

NEW TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN TWO RURAL WASHINGTON
SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

By

DAVID RAYMOND PECK

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education

MAY 2008

©Copyright by DAVID RAYMOND PECK, 2008
All rights Reserved

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of DAVID RAYMOND PECK find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all those who assisted me in achieving this degree. This has been a dream of mine for many years, and one that I could not have accomplished without the sacrifice and service of so many people. I would first like to acknowledge my committee, Gail Furman, Forrest Parkay, Terrell Young and Nancy Kyle for the time and energy they have committed into helping me complete this work. Their feedback and guidance have been invaluable to me over these past years. I would especially like to thank my chair, Gail Furman, for the tireless hours and attention she has committed to my studies. She has been a teacher, an advisor and a mentor to be. I am greatly indebted to her for her kindness and commitment to excellence.

I would like to thank my classmates and colleagues who have coached and encouraged me along the way. I am especially grateful to Curtis Banks for enduring with me through the long drives to Pullman and the many late night study sessions. I would like to thank the many professionals who agreed to participate in this study and the transcriptionists who so graciously labored on my interviews.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support throughout the entire journey. I am grateful to my loving parents who have always expressed confidence in me. I am thankful for my children, Daniel, Jacob, and Sarah, for the many hours they spent away from their dad as I labored on this project. Ultimately, I owe this degree to my wife Catherine. I could not have done it without her. She has selflessly acted as my editor, research assistant, counselor and friend.

NEW TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN TWO RURAL WASHINGTON
SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Abstract

By David Raymond Peck, Ed.D.
Washington State University
May 2008

Chair: Gail C. Furman

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of new teachers in two small, rural school districts. Specifically, the study addressed these research questions: (a) What are the experiences of new teachers in small, rural Washington schools given the current educational reform environment; (b) what are the main challenges faced by new teachers in small rural schools; (c) what experiences have been most helpful to these teachers in dealing with their challenges; (d) how have these experiences and perceptions affected their desire to either stay in or leave the profession; and (e) how are teachers' experiences and desire to stay in or leave the profession influenced by a school district's context? Data were collected through open-ended, phenomenologically-oriented interviews with eleven teachers and four administrators in two rural districts in Washington State. The analysis of the qualitative data resulted in two major themes which were (a) making connections with colleagues and in the community, and (b) thriving in the workplace through job efficacy and sufficient resources. Each theme dealt primarily with the teachers' expressed needs and hopes regarding their success

as new teachers in small, rural schools. Five conclusions were drawn from the study: (a) New teachers today face enormous pressures, but administrators have either forgotten or are largely unaware of the challenges they face; (b) administrative support is a critical element in helping new teachers to thrive in their new assignments; (c) new teachers need and desire time with and support from their colleagues; (d) some of the challenges that new, rural teachers face cannot be remedied; and (e) while not every problem will have a ready solution, there are mechanisms that can help relieve some of the strains of new teacher life in small, rural schools. Ultimately, it is hoped that this study will further discussions regarding new teachers in small, rural schools and will serve as a springboard for policy and practice changes leading to effective and cost efficient support programs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	2
Research Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	5
Research Methods.....	6
Research Ethics and Validity.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Report of the Study.....	7
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Teacher Attrition.....	9
Effects of Reform.....	14
Challenges in Small, Rural Schools.....	15
Induction Programs and Retention.....	20
Summary.....	24
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....	27

Introduction.....	27
Research Methodology.....	27
Research Design and Methods.....	28
Site Selection.....	28
Participant Selection.....	31
Participants.....	33
Riverview Participants.....	33
Hillview Participants.....	35
Data Collection.....	38
Data Analysis.....	39
Ethics and Validity.....	40
Summary.....	40
4. ANALYSIS.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Contextual Themes.....	42
Small, Rural School Challenges.....	43
New Teacher Concerns.....	47
Effects of Attrition.....	49
Importance of Induction.....	50
Core Themes.....	52
Making Connections.....	52
Colleague Connections.....	54

Needs.....	54
Barriers.....	55
Addressing Needs and Barriers in Riverview.....	59
Addressing Needs and Barriers in Hillview.....	61
Ideas for Future Course of Action.....	69
Community Connections.....	74
Needs.....	74
Barriers.....	75
Addressing Needs and Barriers in Riverview.....	84
Addressing Needs and Barriers in Hillview.....	86
Ideas for Future Course of Action.....	87
Thriving in the Workplace.....	92
Efficacy.....	92
Needs.....	92
Barriers.....	93
Ideas for Future Course of Action.....	103
Resources.....	107
Needs.....	109
Barriers.....	109
Ideas for Future Course of Action.....	113
Summary.....	117
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	118

Introduction.....	118
Conclusions.....	118
New Teachers Face Enormous Pressures.....	119
New Teachers Need Administrative Support.....	120
New Teachers Need Meaningful Time With Colleagues.....	120
Not All Small, Rural Challenges Can Be Remedied.....	121
Support Mechanisms are Available.....	122
Implications.....	124
REFERENCES.....	130
APPENDIX.....	140

LIST OF TABLES

1. Participants, assignments and years of experience.....32

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Catherine,
and to our children, Daniel, Jacob, and Sarah.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The public educational environment is continually being reexamined. Intensive reform movements of recent years have changed the face of education and the perception of teaching among educators. Troman and Woods (2000) report a trend of teachers leaving the profession due to the “changed nature and organization of their work” (p. 253). There is a compelling correlation, argue Travers and Cooper (1996), between the introduction of recent reform initiatives and rising stress levels among teachers. Entering into an environment of isolation and limited support, new teachers are especially vulnerable to the demands of teaching. Despite the detailed mandates of accountability reform initiatives, a Kauffman (2002) study found that most new teachers receive “little or no guidance about what to teach or how to teach it” (p. 278).

This study focuses on the lived experiences of a group of new teachers whose needs are often overlooked - new teachers in small, rural schools. The state of Washington operates 575 rural, public schools. This number is among the highest for any state in the U.S. Pacific and Mountain West (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2007). The struggles that new teachers face in rural schools are often exacerbated by the professional and social isolation they encounter (Collins, 1999). This is evidenced in a Texas mobility study that reported that rural teachers were more likely to leave their districts than were their urban counterparts (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). By exploring the experiences and perceptions of new teachers in small, rural schools, this

study hopes to further the discussion on their needs and concerns. Additionally, implications for policy, practice and further research will be presented.

Background

Attrition is a phenomenon common across all professions. However, studies reveal a relatively high tendency for attrition among public school teachers in K-12 schools. Ingersoll (2002), for example, reports an 11% annual turnover rate for all non-teaching professions in comparison to an annual turnover rate of 15.7% for K-12 teachers. In the 2000-2001 school year 539,778 educators nationally left the profession of teaching either by choice or by directive (Ingersoll, 2001). Of that population, teachers in their early years of teaching are especially vulnerable to attrition. The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) reports that 9.3% of public school teachers leave within the first year of teaching; over 20% leave within their first three years of teaching; and 30% leave within the first five years. This attrition rate for new teachers has long been a source of concern for educators and policy-makers. High teacher attrition rates influence schools economically, limit the number of quality staff members and affect the cohesion of the school as an organization. Also of great importance, the negative effects of attrition can influence the learning environment and overall educational experience of students (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

The sweeping educational reforms of recent years have exacerbated the problem. New teachers are increasingly stressed by the demands placed on them by reform movements such as the No Child Left Behind Act. In a 1999 study of new teachers in North Carolina, 83.8% reported that their jobs were less satisfying and more stressful after

the implementation of high-stakes testing reform initiatives (Hargrove, 2004). High stakes testing and pressures for greater student achievement add to a new teacher's already challenging task of moving from student of teaching to teacher of students (Geoff & Woods, 2000). Not only are educators feeling the pressure to help students meet higher demands, but the teachers are under tighter scrutiny as well. The need for increased certifications and "highly qualified" status is adding to a new teacher's already long "to do" list (Goertz, 2005). With the scarcity of time, funds and support, many new teachers are feeling overwhelmed.

To address these attrition issues, many public school districts have adopted induction programs to help novice teachers feel accepted and flourish in their new assignments. Such induction programs can be as simple as holding a one-time summer in-service training program or as complex as developing a robust structure involving long-term, intensive training and support. Studies show, however, that the more pieces an induction program can include, the greater the chances are that a new teacher will succeed (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

In considering these attrition and induction issues, there is a segment of public schools that warrants particular attention. Many small, rural schools lack both the human and capital resources to develop a strong and effective induction program for new teachers. While state and federal funding structures appear equitable across districts, much of a rural school's funding comes from local tax structures. Many of these communities generate lower property tax revenue, a situation which often leads to a shortage of needed funds. A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1997) concluded that

“both revenues and expenditures per pupil were... less in rural districts than in non-rural districts” (p. 58). Professional isolation, limited funding for special programs, low income and minority students, and personnel shortages are additional factors that magnify the challenges for new teachers in small, rural schools (Jimmerson, 2004). Recruiting individuals to fill teaching assignments in such schools is a challenge, as is retaining them once they are hired.

Research Problem

Teacher attrition in rural regions of the country often leaves schools with significant staffing needs (Brownell, Bishop & Sindelar, 2005). This phenomenon is costing school systems resources and quality teachers. Exacerbating the problem, new state and federal mandates have increased the workload of teachers and the costs to run schools. However, it is a challenge to collect accurate data in regard to new teacher attrition and retention in such schools. Many of the state and nationwide databases are not disaggregated to accommodate a narrower focus on new teachers in rural schools. Many do, however, provide data on rural teachers of all experience levels. One study, for example, established that 18% of all teachers hired in small, rural schools leave or move from their assignments (NCES, 2004). An analysis of data from the Texas school system concluded that more teachers in rural districts change jobs than do teachers from larger or more metropolitan regions (Hanushek et al., 2004). More than statistical data, however, there is a need for studies that describe and analyze the experiences of new teachers in these settings in regard to attrition and retention issues. There is a lack of research that specifically focuses on the working lives of, and challenges faced by, new teachers in small

rural schools. Given the current educational reform movements, research is needed on how these teachers perceive their experiences and how these experiences are affecting their desires to stay in the teaching profession. Research from this study seeks to bridge the gap in literature regarding the challenges new teachers face in small, rural schools, and the expressed needs and desires of these new teachers.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This qualitative study focuses specifically on new teachers in small, rural schools in Washington State. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of these new teachers, including their feelings about their teaching assignments, and how these experiences have affected their desires to either stay in or leave the teaching profession. Data were collected through a series of in-depth, phenomenological interviews with both teachers and district administrators in small, rural schools in Washington State. The following research questions served as a guide throughout the process:

1. What are the experiences of new teachers in small, rural Washington schools, given the current educational reform environment?
2. What are the main challenges faced by new teachers in small rural schools?
3. What experiences have been most helpful to these teachers in dealing with their challenges?
4. How have these experiences and perceptions affected their desire to either stay in or leave the profession?
5. How are teachers' experiences and desire to stay in or leave the profession influenced by a school district's context?

Research Methods

This study describes, analyzes and interprets the experiences of new teachers in small, rural schools in Washington State. It utilizes qualitative, phenomenologically-oriented research methodology as outlined by Seidman (1991), Cresswell (2003), and Rubin and Rubin (2005). In depth, open-ended interviews were the primary means of data collection. Eleven teachers and four administrators from two school districts were included in the study. This study seeks to better understand the experiences of these teachers, the challenges they face, and how these experiences have affected their desires to stay in or leave the profession. Further discussion of the research methodology used in this study can be found in chapter three.

Research Ethics and Validity

As teachers and administrators participating in this study related their experiences within their educational environment, sensitive information was shared. Shortcomings and challenges facing individuals, schools and policies often surfaced. To ensure that no embarrassment or harm would come to any of the participants, great care was taken to protect confidentiality. No names of individuals or places are disclosed in this report that would allow a reader to identify an individual or school. The participants' willingness to share personal and in-depth experiences is what made this study valuable.

In retelling the stories of these new teachers, I took great care to accurately preserve the voice, feelings and opinions of the participants. While this study represents a relatively small cross section of teachers, it is hoped that these teachers' accounts will speak to the needs and concerns of a variety of new teachers in small, rural settings.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it contributes to the body of literature involving a large group of often overlooked teachers - new teachers in small, rural schools. Rural schools make up a large percentage of public schools across the state and nation. While studies have focused on new teacher concerns and rural school challenges, very few have addressed the needs of new teachers in small, rural schools. Furthermore, the frequent use of surveys and statistical analysis has left many important stories untold. To truly improve the working conditions of new teachers in small, rural schools, their stories need to be presented. This study carefully preserves the voices and lived experiences of new teachers across two rural, Washington districts. As school administrators read their accounts, awareness and understanding should increase. This study will further discussions regarding the needs and concerns of these teachers and serve as a springboard for policy and practice changes leading to effective and cost efficient support programs.

Report of the Study

The report of this study consists of five chapters in standard dissertation format. Chapter One has introduced the study, provided background, discussed the research problem, listed the research questions, outlined the research methodology, touched on ethics issues and highlighted the study's significance. Chapter Two contains a review of literature significant to the topic of new teachers in small, rural schools. More specifically, this chapter highlights literature relative to teacher attrition, reform movements, rural school challenges, and induction impacts. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology of this study. This includes discussions on site and participant selection, data

collection and analysis, ethics and validity. Chapter Four is the heart of the study and examines the lived experiences of new teachers in small, rural schools. It highlights the needs and concerns of the teachers and presents the data in core and contextual themes. Chapter Five presents the significant conclusions of the study. It also suggests implications for policy, practice and further research. References and an appendix are included.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

To provide a context for the study, this chapter reviews literature that focuses on themes central to this study. Specifically, this review focuses on (a) the impact and magnitude of teacher attrition; (b) the effects reform movements are having on teachers and their desires to stay in the profession; (c) challenges particular to small, rural schools; and (d) the impact induction programs have on teacher retention.

Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition has long been a concern within the field of education. “Teachers are leaving teaching much earlier in their careers than are professionals from other fields,” states Dove (2004, p. 8). Troffman and Woods (2000) have observed:

While occupational stress is a problem amongst the caring professionals generally, it is of particular concern in the teaching profession. There is now a considerable body of work which links teacher stress with the wholesale restructuring of national education systems which began in the 1980s.... Intensification leads to reduced time for relaxation and reskilling; causes chronic and persistent work overload; reduces quality of service; and separates the conceptualization from the execution of tasks. (p. 255)

As working conditions decline, the exodus from the profession increases. Since the early 1990s, the number of teachers leaving the profession has surpassed the number of those entering the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The National Center for Education Statistics (2004) has set out to better understand this phenomenon. In 2001, they surveyed thousands of teachers nationwide using the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), the

Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), and the National Census Bureau. In processing the data, several categories of teachers surfaced as being “high risk,” that is, at an elevated risk of leaving the profession. These groups included new teachers, teachers in small schools, and teachers in schools with high levels of minority students. Among the NCES (2004) findings were:

1. Of the teachers in their first three years of teaching, 13.8% moved assignments and 8.9% left teaching altogether. This was higher than any other level of experience. The longer teachers taught, the greater the chances were that they would stay in the teaching profession.
2. Of the teachers assigned to schools with enrollments of less than 200 students, 9.8% moved assignments, and 8.4% left altogether.
3. Of the teachers assigned to schools with minority enrollments of 35% or more, 8.7% moved assignments, and 8.1% left teaching altogether.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) has done considerable work to help better understand the nationwide attrition phenomenon among teachers. The research sponsored by this group found that as many as 6% of the teaching force is likely to leave the profession within one year— totaling over 200,000 teachers. In the same report, it was also noted that the rate of attrition is roughly 50% higher in poor schools than in wealthier ones. The authors further observed that teachers new to the profession are far more likely to leave than their more seasoned counterparts. The study concluded that resources and expertise are key factors that influence whether a teacher stays in the profession. In a separate study, Connolly (2000) reported that between one-third and one-half of new

teachers leave by their seventh year. Furthermore, when interviewed, 19% of new teachers indicated that they intended to leave teaching within five years. O'Brien and Tye (2002) followed 551 teachers for seven years after they completed their certification programs. The findings of this study showed that 49% were no longer teaching. Study after study confirms that new teachers in the public K-12 system are at an elevated risk of leaving the teaching profession.

Some policy makers have questioned whether these trends will continue. Mertler (2002) conducted a study looking into the overall job satisfaction of public school teachers. He found that a large number of teachers are unhappy with the circumstances surrounding their work. As many as 32% of the teachers surveyed were not satisfied with their jobs; even more telling is that 34% of the teachers surveyed reported that if given the chance to choose a career again, they would not choose "teacher." Abel and Sewell (1999) conducted a stress and burnout survey of urban and rural teachers. They found that working conditions and time pressures were key indicators for rural teacher burnout. Qualitative methods have also been utilized in examining teacher attrition. Phenomenological interview approaches have allowed teachers to attach meaning to their experiences and gain understanding from their struggles and challenges. Blase (1982) and Blase (1986) utilized qualitative interviewing techniques to explore teacher experiences and challenges. Both of these studies present data discussing relationships between work-related stress and teacher burnout. Another qualitative approach to attrition was conducted by Beck-Frazier (2005) in North Carolina. In her study a series of case studies were conducted among new

teachers. Her data revealed that common sources of teacher dissatisfaction were minimal administrative support, poor parental participation and low salaries.

Schools in Washington State exhibit many of the same trends as the national studies cited above. A study of hundreds of Washington schools confirmed that “there is correlational evidence that within the district, teacher retention is linked to the composition of the school’s student body” (Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP), 2005, p. 31). Of the seven districts included in the CSTP study, six districts had higher attrition rates in schools that served high-poverty students. In five of the seven districts, schools with high minority percentages had higher attrition rates than did schools with higher Caucasian populations. In relation to district size, the study also found that “smaller districts in the sample tended to lose a somewhat larger percentage of their novice teachers to other districts than larger districts” (p. 22).

What impact are these attrition rates having on students and learning? First, attrition is costing small schools funds that are already committed to basic operating expenses. As studies have determined, it is costly to replace employees (Norton, 1999). Darling-Hammond (2003) cites a case in Texas where a 40 percent turnover rate cost the state \$329 million a year, or \$8,000 per recruit. These are funds that are needed for educational programs and teacher support structures. She concludes “High attrition means that schools must take funds urgently needed for school improvements and spend them instead in a manner that produces little long-term payoff for student learning” (p. 8).

Teacher attrition affects learning. Studies show that the teacher has a strong influence on the variance in student performance (Darling-Hammond, 1999). As O’Brien

and Tye (2002) explained, “the nation as a whole is robbed of a high-quality work force for its schools when so many teachers are beginning to think about leaving the profession” (p. 29).

The loss of individual teachers also has an effect on the school system as a whole. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) explain, “High turnover can cause turmoil and lead to problems in how the organization functions. ...High turnover of teachers in schools,” they continue, “does not simply cause staffing problems but may also harm the school environment and student performance” (p. 31). The feeling of cohesiveness among teachers, teacher morale, and organizational stability are among some of the factors that suffer when turnover is high among teachers. Developing a collegial faculty is difficult when the staffing process resembles a revolving door. Establishing a safe and productive learning environment takes time. The more stable a staff, the greater the chances are for having a cohesive organization.

When a school district loses qualified teachers, the need arises to replace them with other qualified teachers. In rural districts, this can be a great challenge. Attracting qualified teachers to communities that are often depressed, far from metropolitan areas and which have limited professional opportunities can be very difficult. Often, due to urgent staffing decisions, districts compromise in regard to teacher quality. Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves and Salgado (2005) found that isolated rural schools are more likely than urban districts to fill vacancies by increasing class sizes, reducing the number of courses, increasing the number of classes assigned to current teachers, and increasing the number of teacher aides. Rural schools were the least likely to fill vacancies with certified, qualified

teachers. Furthermore, small, rural schools have two to three times more “unqualified” teachers (by NCLB’s standards) than mid-sized or large schools (Schwartzbeck, 2003). In addition, fewer rural teachers have graduate degrees than non-rural teachers (32.9% vs. 42.6% with masters degrees). Tyler, Cantou-Clarke, Esterling and Klepper (2003) report that 35.8% of rural teachers are “uncertified” compared to the national average of 11%. Relf and Hobbs (1999) illustrate that a downward spiral of low recruitment leads to low standards, which leads to further low recruitment. In short, the entire school system is influenced when retention and recruitment problems arise.

Effects of Reform

Sweeping reform movements such as the federal No Child Left Behind Act have only exacerbated the challenges facing our nation’s schools. Implementing new testing and accountability systems is costly and time consuming (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). Threats of consequences for schools that fail to demonstrate adequate yearly progress is only adding to the pressures faced by teachers and administrators (Goertz, 2005). From an attrition perspective, Harrell and VanTassel (2004) explain that the No Child Left Behind legislation is also posing significant problems in staffing schools with NCLB-mandated “quality teachers”:

As typical in education, focus on how to measure teacher quality has taken precedence over defining what a quality teacher is and creating a process by which such teachers can be effectively prepared. The use of high-stakes standardized test scores as the primary indicators of quality instruction only increase the pressure on teachers to be sure their students perform well on the measures. (p. 48)

In a 1999 study of new teachers in North Carolina, 83.8% reported that their jobs were less satisfying and more stressful after the implementation of the high-stakes testing

movement (Hargrove, 2004). Effects of such movements come in the form of “increased workloads, increased responsibilities and the implementation of a variety of ‘new and improved’ programs designed to boost test scores. Additionally, teachers may be evaluated by those test scores alone as a measure of school accountability” (Brown & Nagel, 2004, p. 36). Hargrove (2004) remarked, “While a reasonable amount of pressure is healthy, too much pressure can lead to teachers prematurely exiting the field” (p. 568). In an effort to standardize tests, some have argued that we have also tried to standardize teachers and methods. In the push for higher achievement, teacher development and induction is becoming a lower priority in many schools across the country (Arens & Delandshere, 2000). In short, as demands on new teachers increase, resources and support diminish. Kauffman (2002), after interviewing 50 first and second year Massachusetts teachers, aptly described the dilemma:

Today’s environment of high standards and accountability created a sense of urgency among many new teachers but did not provide them with the support they needed to teach effectively.... Faced with increasing pressure and lacking sufficient material guidance and support, new teachers tended to respond frantically and haphazardly, often working in isolation and hoping for the best. (p. 279)

If such conditions persist, negative impacts on teacher retention will continue.

Brown and Nagel (2004) conclude, “When teachers are exposed to stressors over long periods of time and perceive the demands are no longer manageable, burnout, or emotional, physical and mental exhaustion may result” (p. 35).

