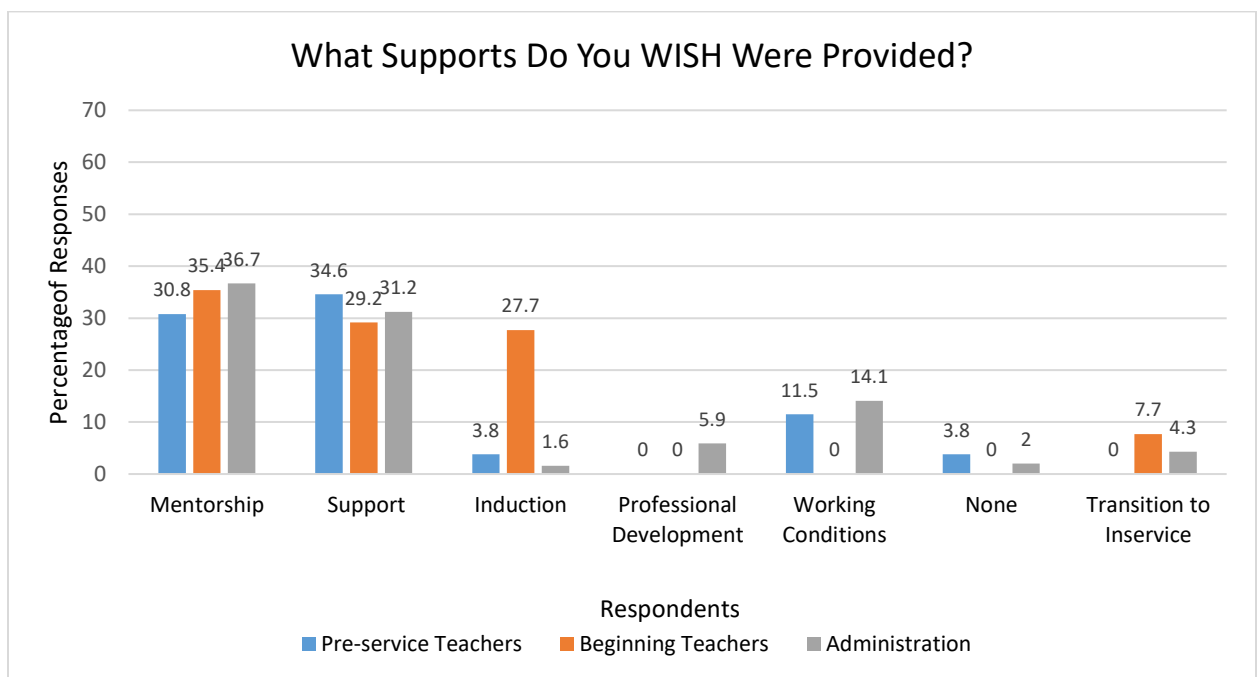


Table 5

Looking specifically at the top response of mentorship, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-Service teachers hope for “a mentor who is open to me asking a lot of questions, someone who will provide directive feedback, guide me in due process, and help me in

being reflective on my own teaching practices” and “strong relationships with other staff, support of colleagues.”

- Beginning teachers reported “time to observe other teachers, more help in the classroom, help with classroom management” and “someone to work closely with.”
- Administrators noted “The most powerful ones are where the new teachers find the person they connect with, trust, and build a relationship with” and “that has taught the same grade or subject as the teacher they are mentoring. I would like to see this person assigned to one building” and “principals more involved with mentoring our new teachers through a structured principal mentoring program.

Regarding question 3 “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Do You Wish Would Be Provided to New Teachers**”, the results from fall 2021, as seen in Table 6 below, indicate supports they wished for was support and mentorship.