Challenges in Small, Rural Schools

Rural schools face an additional set of limitations. Many small, rural schools lack human and capital resources for much needed support structures. Washington State

operates 575 rural, public schools. With the exception of California and Montana, this is more than any other state in the Pacific and Mountain West (NCES, 2007). These K-12 schools account for a total of 168,633 students (16.3% of all public school students in the state and 25.3% of all public schools). Not only are these school systems dealing with high turnover issues, they also are faced with the added burden of limited resources. State and federal funding provides much of the needed revenues to operate a school. Depending on the state's budget structure, however, a proportion of the school's expenses must be borne by the local community through sales and property taxes. The NCES (1997) reported:

Rural districts typically serve poorer populations with greater needs. They exist in areas with lower property values and therefore have a much smaller tax base for local educational funding and they often do not have the requisite funding to provide more than the most basic educational program. (p. 57)

The NCES study reported that rural schools brought in revenues ranging from \$5,223 to \$6,220 per student, whereas non-rural schools ranged from \$5,846 to \$6,548 per student. This results in a funding inequality ranging from \$328 to \$623 per student. School districts with more affluent residential areas or flourishing commercial activity have substantially greater resources available to support education (Hadderman, 1999). North Carolina's "ten most affluent counties had \$877,807 in taxable real estate available for every public school student compared to \$208,853 for the ten least affluent counties," according to Reeves (2003, p. 3). Although Reeves focused primarily on North Carolina schools, she accurately captured the impact that the "small" factor can have on school funding for districts across the nation:

The small student population in many rural schools and districts does not allow these schools to derive the benefits of economies of scale. All school districts must maintain a certain set of service...The smaller the school district, the more it costs per-pupil to provide transportation or staff. For example, it is less cost effective to run a school bus for ten students than for 50 students. As a result, small districts spend a greater proportion of their budget on transportation than do urban districts. The same applies to resource personnel and education specialists. It does not matter whether a school has 1,000 students or 50 students, a reading specialist costs about the same. In a large school, the salary for the specialist is absorbed by hundreds or even thousands of students. In a small school, the salary would be absorbed by only 50 students or less. (p. 3)

Reeves continued to illustrate the concept of economy of scale through the lens of educational reform. The effects of such efforts will influence districts at varying levels relative to district size. She elaborated:

For rural schools, teaching out of field is an issue of economies of scale. Small high schools cannot afford to hire teachers to cover one class each of higher level math and science courses, nor do they have sufficient numbers of students to demand it. Requiring certification for one teacher in more than one subject area will be expensive and time consuming. Combined with the lower salaries paid to teachers in rural schools, more stringent certification requirements will become another disincentive for teachers to take positions in rural schools. Teachers will have to pass multiple tests to be paid half as much as teachers in urban or suburban schools who need to pass one test. (p. 9)

Stretching a school's budget even further are new state and federal requirements placed on schools that increase the cost of operation (Camp & Thompson, 2006).

Extensive testing and accountability measures cost time and money. "The modern reform movement," adds Haller (1988), "is likely to increase financial burdens in the nation's remaining small rural school districts" (p. 477). In addition to limited capital resources, many of these small, rural schools lack the human resources to administer such programs. Veteran faculty members are being asked to wear multiple hats. Support personnel are not

available. Teachers are spread thin, and there is not a sufficient workforce to lighten the load.

Research has confirmed that small, rural schools have serious concerns (Harris, Holdman, Clark & Harris, 2005; Jimmerson, 2004; NCES, 1997). Professional isolation, funding limitations, high risk students and personnel shortages are factors that magnify the challenges for new teachers in these settings (Jimmerson, 2004). Consequently, recruiting teachers to fill such assignments is also a challenge.

Geographically isolated communities face greater problems in attracting teachers; while schools located on the outskirts of suburban areas face greater difficulty in retaining teachers. Geographically isolated communities have difficulty attracting teachers to their community because of lower pay and social and professional isolation. (Reeves, 2003, p. 8)

It can be hard to attract new teachers to live in communities isolated from hospitals, universities, social settings and commercial centers (Simmons, 2005). A 2005 national survey of 597 superintendents examined some of the major recruiting challenges facing rural schools. This study reported the most common recruiting challenges to be (a) geographic isolation (32.1%); (b) social isolation (27.6%); (c) proximity to higher paying districts (26.8%); and (d) low, uncompetitive salaries (26.2%) (Hammer et al., 2005).

With the additional burdens from educational reforms, small schools are seeing an increase in retention concerns. Requiring certified teachers in every subject has proved to be detrimental. Many rural teachers are being asked to teach multiple subjects “out of field.” Reeves (2003) elaborates:

The new certification requirements will likely increase existing disincentives to teach in rural schools, particularly rural secondary schools. Teaching “out of field” is common in small rural high schools. Limited access to a choice of faculty often makes this practice a necessity. Not only

is “out of field” teaching common, but teachers also frequently prepare for a number of different courses daily. For example, a science teacher in a small rural high school may teach each of the science courses offered by the school. She may prepare up to five different courses each day. When a job becomes available in a suburban school in which she will be able to teach one or two science courses each day for higher pay, the decision to leave is not a difficult one. (p. 9)

Teaching multiple subjects means added certification pressures. Obtaining state certification in multiple subjects and living great distances from the nearest college or university is extremely difficult for many teachers (SCFTQ, 2004). One survey of rural superintendents revealed that they expected to lose 9.3% of their teaching force from enforcing NCLB standards alone (Schwartzbeck, 2003).

As most state and nationwide databases are not sufficiently disaggregated, isolating the exact magnitude of new teacher attrition in small, rural schools has proved to be difficult. One attempt at accomplishing this involves a nationwide survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2004). This study examined a variety of factors such as school size, teacher experience and student enrollment. While they did not consider the joint characteristics of new teachers in rural schools, they did look at various salary levels across a variety of school demographics. Typically the new teachers fall in a lower salary bracket and thereby provide researchers with rough ideas of where new teachers in rural schools are going. The NCES study showed that rural teachers in the lowest salary bracket (less than \$30,000) left the profession or their assignments at a much higher rate than teachers in the same salary bracket from city or suburban schools. Of these rural teachers, 34.3% left the profession and 36.8% changed assignments as compared to the urban rates of 19.6% and 17.1% respectively. Another attempt to examine

the magnitude of teacher attrition was conducted among Texas public schools in 2004. Longitudinal data examining district size, demographics and salaries was utilized. The study concluded that teacher mobility in rural districts totaled 8,491. This number was greater than even their urban counterparts whose mobility rate totaled 3,872 (Hanushek et al., 2004).

In looking beyond the numbers, it is also imperative that we understand what is influencing this phenomenon. To help shed light on this issue, in 1998 the NCES (1999) conducted a survey among new teachers in rural schools. They found at the time that only 29% of rural teachers were satisfied with their overall working conditions. Job satisfaction and the elements that contribute to it are key components that surfaced throughout this study. A 2005 superintendent survey adds further insight into factors contributing to this dissatisfaction. The results of the study found that the greatest retention challenges among rural schools were (a) proximity to a higher paying district (29.1%); (b) geographic isolation; (c) low/uncompetitive salaries (24.8%); (d) social isolation (20.8%); and (e) poor working conditions (6.7%) (Hammer et al., 2005).

Induction Programs and Retention

Can something be done about this costly turnover of new teachers? The answer is yes. The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) has long since recognized the need to support small, rural districts. Assisted by local grant money, five small Washington districts have been receiving aid in implementing a three-phase induction program. Also of great support to new teachers across all demographics is the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). For schools willing to submit and

follow a teacher assistance plan, the OSPI will provide funding for new teacher support. Such support measures are reinforced by the literature, which indicates that thorough and sustained induction programs do make a difference in regard to attrition rates (Blackwell, 2004). Britton, Raizen, Paine and Huntley (2000) report that beginning teachers who did not participate in an induction program were twice as likely to leave teaching. Kelley (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of Colorado's induction program and its effectiveness over the course of its 10 years of operation. She found that 94% of the program's participants were still teaching after four years. This is encouraging when compared to the national average of 60%. In a further study, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) examined nation-wide data on schools and induction programs to determine their effectiveness. He found that it was not enough to simply label a teacher as having been "inducted." He expanded the concept to include a variety of induction pieces a teacher may receive. The key induction elements discussed were mentor programs, new teacher seminars, common planning times, teacher networks, reduced workloads and extra resources. He discovered that those teachers who received no induction support were 40% more likely to leave the profession. If a teacher received three induction components, their turnover probability was 28%. If they participated in six induction practices, this rate dropped to 24%. The more support a new teacher received, the more likely they would stay in the teaching profession.

What elements does the literature suggest an induction program should contain?

The mentor is at the heart of a vast majority of the studies reviewed. Experienced and qualified mentors possess a wealth of experience and knowledge that administrators can tap

into (Meijer, Verloop & Zanting, 2002). Stromei (2000) has stated that “a mentor can provide not only job-specific knowledge and training but also valuable insight into an organization’s environment and culture, as well as psychosocial support” (p. 56). Many major corporations, observes Stromei, have adopted a formal mentoring program. They have come to recognize “the value of mentoring for the growth and success of employees” (p. 56). For an educator, a qualified mentor is “often considered the single most effective strategy for providing consistent support that contributes to success and to the decision to remain in teaching” (Jorissen, 2002, p. 51). This is especially true in hard to staff schools with high minority rates and high poverty rates (Tillman, 2005). For schools, however, with limited resources, such programs can be difficult to organize. Green (1994) examined a successful Arkansas based mentor program which combined resources with a local university to provide training and on-site support. A Feiman-Nemser (2001) study also highlighted the benefits of partnering with a local college or university for mentor training and assistance. She spent hours observing and interviewing teachers and found that quality mentor training greatly enhanced the quality of such efforts. She observed “If teaching is the profession that shapes America’s future, then investing in new teacher development and the development of teachers’ mentors is an investment in that future” (p. 29). Carver and Katz (2004) examined their mentor data through the lens of educational reform. Conducting a longitudinal study of mentor and new teacher relationships, they concluded that in today’s challenging educational environment, an effective mentor is more critical than ever. As reform standards hold teachers more accountable for performance, mentors also need to be able to assess and address difficulties faced by new teachers. Carver and

Katz maintain that “mentors have to be willing to take on a more assessment-oriented role, holding themselves and their novices up to public and professional standards and taking responsibility for identifying and trying to change ineffective and inequitable practices” (p. 461). With such an approach, the mentor can play a critical role in helping a new teacher adapt and flourish in a high-stakes teaching environment.

Although a crucial piece, mentoring is not the only induction element useful in supporting new teachers. Studies show that other key elements include common planning time, cohort networks, administrative support, reduced teaching loads, and routine classroom visits by administrators and colleagues (Kelly, 2004; Wong, 2004; Elder, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor & Mazin, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (2005) conducted a recent study and found several other elements essential to induction as well. In 2003, over 400 teachers from across the state were surveyed about their work-life. As they processed the data, the CSTP concluded that some keys to retaining qualified new teachers were informed hiring, orientation, professional learning, and formative assessment. These four elements, along with a structured mentor program, are pieces of an induction program that often contribute to the success and well-being of a new teacher. In a separate study from Georgia, Inman and Marlow (2004) also gathered survey data from new teachers to assess what elements would contribute to a successful induction program. Much like the findings above, they concluded that teacher education mentors, meetings with colleagues to share ideas, administrators who encourage and promote teachers’ ideas, and a community which feels positive about the educational system were among the top teacher responses. While the

resources and conditions of rural schools differ from metropolitan schools, it is vital that induction programs consider rural factors as well. As Hersh (1996) reminded:

Entry year teachers, especially in rural areas, are faced with what often appear to be insurmountable obstacles. They may be expected to teach the most difficult classes or to teach subjects in which they have an inadequate background. They may be asked to take charge of extra curricular activities such as coaching or activity advising. And they may be asked to work with inadequate supplies and resources. (p. 31)

Support programs for new teachers in rural settings need to become a priority for administrators and policy makers.

Summary

Based on this review, several deficiencies in the literature have surfaced. Collin's statement from 1999 still holds true: "Recent research on rural teacher recruitment and retention appears thin, and much of it has been conducted outside the United States" (p. 2). Some administrators and policy makers have falsely assumed that data regarding large districts applies to schools across all demographics. Hannaway and Talbert (1993) conducted a multivariate analysis across 321 schools to determine the significance of school size and context on school effectiveness variables. Their study concluded that size and context are significant factors affecting school characteristics and argue that large-scale education policies "may not apply equally well to all kinds of school settings." They challenge researchers "to take into account the diversity among U.S. schools in their research" (p. 165). Homogeneous policy approaches may not be sufficient. While research in the area of new teacher induction is rich and plentiful, and attention has been given to the problems facing small schools, there continues to be a gap in the literature when one narrows the focus to new teacher induction in small, rural schools.

Of the research available on teachers in small, rural schools, many studies have utilized large-scale survey methods (Lemke, 1994; Pesek, 1993; & Hammer et al., 2005). While this approach offers insights into trends and patterns, “the individual and detailed testimony of teachers is often missing” (Troman & Woods, 2000, p. 256). Depending on sample characteristics and measurement tools, results frequently differ across studies. A study performed by the CSTP (Knapp, Loeb, Plecki & Elfers, 2004) surveyed teachers from 20 districts of varying sizes and demographics across the state. This team of researchers utilized fast response surveys and state databases to examine trends in teacher retention and mobility. While trends and patterns were highlighted, the study conceded that certain elements were missing. The researchers reported that survey data cannot tell us “the fine details of teaching assignments, teacher responses to reform, how teachers experience working conditions, the nature of classroom practice, and how teachers’ professional learning is supported” (p. 12). For this reason, research that takes an in-depth look at the testimonies and perceptions of new teachers in small, rural schools is needed. A qualitative approach can add clarity and depth to quantitative reports.

Additionally, few studies exist which highlight the lived experiences of new teachers in rural Washington State. There is some work that has been done in other states and even in other countries (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Wong, Britton & Ganser, 2005). However, as each state has jurisdiction over its educational policies and practices, these may differ drastically from state to state. Studies from rural schools in Australia or Texas, for example, may not accurately describe the setting of rural teachers in

Washington. One study concluded, “little is known about retention, mobility, and attrition in Washington state” (Knapp, Plecki & Elfers, 2005, p. 4).

Finally, the conditions of a teacher’s environment are always changing. The studies on new teachers from a decade ago may no longer reflect the needs and concerns of public school teachers today. Given the current reform movement, new teachers may be experiencing pressures and expectations that have not yet been adequately documented. The attitudes and perceptions gained from the participants in this study contribute to the understanding of new teacher challenges in small, rural schools. The results of this study will further discussion between teachers and administrators and encourage change in policy and practice to better support new teachers in small, rural schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methods used to select participants and collect and analyze data for this study on new teacher experiences in small, rural schools. This chapter will discuss research methodology, design and methods, research ethics and validity of the study.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological research design in order to “make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 1998, 15). It was not begun with a preconceived set of expectations, but allowed the data to unfold into meaningful themes and concepts. Unlike the quantitative approach, this study did not utilize surveys or statistics to highlight variables or test hypotheses. In the spirit of exploration, it viewed the phenomenon through the lenses of the participants. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study in that it highlighted the perceptions of multiple individuals rather than report on a life history or a single subject matter. This study allowed new teachers in small, rural settings to describe their experiences and to explore the phenomenon of new teacher attrition in such schools (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Phenomenological interviewing allowed the participants to describe their experiences, explore their perceptions and attach meaning to these

experiences. While other research methods fill a valuable role, to achieve the purpose of this study, the stories and perspectives of individuals needed to be taken into account.

Qualitative interviewing was the primary means of data collection.

Recommendations and practices suggested by Seidman (1991) and Cresswell (1998) have proven to be helpful and were utilized throughout this study.

Research Design and Methods

Site Selection

The schools selected for this study needed to meet several criteria. First they had to be small. The challenge in meeting this criterion is that “small” is a relative term. Educators from various backgrounds will likely have differing views on what is considered to be small. While there is no absolute criterion for “small,” I will describe the parameters I used for this study. To define “small,” I employed multiple school classification techniques. To form a cursory pool of potential sites, I first utilized a classification technique used by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA). The WIAA has categorized schools into competitive districts according to enrollment data. I began the selection process by eliminating all schools that were not in the WIAA 1A, 2B or 1B divisions. According to WIAA standards, this left only districts with high school enrollments of 467 students or less. Next I utilized a criterion practiced by the National Center for Education Statistics. They determine a school to be “small” if it has less than 100 students per grade at the 9-12 level. While the scope of my study goes beyond high school, I expanded this criterion for “small” to include the K-8 grade levels as well. I was able to reference the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

(OSPI) databases to identify schools that met this criterion. The third and perhaps most important qualifier for “small” included schools that were self selected as such. All the schools used in this study perceived themselves as small. Each was a member of a Washington State Small School Consortium.

Since small and rural are not synonymous, I also needed to include separate criteria for what I was looking for in a rural school. A school may be small in numbers, but connected enough to an adjacent community that it does not feel the struggles of a rural school. A small, middle to upper class suburb of a larger metropolitan community, for example, would not experience the isolation or resource limitations that a rural community might. For this reason I have chosen to narrow my focus to include both small and rural schools. For the later criterion, a school will be described as rural if it has both a low population in the surrounding community and is non-adjacent to a metropolitan area. For this study I limited my sites to towns of 3,500 residents or less. I used U.S. Census Bureau demographic data to determine which of the small schools in Washington could be classified as rural. Aside from the census data, other factors considered were a small business base and a heavy agricultural presence as elements common in the rural communities of this state.

Aside from the criteria of small and rural, feasibility was also a factor I needed to consider in my site selection. The chosen sites are all located in regions of Washington State that were reasonably accessible to the researcher. Throughout this study, names and identifiable information will be removed so as to protect the identity of the individuals and schools that participated in this study.

Of the two sites selected, I will call the first the Riverview district (a pseudonym). According to the 2000 census data, this community has a population of 3,300 people. It is a predominantly white community with a per capita income of \$17,000. Riverview began as a railroad community, bringing in a variety of low-paying jobs. While the railroad system is no longer a major employer of the local residents, the lower-middle class status has remained in many of the neighborhoods. Agriculture and factory work are two main vocations of the community. The school district takes in a large geographic region, requiring some children to ride the bus almost two hours to school in the morning. Higher education has not traditionally been a focus for many of the students of this district. While the teachers are working to reverse this trend, last year only four graduates went on to attend college. Riverview has a remarkably low teacher turnover rate. Last year, only one teacher left the district after 30 years of teaching. On average, this district replaces only two teachers a year.

The second district will be known as the Hillview district (a pseudonym). Demographic data reveals a population just under 3,000 people. It has a racially diverse population of almost 50% Caucasian and 50% Hispanic. Seventy percent of the students are English secondary language learners. Hillview has a high poverty rate with a per capita income of \$12,600 and approximately 80% of the students on free or reduced lunches. While Hillview also began as a train stop, the primary industry is farming, with a base of food processing and agricultural chemicals. In stark contrast to Riverview, the Hillview school district has a high teacher turnover rate. Last year alone, the district hired 27 new teachers.

As my research in the two districts progressed, the data quickly began to reveal interesting and relevant contrasts between these two small, rural school districts. As I continued to compare the data, I became increasingly interested in the roles that collegial relationships, administrative styles and community make-up play in the life of a small-town teacher.

Participant Selection

To locate participants appropriate for this study, I utilized purposeful sampling. Two categories of educators were included in the research. First, I selected public school teachers in their first two years of teaching. For comparison sake, I selected these teachers from the two above-mentioned districts. To add depth and context to the study, I also included administrator perspectives from both districts. Of the administrators, both superintendents and mentor supervisors were interviewed.

The interviewing process began with a recent pilot study. Several teachers were interviewed from both districts (Peck, 2006). I quickly observed that the Riverview and Hillview districts would provide a rich supply of data on small, rural teaching experiences and decided to continue within these same districts. For the present study, I used a snowball sampling approach to locate additional participants. Snowballing included asking previous participants to recommend other educators who were willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2003). Clearly not all individuals contacted were interested in taking part in the study. Some felt they had nothing to share or could not find the time to participate. In most cases, however, the educators interviewed found enjoyment in sharing their first year experiences with an interested researcher. This made it easy to recommend

fellow new hires for the study. In each case, I coordinated with local administrators to gain access to their facilities. It was interesting to note which administrators were excited to have me meet with their teachers and which were not. There seemed to be a high correlation between program success and willingness to open doors. Given the busy lifestyles of these new teachers, coordinating the interviews proved also to be a great challenge. After many e-mails and follow-up calls, a total of 11 teachers and four administrators were interviewed. Information regarding years of experience, district and assignments are displayed in Table 1. It was interesting to observe the various motives of the individuals for participating. Some were proud of their accomplishments and were eager to share. Others felt discouraged in their assignments and felt a need to bring this frustration to light. Regardless of their background or motives, I was grateful for the time each participant devoted to this study.

Table 1. Participants, assignments and years of experience.

Participant (Pseudonym)	District	Level	Assignment	Years Experience
Chad	Riverview	District	Superintendent	>15
Taryn	Riverview	District	Mentor Ldr.	>25
Kacey	Riverview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Roger	Riverview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Lynn	Riverview	Middle School	Teacher	2
Mandy	Riverview	Middle School	Teacher	2
Tammy	Riverview	K-12	Teacher	1
Nick	Hillview	District	Superintendent	>25
Kate	Hillview	District	Mentor Ldr.	>15
Karen	Hillview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Warren	Hillview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Mike	Hillview	High School	Teacher	1
Olivia	Hillview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Kim	Hillview	Elementary	Teacher	1
Cathy	Hillview	Elementary	Teacher	1

Participants

Of the 15 participants, five were male and ten were female. The participants came from a variety of educational and community backgrounds adding diversity to the study. Throughout this report, pseudonyms will be used in identifying these individuals.

Riverview participants.

Chad is currently serving as the superintendent of the Riverview district. He grew up in a small northern Washington town so he feels at home in his current assignment. Professionally, he has spent most of his career teaching and administering in the Riverview region. During his tenure as superintendent, he has taken a very proactive role in training and mentoring the new hires. He was very enthusiastic to talk about the direction his district is going and the vision he hopes to instill in his teachers.

Taryn has had 28 years of experience in the classroom. She has been a very successful teacher, which is evident in the new assignment she has recently been given. This is her first year as a full-time mentor and instructional coach. This is a new position in her district, which illustrates the priority the district places on teacher support and induction. Taryn grew up in a mid-size metropolitan community, but has adapted well to small-town life. She and her family have lived in Riverview for many years now and are happy to call it home.

Kacey is a first year kindergarten teacher. She is no longer living in Riverview, but is a native of the community. She felt immediately accepted by her colleagues as many of them were her own teachers when she went through the system as a youth. She has a small family of her own and feels the pressures of raising her own kids while providing a quality

education to her students. She loves teaching, but admits she will not be returning to the classroom next year. She found the workload to be too great, but hopes to return to education someday in the future.

This is Roger's first year teaching. He teaches third grade and has loved his time in the classroom. He is new to Riverview, but is no stranger to small towns, having grown up in a town with a similar makeup. He feels especially connected to the community as his wife grew up in Riverview. He does not live in the community but makes a daily commute. He finds it helpful to have a separation between his personal and professional lives. Despite the distance, Roger gets very involved with the community in sporting events, holidays and school committees.

Lynn has only ever known large schools and flourishing communities. She expressed what a shock it has been coming into such a small school district. This is her second year as a middle school math and reading teacher. While she loves the kids, she admits to feeling the pinch of juggling two curricula and finding the time to certify and keep current with the many state requirements. She hopes to stay in education, but may have to look for another position if she is continually required to teach two subjects.

Mandy made a mid-career move into education. Starting her teaching career with teenage children of her own has given her interesting insights into the profession. This is her second year as the 8th grade language arts, reading and science teacher. Although she loves her interaction with the students, her own family does not always share her excitement for the career change. They are concerned that the benefits do not outweigh the costs. Given the extensive night and weekend hours she has had to put into the job, Mandy

has admitted to feeling that way as well. As she is not working for the money, she is considering dropping her work load to a part-time position.

Tammy is a first year art teacher for grades K-12. She grew up in a small town less than an hour away from Riverview. She has advanced art degrees and is undoubtedly qualified for the position. She has always dreamed of teaching art and was thrilled with the opportunity when it was offered her. She has quickly become disillusioned, however, with the lack of support and resources she has been given to do her job. She has come to learn that her new district has neither the time nor the money to develop the fine arts program. Not belonging to any of the building's faculties, Tammy feels isolated and under-supported. She wonders if she can survive two or three more years.

Hillview participants.

Nick grew up in a small rural community in northeastern Washington. He enjoyed school as a boy and always dreamed of going into teaching. He followed that dream and went into teaching and coaching. After many years in the classroom, he entered into administration. While he misses the classroom, he loves the challenges and opportunities that he sees as an administrator. In his current assignment as the Hillview superintendent, he is grappling with ways to unite the community in supporting local education. This disunity has recently manifested itself in a double levy failure.

Kate is a native of Farmington (pseudonym) where she works and lives. Farmington is a satellite community of Hillview and is even smaller and more remote. Kate waited until her mid-thirties to go into education and has since experienced a tremendous number of assignments. She is currently responsible for the Teacher

Assistance Program (TAP) for the district and is also over the mentor program. Unlike her Riverview counterpart, Kate also carries the responsibility of principal in the Farmington elementary school. The Hillview district has been unable to dedicate a full-time position to teacher support programs.

Karen has recently completed her Masters in Teaching program and is now in her first year of teaching at the Farmington Elementary School. She is currently assigned the life skills program and feels overwhelmed at times with the heavy load and the lack of funding and support. Not living in Farmington, the daily commute adds many hours to her already long work-week. Growing up in a major southwestern city, she has much to adjust to. Karen admits that her job is far harder than she ever imagined. While she loves helping children make new connections, she is unsure whether she has the energy to continue down this road for too many years.

Warren is a brand new fifth grade teacher at the Hillview elementary school. He comes from one of the larger towns in Washington and is working to connect to his new community. He is one of the few new hires in Hillview that has chosen to live in the district. Given the lack of housing in the area, this is rare among most of the new teachers. Living among the families he teaches and his active church involvement has made it easy for him to feel at home in his new community. Professionally, Warren has been very willing to volunteer for committees and assignments. Consequently, he has already been given positions of responsibility and has felt valued among his colleagues.

Mike grew up in a mid-size metropolitan town in southeastern Washington. He is a first-year English teacher at the Hillview High school. He applied to Hillview High after

27 years of a successful business career on the recommendation of a friend. With his children nearly grown, and money no longer an issue, he decided to go into teaching for the pure joy of teaching. Mike has a fresh “real world” perspective he likes to bring into the classroom along with a maturity that is rare among new teachers. Although he is a new teacher himself, Mike has already been asked to mentor a teacher as new as he is.

Olivia serves as the librarian at the Hillview elementary school. She grew up in a much larger, west coast town and is having a hard time fitting in to the small-town life. Due to the lack of social events and other after-school activities, Olivia has chosen not to live in the Hillview community. She feels this has severed some ties with community members. While she admits she could probably reach out better to her new colleagues, she is frustrated with the few attempts that have been made to reach out to her. A variety of community and collegial factors have left her with very little sense of efficacy in her job. In fact, the Friday before our interview, she had interviewed with another company – not in education.

Kim has thought seriously about leaving teaching, but is still hanging on to the hope that things will get better. Kim was hired with Olivia and shares in her frustration with the lack of support they have felt this year. Perhaps Kim’s greatest discouragement is the discrepancy between what was promised her and what was delivered. She enjoys her fourth grade students and would miss them if she ever left. As she expressed to me, she has no pressing reason to leave, but she also has no pressing reason to stay. This lack of connection to career and community would make it easy for her to follow other paths if they presented themselves.

Cathy is a 5th grade teacher at the Hillview elementary school. She is not only foreign to the Hillview district, she is foreign to the United States. Cathy began her schooling in her native country. She paused her studies to get married and start a family. Not until her kids were in school, did she finish her education degree - in the United States. Now a single mother, and juggling the pressures of a new career, she is struggling to make ends meet. With very few social outlets, barely enough salary to pay the bills, and little support for her children, she has often wondered if she has made the right decision. Furthermore, the new reform movements have placed an even greater burden of time and money on her already strained resources. She wants to get more involved in church and community, but just hasn't found the time. She enjoys teaching, but wonders how she will survive. After all the sacrifice she has made, she hopes she can find a way.

Data Collection

For data collection, I relied primarily on the in-depth, phenomenological interview guidelines provided by Seidman (1991). I incorporated the three phases of Seidman's approach into each interview. In the first phase, I focused on context and background. The participants were encouraged to discuss life experiences and what factors led the participant to where he or she is today. Such experiences can have a profound impact on how individuals view their world and cope with setbacks. Such questions also provide a useful context for the study. The second phase of the interview focused on the details of the participant's experiences as a new teacher in their small, rural school. I asked open ended questions that allowed the participants to relate their lived experiences as they viewed them. The third phase encouraged the participants to explore the meaning of their

experiences and allowed the participant to reflect on his or her understanding of these events. Most of the interviews took place at the participant's place of employment. Two took place at a local library and two at the researcher's residence. Most of the interviews were one on one. In two cases, however, the participants felt more comfortable being interviewed with another colleague. While unintended, this method also proved very useful. The group interview added an extra energy some of the other interviews lacked. In many cases, the participants keyed off other answers and triggered deeper responses with their colleagues. I gained some insights I may not have observed any other way. Each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed so as to include the details and any nuances in voice tone and expression. In an effort not to lead or bias the interview, the questions were open-ended and semi-guided. I asked broad questions that encouraged the participant to reconstruct lived experiences. (See Appendix A.) Where more detail or clarification was needed, I asked follow-up questions. In several instances, I telephoned later with further questions where I found pieces to be missing.

To put the study in context, I also collected demographic information from the school and the surrounding community. It was also useful to chart socio-economic indicators, student demographics, teacher turnover rates, and induction program components.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data I began by transcribing the taped interviews verbatim. In reading and reviewing the transcripts, I coded and labeled reoccurring concepts. I used an

open coding process to fragment the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I did not enter the study with predetermined categories. As I reduced and coded the data, I looked for emerging categories and themes. In examining these themes I explored their interconnectedness and addressed any contradictions that may have surfaced. By doing so I clustered themes that spoke to common topics and tried to eliminate redundancies. Finally, I pulled the data together into a coherent narrative that represented the experiences of the participants.

Ethics and Validity

Given the nature of this qualitative study, it was essential to keep all participant information confidential. At times, the participants divulged sensitive information regarding their school contexts and the quality of school leadership. All names used in the report of the study are pseudonyms. No identifying information has been used that would allow identification of the school district. I am not aware of any emotional or physical harm that has come to the subjects. There is always the potential, however, that some may have experienced levels of stress or discomfort in relating past lived experiences. Consequently, I always made it clear that subjects could withdraw from the study at any time. I am pleased that most of the participants seemed to benefit from the study and found great satisfaction in sharing the successes and struggles of first year teaching.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the research methods used in conducting this study on new teacher experiences in small, rural schools. In doing so, I outlined the methods used to select participants and sites, as well as the process used to

collect and analyze the data. Finally addressed were the research ethics and validity of the study. Having an understanding of the methods and design of this study will provide a useful context for understanding of the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of new teachers in small, rural schools. This chapter will discuss the themes and concepts that emerged while analyzing the qualitative data collected through interviews with the teachers and administrators described in chapter three. As I analyzed the data, I divided the emerging themes into two main strands; core themes and contextual themes. The core categories deal primarily with the teachers' expressed needs and hopes regarding their success as new teachers in small, rural schools. These themes form the framework for the heart of the analysis. They shed light on the phenomenon of new teacher attrition in small, rural schools and provide insights into minimizing its occurrence. The two core themes are *making connections* and *thriving in the workplace*. Additionally, other themes emerged that relate to the context in which these teachers work. This contextual data addresses topics such as the setting and circumstances faced by new teachers in small, rural schools. To set the stage for discussion of the core themes, I will begin the analysis with the contextual themes of *small, rural school challenges*; *new teacher concerns*; *effects of attrition*; and *importance of induction*.

Contextual Themes

The contextual themes lay a foundation for the core of the analysis. While new teachers are the primary focus of the study, discussions with administrators provided useful

insights as well. As administrators' responsibilities are different from teachers', it is understandable that their thoughts and concerns differed from those of the teachers. The teachers focused heavily on small school challenges and new teacher concerns. The administrators, on the other hand, spoke primarily about the themes of attrition and induction.

Small, Rural School Challenges

Some of the challenges discussed by teachers related to the setting of their assignments. To set the stage for later discussion of the core category of teachers' needs and concerns, here I will highlight some of the challenges these educators expressed relative to the size and setting of their school. While it is impossible to generalize across all teaching environments, throughout the interviews in this study, teachers and administrators consistently identified common elements regarding challenges in small, rural schools. Some of the key issues centered on staffing, support and culture.

It became apparent through the interviews that staffing small, rural schools can be challenging. Especially, suggests Chad the Riverview superintendent, as state reform movements increase regulations, math and science teachers become increasingly difficult to recruit. Whether a school has to add .2 full-time equivalents (FTEs), or six, "they just don't exist," stated Chad. And when qualified applicants do surface, too often they are not choosing schools like Hillview or Riverview. As Kate, the Hillview mentor supervisor described:

It is a huge problem for rural, small schools, because we don't attract a lot of science teachers and a lot of math teachers. There is a shortage of them across the state, and they don't show up on our doorstep a lot in Hillview.

Kim, a new elementary teacher from Hillview, sees the problem through a different lens.

Admittedly dissatisfied with her assignment, Kim suggests that the only teachers her district can recruit are locals wanting to stay local or new teachers who had few other options:

I think really the only teachers that they are able to hire, it seems like, are either somebody's spouse who just got a degree or brand new teachers who are new out of the chute and don't know any better than to get stuck in a district like this.

Kim put herself in the later category and left the Hillview district after participating in this interview. Warren, a coworker of Kim and also a new hire, has broken the mold. He is neither a local nor a disillusioned new hire. He has, however, observed the struggles of his fellow new-hires:

I'm probably the only one that's not looking for a job out of the four new teachers at this elementary school. The other three are out looking for jobs right now. One is already- hasn't turned in her letter of resignation, but has told the principal that she probably won't be here next year, already without having a job, and the other two are looking.

Because of these staffing challenges, Hillview and Riverview administrators have had to make compromises. To make up for staffing shortages, it is not uncommon for teachers to take on multiple subjects. This means that teachers occasionally take on subject matter in which they do not have degrees. This is especially a problem on the middle school and high school levels. Lynn, a Riverview middle school teacher, faces this dilemma:

I'm not highly qualified for the middle school department ... For my position I would need an endorsement in reading, and I would need an endorsement in math. And if next year I taught social studies, I would need an endorsement for social studies. And after science, an endorsement for science.

Mandy, also a Riverview middle school teacher, expressed similar feelings of inadequacy. She too, has taken on classes she feels unqualified to teach. In her school, “language arts” is one of the hardest subjects to fill. Having the lowest seniority, the task has fallen to her. “Writing is not my favorite, but you know what, I have to fake it in front of them,” she lamented, “and it is not my favorite.”

Finding qualified teachers to fill positions is only one of the staffing concerns facing these two districts. With precious little capital and human resources, retaining teachers has been just as much a struggle. Many of the new Hillview and Riverview teachers feel alone and under-supported. When job offers have arisen promising greater benefits and opportunities, it has been hard for some to say “No.” Lynn described the shock she felt when walking into her new assignment:

Being in a small school, you're typically all alone in your content area....If I were in Centerville and I was in a bigger school I might have four or five other teachers teaching the same thing as me and be able to go to them and say, “Hey what are you doing? Can you help me out? Can you give me something?” I walked into this room with empty cupboards, empty file cabinets, empty everything. OK, what am I teaching? You mean I don't have a curriculum? You mean I don't have a scope and sequence? You mean I'm not already aligned to the GLE? You mean I don't have anything? So it's kind of a shell shock that way.

With no colleagues to turn to, no curriculum to consult and no supplies to utilize, Lynn felt overwhelmed as she wrestled her way through her first months of teaching.

For some, the challenge came from the dramatic change in environment. Most of the participants were raised or educated in large metropolitan areas and then transferred to the small, rural districts of Hillview and Riverview. Their reasons were varied, but their destination the same. This has proven to be a struggle for many of the teachers

interviewed. Lynn admitted, “It was a shock to me. When I got here... I am kind of used to it now. Last year it was a shock, because I am not from a small district.” This is now her second year of teaching. She remembered how foreign the rural, agricultural life was in comparison to her metropolitan upbringing:

I will never forget one day the secretary called me and said, “Owen needs to come to the office.” OK, why does Owen need to come to the office? Well, his cows are out. Wait, what? You gotta be kidding. This is a joke. No, his cows are out and the principal needs to go help Owen corral his cows. I’m like, “I know I’m in Riverview now.” You get to leave my class, because you’ve gotta go get your cows.

For Lynn, the culture shock arose from the rural aspects of her assignment. For others, it comes from small school dynamics. In both of these communities, a core of the population has lived in these towns for many generations. Lynn reflected that it seems that “Everyone knows everyone.” She added that, “At a small school these kids have been around each other for a long time and you see a lot of people are related in some way.” With the familiarity also comes a tight communication network. Karen, a Hillview elementary teacher, has struggled on multiple occasions with an active rumor mill:

Everybody talks about everything. Everybody knows everything ...Just know everybody talks, so be careful. The walls have eyes and ears ... I mean the whole school has had conversations about how you say something in a room, but there is always somebody listening and watching.

Even as she related this particular challenge of being at a small school, Karen looked over her shoulder and closed her office door. It was apparent that she had been hurt by this communication network and by small school politics before.

New Teacher Concerns

Some of the struggles expressed by the participants were independent of school size or location. These are challenges that apply to new teachers regardless of school setting. For some of the teachers, the challenges came in dealing with unrealistic expectations. Others struggled to juggle workloads that were disproportionate to their abilities. Most of the teachers interviewed talked about the great strength and stamina required to survive their first year in education. The following remarks are general observations that set a tone for future discussions.

The Hillview and Riverview administrators expressed the concern over new teachers that are ill prepared for the rigors of teaching. They observed that many of their new teachers come into the profession with glossy expectations and find that the daily routine is much more taxing than they had expected. Taryn, a veteran of 28 years noted, “They typically come in from college, or whatever, pretty idealistic and stark reality hits of all the many things they have to do and they are pretty overwhelmed at first. It is overwhelming.” Of this same reality shock, superintendent and long time teacher Nick, also commented:

How many of those people get into the field in the state of Washington after about three years and have a reality check that this is a tough job? This is not a nine month job. If I want to be really good at my job I need to put in an extra six weeks in the summer indefinitely to get my certification and just to get better with my craft. There is a lot of intensity now with the WASL and all this other stuff, and now I have to do this until I’m 65 years old. Whoa, wait a minute. I can make more money with less pressure doing this.... This is a tough job, it is a demanding job.

Karen is in her first year of teaching and is currently dealing with the harsh realities of new teacher life. She admitted her expectations were unrealistic, but is uncertain if any advice or words of caution could have adequately prepared her for what she now faces:

The first year is really hard, a lot harder than anybody realizes. You hear it is going to be hard, but you don't ever . . . there are just so many things that they cannot really tell you about, that you won't know until you get there, because every school is different. . . . You may think going in you know this, but you don't know. I remember hearing teachers say you know, "Your first year is really hard." And it's true. You don't know. You don't know what you're going into.

As stewards over their faculty, the administrators I interviewed expressed a desire to guide their new teachers through the early formative years. Rather than feeling protected, however, many of the new teachers felt punished. Mike, a new teacher who is surviving, spoke of a colleague who likely will not:

We give new teachers the most at risk kids it seems. This poor guy last year had every ELL and ESL kid in the school for freshman English, while a teacher with 28 years of language arts in the same building is teaching every honors section in the school. Not just at grade level, but every honors section in the school for all grade levels. . . . This other man, I mean 28 years in the business, and he is teaching five sections of honors and one section of regular English and poor Ken. Man, I tell ya what, he was fit to be tied. . . . I don't know if Ken is going to make it.

Mike and his principal are currently working to help Ken have a positive experience with his first year of teaching. For many of the new teachers interviewed, having a principal sit down and listen to their needs and frustrations would have made a big difference. Karen was very open in expressing her frustrations:

It's a lot of work and stress, and it's a lot of responsibility, and we get burned out and tired. I know like this year, if I have another year the same, I don't know what I'm going to do, because you feel like you're doing so much, but yet you feel like you're not doing anything . . . you feel like

you're doing so much, but it just isn't enough to do your job well. You get tired and it's a lot of stress.

Karen may not be teaching next year if a concerned administrator does not get involved.

Effects of Attrition

In an environment of shrinking budgets and growing expectations, administrators expressed great frustration in losing resources to attrition. As one who dedicates her entire day to the support of new teachers, Kate knows all too well the difficulty of losing new teachers:

Statistically, you put the most money into people the first five years that you have them on staff, because you are providing training and all of the things that you do with them, and, so, if you lose them, all of that money walks out the door.

From a superintendent's perspective, Chad echoed, "It is a pure economic situation for us." Concerned over their limited resources, he added, "If we have our veteran teachers retire and at the same time those new teachers that we have brought on are leaving us as well, our system won't be able to handle it." Chad reminded, however, that the concern is more than simply a fiscal one. It is a pedagogical one as well. He continued, "We will never get better if we are continually replacing those people."

In my interviews with the administrators, I observed less tangible frustrations as well. High attrition rates seem to exact an emotional or even a psychological toll on administrators. When the staffing resembles a revolving door, administrators become weary. As they invest time and money into new hires, many wonder if they will see any returns on their efforts. Some feel that they train their new hires just long enough for a

larger district to recruit them away. Kate, the mentor supervisor of the Hillview district expressed it well:

We train for other schools. Our community isn't attractive to bilingual teachers, and bilingual teachers can pretty much write their ticket anywhere they want to go. They don't choose here. And you know Centerville is just very, very appreciative of Hillview, because we really train our teachers well and then they take them and they don't have to train them.

Importance of Induction

A textbook definition of induction would likely discuss the formal process of initiating, training and supporting teachers as they enter the field of teaching. Research supports the importance of such induction practices for new teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Britton et al., 2000). The administrators interviewed for this study shared in the conviction that induction programs positively influence new teachers. They expressed not only the importance of induction, but also a desire to provide meaningful induction experiences for their new teachers.

Chad, the Riverview superintendent, freely shared his philosophies on the importance of induction. He felt that induction decisions influenced many levels of his school system. He hoped that wisely investing in new teacher support programs would yield benefits throughout his entire district. While he cannot attend to every need within his program, he feels an effective induction program can greatly increase his impact and exposure. Chad was ardent in his advice to fellow administrators:

Attend to those things that are likely to have the most impact on all of the systems [you] are trying to affect. Creating an induction system is one such high leverage activity, and any leader who is serious about changing systems needs to give considerable personal attention to the design of this system and should be prepared to play a central role in the processes.

Chad reminded that we “have an opportunity to change [our] school with the quality induction system.”

Taryn, Riverview’s mentor supervisor, shares in Chad’s enthusiasm for induction practices. She hopes to utilize induction as a means to pass values and goals on to new employees. In her current assignment, Taryn devotes much of her time instilling the district’s belief systems into the new teachers. In discussing some of her induction practices, Taryn explained:

We share with them the goals of our district, our initiatives that we have going on, things that we believe in, what we want to focus on as a district. We really want to induct them into that belief system, and we are very, very clear with them.

Many of the administrators experienced the connection between induction and attrition and hoped to provide valuable support for their teachers. An induction system, stated Chad, “will have an impact on your retention system, will have an impact on people willing to move into your district to live and teach in your schools.” An understanding of this relationship and a willingness to act on it are sometimes two different things. Nick, the Hillview superintendent, has seen this struggle throughout his many years in education:

How we treat our new teachers, the type of support we provide to our new teachers is a huge issue in terms of their effectiveness and longevity. Historically I do not think a lot of districts have done a wonderful job of mentoring new teachers and helping them work through their personal, stressful issues that come up. Back when I was doing this it was like you are getting initiated into the field. “Just tough it out.” That is not the way to approach helping people.

As Nick illustrated, there is often a disconnect between good intentions and good practice. An outside evaluator could judge the value an administrator placed on induction by the time and resources he/she actually invested into induction practices. Ultimately, such

decisions usually mean either investing in supporting new teachers, or eventually investing in replacing new teachers. Many schools expend valuable resources on the later.

To help support and develop new teachers, administrators need to be aware of the issues their teachers are struggling with. In the following section on core themes, teachers will tell their own stories. They will express their hopes and concerns. It is my desire that these discussions will open up the doors for further discourse between new teachers and administrators.

Core Themes

Making Connections

Humans are by nature social beings. Generally, a prolonged period of isolation is detrimental to an individual's emotional and mental well-being. However, the teaching profession has long been known for placing teachers in an environment of professional isolation. Glickman, Gordon, and Gordon (2004) compare the typical teaching environment to that of a one-room schoolhouse. Although teachers are surrounded by people, they close their doors and are isolated from professional, collegial contacts. Teachers in the small, rural schools of Hillview and Riverview, however, described not only professional isolation, but also social, physical and familial isolation as well. In many ways, these schools are more like islands than one-room school houses. Cathy, a first year Hillview teacher, described such an outlook. "You [are] very lonely. You just feel isolated and the last man on the island and you sink or swim, but you're on the island alone is what it feels like." Teachers in these schools, however, are not stranded. Support is available.

Chad believes if we do not do a better job helping teachers to feel connected to their job, co-workers or community, they will make the necessary adjustments to feel such a connection. This could mean changing careers, leaving the community or changing districts. Roger, a first year Riverview teacher, attributed collegial and community connections as primary reasons for wanting to stay in his present assignment. Roger enjoys the teachers he works with. He volunteers to serve on committees and participates in after school athletic events. If he did not feel connected to his colleagues, he admitted he would likely leave his assignment:

As far as who you work with, I think if I didn't like who I worked with it would make it a lot more difficult the first year. After the kids are gone, if I didn't like who I was working with it would be tough. If that was the case I would probably be looking for a job somewhere else.

Connecting to community is perhaps just as connecting to colleagues. The connections Roger has made to the Riverview community are also a major factor motivating him to stay where he is:

The community is very supportive of the teachers, and it is easy to get to know everybody and get comfortable in a smaller community. ... I wasn't a big fan of Riverview when I first came down here – I had been here before – it wasn't a place that I told myself I'd be here full-time, but after working here for a year, I could see myself getting comfortable and getting into the groove and staying. I could see myself retiring here.

In spite of his early intentions to leave, meaningful connections have inspired him to stay. When teachers are unable to connect to colleagues or community, they go where such connections can be made. In contrast to Roger, Kim, a first year Hillview teacher, has felt no such connection to her community or colleagues. As a result, she feels she has no reason to stay in her present assignment and even perhaps in the profession:

There is no reason why we shouldn't stay, but there is no reason why we should. So it is just kind of our own personal discretion. For instance, I heard of one particular teacher who is staying, because he signed up to do a five year thing. ... For the rest of us, if we can get a better offer, then why not go with that opportunity?

Administrators need to be aware of the barriers that are keeping teachers from connecting to colleagues and to the community. It is hoped that teachers' views on their needs for connection and the barriers to connecting, as presented below, will lead to ideas for future practices and policies. In the sections that follow, teachers' views on their first year experiences are presented.

Colleague Connections

Needs. Teachers shared a fundamental need to feel part of the collective whole.

This need is often met through informal, social interactions. They also have an underlying need to feel professionally valued and respected. Nick, the Hillview superintendent, spoke to these needs:

There needs to be a certain level of social engagement amongst the staff to really have a powerful supportive group. Some can do it pretty much through professional lines, and most need that added element of relationship outside of school setting.