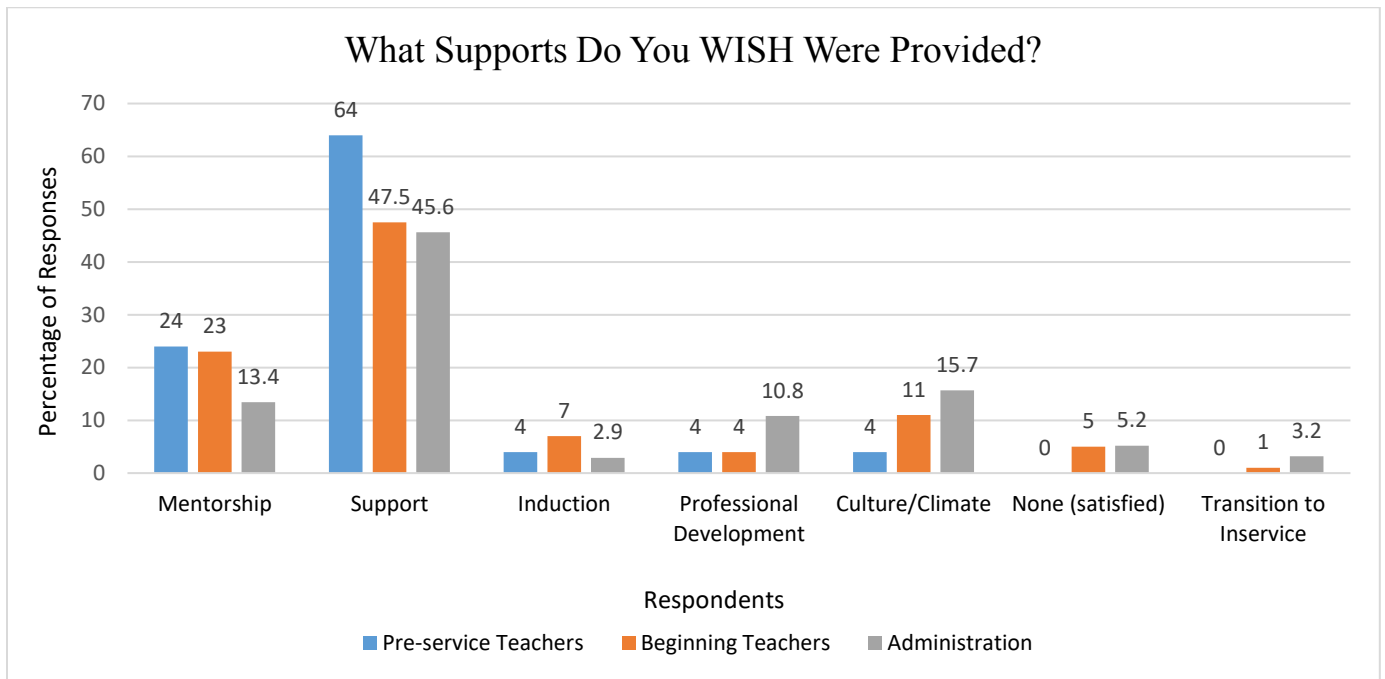


Table 6

Looking specifically at the top response of support, the following are examples noted in the data:

- Pre-service – “I hope that my mentors will support my ideas and allow me to try new things in my classroom... I want mentors that support my creativity and that support individualized learning.”

- Beginning teachers – “I was hoping to have a more regular interaction with a mentor who would not only observe my classroom, but help me work through classroom management situations and issues and provide effective techniques as well as help me with planning and assessment” and “I wish we could have a reduced teaching load, because the non-instructional demands of being a teacher take a lot of time to adjust to (including but not limited to grading, contacting families, making intentional groups, and creating content), and I was quite slow at them during my first year. This would also provide time to observe other teachers at the school, which would be a great opportunity to see different classroom dispositions and energies.”
- Administrators – “Anything that provides them with real-life teaching experiences and a chance to reflect and process with a veteran teacher.”

Conclusions

Regarding question 1, spring 2021 data, all three groups perceived working conditions, burnout, and supports as the top three reasons why teachers are leaving the field. In comparison, data from fall 2021 indicates that the top two reasons teachers are leaving the field are working conditions and support, with classroom management being the third highest for both beginning teachers and administrators, while burnout was noted by pre-service teachers. Our findings indicate that working conditions such as low pay, unrealistic expectations, and lack of support add to teachers’ decisions to leave the field. These findings mirror results on working conditions in related literature (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Nguyen et al, 2020).

Support was originally the third highest theme noted in the spring 2021 data, however it moved to the second highest in the fall 2021 data. Concerning supports from the spring 2021 data, respondents indicated a lack of support from experienced teachers, administrators, parents, school districts, and communities as a reason new teachers decide to leave the field. In the fall 2021 data, respondents reported a lack of support from administration and parents. Related research often focuses on administrative support for beginning teachers (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Conley & You, 2017), with little exploration into parental and community-based supports. However, our findings indicate that although administrative support is a highly sought-after form

of support in both sets of data, parental and peer support became more prevalent in the fall 2021 response data.

Regarding question 2, spring 2021 data, all three groups reported the top induction/mentorship support provided to new teachers as mentorship. Although 54.5% of beginning teachers cited mentorship as the top induction support, 29.4% reported it as a negative experience, based on mentor's lack of availability over the course of the school year, providing minimal effective support, and not being helpful.

In the fall 2021 data, there was a shift by pre-service teachers (55.6%) and administrators (35.9%) who perceived instructional support as the top support provided to new teachers. However, this was evident in the data gathered from the beginning teachers, with only 8% reporting being provided instructional support. Our data suggest that beginning teachers may need more instructional support, specifically focusing on lesson planning and curriculum design and/or implementation. Examples of responses include:

- I had to create a whole new curriculum by myself.
- CURRICULUM!! I came into the school year not knowing what I was teaching EVERY SINGLE DAY. I would stay up countless nights preparing for the next day. Year two comes and they change my curriculum- I rewrite it. Year three comes along and it changes again AND I get to start a pilot program class with again, no curriculum.
- I wish there had been a fully formed curriculum with adjustments, so I could have focused solely on relationships and classroom management.

These sentiments from respondents warrant consideration regarding if there is a misunderstanding or misalignment by beginning teachers with the terms 'curriculum' and 'lesson planning'. Further research on this topic should be considered.

The beginning teachers reported mentorship (51%) as the highest support provided to new teachers. Even though all schools are expected to implement a mentorship program as of July 1, 2021, data gathered in this study indicated that this may not be the case. The data further suggested that even when mentorship was occurring, it may not be highly effective. Our findings suggest a disconnect between related research on effective mentorship (Goldrick, 2016; Weinberg, 2021) and mentorship practices reported by many beginning teachers in the field.

Regarding question 3, spring 2021 data, two of the three groups (beginning teachers and administrators) reported the top support they wished would be provided to new teachers was mentorship. Beginning teachers expressed the desire for the provided mentors to demonstrate effective mentoring skills, such as providing help in the classroom, guidance on instructional support, observation opportunities, and classroom management. Administrators stated the need for sound mentorship models, which would be implemented with fidelity and centered around highly skilled mentors. The top wish reported by pre-service teachers was academic support, including curriculum assistance and lesson planning. They also wished for social supports including strong relationships and collegial social groups. This aligns to findings of new teacher supports as noted in related research (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; McLean, Abry, Taylor, Jimenez, & Granger, 2017).

In the fall 2021 data, all three groups listed support as the top theme they wished was provided to new teachers. Response data drastically increased for each group from spring to fall. Responses from preservice teachers regarding the wish for support jumped from 35% to 64%, beginning teachers went from 29% to 48%, and administrators increased from 31% to 46%. Delving further into the data, support was broken down into the following: administrative, instructional, social/emotional/behavior, and mental health supports. All three groups overwhelmingly noted instructional support as the most desired form of support. When delving deeper into the support responses from administrators, nearly 20% of the support responses indicated support from an academic or instructional coach as the top wish they could provide to new teachers. This warrants further research into whether administrators feel that academic/instructional coaches are interchangeable with mentors, as well as skill level of coaches regarding curriculum, observation and feedback.