When teachers find this collegial support, they know where to turn when needs arise and feel less isolated in their struggles. Nick discussed the need for such collegial connections in small, rural schools. In settings where so few support structures are in place, these collegial relationships may be their only source of strength. "Rural environments are really very much dependent on their relationships. And if there are no relationships and if you do not form relationships ... then you are going to leave." Schools do not always provide sufficient opportunities for teachers to form relationships with colleagues. Chad, the

Riverview superintendent, sensed an urgent need to provide teachers meaningful opportunities to form such connections. “Schools have historically been places where teachers taught in isolation and for our new folks we've got to really break that, because I think they will leave in droves if they can't find that connectivity with their peers.”

Barriers. The primary barrier to connecting with colleagues is isolation. There are many factors throughout a teacher's day that contribute to feelings of isolation. The foremost that surfaced throughout the interviews is that teachers are not offered sufficient opportunities to interact with other teachers. If time to network is provided, relationships will grow, and teachers will find ways to meet one another's needs. According to Chad:

I think our new teachers are used to learning in professional learning communities. They are used to learning together, and, what often happens is we take them out of that environment and stick them into an environment of isolation and say, “Learn on your own.” I think new teachers struggle with that. They like to have their peers to bounce things off of. They like to be able to process, this is what I have found, and if you don't give them that environment they will seek a place where they can get it. Oftentimes that is a larger school district, because there are more new teachers who understand what they are going through at the time. So providing them that professional learning community that they are used to having in the university system is really important.

Excessive workloads is another barrier to forming connections with colleagues.

Many of the Hillview and Riverview teachers feel overburdened and unable to find time to meet with fellow teachers. Lynn described the isolation she felt as she struggled to fulfill her professional obligations:

I spent from August until probably February totally in my room. I didn't get out, because I just felt like I was attached at the hip in the room. I just worked and I tried to figure it out. Mandy and I were the same way. I mean we literally didn't leave our rooms. We were there from 6:30 in the morning until 4:30 at night. I didn't leave my room for lunch. I was here. And so finally February rolled around and some teachers said, “You need to

get out of your room, come eat lunch.” What do you mean? I don't have time to eat lunch. No, leave your room and you will get more done. And that's the truth. So I go to lunchroom and say “What's going on? What don't you know?” So we just sit down. And that's a big thing.

Lynn discovered that a small investment of time yielded great rewards in the form of emotional support and professional guidance. Her associations were informal, yet provided her with an outlet to fulfill her needs. Tammy, still struggling to make connections, described her condition: “I feel like I'm kind of cocooned here - so much in my own little shell.” Cathy also felt that the pressures of her workday limited her opportunities to branch out and connect with fellow teachers:

It would help so much if you could interact with an adult or just relax and take a breather. It would add a lot of energy even to clear your thoughts, but right now you're doing nothing but pushing those kids at education, education, education. But no, you never see anyone.

This is not a condition felt only by new teachers. Beth, who is not new to teaching, but is new to the Hillview district, also sat in on one of the interviews. As a seasoned teacher, Beth also lamented over the limited interactions with her fellow teachers. Speaking of a colleague just across the hall, she said:

We don't get together, all the teachers, unless it is in a meeting where you can't really talk We don't even have 10 minutes or 15 minutes a day that we could have a coffee or whatever – to just get together and have the chance to be in there or in other rooms to chat. We are always so busy and we don't have the same breaks. So sometimes I don't even see her, and we teach across the hall. Yesterday I didn't see her in the hallway....If I don't see her I do not speak with any adult, because I am here with my children the whole day. I have only half an hour break for lunch and usually I stay in my room preparing for the afternoon. I don't talk to anybody in the hallway...It would be nice if I could interact with adults more. It would be nice to go out and talk to somebody and share your life a little bit with some of the teachers.

Such settings create islands of isolation. Not only do these teachers feel alone in their struggles, they are inefficient as they seek solutions to their problems on their own. As Kim concluded, “We are all too busy to look out for each other. We are probably struggling with our own things, because we don't really have anyone else to help us.”

An additional barrier to forming connections on the middle and high school levels is a lack of content level teachers. An 8th grade math teacher, for example, may have no other math teachers to turn to for support. If there are no other content level teachers available, many have expressed the concern that no one possesses the expertise or experience to share directly applicable advice. This can create a strong feeling of isolation even in a building full of teachers. Mandy confessed:

Here's the bad part of being at a small school ... We can tell everybody you're the head of the language arts department in the eighth grade. Well, I'm the only one. You know at Centerville where I came from there are like three eighth grade language arts teachers, so you know they can get together. So if one has a strength in persuasive writing, bam, they would write the unit. . . I mean I don't have anybody to divvy up the work with.

Tammy felt a similar strain from having no content level teachers to confer and collaborate with:

I really have been at a disadvantage being in this district versus like if I was to be in Centerville; they have meetings I think every Wednesday or one Wednesday a month with art teachers, and they get lesson ideas and talk about things, and they have their little venting sessions and everyone understands what they are going through, because it is the same subject area and they are dealing with the same responsibilities.

Similarly, in small elementary schools, teachers lack fellow grade level teachers. In a small elementary school, explained Kate, “you really don't have any grade level peers that you can bounce ideas off of. ‘Where are you?’ ‘How is this going?’” Teachers such as

Tammy regret the missed opportunities to plan and prepare teaching materials together. Instead of rich instructional dialogue, these teachers are largely left alone to work out their lessons and daily routines.

Another topic of concern that surfaced among these teachers is the formation of cliques. Especially in the schools with high turnover, there was a tendency for veteran teachers to form circles of friends solely among veteran teachers. Many such teachers preferred to mingle with the experienced teachers rather than interact with new teachers who traditionally left the district after a year or two. Kim described her feelings of being on the outside of these social circles:

It is really tough coming into such a tight group at a small school in a small town.... They all have their group of friends that they all talk about and talk to so all the newbie "Joes" we are just a group in ourselves.

One final barrier to collegial connections, expressed by Chad, is a feeling of insecurity among teachers. From the perspective of a superintendent, Chad has observed many teachers resist opening their practice to scrutiny and thereby hindering a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. Chad wished that more teachers within his district would literally and figuratively open up their doors:

Even most elementary schools today are still systems of isolation. You close your door and you do what you need to do in your classroom with your group of kids. We need to find people to come into the teaching profession who are willing to say, "You know what, I do want to comment on what you're doing in your classroom and I want you to comment on what I'm doing, and let's break this isolationism that comes along with teaching."

These barriers make the formation of collegial connections difficult. There are efforts being made, however, to break down such barriers. Throughout the course of my interviews, the teachers made observations about what actions the Hillview and Riverview

districts are currently taking to encourage collegial connections. In some cases, the lack of action was a theme. These observations are presented as numbered items in the following sections specific to Riverview and Hillview districts.

Addressing needs and barriers in Riverview.

1. Cohorts and mentors. The Riverview district places a high priority on giving new teachers frequent opportunities to meet and share ideas. In doing so, the new teachers are provided with a built in support structure to help them through their challenging early years. Chad shared his feelings on the strengths of forming cohorts:

They have a cohort of people in our district that they can turn to. Our new staff induction system has allowed them to form relationships with other new teachers in our district that they know. Whether they are at the high school or the elementary school, they can turn to each other, and they have come to rely on each other. That has been one of the biggest things in that they feel like they are a group and together they are strong and they have an identity with that.

The cohort of first and second year teachers are expected to meet once a month. This includes teachers from all grade levels. The vice principal of the high school is in charge of overseeing these gatherings. In these meetings the teachers may discuss topics ranging from professional certification to classroom management. Over the months, these collegial relationships have become meaningful and supportive, according to the teachers. In some cases, what began as professional relationships developed into out of school friendships.

2. Collaboration time. The Riverview district builds into their weekly schedule time for the teachers to meet in small “teams.” In these team meetings, explained Taryn,

They collaborate with their colleagues for about an hour and a half on lesson design, and other areas that they see are needed for that week. We use protocols for lesson design and that is in place so that everybody has common language and common expectations. They observe each other.

They give each other feedback professionally and I think that has been probably one of the things that has moved us forward in some of our initiatives that we use.

Much of the success of Riverview's efforts is due to the fact that collaboration time is built into the day. The teachers' students are rotated through P.E., music and art classes each week. This ensures that the teachers will have "protected" time in their week to meet with their fellow teachers.

3. Teacher observations. The Riverview teachers are encouraged to watch other teachers teach. In doing so, teachers observe instructional practice and engage in continuous professional learning. Riverview hired a full-time support specialist to help facilitate such visits. Taryn serves in this capacity and will frequently substitute for teachers who are visiting other teachers. This is especially valuable where a teacher is the only subject teacher in the district. He or she is free to visit neighboring districts and see what other content level teachers are practicing.

4. Informal associations. The Riverview teachers exude a spirit of collegiality and friendliness. They look for opportunities to spend time with one another. While their associations are frequently informal, they still offer professional support to one another. The teachers mingle and eat together, which usually translates into collaboration time. As Roger described it:

We're talking all the time. We go to the staff room for lunch. We're always chatting about everything. And the fourth grade teachers, I get along really well with them too, actually everyone really good. The principal is very easy to work with. I've chatted with him quite a bit, and then at the induction meeting the high school principal sat in on it so we got to know him real well and got to be pretty good friends with him too. It's a very joking atmosphere and very easy going.

5. Orientation activities. For four days before school starts, the Riverview district holds professional days. During this time, the principals and Superintendent meet with the entire district teaching staff and discuss the district's philosophy and mission statement. The teachers break out into smaller focus groups and work on more specific tasks. The new teachers have this time to get oriented to the district and their new school. This is also a time to get to know the other new teachers. As an informal way to introduce them to the rest of the district, the new teachers also prepare and present an informational and educational skit. During this time they are introduced to the other teachers and position assignments are announced.

Addressing needs and barriers in Hillview.

1. Cohorts and mentors. The Hillview district has built into their induction plan a system to encourage mentor and new teacher relationships. As Nick explained, "We do a nice thing for teachers when they first come in. We assign them to mentors to work through. There are supposed to be monthly meetings between the mentee, mentor and supervisor." While Nick recognizes the system breaks down from time to time, he still holds firmly to the belief that it is worth the effort. Even from his very early years of teaching, he recalled the relationships he formed with colleagues:

This is my own personal experience. I form very strong relationships with other educators that started in the system the same time I did. We have the same experiences, we were new and we formed some very strong alliances. So creating some formal ways for most people to work together like through mentoring and getting together throughout the year and bringing them together so they can develop those relationships is a pretty powerful thing.

From an administrator's perspective, Nick encourages such interactions take place. In speaking with the teachers, however, I learned that this frequently was not the case. Time and money were primary factors leading to the breakdown of positive mentor relationships. Warren spoke of the lack of time his mentor had to support him properly in his first year:

She bites off way more than she can chew. So she became so busy. When she saw that I had my foundation she kind of backed off... We were about a month ago supposed to have a meeting that we should have had at the beginning of the year, getting the mentors and the new teachers together, but because there was a lack of interest, and because there's not a great foundation laid for that, it went by the wayside this year.

The Hillview district started the year off providing a support structure for the new teachers, but quickly, as Warren continued, the program lost momentum:

What should have happened is that we should have had weekly meetings with my mentor one on one and say, "These are my lesson plans," ask questions, get feedback. And that lasted for about a month or two, and because of the busyness of it, because I don't think there was a big monitoring from district level, it just kind of died out.

Mike, also a first year teacher, attributed much of the waning mentor program to a lack of funds. When money got tight this past year, the mentor program was one of the first programs to suffer:

Part of it was the money for mentoring. We did not have the budget to mentor. By contract we have a pay scale for mentoring. I do not even want to call it stipend, but a very small reward for taking on the relationship of a mentor teacher.

What added to the strain, believes Mike, is that in previous years money had been available for such programs. Last year when veteran teachers were asked to participate without monetary compensation, most simply refused. Mike elaborated:

There were teachers in our building that refused to be part of the mentor relationship last year with Mark or me, because they were not getting paid.

Literally said “I am not going to be a mentor, I am not getting paid for it.” They are saying that to me and I’m going “Thanks a lot.” “I’ll remember you when you need help.” Isn’t it the right thing to do as a person? But, the district has over the last couple years, the union and the administration, have gotten very contentious.

Kim reflected on her limited mentor associations and feels, like Mike, that money played a significant role:

They set me up with a mentor and informed that person that they would be getting paid and, then after the first couple of months of meeting and everything was underway, they informed her that, “Oh well, actually we just want you to do it for free.” It was kind of hard. I mean she had been there for me just because she had to.

Kim admitted, however, with all that teachers are asked to do, if she was given one more assignment without any compensation, she would probably let it slide as well:

If it is my own time, am I going to really sit down with so and so, or am I going to grade papers, do report cards, all the last minute stuff that I have to get done? I will wait on that and do my report cards and do all that stuff that parents are going to be waiting on instead of teachers.

2. Social events. Over the summer, Hillview teachers participated in a multi-district dinner. It was a social event designed to help new teachers forge relationships with other new teachers throughout the region. As an administrator, Kate sees the value in providing such opportunities. “What we really try to do is we try to provide a few social things within our buildings within the district...to kind of help with that relationship thing a bit.” In past years, it appears such activities were more prevalent. Some of the teachers have noticed a movement away from such social events. While it may seem like a minor oversight, Kim sees it as a sign of how the new teachers are valued throughout the district:

We hear from other teachers what new teachers used to get when they came in and what we were promised or were told prior to the year. Every month we will have newbie meetings for all the new teachers and we will get

together and maybe we'll meet at my place and have a bar-b-que or your place. Or they want to take you to this nice resort for a great lunch and we will just talk about issues that impact new teachers and just talk to management. Each month we will take on an issue. It's April and we have not seen any of that. We know that goes back to the principal being stretched out very thin. We know that it is part of the budget, but mostly non-time investing ways of being valued as teachers.

3. Collaboration. This year the Hillview district has built into the teachers' schedule a two hour block each month to encourage discussion among teachers across grades or subjects. Ideally, these meetings would have been held during regular hours, but scheduling conflicts has forced them to push the meetings to after school. Kate's job is to facilitate these meetings. She described the challenge in ensuring they happen:

We are trying to get that across the district, across the grade level conversation going. That is new this year. ...They have two hours a month that they can do that. We started out with "We will find subs for you; if you want it we'll find subs for you." But the sub situation out here is so bad that it just really didn't work out so they have had to go to after school, and that works better for some than others. They've really made a giant effort to do that so they must be feeling like it is a very beneficial use of their time or they wouldn't.

While it has been a sacrifice for many of the teachers to extend their workday, Kate feels that for those who have made the effort, the sacrifice has paid off.

4. Informal associations. Given all the formal structures that administrators work to initiate, it was of interest to this study how frequently teachers spoke of informal support practices. Perhaps these informal associations developed to fill a gap that existed in formal supports. Perhaps they would have developed in spite of formal induction practices. Regardless, it was clear that these informal associations were a critical piece in a new teacher's acclimation to teaching. Olivia described the process:

It arises out of a need. I need to ask her how to do this, because I never have or I need her to help me fix this. But it is not, let's sit down and meet, and talk about how things are going or let's sit down and meet and plan out how we can do this. It is not mentoring that is happening... couldn't strictly label it as that as she would not be getting \$300 or something by the end of the year.

Aside from the veteran teachers, Olivia is also grateful she has other new teachers she can turn to for moral support. She has found great comfort in having others who share a similar perspective and outlook on teaching. Olivia concluded, "I think most of us can agree that if there was only one new teacher it would be tough to do." Warren shared a similar sentiment about his fellow new-hires:

The other three teachers and I, we get together, I mean we're all very good friends and are very open with our frustrations and with our accomplishments. We'll meet in the library for a few minutes or we'll all be in there for some reason or another and say "How's it going?" and keep up with each other's desires to either leave or stay and what they're doing.

When it's more than moral support he needs, however, Warren knows there are a variety of experienced teachers he can turn to:

I know who the strong teachers are and I'll say "What did you do?" That's always available. There are great teachers that will just sit down with you and talk with you, even if they are the primary and don't teach here in the upper classes.

In some ways Warren feels this informal support structure has eliminated the need for formal support practices. Specifically, the formal mentors seem to be of less value in the Hillview district, because teachers are looking to other sources for support. In speaking for himself, Warren has not felt a strong need for a mentor:

I think that's another reason why our mentoring died, because I'm always over there asking, "What did you do here last year, what about this?"; and I'll sit over there for a half hour; we don't have an hour meeting, but we'll

probably sit down for a hour to two hours throughout the week. The help and everything is there.

From another perspective, one could argue that practices described by Warren arose out of a weak mentor program. Given the choice, however, Karen would prefer the informal approach to the formal. As a new teacher, she was assigned a mentor. Each time she went to her mentor for support, negative repercussions arose. Information about her concerns spread to administrators and questions surfaced about her qualifications. Out of self-preservation, she has learned to take other avenues:

When I have asked [my mentor] questions which were confidential, questions about how to be doing things, she went and told our ... person who is in charge ... that I could not do this and this and this. Then I got a phone call about how I should have known how to do this, so I went, OK, well, I'm not asking her questions then. I'm asking questions, because I don't know, and if she's going around telling them that I don't know and then I get a phone call being criticized for what I don't know as a first year teacher.... So I will ask her if it is something really that she is the only one who can answer. But usually I can find the answer elsewhere and then not have them make a big deal out of it.

Karen has enjoyed the “give and take” relationships that have developed among some of her colleagues. She feels valued when she can contribute to another, and is comforted to know she can ask for help in return. She described an example of how this process has worked for her:

I was doing a progress report, and I wasn't given a form to use, so I had to create one and she ended up seeing it . . . and she said “Oh my gosh this is great can I have it?” So I am happy I was able to share something with her, and she is going to help me out here with some of the testing we have to do. She is going to come down and help me, because she has a prep period so she said she would offer her support.

Whether the above informal structures eliminated the need for formal supports, or a lack of formal practices led to an abundance of informal structures is unclear. One thing is

certain, however, the Hillview district relies heavily on informal support practices to induct and train new teachers.

5. Orientation activities. Orientation activities can take place on either a district or a building level. District-wide, the Hillview new hires received a basic orientation regarding the conditions and essentials of their employment with the Hillview district. Warren explained, “We went to the district and we got ‘How to call a sub,’ went through our benefits, went through the emergency training and everything.” On a building level, each teacher received a different orientation into his or her new assignment. Some were in the right place at the right time and were given more attention than others. For Olivia, she was organizing her room when the principal entered and exclaimed, “Oh, good, you're here, let me take you on a tour of the town really fast and then drop you back off, because I'm going to go have lunch.” Kim feels neglected when she reflects on her first few weeks at her new job. She stressed:

Basically the secretary handed us a key and said, “Your room is down there,” and we both just kind of walked on down the dark hallways that were still being cleaned and “Are they going to show us where the gym is or where we eat and the restrooms?” But that never happened. No. The school tour never happened. Never happened. I didn't even know until January that there was another resource room at the other end where there was paper. Yeah, it was just basically “Feel it out for yourself” orientation.

Aside from the quick drive-through of the town, Olivia wishes she could have received more guidance during her first weeks of employment as well. She recalled her first few moments at the school:

“You said you were organized though. Let's see what you can do.” That's what the teacher actually came in and said. “You said that you could organize this. Let's see what you can do.” And so then I just had to go

through and I'm in my room by myself doing my own thing, trying to figure out what everything was.

While not new to teaching, Beth was new to the district last year and also noticed a scarcity of orientation activities. She observed, "It would be nice to have a bit of orientation. I didn't have any orientation."

6. Principal visits. The principal consistently surfaced as a key piece to the new teachers' sense of well-being. The Hillview district teachers spoke highly of their principals. While principal visits to classrooms numbered only two or three throughout the year, the teachers interviewed each felt they could approach the principal if needs did arise. Warren described his relationship with his principal as follows:

He's very hands off. I have a great relationship with him, I feel that if I have a problem or question I can go talk to him. He makes himself very available that way, but I've probably had on a professional level, two or three conversations with him all year.

When the formal principal visits took place, they were informative and efficient. Kim related her experiences:

He was really efficient with the feedback, if that makes any sense. Everything has a graph, everything has numbers, everything is typed out, written out, how we can improve, and all of that kind of stuff. So we actually get it back and it is actually not hard to remember your lesson or what you were teaching, because it is four pages of exactly what you said. You know. He is very efficient that way. It just takes a while to get the feedback.

It is clear these Hillview teachers looked to the principal for support and guidance as the instructional leader of the school.

Ideas for future course of action.

In a spirit of furthering the discussion on collegial relationships, many of the teachers in this study shared ideas and hopes regarding collegial connections. They volunteered suggestions they felt would help facilitate such connections for future new teachers. Seven of these ideas and suggestions are discussed below in numbered sections.

1. Offer common planning time. Many of the teachers find their schedules so mismatched, that it is nearly impossible to sit down with fellow teachers. Mandy pleaded, “We can't meet, we do want to meet.... But how when my planning is midday? Amy is after lunch, and seventh is first thing in the morning. How are we all going to meet?” Cathy finds she is so busy or is juggling so many other tasks that she does not have the opportunities she would like to collaborate with colleagues. Even her lunch breaks are not breaks, because the teachers are asked to serve as lunch aids:

You never see anyone and I mentioned that to Harry the other day. I said “You know it would really help if we had a common break time where or if somebody watches lunch, cause if we have to eat we will go where everyone is meeting to eat, but you can't do that if you're watching the kids.”

In some of the buildings, planning time is scheduled, but the time is so structured that the teachers do not feel their needs are being met. Karen explained how she would like to see her planning time spent:

They actually structured it so we were watching videos and it wasn't useful to me. I would rather have actually talked with other brand new teachers and then gotten ideas from them and talked about how things were going, and did they have ideas for doing stuff, or maybe even like scheduling time every month where you met with a mentor every month, something to where it was scheduled where you had two hours to meet with them one-on-one, or else to meet with other teachers who are new. But do not structure it in a way where you are doing videos, which might not be as beneficial. ...

“How do you do your progress reports?” “How are you figuring this out?”
Yeah that would have been more helpful to me.

Kim agrees that if administrators take time out of a teacher’s day for meetings, the structure should allow for teachers to influence the topics being discussed. She suggested, “Having a monthly time to sit down and just talk about stuff - maybe not necessarily an agenda, but just to share and see how things are going.”

2. Require fewer formal meetings. The less discretionary time teachers have, the fewer opportunities they have to collaborate and meet their growing list of demands. As Dawn observed:

The meetings are very tiring. You can work . . . sometimes you can work better alone with your job, and checking the homework of the students or doing your own jobs than in meetings. Sometimes they are necessary, but I don't think that as regular as they are. We can have one a month and I think it is necessary and it's OK, but not multiple each week. I think it is tiring. Because you could use that time here and you have to go to the meeting and after the meeting you have to come back here. It's all in the same condition as when you left. The meetings are not tied into work. They are not tied in.

As the teachers reflected on the demands placed on them, they often lamented that the meetings they attended added to their stress levels and feelings of inadequacy. Cathy recalled dreading the feelings that came after such meetings:

It is doing a good job putting the screws to the teachers in that you feel even more pressure. I mean before you are feeling the pressure, because you know you have to meet all these ELRs weekly and you have to be watching the standard, or you have this big test that you're teaching for. You know, you're really pushed hard for that and then you turn into AYP, and all of these meetings, and it is like, you know, I'm busting my rear trying to get this done, and I'm trying to do a great job, but it's like, it doesn't matter, because we are always coming up short. . . I'm tired.