Recommendations for Practice

Results of the study have led the researchers to several recommendations:

- A positive working environment - Administrators need to create working conditions that support their new teachers. The recommendation is to give new teachers appropriate assignments, including reduced teaching load and class size, time for teacher planning, and paid residency or extended internship.

- Effective mentorship – Beginning teachers want mentors who are committed, willing to build relationships and to be their support system. The recommendation is to design a state-wide mentoring program that ensures consistency of message and support across all districts.
- Support – Beginning teachers want instructional support and administrative support. The recommendation is to provide support and dedicated time for frequent interactions with administrators and trained instructional coaches, which include check-ins, and actionable feedback in both non-evaluative and evaluative observations.
- Transition - Pre-service teachers need to have a realistic understanding of what the education profession really entails, as well as assistance in transitioning from pre-service to in-service. The recommendation is for more intentional collaboration between higher education institutions and school districts to better support beginning teachers.
- Invitational Education Theory Framework - Intentionally embed all facets of this framework to support educators and students in recognizing and nurturing their full potential within the educational setting.

Invitational Education Theory offers a framework that supports creating positive environments for teachers, administrators, and students. Implementing the 5 Domains of Invitational Education Theory (People, Places, Policies, Programs, Processes) will allow for the creation of an environment conducive to personal and professional development. Intentionally embedding/developing the elements of ICORT (Intentionality, Care, Optimism, Respect, Trust) through mentorship and support will foster a teacher’s self-efficacy and allow everyone to reach their full potential within an optimally inviting environment.

As a result, our recommendations of creating positive working environments, fostering effective mentorship, providing supports for teachers, facilitating transition from pre-service to in-service, and embedding the Invitational Education Theory Framework could provide a meaningful pathway to increased teacher retention through intentionally inviting through communication, collaboration, and cooperation to facilitate impactful educational transformation.

References

- Algozzine, K., & Algozzine, B. (2007). Classroom instructional ecology and school-wide positive behavior support. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 24*(1), 29–47. https://doi.org/10.1300/J370v24n01_02
- Anderson, C.J. (January 31, 2024) In an inclusive classroom, your ICORT mindset invites optimal student engagement and success. [Web log post] Retrieved from <http://www.ucan-cja.blogspot.com/>
- Bacher-Hicks, A., Chi, O. L., & Orellana, A. (2023). Two years later: How COVID-19 has shaped the teacher workforce. *Educational Researcher (Washington, D.C.: 1972), 52*(4), 219–229. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231153659>
- Billingsley, B, Bettini E. Special Education Teacher Attrition and Retention: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research. 2019; 89*(5):697-744. <https://doi:10.3102/0034654319862495>
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher Attrition and Retention: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(3), 367–409. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308321455>
- California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (2016). Best Practices in Teacher and Administrator Induction Programs. Retrieved from <http://ccsesa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Best-Practices-in-Teacher-and-Administrator-Induction-Programs.pdf>
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher attrition affects students and schools. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27(36). <https://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3699>
- Conley, S., & You, S. (2017). Key influences on special education teachers' intention to leave: The effects of administrative support and teacher team efficacy in a mediational model. *Educational Management, Administration, and Leadership, 45*, 521–540. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215608859>
- Diliberti, M.K., Schwartz, H. L. & Grant, D. Stress Topped the Reasons Why Public School Teachers Quit, Even Before COVID-19. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1121-2.html.
- Evans, A. (2019, October 23). *50-State comparison: Teacher recruitment and retention*. Education Commission of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-teacher-recruitment-and-retention/>