Perhaps, recommended Mike, when meetings are required, they can focus on the positive and strive to motivate rather than intimidate. “I would try at least every 5-6 weeks,”

offered Mike, “to have them all together and talk about ‘Hey, what kind of successes did you have?’ - Talk about successes. I wouldn’t want to talk about our failures; wouldn’t want to focus on it. I would want to talk about our successes.”

3. Create a cohort atmosphere among the new hires. Cohorts provide connectivity and continuity. Nick, a teacher and administrator of many years, loves to see when groups of new teachers are able to form a productive working cohort. He stated:

Probably the best way to keep people is to have a fairly large group of them come in at about the same time. They form good social networks that are positive. Some of them can be negative, but if they are positive they kind of grow together.

He recalls being part of just such a group when he was a new teacher. The connections he formed were a source of strength to him for many years. Throughout his years of teaching he has observed teachers who have struggled to make such connections. He remarked on the fate of teachers he has known who never felt part of a cohort:

A lot of people did not stay. For whatever reason they did not connect, and so if you could wave your wand and bring in five great teachers at the same time and form that network with them, they could form roots.... If you’re lucky those networks develop and if not, they are here a few years, and then are gone.

4. Support new teachers beyond their first year. As one who devotes most of her workday to supporting new teachers, Kate wishes she had the time and resources to extend that support beyond the first year. She feels that to truly make a lasting mark on a new hire, the efforts must go beyond the first year:

If I could change anything, it would be really having the time and the energy to develop a program that is a more formal and extensive program for our new teachers, and maybe going over three years instead of really feeling like we do a pretty good job the first year, and then it diminishes after that. I think if I could change something, I would put together a

program for teachers, who are here, for three years. And maybe that would be one of those things that might influence teachers to stay longer.

In the near future, Kate hopes to put some of these ideas into action. While the funding is still inadequate, any efforts to extend induction beyond the first year, she feels, would prove beneficial.

5. Encourage new teachers to get involved. While time is scarce and must be guarded, finding a few select ways to contribute to the staff and school offers a sense of great professional satisfaction, and opens doors for meaningful collegial relationships. For Warren, this is one of the deciding factors into why he hopes to stay in his assignment, and why his three fellow new-hires plan to leave the district:

I think that you have to be open to doing as much as you can after school, becoming a part of the school. Unfortunately, because of a lack of commitment, because I think this was a one-year stop for them, they haven't really wanted to become a big part of the staff. We have to be here until 3:25 and those three other teachers are out of here at 3:25. I think if you're going to make it at a school you have to have that desire to put yourself out there, and ask for responsibilities, and take the responsibilities if they're offered to you. Then you become connected. Without that, it's just an eight hour job.

The principal can play a key role in ensuring that new teachers are given opportunities to contribute. If placed in an administrative role, this is exactly what Mike explained he would do:

I would give them an important assignment for the school very quickly. Not one that is going to consume a great deal of their time, but is an important assignment that would put them in front of the other teachers in an opportunity to share their professionalism with them, and demonstrate to them. Seasoned teachers tend to look at new teachers a little standoffish in some cases.

In small schools where budgets are tight and staff is limited, Mike suggested that teachers willing to contribute are a necessity. Without such attitudes, a school system struggles to function:

In a small school you've got to be involved. If you are not prepared to, they cannot afford to keep you. It is spring in a small school. We have boy's and girl's track; boy's and girl's tennis; boy's soccer; boy's baseball; girl's softball. We have five varsity sports out there. In fall we have three. In winter we have two. They cannot afford to keep hiring teachers that do not want to get involved in things like that.

From a different perspective, Olivia recalled how undervalued she felt when she and a colleague were not invited to participate in a school-wide reading night. Students and parents from the community visited rooms, while teachers read popular children's books.

Olivia was not asked to participate and was not even notified of the event until the day of:

So I was really bothered by the fact that they didn't ask me to be a part of it. And what really irked me even more, was that my predecessor who is out of the district now was a reader.... None of the new teachers were asked. What was sad was that in Kim's classroom, and in other new teachers' classrooms, there were other people reading. So she had to clear out her room and make accommodations for this reading night, which we didn't even know about. Of course we would have wanted to be readers in our room if we had known. But just the fact that we weren't even asked.

6. Allow for colleague observations. Mike feels he could have benefited greatly from having the opportunity to watch other teachers teach. Sharing ideas is important, but there is no substitution for seeing theory put into action. Mike remarked:

I would have loved to have the opportunity to observe a couple of teachers last year - just to get some ideas. As confident as I seem to be, I struggle with finding activities that are engaging. I know the lesson and what I want to teach them, but the delivery, the method - you know. Finding creative ways to deliver the message to them - that is where I struggle the most.

If ever given the chance, this is one change Mike would certainly make. “If I had to, I would go cover their classrooms for them so they could go observe a master teacher.” In small schools, however, it can be a great challenge finding ways to cover classrooms so teachers can visit other teachers. Mike’s suggestion of having the principal cover is only one option. Having a mentor who is willing to substitute is also an option. As a full-time mentor supervisor, Kate works hard at providing teachers as many opportunities as she can to visit other teachers. She wishes there were more substitutes available to allow for greater observation opportunities. “We started out with ‘We will find subs for you, if you want it we’ll find subs for you.’ But the sub situation out here is so bad that it just really didn't work out.” Kate, however, is very willing to fill in for teachers as much as her schedule allows.

7. Create an atmosphere of cooperation. A final suggestion to encourage positive collegial connections is creating an atmosphere of cooperation. Whether a formal assignment or not, Olivia feels if everyone were willing to look after each other, teachers would find collegial connections. In thinking back on her first day, she knows this would have made a difference in her teaching experience. Olivia recalled:

I am just thinking about that first day.... How great it would have been to have a couple of people be willing to help and just kind of say “How are things working here?” Kind of lend me a hand. When you're new, things are a little bit messy and unorganized. “How can I help you get settled?” “How can I help you put your classroom together?” I think that would have gone so far to say, "Oh yeah these people really want to help.”

Community Connections

Needs. Where social interactions are limited, and entertainment outlets are few, connecting to the community is essential. Teachers need to feel safe and accepted by the

people that are such a large part of their professional and personal lives. In a small, rural environment, the line between professional and personal is almost indistinguishable. The community is an inseparable part of both. This is why, suggested superintendent Chad, “Getting an understanding of our community is huge. I think it's what makes you a more effective teacher.” When asked why he enjoyed his job and desired to stay in Hillview, Warren responded, “I feel connected to the community.” When asked why he felt the other three new hires in his building were looking for jobs elsewhere, he confidently answered, “They’re not connected to the community, is why.”

Barriers. As important as a community connection is, there are many teachers who never find that connection. These are not the type of teachers Chad is looking for in his district. He feels, “If you don't have an understanding of our community and how our community operates, I don't think you can be effective in the classroom.” One step in connecting to such a community is understanding some of the challenges or barriers others have faced in their efforts to connect. The following section is a numbered list of challenges the teachers related to community connections.

1. New teachers are viewed as outsiders by the community. Finding acceptance into a tight-knit community can be a great challenge. As one who has lived in Riverview most of her life, Taryn has watched from the inside as new teachers tried to find acceptance into their new community. In comparing a new hire that comes from outside the district to one hired from within the community, she remarked:

This person could be just as great a teacher, have just as many things to offer our district, but since they are an unknown quantity to parents, parents in fact are probably a little more reluctant to trust that person and believe what they say.

Professionally, this can pose some difficult challenges. Taryn illustrated with the following example:

Parents can give them a hard time. As parents do sometimes, they think that their kids are really not using that bad language in class, you know, and because that teacher is not known to them very well they might be inclined to support the child, and not listen to the teacher as much as they would to someone else that has either been here a while or is from the community.... It's way different for those newer teachers. They have a tough row to hoe, they really do.

As a Riverview native, Kacey knows this connection has made her road smoother as a new hire. She is sorry for her colleagues who are not from the region and are striving to gain acceptance into the community. In recalling the interview process, Kacey remembered:

One of the questions was "How long do you think you will be here?" They want to know long term. "Where are you going to be in one year, two years, three years?" - Because it is such a small tight community. They don't like to see people come and go. They want people who are going to be there for the long haul.... So they are thinking "We want people to stay here. This is our community. We built it up. Are you going to be able to fit in with us? Because this is who we are."

Tammy, still in her first year, is struggling to find a connection with the Riverview community. In speaking of her bond with the community, she related:

I don't have any ties to it. That's honest. That's being blunt. I don't. I'm an outsider still. I don't know how that's going to ever change . . . I think the only way that will change is when I feel like I have a smaller class size and I can actually go out like during the day with them and go like do activities in the community and I don't know if that will ever happen.

Kate, also a long time resident of the Hillview region, is sorry to see the process of acceptance take so long for the new hires. She fears that over time, the community has lost its ability to embrace new members. She explained:

There are community members who want our people all to live in the community, you know, support our community and all of that. On the other hand, they don't really want to do anything, you know, because basically they are long established families; they have their acceptance in the community, and they don't remember or they never had to go through that process of becoming part of a different community culture. So they don't know how to welcome and support people on more than a surface level.

2. There is a strong feeling of isolation. For many, the isolation is a social one.

Nick realizes this is a serious issue when trying to retain teachers in his district. Many of his new hires feel a great need for social interactions. He stated, "There is not a lot to do out here socially. They go elsewhere for their social or wherever, so they are going to move that direction anyway. So we have that working against us." As so many of these new teachers originate from larger cities, the change is often too much of an adjustment for them to make. Nick called it culture shock:

It is like culture shock for somebody that is coming in from an urban area or suburban area to a small town. They can love the heck out of the time that they are in the building, and the interaction at school, but the time that they are not, is like, you know, too much time to think, too much whatever. There is too much time that they have to figure out ways to fill it. If you are not a hunter, or do not like driving to town multiple times during the week, or you are not already married and are engaged with all of those family things - those are issues. They really are issues and we lose a lot of quality people after just a couple of years, and some after a few more years. They form relationships and the relationship is miles away. They met during summer school, and those things happen.

From her perspective, Kate has witnessed a very similar phenomenon. If new teachers are not finding fulfillment in their personal life, they are moving to communities where they can:

Lots of our teachers who we hire are coming here unmarried, first jobs, and that is an issue for them. The single life - we don't have anything to offer. Unfortunately our little community of Hillview doesn't have things in place. They just don't. When people live in those areas they live there, because

they have their families, and they have that kind of support themselves. But when you come and move into it, it's hard.

When speaking of the loneliness of life after work, Cathy simply stated, "You go to your house and you stay in your house." She recognizes, however, that there are a few limited social opportunities available in the community. The pressures of her job have made it hard for her to find the time to participate:

I'm involved with the church, but I can't volunteer to do anything at church, because I'm too busy at work. So I have met people through church. I do have family here, so occasionally I'll run into them, but it's just very isolated. There isn't a community life. There is that bowling league if you're lucky enough to be on one, and really that's it. It is difficult. For me I have kids, so this fall we drove into the city to do the sports thing. So I met parents at events, but since that stopped, it has just dropped off to nothing.

Beth, who has had a similar experience, shares an example of the isolation she has felt.

"Last year it was only my son and I here, and, you know, after school we would just go to do some shopping or go for a walk. We didn't cross anybody. Not once. We didn't see anybody."

For others, the disconnection comes from more than limited social interactions. It also stems from meager conveniences and services. On top of the other pressures Cathy is feeling, she wishes she did not have to add hours of driving each week to accomplish basic day-to-day tasks:

I would like to be closer to where I could drive 10 minutes to an activity instead of driving an hour. When I need to go to the grocery store, it would be nice to only drive 10 minutes to go to the grocery store instead of driving an hour and then rushing home before it melts. I mean, it's just hard. I don't have enough time in my day to juggle the rural life when all of the conveniences are in the city. So when I am juggling four kids and this job that is taking way more hours than what it should . . . I mean I've gotta simplify somewhere.

That's one of the things I look at cause you know it would be nice if I didn't have to drive. A doctor in town would be nice, a real doctor. But you know they don't. They have nurse practitioners right - so if you need a specialist or if you need a doctor, if you need an expert you have to drive to the city. So I'm sitting in the car with a broken bone, and I have to make him sit there for an hour while I drive into some clinic.

For Cathy, these community factors may be enough to send her looking for employment elsewhere. She imagined what life would be like outside of small, rural Washington:

For me that's a huge thing, you know. I would have a social life. I would have conveniences right there. My kids would have more options in school, like they would have a drama club, you know, all of the different programs. And here, we had to cut the drama program, because of funding. So I mean . . . I look at that and think, you know, we could have all this stuff.

3. The community is frequently divided across geographic and cultural lines. For a new teacher, it can be difficult navigating the diversity that makes up so many small, rural towns. As Mike stated, small does not mean uncomplicated:

I was not prepared. Even though we have this mix of races and cultures, you tend to look at skin color as culture. Just be prepared that there are a lot of sub cultures even in a small, rural culture. You cannot define singularly one community just because of its location being rural.

In many cases, the divisions are geographic. A small, rural school is frequently a patchwork of many small surrounding communities. They each have their own identity and also their own individual needs. Chad hopes he can help his new teachers understand these subtle differences. He feels, however, such an understanding can only come with time:

If you go out to Donnerville, it is its own little community out there and Donnerville has a different identity, even a different community than downtown Riverview. Caldwell has a different view of things than maybe Wellington does. And either you understand that . . . you know you just approach things differently in each of those communities and it's not bad,

it's just different . . . all the way down to voting patterns, to the way the community views itself.

As the Hillview superintendent, Nick has struggled at times to unify these independent entities. They are divided on so many issues, unifying the communities on the subject of education has proved to be a challenge:

Despite whatever efforts I have made, we still do not have a real unified school district. We have a history of being somewhat divided and it is fairly natural if you look at the geographics of our district. We are a fairly large geographic district and we have ideologies that are different in different areas. What makes Hillview folks tick is different than what makes Coalville folks tick. Part of it is the culture, but part of it is just the way the social entities have developed, too. That is probably going to be biggest hurdle for this district forever - getting everybody to support one another district wide. It is a tough thing.

With her many years in the district, Kate has felt similar frustrations. She wishes they could find unity throughout the community:

Because we are Fullerton, Mapleville, Coalville, Hillview, our community does not agree on a lot. There isn't general agreement across our district on just about anything. That's my opinion. So I think that makes it very difficult. . . . Each community has its own demographics, its own culture and all of that. What can be good for one community, another one doesn't agree with, and so there is always that going on.

When such disunity exists in a community, it affects more than the administrators.

Tension influences all levels of a school. The repercussions can manifest itself in parental support, financial support and even faculty moral. Nick has wrestled with small-town politics, and wishes there was an easier solution:

If you get distracted with other things or you let them become pervasive, then you end up hurting what is most important. It seems like it should be so easy to keep your focus, but it is not. . . . They can start to have an impact through negotiations and just the mentality of the work force. When you talk about your classified staff - most of those are home grown folks, and if they do not like what is going on, then they are out there talking about the

negative side of stuff to the community. So there is lots of political stuff that comes into play.... How does our staff feel about our system? What are they saying to their neighbors? How do the community people feel about it? If someone gets cross ways - in this district more than any district I have ever been in - almost the first thing that will come out of someone's mouth if they are upset about something is "I am going to vote against the next levy." It is unbelievable - especially when you have a levy coming up that year. I have heard that come out of people's mouth for at least 50 different reasons since I have been in this district. Some of it is just in anger, "I am going to get even with you." It just scares me the mentality that is there.

Rejecting levies is a tactic the Hillview community has exercised multiple times in the past. If they are unhappy with the way money is being spent, or the direction the schools are going, they deny the district much needed dollars. Kim explained the complexity of the situation:

I think that kind of ends up being a tension in the community, because the money is not there for anybody, and it is tight, and that creates a lot of tension. I think there is a lot of checking to see how we are using our resources to make sure that we really know what supplies we have. Do we really need this levy? Are there ways to use more of your resources?... People are wearing extra hats so now they are just basically saying, "Well, you have been able to do the job of two people. Why should we give?"...

They are really split down the middle. With such a high Hispanic population that they are giving this money to, but most of the kids in our school are coming from out of town, and so they don't like giving money for kids who are not from their own town - those parents who put money down towards those schools and none of that comes this way. I have heard a lot of parents talking about that.

As a new teacher, Warren has also felt the struggles that come from working in a divided community. Sometimes the division is more than geographic, financial or political. In many of his encounters, the division has been racial and cultural. He described the frustration he felt in helping parents and sometimes teachers put aside their prejudices:

The uniqueness of this school district, which is difficult to come into, is just how separated the community is. At the beginning of the year I had two young ladies whose parents I know, and who talk to me. This was the first time that their children have been outnumbered by the Hispanic, and so it really worried their daughters, and because of the group work and how it intermingled them all.... Now in my class they sit with each other, they're buddies, they play out on the playground, but that was unique to see how separated they were.....There's definitely the lines drawn, and a lot of the Hispanic kids know that, or feel that there's favoritism against them, so it's pretty difficult to get through that, and to teach them as a group. Unfortunately, there are prejudices here, even through teachers. A lot of the, I would say the more mature teachers, have those prejudices. I think ten years ago it was about 70% Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, and it's just done the reverse. So there are a lot of new things that have just happened within the last ten years that are different to this community now.

Even some of the activities that were designed to unify, lamented Warren, have reinforced the community's conflicts:

There's not much in a little community like this that brings the communities together. The football games were fun, the athletics is huge, but it actually separates the Caucasian with the Hispanic. There's no Hispanics at the football games at all. At the soccer games, it's almost all Hispanics, which Hillview also has a very good soccer team, but it's almost all completely Hispanic. It's really separated that way. You have your Hispanic community that probably 70% of them don't speak English at all - the parents. I have ten or eleven Spanish speaking kids and nine out of them, their parents don't speak any English, so it's difficult.

As challenging as these cultural differences can be, I noticed in my interviews the powerful effect the teachers can have on their students as they try to understand and relate to the diversity in their classes. For some of the teachers it meant showing patience when students traveled to Mexico for a month over the holidays. For others it meant reaching out to the parents who had no time or energy to reach out to them. It even had an effect on the curriculum choices they made in their classroom. Cathy related the difference it made on her teaching as she began to understand and embrace the diversity in her classroom:

I was talking to one of my students, and her family works over at the processing plant. They are working two shifts, and her mom who is not a very big lady, had to pick up 50 pound bags of potatoes, and hoist them onto the truck, and she was not allowed to go home until the truck was filled. Then she would take a short break, and go start the next shift. And I thought, you know what, I've never worked that hard in my life and so she was working two shifts, her husband was working one, and they are barely making ends meet. And I have never had to work that hard. They work incredibly hard. I am trying to think, I don't think I have anyone that is just a slacker, you know what you would call a slacker. They work very hard. The poverty level is way high here - very poor families. You don't get like coming from Yates County, they don't get what the Yates County kids do. They don't go to Adventure Mountain twice a year and they don't get to fly off to grandmas and they don't get you know . . . One of our writing projects at the beginning of the year was, "If you were in charge of a parade, what would you change and why?" Well I had five kids raise their hand and say "What is a parade?" You know, I was clueless that they had never honestly seen a parade.... I said, "Have you never gone to the Hillview Parade, you know, the one that's in town here that's free?" and they are like, "No," because they are home, because their parents have worked hard all week long and they are too tired.

Understanding these cultural differences can also help in parent - teacher relationships.

Several of the new teachers interviewed commented on how unengaged some of the parents were in their child's education. Understanding their background can shed light on such issues. Warren observed:

I don't have any parental helpers that come. I don't have any moms or dads that come in and do anything. In Centerville you always had three or four moms that would always come in and actively ask to participate, but, half of my kids both parents work, and it's just not even something that's feasible.... The volume of help and the volume of parental support is down. I think that's mainly because we live in farming communities where both parents work, and with most of our kids getting free and reduced lunch, we have very high poverty, and so that's a big part of it too.

Bridging cultural gaps and making meaningful community connections can be a great challenge. Next presented is a summary of some of the observations the teachers and

administrators have made regarding these efforts. These observations are presented as numbered items specific to Riverview and Hillview districts.

Addressing needs and barriers in Riverview.

1. Bus tour of the community. While a simple thing, most of the teachers commented on how they appreciated being invited on a bus tour of the region. The Riverview district is geographically vast, and the teachers valued seeing the sub-communities that made up their diverse district. Chad explained some of his rationale for the tradition:

When we took our bus tour, we had one of our teachers at the elementary school, who has been here his whole life. He was commenting on all of those things; the history of Riverview, and getting an understanding of that. We had all of our new teachers on it...every teacher in our district needs to see this. Every teacher needs to understand it.

From a teacher's perspective, Roger clarified how understanding the community make-up helped him better relate to his students:

We got on a bus and he drove us around the whole community. He showed us the different areas and the different socio-economical factors that played into the school. These kids live way out here and these kids are having to get up at five in the morning so you can understand why they are a little groggy when they get into your class. It's actually a big area - 15 miles north, 15 miles east. It's just a big area.

2. Parent teacher organizations. Kacey commented on the great potential the parent teacher organization (PTO) has in acting as a link between the school and the community. In speaking of her own induction to the community, Kacey spoke fondly of the PTO:

You know, actually, who did most of it, was the PTO. They went around and did special little things for the new teachers. On the very first day there, we all had flowers on our desks. I think for the first week, they had brought

something in for us every day. That was informal too. But it was a way of letting us know, “We are glad you are here, welcome to Riverview.” I thought that was neat.

3. Community introductions. The three primary means for introducing new teachers to the Riverview community were community newsletters, school board meetings and communication with parents. Kacey spoke of the impression the community newsletter made during her first few weeks of teaching. In the newsletter, a biographical sketch was written on each of the new teachers, highlighting the teachers’ backgrounds and interests. As the newsletter came from the superintendent’s office and was sent throughout the community, it gave the teachers a sense of support and approval from the district. Kacey also spoke of the warm welcome the new teachers received from the school board. “As new teachers – all attend the school board meeting the week before school starts. We were introduced at the school board meeting. They made introductions there too. They kind of welcomed us to the community.” Finally, and perhaps most importantly, were the parent introductions. Teachers who made parent connections early in the year seemed to make a much smoother transition into the community. Kacey explained her approach:

I would meet with the parents before school started. It was just a one time thing. They would come with their children and meet me– the day before school. All of them would come in. I guess I was trying to introduce myself to them. We were introducing ourselves to the kindergarteners. “I am your teacher. Come look at our room.” We would meet with them one on one.

Roger, also one who places great value in parent relationships, outlined the impact an open house and parent aids have had on his community relationships. He enjoys the openness he feels with the parents and his students:

We have an open house right away. Only a couple of parents didn't show up for the open house. So I met everyone then. And then you have your trimester conferences every time. I have four parents that I continually talk with. One is a room mom that helps out. I have a couple other parents that help out in the classroom. And then we have field trips and parties and they are coming in, and kids have birthday parties and parents bring cupcakes for their kids. They are always coming in and out. It's not unexpected for a parent to come in during a lesson.

Addressing needs and barriers in Hillview.

1. Tour of the community. While Hillview administrators did not formally drive the new hires around the community, at least one teacher had a personal tour of the community. Olivia explained her experience:

The principal really did take me around when we first accepted the position. He called and said, "Now here's an apartment number, here's all the numbers for all of these places that are available, and when I got there he took me on a tour of the whole, the "whole" town if you can call it that I guess. Yeah, like a three minute tour instead of a three-hour one. Then after that it was kind of like, "OK now that you've seen it go ahead make do with what you have."

Rather than provide better understanding of the community make-up, Olivia felt the trip was more of an attempt to encourage her to find an apartment in the community. Neither was accomplished.