- Garcia, E. & Weiss, E. (2019). The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from [The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought: The first report in 'The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market' series | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](#)
- Gold, Y. (1996) Beginning teacher support, attrition, mentoring and induction, in J. Sikula, T. Buttery & E. Guyton, eds., *Handbook of research on teacher education*, (pp. 548-559). New York: Macmillan.
- Goldrick, L. (2016). Support from the start: a 50 state review of policies on new educator induction and mentoring. Retrieved from [2016CompleteReportStatePolicies.pdf \(newteachercenter.org\)](#)
- Hagaman, J.L., & Casey, K.J. (2018). Teacher attrition in special education: perspectives from the field. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 41(4), 277-291. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417725797>
- Ingersoll, R. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Ingersoll, R.M. & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: a critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>
- Jackson, C., & Bruegmann, E. (2009). Teaching students and teaching each other: the importance of peer learning for teachers. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(4), 85-108. <https://>
- Johnson, S.M. & Birkeland, S.E. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: new teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal* (40)3, 581-617. <https://doi/pdf/10.3102/00028312400035810>
- Kraft, M.A., & Papay, J.P. (2014). Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience. *Educational Effectiveness and Policy Analysis*. 2014:36(4):476-500.
- McLean, L., Abry, T., Taylor, M., Jimenez, M. & Granger, K. (2017). Teachers' mental health and perceptions of school climate across the transition from training to teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 65(1), 230-240. Elsevier Ltd. Retrieved September 10, 2021 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/202905/>.
- Minnesota Legislature Office of the Revisor of Statutes, Teacher Mentor and Retention of Effective Teachers, 122A.70 (2020). Retrieved from [Chapter 13 - MN Laws](#).

- Minnesota Legislature Office of the Revisor of Statutes, Teacher Mentor and Retention of Effective Teachers, 122A.70 (2021). Retrieved August 2, 2022 from [Chapter 13 - MN Laws](#).
- Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (2021). 2021 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota. St. Paul, MN: PELSB. Retrieved from https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021_Final_tcm1113-463801.pdf.
- New Teacher Center (2015, February). Strengthening teacher induction policy in Minnesota. Retrieved from [MinnesotaInductionReport.pdf \(newteachercenter.org\)](#)
- Nguyen, T.D., Pham, L.D., Crouch, M. & Springer, M.G. (2020). The correlates of teacher turnover: an updated and expanded meta-analysis of the literature, *Educational Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100355>
- Purkey, W. W. (1991) *What Is Invitational Education and How Does It Work?* Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED334488.pdf>
- Purkey, W.W. & Novak, J.M. (2008). *Fundamentals of invitational education*. GA: International Alliance for Invitational Education.
- Purkey, W. W., & Novak, J. M. (2021, August 6). *An introduction to invitational theory*. Education Today. <https://www.educationtoday.com.au/news-detail/An-Introduction-to-Invitational-Theory-5350>
- Rosenberg, D. Anderson, T. (2021). *Education resource strategies*. Teacher turnover before, during, & after COVID. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED614496.pdf>.
- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4–36. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>
- Shernoff, E.S., Marinez-Lora, A.M., Frazier, S.L., Jakobsons, L.J., Atkins, M.S., & Bonner, D. (2011). Teachers supporting teachers in urban schools: What iterative research designs can teach us. *School Psychology Review*, 40(4), 465-485.
- Smith, T.M. & Ingersoll, R.M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.
- Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). The hidden costs of teacher turnover. *AERA Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420905812>

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

[Teacher Support Partnership \(2008\). Minnesota educator induction guidelines. Retrieved from 11-8-11 TSP MN Educator Induction Guidelines_ACC.pdf](#)

Weinberg, A. (2021, July). 3 Strategies for Productive Teacher Mentoring. *Edutopia*. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-strategies-productive-teacher-mentoring>

Whitaker, S. D. (2000). Mentoring Beginning Special Education Teachers and the Relationship to Attrition. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 546–566.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290006600407>

To contact the researcher:

Dr. Amy Christensen, amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu

Dr. Michele Barron-Albers, mbalbers@stcloudstate.edu