2. Community introductions. No formal attempts were made during the year of this study to introduce the new teachers to the Hillview community. Several teachers remarked how they wished more had been done. In past years, the local newspaper has run an article highlighting new teachers. With such high teacher turnover rates, however, the newspaper has lost its enthusiasm for the story. Olivia felt a little slighted:

I went into the newspaper and they said, "Oh you're a new teacher, that's great. We're going to come and take pictures of you, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they said "Oh you want a newspaper, because you're going to live

here? And I said, yes I'm planning on moving to the town and just stepping right in. Then they found out that none of us were going to live here and then it was kind of lost. None of us were able to get houses or apartments and then it was kind of like, "Are you really going to stay, because the last teacher was only here a year? Do you really think you're going to make a commitment? I'm just telling you that we're having a hard time in the community." And kind of that situation and so the new teachers didn't, no recognition within the community whatsoever, uh uh. No attempt....

Some five or four new teachers last year left, so they had done this huge thing in the newspaper for all those teachers and how excited they were to have them in the community. And then here come five new teachers again - we're not even mentioned.

Warren also recalled how no mention was made of the new teachers at the school board meetings or in the newsletter. What frustrated him more, however, were the promises made in the recruiting interviews of a supportive community. He has yet to see the promised support.

Ideas for future course of action.

1. Encourage teachers to live in the community. While many teachers in the two districts I studied chose not to take this route, it was still encouraged by all the administrators I spoke with. It was also interesting to note how all the administrators I interviewed lived in the communities where they worked. Chad explained how the depth of understanding is much deeper when a teacher is willing to commit to and live in the community:

My experience with Riverview is that you had to slow down and you look out and see this side of Riverview and that's all you see. You see the downtown area and you think it's nothing but a trailer court. I had driven through here for seven years. I had worked in Waldon. Then you move over here and you start to live here and you try to cross that road. There was no light up here at the bridge and you got your family in your car and you try to cross that road and you see people zipping by at 65-70 miles per hour and you've got your family to cross that road and you get a different

perspective. It is a very different perspective than what most people have of our community, because a lot of it is hidden. You don't see much of Riverview. There are homes and views along that river that would rival any view, any place. There are just beautiful, beautiful homes up there that people have no idea exist.

When asked what one of the main contributors to his success in the community was, he attributed it to living in Hillview. He feels the other new teachers' decisions to live out of town has made their experience with Hillview less fruitful. When asked why they were looking to leave after less than a year, he exclaimed, "I think because they're not connected to the community, is why. I live here and the other three don't. I feel connected to the community." As one of the teachers Warren referenced, Kim expressed her frustration with the situation. She knows the community appreciates new teachers who can contribute to the community, but wishes the town would do more to make itself attractive to visitors:

When a lot of the new teachers decided to live in Centerville, I think that was a factor in the community. It is a two sided coin, because on the one hand...they are saying teachers aren't adding life to the community yet at the same time there is no place for these teachers to live. So it is kind of a catch 22. I think it is one of those where they are disappointed and then they have to move on, because it is just a reality issue.

2. Look for teachers with small-town backgrounds. While this cannot be an exclusive criterion, it seemed that teachers who grew up in or have lived in towns with similar demographics have a much easier time adjusting to life in small, rural schools and communities. Roger, having grown up in a similar sized town, has had few difficulties adjusting to life in his new assignment:

I came from a small school growing up, too. So it was I think a lot less nerve-racking for me being back in a small setting. Rather than being in a city school. And the kids are coming from the same kind of background

that I did, so it is easier for me to relate with them. If I go to a city, I don't relate as well, never having lived in a city.

With his wife having been raised in Riverview, Roger had one more connection to tie him to the community:

When they interviewed me, there were eight staff on the interview committee, and I think four of them had either had my wife in their class or had her sisters in their class. So right off the bat. One of the staff had actually gone to school with her.

Kacey, also from Riverview, has experienced similar successes in adapting to her new career:

I feel like I had an advantage. Just because I grew up in Riverview. These teachers were my teachers. I don't know how it would be for other people coming in - if they felt the exact same way. That would be interesting. So I always wondered; Was it because I already knew them? The lady I am teaching with was my 2nd grade teacher. I felt there was already that connection there.

Mandy, having grown up in a school of only 100, describes her time in Riverview as coming "back home." In contrast, Lynn knew only large schools and large towns growing up. For her, the adjustment has been a more difficult one. She explained the adjustments she has had to make:

It was a shock to me. When I got here . . . I am kind of used to it now. Last year it was a shock, because I am not from a small district. I grew up in Centerville and I went to Mountainview and I went to a big elementary school, big middle school, big high school. Then I come out here and I'm like, OK, all three buildings are next to each other. You have everybody pretty much on the same lunch schedule so you have the potential for elementary students to be socializing with middle school. They also grew up with each other.

In describing the long-time teachers from the Hillview district, Kim observed:

The teachers who really stick around, how many of them are born and raised Hillviewites? All of them. The ones who stay - yeah. All of them. I

can think of several of them who went to school or grew up at that school and then those are the last names that crop up all over the whole community.

As a native herself, Kate has come to a similar conclusion. The teachers that really stay are the ones who have deep-rooted community connections. “They were born and raised here,” proclaimed Kate, “so they married someone from here, and so that is why they are here. They married a farmer and came here and so they have their family here.”

3. Build relationships with parents. Approaches to this theme have been discussed in some detail in the above section. Taryn, as one who spends much time bridging gaps between teachers and parents, is a firm believer in parent communication. She confirmed:

It is critical to develop relationships with kids and develop relationships with their parents. ... If you take the time to develop those relationships you are going to be able to get a lot farther with your agenda than you would otherwise.

4. Get involved. While getting involved takes time, the teachers who do, attest to the great difference it has made. Professionally and personally they are much more satisfied with their career. Roger does not live in Riverview, but has compensated for this by getting involved in several community and extra-curricular activities. He has become more attached to the community and found greater connections in the lives of his students.

He elaborated with the following examples:

I am out here quite a bit - because of my wife’s family. Halloween – I went to my mother-in-law’s house and I got to see all the kids come through. And little things like that. I am helping coach the baseball team – so I stick around afterwards and go coach high school baseball. So I still see kids. Going to the games kids will see me and say, “Hey Mr. Smith!” So it is kind of nice that I am still involved with the community, even though I don’t live here.

If I didn't have any family out here, or if I didn't do any extra-curricular stuff, I would probably miss out on a lot of that.... You do extra stuff and you get more interaction with the kids. I went to a couple of basketball games. Some of those kids are just angry at you one minute and you show up at one of their basketball games – and they are “hey how are you doing?” It's all good.

By way of advice to future new hires, Roger recommended:

Get out there as soon as you can and get to know everyone and get to know your kids and where they're coming from. Put yourself out there. Be friendly with everyone and get to know everyone and I think you would enjoy it more.

Warren also tries to contribute to the school and community as often as he can. He has also noticed the difference this has made in his brother's teaching career. Hired to teach at a small 1A school, Warren's brother intended to make his first stop a short one. After getting involved and connected, his plans changed:

My brother who taught, was in Centerville, and moved to Shillington, which was a single A school. He went there for one year, was planning on teaching there one year, but he started coaching and he lasted around there for eight years before he moved back to Charlestown where he's been teaching for three years. So he got intermixed in the community and felt a part of it and got connected to it so he stayed longer.

5. Increase social activities. While there are some factors a small town cannot compete with on a large city level, the teachers I interviewed believed that more could be done. Nick is hoping that more social outlets will surface in the near future:

Working within your community and trying to get some things that provide for more entertainment and social support for teachers is there too. I think hopefully in the next few years we are going to get more of that here.

Kim believes that the district can help make up for where the community lacks. Olivia feels that with some creative planning, activities can be sponsored by the school to fill both social and educational needs:

We don't have a lot of community events or activities at the school with the community and that has been something that as new teachers we have talked about. Where we want to do an art night or something to get parents to come to the school.

Planning such activities takes time and energy, but many of the teachers feel the outcomes would be positive.

Thriving in the Workplace

While making meaningful connections with colleagues and community is essential, the teachers interviewed continually expressed a desire to thrive in the workplace as well. A discussion of the core category *thriving in the workplace* will be presented through two sub-themes – *efficacy* and *resources*. These sub-themes are interrelated, and both contribute to a thriving career in education. Teachers want to feel they are succeeding and having a positive impact on the youth they teach – efficacy. Teachers need to be given the means to achieve these desired results – resources. Both efficacy and resources help a teacher to thrive and to achieve a long and fulfilling career.

Efficacy

Needs.

Teachers who stay in teaching need to feel joy in their work. This most often comes when they are succeeding and feel they are making a difference in the lives of their students. Chad spoke of this need for a sense of efficacy:

Our new teachers sometimes struggle to understand and feel the joy of teaching and they've got to find a way. . . . I think your first three years of teaching sometimes is just navigating it all and so then how can you find the way to truly enjoy the craft of teaching?

Chad further explained that efficacy is more than liking what you are doing – it is doing it well:

Work isn't the place you go to be happy it is the place you go to be productive and from that productivity and engagement comes satisfaction and you feel good about what you're doing.

Mandy fears that new teachers today are getting lost in the mixed messages that recent reform movements are sending. They no longer know what is meant by success and what objectives they are working towards. She stated, “You don't know if you're making a difference or what you're supposed to be doing.” Many of the new teachers I interviewed are still looking for this joy in teaching and question whether they are seeing any success. Consequently, their longevity in education has seriously come into question. Tammy explained her frustrations:

Until I get the respect to where I am enjoying my job, it is not really worth it yet. ...I do my best and I just hope that eventually I do see why I'm meant to be here. I feel like I'm meant to be here. I honestly do. I was really drained out thinking I've gotta leave or lose my sanity.

On a similar note, Karen is also searching for a sense of career efficacy. She too has questioned whether she can last in the profession:

It's a lot of work and stress and it's a lot of responsibility and we get burned out and tired. I know like this year, if I have another year the same, I don't know what I'm going to do, because you feel like you're doing so much, but yet you feel like you're not doing anything . . . you feel like you're doing so much, but it just isn't enough to do your job well. You get tired and it's a lot of stress.

Barriers.

1. Reform movements. Current reform movements surfaced most often when teachers spoke about job efficacy. Most of the new teachers interviewed spoke of how the

added pressures are sapping their strength and their joy for teaching. Chad lamented, “The notion of teaching for the sheer joy of being with kids is gone.” With all a new teacher faces already, the increased pressures of the current reforms are just more than many teachers feel they can handle. As a superintendent, Chad has seen the effects of these changes on his teachers:

I think that has put much more pressure on not only our veteran teachers, but our new teachers coming in.... When I first started teaching it was still, I don't know you had some latitude, you had some freedom and you could focus more on the art of teaching. I think what it is now is more of a focus on the science of teaching and having data to back up and prove what you intuitively know is true.... I think that with the pressure that comes with all of the accountability pieces. . . I think people struggle.

Mandy shared her frustrations regarding the increased demands:

Now all of a sudden I have to be highly qualified in three areas, so besides taking the pro-cert class here, I am taking two other classes; one in reading, because I need to be highly qualified in reading, and one in language arts. So I'm taking three college courses, plus teaching, you know, and with basically two new curriculums, because science is new to me and now my writing is new this year to me, because last year I just kind of did whatever to make it through the year. There are a lot of days I wonder which one is going to . . . where do I drop the ball just to make it through the day?

Ironically, in all that Mandy is doing to become “highly qualified,” she feels she is failing where it matters most – in the classroom. She concluded, “By doing all of that, it is taking me away from being qualified in my classroom. It's ridiculous. Wouldn't it be better,” asked Mandy, “just to have me in my classroom teaching?” For Tammy, a K-12 art teacher, the “highly qualified” checklist has done nothing but cause her frustration. She has two art degrees and a masters in teaching, but is still told she is not “highly qualified.”

For Lynn, what has compounded the problem is the unstable nature of the policies. She has been hurt by unexpected changes in the past and wonders how long until future

changes will set her back again. “The legislation changed right after I got out of school,” explained Lynn, “Northern State University had prepared me knowing what is expected and then I graduated and then the laws changed and now. . . I don't have time to go.” Consequently, Lynn is currently not “qualified” to teach both of the subjects she is currently teaching. The current guidelines require that the public be notified of all “unqualified” teachers in the school. Kate, a mentor to these new hires, feels we are not giving the teachers enough time or resources to fulfill the demands being placed on them. Placing an “unqualified” stamp on new teachers and publicizing it to the community, she feels, is detrimental to their personal and professional wellbeing. Their self-esteem and job efficacy diminishes. She told of one such experience with a recent new hire:

One example that I have just lived is very interesting, because with no child left behind, you are supposed to send a letter home in September within the first two or three weeks of school to all of the parents of students who are in a teacher's classroom who has not met the highly qualified criteria. It's a federal law. Well you know what, first year teachers, there is no way they are highly qualified. That is not even a possibility, so the first thing we do is sit down with them and say, “OK, I need to send a letter to all of your students and say that you're not really a quality teacher here.” That is so bad. I mean that is so bad. It is. I had a parent come in, tears in her eyes saying, “What is this letter that I just got? I love this teacher. This teacher is doing a great job for my kids, what are you talking about here? And how does this teacher feel? We were upset when we got the letter, how is the teacher feeling who knows it went out?” And I said, “Oh well, you know she and I sat down together, I showed her what it was, I told her why we have to do it, I shared with her the . . .” I said, “You're right, it's not good, it's awful, but the reality is we have to do it.” But the parent was very concerned that the teacher was going to feel like, I must not be doing my job, and there is no way she could.

Kate continued to explain that even the grade level WASL reports to the community have caused great concern among her teachers. For small schools, the pressure is especially

great. In a larger school, grade level teachers can answer for scores as a team. In Kate's school, the grade report is only one teacher:

Teachers are very concerned about that. They are very worried how they are perceived in the community as educators, if they get the score reports back and in this building at this site, when you get a third grade report you are getting one teacher's report. ... Here in our small school it is reported out and well, everybody knows that was the fifth grade teacher and fourth grade, and so on. So I think from that perspective it is a little more threatening here than it is elsewhere.

From a different perspective, one could argue that the added demands make for better teachers. Nick, from a superintendent's view, believes that the raised accountability has raised the quality of teaching. He maintained:

The standards have definitely improved the quality of education simply from the fact that they have created standards of performance expectations for the kids which trickles down to performance expectations for the teachers. In the long run it has improved the quality of education. It has also made it a lot more stressful.

While change can bring about growth, Nick recognized that the reforms come at a price. Are the costs of these movements outweighed by the benefits? While this is not the aim of this study, it is significant to document the feelings of the teachers regarding the current educational environment. Specifically, I will focus the comments on those pertaining to job efficacy.

Karen feels it is too much too soon. She feels a teacher needs time to adjust to their new career before being loaded with additional demands:

You feel like you just actually got out of school and you're just learning how to teach and then you have to try to be a brand new teacher and in school again and I don't know how I'm going to do that. How I am going to be able to put the time commitment to take the classes and also teach?

Kim fears that as teachers lose the joy of teaching, they will simply leave teaching. She has seen how her principal has tried to accommodate new teachers who are struggling to find a balance. She told of a recent meeting she had with her principal:

The principal expressed that now his top priority was stressed out teachers. And so I think with all the standards right now and all the academic requirements that are placed on kids and then the responsibility that is placed on teachers I think it is easy to overlook the simple things of; Are teachers happy? Are they enjoying one another?... I think the principal is starting to realize that standards aren't all that we are about. Teachers are doing the teaching. Let's go back to the room and see how we can make happier teachers and how we can create happier staff so they react with their students a lot better.

Kim admitted that she has already begun to lose some of the joy of teaching. She wonders if she can continue if things stay the way they are:

With all the stress and all the demands that are being placed on teachers it just feels like you could put a robot in front of the room to do what they want. There isn't really much room for a creative touch or for a teacher's insight to interpret lessons and what kids need and in building community - everything that I went into teaching for. I feel like a lot of that has kind of been kind of siphoned off and what is left is like reading, math, writing and a sprinkling of anything else. Unless the pendulum starts to swing the other way, I think that could get tiresome. I don't know.

Cathy, like Kim, went into teaching, because she loves working with children. In her interview she spoke of how the time, money and stress that the reforms have added, takes much of that joy away. In a very telling conversation, she elaborated on topics such as the classes, the tests, the time, the money and the stress. Her comments are presented here in some depth:

They are putting so many demands on the teachers. Not only do we have this state stuff we have to deal with, but now they are sending teachers back, because you have to be pro certified and then once you're pro certified you still have to do this and this and this. So there is continually a hoop that I as a teacher have to jump through. I think that teachers should be highly

educated and I think they should be growing professionally, but they are asking me to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on more education and they are not helping cut the cost of that at all. It's not like you get teacher incentive to go back to school. You pay the full price.... I have a Masters and my job does not pay what other professions would pay a Masters.

So I am making ends meet and that's it, but I am still supposed to be able to set aside seven thousand dollars to be able to go get my pro-certification and guess what, I have five years to get that done. You know, at some point . . . I love teaching, but I'm also trying to raise a family and they are not giving teachers any breaks to go back to school. You pay full tuition. So here I am busting my buttons, we're testing kids, we're doing the WASL, we're doing the AYP thing and by the way, when you're not at school you need to be - you know - taking more classes. You know what, I'm already feeling isolated. You want to stick me in front of . . . you can take some on the computer, you know internet, to get it done. You know what I'm so isolated. I'm still working very hard and I still have a family. So you know, what would you tell a new teacher? I love teaching. I love it with a passion, but for the long haul I am not sure how the ends will meet. I am not sure how I will afford to keep going back to school and do what I love and you know I am committed to those kids and those are the kinds of teachers you want on staff, the ones that are really committed to kids. But you know what, the state will take my certificate just because I cannot afford to pay for the credits and I don't really at this point, I don't have time to go back to school. We're in meetings, we're in clock hours. We're here every weekend.

You're not going to get better teachers if you have them so stressed out and unable to make ends meet that we have to pick up another job. There are several on staff here that are working two jobs, because we cannot make ends meet in the teaching profession and raise a family. You know for me, I'm a single income with four kids.

I don't know after last night's meeting, I am not sure pro-certification is going to make you a better teacher. It is just more paperwork to fill out. I mean it's not. . . . Nothing they were offering last night is going to make me have the lights come on and say "Wow I can really plug that into my classroom." ... It is more showing to the state that yeah I can read their document and I have evidence for my classroom to show you why I am doing it and I am paying \$7000 for me to collect your evidence. That's all it is and it's wrong. It's just wrong. I wouldn't mind taking and paying money, not \$7000, but to learn something that would really improve me.

Cathy, along with many of the teachers, has proved willing to make sacrifices for her chosen profession and for the betterment of her students. She has given countless hours and many dollars to the cause. She knew she entered into a demanding profession. Her hopes, however, are simply that the demands of the current reforms be reasonable and relevant to the classroom.

2. Class load. Another barrier to feeling efficacy on the job is the class load being placed on many of these teachers. In many systems, the seasoned, skilled teachers are given the lightest and easiest class loads. The new teachers needing the most support are often overloaded with the toughest students and most demanding classes. Chad feels the system is backwards and needs restructuring:

If you look at studies across the United States; where do those new teachers . . . where are they assigned? They are assigned to the lowest math class, the general math class where the toughest kids reside and they are given these difficult, difficult assignments and we wonder why they leave. Some of them stick it out and then by the time they've been in the system for seven years . . . they are the one that is going to say, I'm teaching calculus and that newbie is teaching the freshman math, because I had to do it. Either we change that culture in which new teachers grow up in, or it will just perpetuate that system. It just keeps cycling through.

The teachers in the Hillview and Riverview district were no exception. When speaking of some of their classes, words surfaced like, “crazy,” “rotten,” “yahoos,”

“uncooperativeness,” “law enforcement,” and “kids no one else really wants.” Tammy lamented, “I don’t think I had a clue what I was going to be in for with these high school kids here. I wasn’t warned enough. Nobody wanted to tell me what I was getting into.”

Mike summed up the problem best:

One of the things that just shocks me to no end, and this is not just our building, but education in general, is how there seems to be a rewards

system for teachers that have been there for 20-30 years. They get to teach the easiest kids to teach - the kids that are motivated to learn that you could put a new teacher in there and they would still be motivated to learn. We take our new teachers who are still struggling to develop their style, method and management technique and give them the most difficult children to teach and we expect good results.

3. Too time consuming. Aside from reform requirements, the teachers also spoke of the day-to-day time demands on their schedule. I was surprised at the many hours these new teachers sacrifice for grading, correcting, planning, and studying. Each of them spoke of the many evening and weekend hours required to do what they felt was an adequate job in the classroom. I will highlight only a few of their remarks.

Lynn spoke of the challenges of juggling her work demands with her personal life.

In order to better balance the two, she has had to limit the number of at-home work hours:

Well, I'm trying to do a better job of only spending an hour and a half at night. So I am limiting myself to an hour and a half at night from 7:00 to 8:30. Once 8:30 hits I'm done. And then I take Saturdays off and I spend my entire Sunday trying to get things worked out, trying to work. So time frame, probably seven hours during the week and then another at least six-seven hours on Sunday and that's just sitting down and . . . It is hard now, because, before my fiancé would understand, because football would be on and we could sit down and he really didn't notice that the laptop was out, that I was actually doing work. Now that there's nothing on and he wants to go do something, it becomes more apparent that, "Why are you always working?"

With a husband and two children, Mandy has especially felt the strain on her family. She feels pulled between wanting to excel in her work and wanting to be with her family. She described her dilemma:

I can usually leave here and I'm the last one to leave at 4:00 or 4:30, and I go home and I feed my family, and I sit down by 6:00 and I will work until like 9:00 and on the weekends I will work at least an 8 hour day both days. Yup. And then you feel guilty taking any time. Like this weekend I took my kids skiing. We took them skiing for their birthday and you feel guilty,

but you know what you just sleep and you feel guilty, and you're ten times farther behind, but I am finding if I don't take that, you know. I'm trying to leave it here and go home, but it just stacks up.... I'm taking two classes and plus Chad's, so there's three and still trying to grade papers and the kids still have to write verses. You know last year I did pages, now it's like "OK just give me five paragraphs OK you guys." You know, so I'm not reading them. But where do you drop the ball? Family gives to be honest with you. I can see why a lot of teachers are divorced.

Having almost survived her first year, Karen can see now why so many teachers leave the profession. She too has felt the strain and has a better understanding of the term "burn out:"

There is a lot of burn out. I can understand. I feel like right now, I feel like I always have this list of stuff to do, a ton of stuff to do. And I cannot ever get it all done and then you're taking so much home with you, so much work home with you. Then with the WASL there is so much pressure with the tests to make sure all your kids pass the WASL.

It isn't like other jobs where you can go on home and everything is at home. You don't have to worry about taking phone calls, or writing IEPs, or grading homework, or doing plans. When you're home, you're home. Here I am at home, but I'm not at home. I mean I'm home, but there is always something I have to do. And I don't always do it granted, I mean I have had to say "I'm not going to do it." But if I don't I end up paying for it.

4. Given too many responsibilities. Related to the above barrier of too many time requirements is the concern felt by many teachers that they are asked to wear too many hats. In describing the condition of her district, Taryn stated, "I kind of fill a lot of different duties. This is a small district and everybody wears a lot of hats and so do I. I do what is needed." Where resources are limited and the staff is small, it is expected that teachers help share the load of running a school. This can be a barrier, however, in helping new teachers feel efficacy on the job. In describing what a teacher's load might look like, Taryn continued:

Especially in a small district . . . They all have to be an advisor to a class. There will be a class that they are in charge of, freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and the teachers divide that up. They are the advisor. They talk to them about their educational plans, you know, when they are going to take which classes and you know that type of thing as far as their own education for those children; and all of the multiple, multiple activities that high school students are involved with. It was absolutely overwhelming to me to find out how many different events they have to supervise at night and on weekends and they have to be there, because they are the supervisors for that class, that club, you know whatever and so the teachers have to be there. So they have a lot of extra duties that are put on them besides just their teaching duties and they do that for free. They are not paid for it. They are there at games or dances, or fund raising events, or whatever. They are there.

As too many responsibilities are placed on new hires, many teachers expressed the concern that they felt unable to succeed in any or all of them. This becomes an attrition issue when new teachers realize that in a larger school, they would be required to carry perhaps only a fraction of the load:

It's a lot of work and from my experience in Yates County, it is a lot more work here than in another school. There is not the support staff here. I mean you are it. And I'm tired. I am very tired. . . .

For instance, I have moved from Downingtown and in Downingtown . . . you have a PE specialist. So you get that PE time to get ready for your class. In Downingtown my kids have PE five days a week. Here you are lucky if you get two and you are teaching it. We had music three-four times a week. We had library once a week. We had all this prep time that you can get stuff done during the day. Here you don't have prep. What do you get - an hour. We have two half hours of music, so we get one hour of prep. And 45 minutes of library, so an hour and 45 - for the week. For the week. That's it. And then you have to supervise lunch. You have to supervise interventions. You have to supervise study hall. There is just . . . you don't have lunch. You give it up for the kids. And then on top of that, I get here between 7:00 and 7:15 and I don't go home until between 4:30 and 5:00 o'clock and I am here every weekend for a minimum of four hours. . . .

And of course being with an AYP school this year, I think I have found that really hard. It has been a high stress level, so as the new teacher walking into an AYP school, it hasn't been so pretty. You know your feet are barely

wet and you are thrown with this. . . . I'm just trying to figure out how to use my computer.

Ideas for future course of action.

The following section contains a numbered list of suggestions presented by the teachers of both the Riverview and Hillview districts. Contained in the list are ideas to alleviate some of the strains of teaching and to increase job efficacy for teachers.

1. Do not over-emphasize standardized tests. Lynn expressed concern over an unbalanced approach to standardized tests. She feels educators easily lose sight of individual students and their personal growth. Lynn finds her greatest satisfaction in relating to her students and fears that joy is slipping. She emphasized:

I think that's the best part is forming those relationships and getting kids to trust you and come to you. There are a lot of foster kids out here with some pretty rough home lives and if they get integers, they get integers, if not, then they don't.

2. Give honest and timely feedback. Part of job efficacy is feeling successful. In order to succeed, participants expressed the need to develop professionally. Warren wished administrators would give him practical feedback to help him improve his teaching. He senses a hesitation among many educators to engage in professional dialogue:

I know I feel competent and capable of being in here with the kids, but I know there's places that I'm weak in that I could get better at. I've gotten nothing but exemplary observations from my principal. I feel that he feels comfortable with me, and he's done walk throughs, and he feels comfortable with my teaching, but I wish there was greater accountability so I could be told where I can improve or where he would expect improvement. But I just think in small districts, and this is just me, but this is kind of how I feel, if they find a person who they think will work out, they're going to do everything they can to keep me, which also means giving me good reports.

Speaking of teacher accountability and feedback, Warren feels small districts have a disadvantage. Recruiting challenges place burdens even on a school's professional development program. A fear of losing a teacher may easily outweigh a desire to offer useful, but sometimes painful feedback. Having done his student teaching in a larger city, Warren recalled:

Coming from schools in Springville where principals were very critical and expected so much more from their teacher.... It was easier to hold teachers accountable, and if they didn't, then they had a great number to draw from to replace them, and I think that's where we fall short....Let's not scare them away.

On her pursuit of professional growth and development, Mandy also wishes she could receive more concrete guidance from her administrators. Although from a different district than Warren, her experience has been very similar:

Where do I need help? It's almost like he is scared to say I need to improve in something. He has never told me. I know I'm not perfect. Tell me. I'm a big girl. We're not perfect, we know that, and if you do think you're perfect, then you shouldn't be here.

3. Work on the WASL as teams. Nick, the Hillview superintendent, would like to see WASL planning and accountability spread across groups of teachers. By doing so, he feels stronger teachers could help lift weaker ones and teachers would feel less threatened by the test. A team of teachers could plan for improvement, but also answer for failures.

Nick explained:

If you can set up your system so that teacher's team together than you can distribute that pressure with the team as opposed to being on an island by yourself. That is one of the things we need to do as administrators is create professional learning communities so that there is a natural built in support.

4. Wait until the 3rd year to send out “not qualified” letters. Kate would like to see policy changes to allow for administrators to wait a couple years before notifying parents of an “unqualified” teacher. To do so before that, she believes, is punishing a teacher for not reaching an unachievable benchmark:

If a teacher is not highly qualified into their third year of teaching that would pretty much cover everybody. It would give everybody the chance to get that one year of experience and do the praxis if they were in a content area they had not been endorsed in, those kinds of things. It seems like that would be a kinder, gentler way to treat our profession.

5. Give the students recess. I observed throughout the interview process a close relationship between student happiness and success and teacher happiness and success. It was hard to find a teacher with a high sense of self-efficacy whose students were consistently struggling. Karen felt her district’s zeal for tests scores motivated them to cut from the students’ daily routine some fundamental ingredients to student happiness.

Removing breaks and recess was just such a decision:

I just think some of the kids need a ten minute break . . . I could not do what these kids do without that morning and afternoon recess. I think you would see so much more if they had ten minutes to clear their mind.

6. Help teachers feel valued and appreciated. If ever placed in an administrative position, first year teacher Mike vowed, “I would make sure they understood how much I appreciated them being here. It is tough being in a teaching job. It is really tough.” One way to show a new teacher they are appreciated and valued, recommended the Hillview superintendent, is by trusting them with positions of responsibility. Years ago, Nick recalled the transformation this approach made in the career of one of his colleagues:

We had a teacher who taught social studies - was kind of a lone ranger and did his own thing and was hard to keep him on track. He was basically

negative about stuff. We did not have department chairs at that time, but I made him the department chair and totally changed this person's outlook. All of a sudden he started looking at the collective interests instead of his interests. He started doing extra work. Giving teachers a chance to lead and empowering them can be a powerful tool in developing that type of thing.

Kim feels another way to show a teacher they are valued is by giving credence to their ideas and suggestions. On more than one occasion, she has felt overlooked and neglected:

I think their fresh-blood theory is that we won't say anything, and so they will have six new teachers without having to put up with jibber jabber about how we really think it should be run. ...We are actually stick-in-the-muds and we don't have our own beliefs about that.

Kim has expressed her desire to contribute to the faculty. Such an opportunity would add greatly to her sense of career efficacy.

7. Give teachers preparation time. Cathy feels it is difficult for teachers to succeed or feel efficacy on the job until they are given the time to accomplish all that is required of them. Cathy urged, "You need prep time. You need some time during the day where you can actually have prep time instead of running like we do." She feels she is being asked to do too much in too little time for her to feel good about her job. Cathy highlighted what one of her typical days looks like:

For me this morning, I went to the restroom at 7:30 in the morning and I did not get out of my classroom until quarter to 3:00 this afternoon and I did a bee line. But that is a pretty full day. Not one prep. Not a moment to breathe. I was on duty the entire time. The lunch break is nothing. I didn't have anyone to cover my classroom, because I am out in a portable so I am completely isolated and that was it. That was a long day and I wasn't sure I was going to make it that last half hour, but what do you do? This is why teachers have, you know, problems. So I mean that's a lot. And no, nobody could tell me that would happen as a new teacher, but it's unrealistic. That is an unrealistic work day. Because even if I was a secretary I'd get ten minute breaks.

As the above suggestions illustrate, helping teachers feel efficacy on the job does not always necessitate large amounts of time or money. In many of the above suggestions, a little more time or a little more attention could make a big difference in how a teacher felt about their job.

Resources

There are several reasons why resources in small, rural schools are frequently stretched so thin. The two primary reasons, explained Nick, involve the tax base and shrinking student enrollments. First, suggests Nick, in an agricultural town, the tax base is very unevenly distributed. This becomes a problem when trying to pass levies to support school programs and projects:

In our district, unfortunately for the agriculture, we do not have businesses. We have one processing plant and a couple other small businesses and that is it. Everything else, when we run a levy, costs our property owners, individual families a higher percentage here than it does in most other districts that have an industrial base. And so in defense of our patrons we have high poverty and we have an agricultural base for our levies and bonds. That creates a tough environment for running very large levies or bonds.... All of the large districts have a growing tax base.

If the state government funded schools at the level schools required, this would not be an issue. Especially as expectations and reform movements increase, and funding remains level or even decreases, the gap between needs and resources grows larger. Nick reminded, “We have no real effort to fund the standards movement. So we have a bloated gap in terms of what the state is actually funding and the needs at the local level... So that is why we are in a financial quagmire at this point.” Essentially, the local tax base is left to fill this gap left by the government. Where an economy is vibrant and growing, resources

are not nearly the struggle they are for many rural schools. Cathy recalled the contrast in the funding structure she observed while student teaching in a more affluent community:

Coming from Yates County is a completely different lifestyle. Yates County is big into sports. There is money dripping off of whatever. I mean the third grade sports team in basketball, everyone has matching uniforms. Here you borrow a jersey and give it back to the coach and nobody has matching shorts, and I mean it is just different.

Another factor affecting rural resources is a shrinking demographic. Nick observed about his own region:

Over the last six years our student enrollment has gone down every year for six consecutive years. When you have that working against you too it is tough, because instead of adding you are cutting or you are replacing dollars for dollars from other areas.

His is not the only district affected by this trend. He has noticed that all four of the surrounding rural towns are shrinking while the metropolitan areas continue to grow. This hurts a small school in what researchers have called economy of scale. Although schools are funded on an equal per pupil basis, schools with larger populations can distribute certain expenses easier. A large school, for example, may have 2,000 students to defray the costs of a drama club or a school counselor. In contrast, a small school may only have 150 students to cover the costs of a drama program or a school counselor. Consequently, small schools frequently make program and staffing cuts. As the Hillview Superintendent, Nick has seen this many times. He elaborated:

Every time we lose a kid we lose \$4300. If you want to run multiple high school academic programs and you are losing kids then what do you take out? What do you eliminate from the curriculum? Those are the types of things that getting smaller creates for you....

Support services like our counseling. We devastated our counseling program in the district for the last two years, because we wanted to impact

the classroom as little as possible. We have somewhat larger class sizes than we had before, but not predominantly. It is hard to maintain the breadth of curriculum like at the secondary level when you lose that. You have an extra class you might offer in science or something else - well how do you offer that when there is not money there?

Needs.

The resource needs of a district are quite different than the needs of the individual teachers. Throughout my interviews, teachers expressed a simple need for the resources to succeed in the classroom. This is where they find their greatest satisfaction. When not given the basic tools to succeed on this level, many felt frustrated, and even had thoughts of leaving the profession. Such resources can be as simple as providing the students with textbooks or the teacher with a curriculum. On her frustrations, Mandy simply stated, “Last year I was really about ready to walk out cause I had no curriculum.”

Barriers.

How have limited human and capital resources affected the teachers’ day-to-day work? How has it affected their ability to thrive in the workplace? Below is a numbered list outlining some of the issues and barriers these new teachers expressed during their first year of teaching.

1. Out of pocket expenses. With salaries as limited as they are, many of the teachers expressed frustration in how often they had to pay for basic operating expenses. While the district lacked the budget, if teachers did not pay for supplies, the students would frequently go without. Over time, the out of pocket expenses became a burden. Tammy recalled experiences from her first year:

I don’t think teachers should ever have to sacrifice money out of their pocket, because they already don’t make very much as it is and you only get

up to a \$250 deduction I believe is what it tops out at as a teacher. And oh my gosh, I know I've spent quite a bit just replacing like ink cartridges....And there are expenses of just upkeep; like pens, pencils, post-it-notes, you know, just little things that you go through on a steady basis. I feel like "Wow" it would be nice if we had just like a supply closet I could just go grab out of. Instead I have to make a mental note like, "Oh I have to go get this cause I'm out of it." Yeah, it's just different than what I expected. When I first got here I had issues with my pencil sharpeners. I have electric pencil sharpeners and there were three of them and they all broke down. All of them burned out, all of the motors. So I went and bought a new one and before I knew it a week or two later it burned out and I said this is ridiculous, I can't afford this.

Kim feels especially compelled to contribute personal money for school expenses. Given the low socioeconomic status of so many of her students, she feels if she does not offer these supplies, no one will:

There is hardly any support at home so your thinking, okay, well if I'm going to spend \$25 on each kid for the whole year, times 16 kids, ya know that is a surprising amount of money, because you are giving out as much as you are taking in it is kind of unequal - all the time. I would say so.... It is not fair for those kids who have always been in poverty not to know some of these things.

2. Limited staffing and programs. The students suffer when necessary personnel and programs are not available due to budget cuts. The teachers expressed great sadness in watching students' needs go unfulfilled. Karen commented:

The money issue is really hard. That is the one thing. I just wish there was a lot more funding and we could do things, because the kids here do not get everything that they need with the little help we have and funding we have. They are not getting what they need and that's really sad to watch. To know that money is such a big factor and I am trying to not worry about that aspect and just do whatever I can to make sure the kids have what they need, but if you don't have a sub for somebody it is just sad. It's just hard to watch.

Along a similar vein, Roger recalled an experience with a student in one of his classes. In a larger district, more support may have been available to help this boy:

At the beginning of the year I had a behavior kid come in. He was in a foster home in town, and he came in for a couple of months and stirred things up a bit. And that was my first two months of teaching. It was really tough.... We don't have a behavior room, and that kinda hurts - not just my grade level, but there's a few other teachers that have some kids that just weren't getting served to the best of their ability, because the district is smaller. We can't meet those kids' needs. So there's certain kids that might not get those needs met to what they need, whereas I think being in a bigger school they are more equipped to deal with things. Probably, because they have more kids who have those problems.

Olivia observed that inadequate human resources affect both the students and the personnel. Often the needs of the teachers are neglected as often as the needs of the students:

We have been cut down recently in the extra staff. We do not have an assistant principal, we don't have a counselor, we don't have a full time nurse. We don't have a PE teacher, so a lot of those roles have been taken on by other people so there are quite a few staff members here that are like half.

We definitely see the impact in that our kids don't have that extra attention and the principal may be able to take on some of that role, but he still is the principal and the secretary has become the nurse, the counselor, the everything. It is unreal.

Since so many staff members are wearing so many hats, teachers like Mandy feel the new hires are frequently left to fend for themselves. She wonders if the administrators are even aware of her needs:

Carl should be in here more.... Carl should really be in here more for me being brand new. He's been in twice this year.... All he needs to do is just five minutes, just poke his head in and leave the laptop in his room. He doesn't need to sit there and type the whole time. I mean just pop in and know what's going on. I don't think he knows what is going on in my room.

3. Inadequate supplies. The interviews reflected a need for a minimum level of operating supplies for teachers to feel they could function properly. I was surprised how

many of the new teachers in these two districts were given empty rooms with not even a curriculum to begin with. It comes as no surprise why so many of these teachers feel they are not succeeding. Lynn related her frustrations:

Can you help me out? Can you give me something? I walked into this room with empty cupboards, empty file cabinets, empty everything. OK, what am I teaching? You mean I don't have a curriculum? You mean I don't have a scope and sequence? You mean I'm not already aligned to the GLE. You mean I don't have anything? So it's kind of a shell shock that way. So that first year, you know, you really don't have time to create your own scope and sequence. You just have time to get by.

The above scenario was not an isolated event. The data uncovered multiple occurrences of new teachers asked to teach with no curriculum. This proved to be very frustrating for many of these new hires. Mandy explained, "I remember being tired, but what was the worst part of last year - maybe not having any curriculum." Consequently, continued Mandy, "Chris and I kind of winged it." Teachers are left to work out the minutia of teaching on their own. Kim had a similar experience and admitted, "I have no curriculum, so it is just whatever I invent, and what I think is best in the class at the time." With all the other challenges these teachers are adapting to, so many expressed the desire to at least have a curricular foundation. Warren described the frustration of having to re-invent jobs that should have been previously organized:

We're supposed to be teaching some Social Studies and there's no curriculum here. The books are fairly outdated. The other teachers don't use them too aggressively either, so that's been my most difficult thing. There's no curriculum and the other teachers have some units, but they're not really put together. They're in thought, but not put down on paper. That's been really difficult for me to put together a comprehensive Social Studies lesson besides just reading from a book, which I wouldn't do anyway. So that's been the most difficult is the curriculum just isn't set in our district.

With some basic resource support, teachers could begin their first year of teaching much more prepared to succeed. Rather than struggling to survive, they could begin to feel like they are thriving.

Ideas for future course of action.

While there is no magic wand for increasing capital and human resources in small, rural schools, the data revealed several innovative ideas that could help relieve some of the strain on both districts and teachers. Some of the below ideas are currently in practice by the Hillview and Riverview districts and some are simply expressed desires.

1. Offer pro-certification classes within the district. This is a practice that has recently begun in the Riverview district. In order to defray some of the costs and great travel time of taking classes at distant campuses, Superintendent Chad has arranged with a local college to facilitate the pro-certification classes within his own district. Not only is time and money saved, but moral is increased as teachers meet within the district to accomplish these state requirements together. Taryn explained the process:

Our superintendent thought it up. He is our forward thinking man. And he just felt like that was something we could provide for our teachers, and be supportive of them in this process....This was something we could provide here on our campus that started right at the end of the regular school day at 3:00 and three-hour classes each week. We use all of our professional days for their classes too - that's what they do as their class. It really helps them out.

Beyond receiving class credit, Taryn has noticed how this process has opened up collegial relationships with all who are involved:

They need a lot of interaction with their colleagues to make this really work. It has really been nice that we use the time to sometimes do assignments or projects together that they have to have to meet the requirements for the university.

As the designer of the program, Chad explained his vision and the impact he hopes it will also have on district retention:

Right now I teach a pro-cert class through NSU. We have I think 11 teachers who are in their first three years of their teaching profession, district wide, and they are in that class. We believe that if we are supporting them through that, they are more likely to stay with us, and it has been huge. But it comes back to what is expected of me at work. It comes back to, "Do I have the certificate to continue to work?" and "Are they going to need to have that professional certificate to continue to teach?" So we think by helping them through that process it is going to pay dividends to us.

Chad has noticed how larger districts typically have an easier time providing such services. Consequently, teachers gravitate to districts where they can enjoy a variety of programs. He concluded, "We have got to find a way to get that to happen in a small school district, so it means sometimes thinking outside of the box."

2. Pool resources with other districts. Chad recognized that even the most innovative ideas may not always be feasible if resources are scarce. He believes that through forging relationships with other districts, small schools could begin to have access to otherwise unavailable services. He suggested:

If we are going to do this, we are probably going to have to get together as smaller school districts in order to pool some of our resources, because there may be times when we can't offer the pro-cert, but if we get together with three other schools, we can. We can band together and say, "OK we've got eight people to do this and we'll do it onsite at Granger this year or we'll do it onsite at Downingtown this year, but next year it will be here." So it is finding ways to come together to do that.

Beyond the pro-certification classes, this concept could be expanded to offer full-time mentors or educational technology support to small, rural schools. These districts could share the expenses but also share the resources. To some degree, this process of

collaboration has begun. A small school consortium has already been formed among many of the small schools in this region.

3. Recruit early. To help alleviate some of the staffing emergencies and shortages that frequently arise in small, rural schools, Chad suggested targeting teacher candidates earlier in the schooling process:

We would find sophomores and juniors in college and we would be connected with them and we would be saying, we would have identified a pool of 15 to 16 candidates at the elementary school through the universities. We would do the same with the middle school. We would have targeted teachers at the high school where we had a pool of 10 candidates for every position and we would be contacting them and talking to them right now.

4. Offer tuition breaks. Cathy felt with all the other demands the government is placing on teachers, relief from tuition expenses would help ease much of their financial burdens:

Yes, it would be nice to survive and if they want you to keep going to school, the state should be giving credit breaks, tuition breaks for teachers. I mean, there are so many mandates placed on us. I am paying off student loans, you know. And you want me to take out more?

5. Provide a handbook and a new teacher packet. As simple of a resource as this seems, Mandy feels that a basic handbook of instruction would have been very helpful in getting acclimated to her first year of teaching. If basic policies and procedures were outlined in a handbook, she believes she could have saved herself and her colleagues a lot of time and stress:

A handbook would be nice that you could just look up that. They think that's really silly. I'm like, "Why?" They have it at every other school district. I mean, it's a really weird profession when you really think about it. Like my husband, just trying to figure out things. It's not user friendly.

Along with a handbook, Olivia argued that a packet of general information would have helped her navigate her way into the new community:

You're trying to move, because you're going to this small town, so you are moving to a school, and you're moving your life and So just, yeah, information about the community, this is where people can go, and this is where you can do this and that kind of stuff. That would be nice in a packet.

Kim feels that presenting new teachers with a packet of essential information is a small way to help teachers stay organized through the tough induction phase. She would have appreciated more district-specific information when she began her first year. She elaborated:

A packet. Just a set packet of information, like - this is where you would go for this, here is a map of the school, here's this, here's that. Here are drill procedures. Yeah, fire drill, lunch procedures. This is a list of the teachers in the building. This is a list of the parents. The people to contact and what they will contact you for. Here's the phone numbers, here's . . . just regular school information.... When I did my student teaching, the day I walked in, the principal handed me, "Here is our school mission statement, and here is an entire packet as to how we back that up, and here is all the information that you need."

As the above data reminds, sometimes it is the little efforts that make a big difference in the eyes of a new teacher. Most of the teachers interviewed want to thrive in their newly chosen careers. Feeling a sense of efficacy and providing adequate resources are important steps in fulfilling this objective.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of new teachers in small, rural schools. This chapter discussed themes and concepts that emerged while analyzing the qualitative data. The data revealed two core concepts relevant to new

teachers in small, rural schools – connecting to colleagues and community and thriving in the workplace. The notion of thriving in the workplace was further divided into sub-themes of efficacy and resources. Excerpts of participant’s interviews were woven throughout the discussion to illustrate each of the themes and sub-themes. Their voice was carefully preserved so as to accurately portray their perceptions, frustrations and needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of new teachers in two small, rural Washington schools. This qualitative, phenomenological study captured the voice of new teachers to share their attitudes and perceptions. Through a series of open-ended questions, teachers recalled detailed accounts of challenges, concerns and needs they have encountered in their first years of teaching. Administrators were also consulted to add greater depth to the study. A total of eleven teachers and four administrators were interviewed. In analyzing the collected data, multiple themes arose, as discussed in Chapter Four. Some themes helped to portray the context of the study. Others surfaced as core themes. These core themes spoke to the topics of colleague and community connections and thriving in the workplace. The core theme of thriving was sub-divided into more focused discussions of efficacy and resources. This final chapter will discuss the conclusions and implications of the study. It will emphasize the central points and what they mean to educators and administrators.

Conclusions

Five key conclusions surfaced from this study: (a) New teachers today face enormous pressures, but administrators have either forgotten or are largely unaware of the challenges they face; (b) administrative support is a critical element in helping new teachers to thrive in their new assignments; (c) new teachers need and desire time with and

support from their colleagues; (d) some of the challenges that new, rural teachers face cannot be remedied; and (e) while not every problem will have a ready solution, there are mechanisms that can help relieve some of the strains of new teacher life in small, rural schools. These conclusions will be discussed in the following sections.

New Teachers Face Enormous Pressures

This study reiterated what research has long been reporting: Teachers work in a demanding and stressful environment and the current reform movement has contributed to this condition. The literature reflects that a large number of teachers find their jobs more stressful and less satisfying since reform movements have begun (Mertler, 2002; Hargrove, 2004). Further evidence of this phenomenon can be seen in the high attrition rates, especially among new teachers (Connolly, 2000; O'Brien & Tye, 2002). A significant contribution of this study has been to allow the voice and concerns of new teachers to be heard. Great care has been taken to ensure that their stories are preserved. It has been my observation that administrators are largely unaware of how frustrated many of their new teachers are. When stories like Karen's are told, it is hoped that awareness will rise and action can be taken. She exclaimed, "It's a lot of work and stress and it's a lot of responsibility and we get burned out and tired. I know like this year, if I have another year the same, I don't know what I'm going to do." She feels that more experienced teachers and administrators are detached from the challenges new teachers face. She concluded, "The first year is really hard, a lot harder than anybody realizes."

New Teachers Need Administrative Support

District leadership plays a central role in the success of an induction program. The schools that found the most success with new teacher support were those whose superintendents made teacher induction a priority. The data made it quickly apparent that for new teachers to succeed, the superintendent needs to be committed to the cause. As the instructional and administrative leader of the district, he or she sets the tone for the type of experience a new hire will have. I sensed early on that for Chad, the Riverview superintendent, induction was a high priority:

We are recognizing how important it is to support new teachers not just in our district, but in their entry to the profession. . . . We have a greater duty or greater call than just to keep teachers in the Riverview School District. I think we have a call to keep teachers in the teaching profession and we have a call to support them in those first five years and way beyond that. . . . if they have started with a solid basis and can become even greater or better teachers . . . and I think we are doing that . . . then I think that we are doing a service to education in general and to children across the state.

Taryn, a fulltime mentor supervisor and instructional coach, has noticed the sacrifices Chad has made to show support to new teachers. The fact that he has allocated a full salaried position dedicated to overseeing these teachers shows where his priorities are.

I mean, my district is pretty much paying for this out of their own pocket. . . . Pretty much my position you know they have had to suck it up and pay for it and I wish the state would maybe provide some more funding for that so that other districts could provide that same thing, that same service in their district. When I talk to people about what I do, they go “Wow, little Riverview is doing that? You guys are so small, you're not a big district. I know.”

New Teachers Need Meaningful Time With Colleagues

The literature describes an educational environment characterized by isolated teachers (Glickman, Gordon, & Gordon, 2004). This study concludes that new teachers

today continue to feel isolated and disconnected. Such conditions have proven detrimental to new teachers' well-being and satisfaction in the education profession. Cathy shared what her experience has been: "You [are] very lonely. You just feel isolated and the last man on the island and you sink or swim, but you're on the island alone is what it feels like." Many of the teachers interviewed expressed a deep desire to share meaningful interactions with colleagues. Beth related, "It would be nice if I could interact with adults more. It would be nice to go out and talk to somebody and share your life a little bit with some of the teachers." The teachers in this study desire to feel connected to their colleagues. Even small amounts of time would allow relationships to form and valuable support structures to develop.

Not All Small, Rural School Challenges Can Be Remedied

This study has not offered solutions to all small, rural school problems. Some of the challenges facing the teachers in this study are inherent to the environment in which they work. The very nature of small, rural schools leads to a certain degree of social and collegial isolation. Understanding this will help administrators to develop appropriate support structures to minimize the effects of some of these conditions if not alleviate them. The literature reports that professional and social isolation, funding limitations, high risk students and personnel shortages are some of the many challenges that new teachers face in these settings (Harris et al., 2005; Jimmerson, 2004; NCES, 1997). This study aids in the understanding of this environment, which is a critical step in helping teachers to thrive in small, rural schools.

Support Mechanisms Are Available

While not every problem will have a ready solution, there are mechanisms that can help relieve some of the stresses of new teacher life in small, rural schools. This study has provided a forum for teachers and administrators to express their hopes and desires for needed support structures. Many ideas have surfaced and are discussed throughout chapter four. One mechanism, in particular, that continued to surface was the mentor. Mentors have long been a source of support for new teachers. When implemented correctly, they can influence a new teacher on many different levels. Linda Stromei (2000) has stated that “a mentor can provide not only job-specific knowledge and training but also valuable insight into an organization’s environment and culture, as well as psychosocial support” (p. 56). While each of the schools I visited seemed to embrace this concept, several concerns surfaced in regard to implementation. Mentoring was relatively non-existent in many of the schools. There are several possible reasons for this failure. One problem is that many of the mentors are overloaded themselves. Warren described his mentor as one who was involved in so many other things and frequently “bites off way more than she can chew. So she became so busy,” he continued, “when she saw that I had my foundation she kind of backed off.” Another possible reason for the deficient mentoring programs is a lack of accountability. Warren described, “What should have happened is that we should have had weekly meetings with my mentor one on one and say ‘These are my lesson plans,’ ask questions, get feedback, and that lasted for about a month or two. Because of the busyness of it and because I don’t think there was a big monitoring from district level, it just kind of died out.” A final shortcoming I observed in the mentoring structure is a lack of mentor

training. It appears that no specific expectations or formal training was provided to the mentors. In Warren's words, the process simply involved, "Could you help Paul? He'll need a mentor."

Kate has observed similar struggles in developing successful mentor programs. In speaking of the realities of their situation, she conceded:

Doesn't always happen! Is it tough for the mentors to find the time to get into the classroom to meet with the teachers? Yeah, yeah in reality it is because at the secondary level of course it is, the time they have would be prep time.

A key ingredient to creating strong mentor programs is encouraging positive, collegial relationships between the mentor and the new teacher. Taryn sees the strength in such relationships and works hard to ensure they develop:

I spent a lot of time at the beginning of the year building strong relationships with those people and letting them know I am really on their side and want to help them and do whatever I can to facilitate their growth here professionally.

When such relationships of trust exist, teachers feel comfortable with mentors offering solid, constructive advice on improving their teaching. Taryn has seen some success in this endeavor:

I go into their classrooms frequently to observe them and give them feedback on what they ask for feedback on and sometimes things they need feedback on. Mostly they will ask me, "How am I doing with my questioning strategies," or something. They will give me a focus that they want me to look at and so I will go in and I will do some observations and give them some written and some verbal feedback. All of that information between us is strictly confidential.

Kate hopes in her district that similar collegial relationships will develop between mentor and teacher. She feels that open, professional dialogue is essential to a teacher's development:

Really what we want is for that relationship to develop to the point where they can have some very pointed conversations about you know "You're doing these really well in your classroom." "Have you thought about this group of students who aren't performing so well?" and "Have you taken the time to reflect on why that might be?" and "How can you design lessons that would better address those?" Those are really the kind of conversations we want them to get to by the end of the year.

Because of the positive relationships Taryn has developed with her teachers, she has been able to pay close attention to their special needs. She notices when they are struggling or going through a difficult time:

I know what teachers go through at certain times of the year and I really try to beef up my support at those times that become really tough for them, like the end of the quarter when they have grades due and conferences, and things like that. I know that is a hard time. It is a high stress time. It is a time when people become sick.

As a mentor, Taryn takes great satisfaction in helping her teachers flourish and grow.

While such relationships require time and resources, Jorissen (2002) suggests that a qualified mentor is "often considered the single most effective strategy for providing consistent support that contributes to success and to the decision to remain in teaching" (p. 51). While a mentor program is only one of many mechanisms available to administrators, it is one that possesses great potential.

Implications

The first implication of this study involves awareness. Administrators and policy makers need to seek out venues to discuss and evaluate needs and concerns of new

teachers. This study is intended to further the discussion on new teacher issues specifically in small, rural schools. It is recommended that further research be pursued expanding such studies across other regions and various demographics. For policy and practice to meet teacher needs, the voices of teachers need to be heard.

Next, superintendents need to devote time and resources to the support of new teachers. Without top-down leadership support, success will be minimal. New teacher support cannot be left to chance. A unified, district-wide policy needs to be created, spelling out clear expectations for principals and their role in new teacher induction. Without understood expectations, accountability wanes and results fade. If principals, with superintendent support, catch the vision of teacher induction, mechanisms can take root and a culture of support can flourish.

While there is no one approach to developing collegiality, top priority needs to be given ensuring that teachers interact with fellow teachers. Traditionally, the educational world has been one of isolation. Chad sensed the urgent need to break down social and professional barriers. He urged, “Schools have historically been places where teachers taught in isolation and, for our new folks, we've got to really break that because I think they will leave in droves if they can't find that connectivity with their peers.”

In practice, this could mean coordinating preparation hours, allowing teachers opportunities to visit other classes, lightening new teachers' loads, encouraging faculty events and socials, and even utilizing internet technology to connect teachers across many miles.

Rural teaching presents a life foreign to many new teachers. Many of the conditions in such an environment cannot be altered. Administrators need to be accurate in portraying what life in small, rural schools and communities is like. To gloss over the challenges will only delay any disappointment and contribute to future attrition problems. Painting an accurate picture of rural teaching in recruiting and hiring visits will help prepare teachers for the challenges that lie ahead. Such candor can help minimize the shock that Nick has noticed in many of his teachers:

It is like culture shock for somebody that is coming in from an urban area or suburban area to a small town. They can love the heck out of the time that they are in the building and the interaction at school but the time that they are not is like you know too much time to think.

This study has allowed teachers to accurately depict rural teaching, utilizing their lived experiences. While a rural district cannot compete with many facets of an urban district, with some creativity, the rural school can become a social hub for the community and help fill some of the needs of those who live and work there.

It is hoped that this study will encourage administrators to draft policies and encourage practices that support induction programs. Mentoring is such a mechanism. In examining the data on creating positive mentor programs, a couple of key implications surfaced for practice and policy. Freeing up time for such relationships is perhaps the most important ingredient in facilitating this process. The Riverview district has chosen to dedicate a full-time position to mentoring new teachers. Serving her first year in this position, Taryn explained the advantage to such a strategy.

I have been an unofficial mentor in the past for people, but I always had so much on my own plate to do that I know I didn't give them the time and attention that they deserved. Now I have time and I give them as much

attention as they can stand. They probably wish I would maybe leave them alone sometimes, but I just really feel like I have that time to give them - if I just need to listen, if I need to give advice, if I need to step in and be an intermediary for them between them and their principal maybe, and just communicate something. I really feel like I can do that and do it well. We come away from it and everybody is in a better place and that makes me feel great. It really does. I think the teachers are able to do their jobs better because they don't have to worry about so many other things that they know I can take care of it.

Another strength to this approach is that Taryn is able to substitute for a new teacher's class which allows them to step out and observe master teachers.

I sub for teachers all of the time in that situation where they want to go observe another teacher in this building or even in other districts. I will sub for them all morning while they go to Centerville.

For districts without the resources to provide full-time mentors, other strategies are available. Pooling resources across districts is one powerful approach some districts have chosen to take. Through the formation of consortiums, small, rural schools can enjoy the benefits of costly programs, without carrying the full load of the expense. On a smaller scale, giving the teachers common planning time has proven helpful for some schools. For others, reducing a mentor's teaching load may be necessary. Ultimately, the data in this study suggests that unless time is freed up for such interactions, the mentor program will fail. This has been the experience of Karen. "She is a teacher," speaking of her mentor, "and she doesn't have time to be coming down here, so she hasn't been supportive. I haven't had the help."

The mentor program is one of many mechanisms that can be implemented in supporting new teachers. Further research could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of other support strategies as well. In choosing which approach will be appropriate for

their district, it is important for administrators to be sensitive to the differing needs and personalities of new teachers. While it is hoped that this study will further the discussion on new teacher support throughout rural Washington, the data confirmed that no one approach will provide the solution for all. Each new teacher brings his or her own unique personality to the role, and some will be more equipped than others to cope with the stresses of the educational world. Nick has observed the wide spectrum of teacher attributes and observed that some have a “with-it-ness” more than others. He described it as “an awareness of what is going on around them.” He continued to describe:

They feed off of it to a certain extent but it is part of their demeanor that they have a sensitivity and awareness of what is happening without having to think about it. It is a skill that some people have naturally, some can be trained so they become pretty good at it and others just never have it. The ones that don't ever have it usually have major management problems that exist and eventually doom them out of the field because it is not fun.

Some teachers' personalities will enable them to reach out when they are struggling.

Others will quietly suffer as they wait for support. Mandy described her personality as fitting the first.

It was very easy for me to approach others. Maybe also it was my personality because I guess if I was anywhere I could probably go up to somebody and say, I'm not embarrassed to say, “I need help.” If somebody looked down on me because I'm asking for help, then they're in the wrong profession in my eyes. I mean, I don't think I'd feel bad about somebody saying, “Oh I'm stuck” or “What would you do?” I don't know.

Not all teachers, however, will have as easy of a time as Mandy in finding guidance. Some personalities will magnify certain obstacles while others will minimize them. An administrator who is sensitive to this will have an easier time seeing his or her new

teachers successfully through their early formative years. It is hoped that the experiences and feelings shared in this study will help move educators forward in these efforts.

References

- Abel, M., & Sewell, J. (1999). Stress and burnout in rural and urban secondary school teachers. *Journal of Educational Research, 92*, 287-293.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). Tapping the potential: Retaining and developing high quality new teachers. Retrieved January 5, 2007, from <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/TappingThePotential/TappingThePotential.pdf>
- Arens, A., & Delandshere, G. (2000). Representations of teaching and standards-based reform: Are we closing the debate about teacher education? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 547-566.
- Beck-Frazier, S. (2005). To stay or not to stay: That's the dilemma. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 71*, 28-33.
- Blackwell, P. (2004). Putting the system together: Lessons learned by the Eisenhower initial teacher professional development programs. *Action in Teacher Education, 25*, 38-47.
- Blase, J. (1982). A social-psychological grounded theory of teacher stress and burnout. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 18*, 93-113.
- Blase, J. (1986). Qualitative analysis of sources of teacher stress: Consequences for performance. *American Educational Research Journal, 23*, 13-40.

- Britton, E., Raizen, S., Paine, L., & Huntley, M. (2000). More swimming, less sinking: Perspectives from abroad on U.S. teacher induction. *Paper prepared for the National Commission on Mathematics and Science in the 21st Century*. Retrieved March 20 2008, from http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/teacherinduction/
- Brown, S., & Nagel, L. (2004). Preparing future teachers to respond to stress: Sources and solutions. *Action in Teacher Education*, 26, 34-42.
- Brownell, M., Bishop, A., & Sindelar, P. (2005). NCLB and the demand for highly Qualified teachers: Challenges and solutions for rural schools, *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 24, 9-15.
- Camp, W., & Thompson, D. (2006). Financing rural schools in a complex and changing environment. *Journal of Rural and Small Schools*, 5(1), 35-40.
- Carver, C., & Katz, D. (2004). Teaching at the boundry of acceptable practice: What is a new teacher mentor to do? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(5), 449-462.
- Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2005). *Effective support for new teachers in Washington state: Case studies*. Silverdale, WA: Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.
- Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2005). *Effective support for new teachers in Washington state: Standards for beginning teacher induction*. Silverdale, WA: Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.
- Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2005). *Teacher retention and mobility: A look inside and across districts and schools in Washington State*. Silverdale, WA: Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.

- Collins, T. (1999). Attracting and retaining teachers in rural areas. Retrieved January 2008, from ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, ERIC Digest website:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/0c/c0.pdf
- Connolly, R. A. (2000). Why do good teachers leave the profession? What can be done to retain them? *Momentum*, 31, 55-57.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved July 20, 2007, from http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/LDH_1999.pdf
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 6-13.
- Dove, M. (2004). Teacher attrition: A critical American and international educational issue. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 71, 8-14, 30.
- Elder, E., Nabel, N., Schechter, C., Talmor, R., & Mazin, K. (2003). Anatomy of success and failure: The story of three novice teachers. *Educational Research*, 45, 29-48.

- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). Helping novices learn to teach: Lessons from an exemplary support teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 17-30.
- Geoff, T., & Woods, P. (2000). Careers under stress: Teacher adaptations at a time of intensive reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1(3), 253-275.
- Glickman, C., Gordon, S., & Gordon, J. (2004). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach* (6th ed.). New York: Pearson.
- Green, C. (1994). Combating isolation: A first year teacher support program. *Rural Educator*, 15, 5-8.
- Goertz, M. (2005). Implementing the no child left behind act: Challenges for the states. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(2), 73-89.
- Hadderman, M. (1999). Equity and adequacy in educational finance. *Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon*. Retrieved July 20, 2006, from <http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest129.html>
- Haller, E., & Monk, D. (1988). New reforms, old reforms, and the consolidation of small rural schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 24(4), 470-483.
- Hammer, P., Hughes, G., McClure, C., Reeves, C., & Salgado, D. (2005). Rural teacher recruitment and retention practices: A review of the research literature, national survey of rural superintendents, and case studies of programs in Virginia. *Appalachia Educational Laboratory*. Retrieved February 9 2008, from <http://www.edvantia.org/products/pdf/Rural%20Recruitent%20Report.pdf>

- Hannaway, J., & Talbert, J. (1993). Bringing context into effective schools research: Urban-suburban differences. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 29(2), 164-186.
- Hanushek, E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 39, 326-354.
- Hargrove, T., Walker, B., & Huber, R. (2004). No teacher left behind: Supporting teachers as they implement standards-based reform in a test-based education environment. *Education*, 124, 567-572.
- Harrell, P., Leavell, A., & VanTassel, F. (2004). Left behind: Results of a five-year study of teacher attrition. *Action in Teacher Education*, 26, 47-59.
- Harris, M., Holdman, L., Clark, R., & Harris, R. (2005). Rural teachers in project launch. *The Rural Educator*, 26(2), 23-32.
- Hersh, S. (1996). Mentoring entry year teachers: A model for rural communities. *The Rural Educator*, 17(2), 31-36.
- Ingersoll, R.M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 499-534.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86, 16-31.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2004). Do teacher induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin*, 88, 28-40.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 30-33.

- Ingersoll, R., & Smith, T. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.
- Inman, D., & Marlow, L. (2004). Teacher retention: Why do beginning teachers remain in the profession? *Education*, 124, 605-614.
- Jarzabkowski, L. (2003). Teacher collegiality in a remote Australian school. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 18, 139-144.
- Jimerson, L. (2004). Teachers and teaching conditions in rural Texas. *Rural Trust Policy Brief Series on Rural Education*. Retrieved May 15 2004, from <http://www.kintera.org/atf/cf/%7BF47E7>
- Jorissen, K. T. (2002). 10 things a principal can do to retain teachers. *Principal Leadership*, 3, 48-54.
- Kauffman, D., Johnson, S., Kardos, S., Liu, E., & Peske, H. (2002). "Lost at sea": New teachers' experiences with curriculum and assessment. *The Teachers College Record*, 104, 273- 300.
- Kelley, L. (2004). Why induction matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(5), 438-448.
- Knapp, M., Plecki, M., & Elfers, A. (2005). Retaining and supporting teachers in the context of state reform, *Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession*. Retrieved July 20, 2006, from http://www.cstp-wa.org/Navigational/Commissionedresearch/Research_reports/Retention/Retention_powerpoint_presentation.pdf

- Knapp, M., Loeb, H., Plecki, M., & Elfers, A. (2004). Teacher quality and support for teachers' work: Developing new information about Washington State, *Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession*. Retrieved February 20, 2007, from http://www.cstp-wa.org/Navigational/Resources_reading/Presentations/UW_Teacher_Quality_Washington_State.pdf
- Lemke, J. (1994). Teacher induction in rural and small school districts. *Rural partnerships: working together. Proceedings of the annual national conference of the American Council on Rural Special Education*. Retrieved February 9 2008, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/86/d7.pdf
- Linn, R., Baker, E., & Betebenner, D. (2002). Accountability systems: Implications of requirements of the no child left behind act of 2001. *Educational Researcher*, 31, 3-16.
- Meijer, P., Verloop, N., & Zanting, A. (2002). How can student teachers elicit experienced teachers' practical knowledge? Tools, suggestions, and significance. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(5), 406-419.
- Mertler, C. A. (2002). Job satisfaction and perception of motivation among middle and high school teachers. *American Secondary Education*, 31, 43-53.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *Characteristics of small and rural school districts*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

- National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *Teacher quality: A report on the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the teacher follow-up survey, 2000-01*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *Navigating resources for rural schools*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Norton, S. M. (1999). Teacher retention: Reducing costly teacher turnover. *Contemporary Education, 70*, 52-55.
- O'Brien, L., & Tye, B. (2002). Why are experienced teachers leaving the profession? *Phi Delta Kappan, 84*, 24-32.
- Peck, D. (2006). *New teachers in small schools*. Unpublished manuscript, Washington State University, Pullman.
- Pesek, J. (1993). Recruiting and retaining teachers in Pennsylvania's rural school districts. *The Rural Educator, 14*, 25-30.
- Reeves, C. (2003). Implementing the no child left behind act: Implications for rural schools and districts. *North Carolina Central Regional Educational Laboratory*, Naperville, IL.
- Relf, S., & Hobbs, D. (1999). The recruitment and selection of new teachers of mathematics: The needs of secondary schools versus the teacher training agenda. *Research Papers in Education, 14*, 165-180.

- Rubin, J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schwartzbeck, T. (2003). How are rural school districts meeting the teacher quality requirements of no child left behind? *Appalachia Educational Laboratory*. Retrieved February 9 2008, from <http://www.edvantia.org/products/pdf/AASA-AELReport.pdf>
- Seidman, I. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social science*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Simmons, B. (2005). Recruiting teachers for rural schools. *Principal Leadership*, 5(5), 48-52.
- Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. (2004). NCLB teaching quality mandates: Findings and themes from the field. *Teaching Quality in the Southeast*, 3(6), 1-3.
- Stromei, L. K. (2000). Increasing retention and success through mentoring. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 112, 55-62.
- Tillman, L. (2005). Mentoring new teachers: Implications for leadership practice in an urban school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(4), 609-629.
- Travers, C. & Cooper, C. (1996). *Teachers under pressure: Stress in the teaching profession*. London: Routledge.
- Troman, G. & Woods, P. (2000). Careers under stress: Teacher adaptations at a time of intensive reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1(3), 253-275.

- Tyler, N., Cantou-Clarke, C., Easterling, J., & Klepper, T. (2003). Recruitment and retention and special education teacher preparation in rural areas: Diversity, federal funding and technical assistance considerations. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 22(3), 3-11.
- Wong, H. (2004). Induction programs that keep new teachers teaching and improving. *NASSP Bulletin*, 88, 41-58.
- Wong, H., Britton, T., & Ganser, T. (2005). What the world can teach us about new teacher induction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86, 379-384.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your educational background and why you became a teacher.
2. Tell me about your school, your district, and the community in which you work.
3. Describe your current assignment.
4. What has it been like being a new teacher in a small rural school?
 - What have been your biggest challenges? Can you give me examples?
 - How have current reform movements influenced your work?
5. What has been the greatest help to you in working through these challenges?
 - What formal support practices have played a role? Explain
 - What informal support practices have played a role? Explain
 - Which individuals have had the most influence on you? Explain
6. What has been the best part of your first years of teaching? What has been the worst?
7. How do you see your future in the next ten years?
 - Will you stay in teaching? Why or why not?
8. If you could change one thing from your experiences as a new teacher, what would it be? Why?
9. Is there anything that I did not ask that you wish to tell me, or that you think would be important to this study?