



# **SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON HOW ADMINISTRATORS AFFECT THE INDUCTION PROCESS FOR NEW TEACHERS: AN EXPLANATORY CASE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

Schools are experiencing alarming attrition rates nationwide. The problem is 5% of teachers in suburban southeast South Carolina were leaving within their first 3 years. Increasing attrition rates were important because 5 years ago the attrition rates were half. The purpose of this explanatory case study was to learn how a shared decision-making approach and additional principal support during the induction process can improve teacher retention rates. This case study may help fill a literature gap by exploring how to give early career educators a voice. The study's theoretical foundation was based on Hawthorne's participative leadership and Vygotsky's sociocultural theories. Research questions were designed to provide data about shared decision-making and additional principal support during the induction process. An explanatory case study design was selected because case studies provide an in-depth understanding of a real-world topic. The case study was bound by secondary teachers in their induction year. Questionnaires and interviews were the data collection methods. Secondary teachers enrolled in the district induction program were selected by convenience sampling and a sample size of 15 teachers participated. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted using Atlas.ti. The data concluded two key factors that must be addressed when considering attrition rates. Supportive, approachable, and consistent administrators can better support the induction process. Providing teachers with a shared decision-making voice is effectively implemented when teachers work and plan together. A sense of belongingness and career longevity happens when these factors are present. The study results confirmed that external factors such as pay, bureaucratic oversight, and parental involvement were issues that were challenges in year one. Nevertheless, the support and acknowledgment that was displayed by the administration was the key piece that kept educators feeling connected and motivated to continue their careers beyond the first year. Early career educators seeking a sense of belonging in their school during their induction year is the most important conclusion that can be taken away from this study. To achieve that sense of belonging, principals should implement a shared decision-making approach that is in the best interest of early career educators. The demographics of an early career educator do not look like they looked even five years ago. School systems and school leaders must recognize the needs of their staff and work to provide the support that they are seeking.

## **Keywords**

Explanatory Case Study, Induction, Teacher Attrition, Early Career Educator

## **Introduction**

The teacher shortage in the United States is steadily increasing, which is an urgent public education problem (Love & Love, 2022). Garcia and Weiss (2019a) reported that the inadequate number of teachers is due to reduced interest in the career field, increases in school enrollment, a decrease in class size, and disproportionate numbers of teachers leaving education. The reduced number of college education graduates with a degree in teaching is a concern for principals as they are faced with the challenge of staffing teachers year after year. Teachers who are new to the field of education are much less likely to leave early in their careers if proper induction supports are put in place (Love & Love, 2022). The presence of a principal who values teacher input can help new educators feel that they are a part of the school climate and culture (Hopper et al., 2022).

Potential benefits of this study may include learning perspectives on what should be done to improve the retention of educators from teachers in the field who are new to the profession. Obtaining feedback from teachers currently in the induction process may provide insight into why teachers are leaving the field of education. Additionally, this feedback may provide views on what principals can do to support new educators better. Having personal feedback from first-year educators may benefit the field of education by giving these educators a voice for what they need to be a success in their classrooms and aid in longer-term retention rates.

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to learn how a shared decision-making approach and additional principal support during the induction process can improve teacher retention rates. Rationale provides that attrition rates should improve with enhancements to the induction process through shared decision-making and more support from the principal. The aim of this study was to determine if principal support and shared decision-making should be offered during the induction process for new teachers. This qualitative study includes an explanatory case study design. The data instruments consist of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for secondary teachers who are currently enrolled in the district induction program.

This case study approach had a goal to describe the induction process used during the 2022-2023 school year for a school district in southeastern South Carolina. Additionally, the study goes on to discover how principal support and shared decision-making during the induction process can impact teacher retention. The objective of this research study was to provide real-life feedback to the school district in which the research was done so that the administrators could make any necessary enhancements to the induction process to ensure that new teachers will remain in the district.

## Literature Review

In a review of existing literature, four themes emerged that impact the research focus. The literature review is organized by research findings on teacher attrition, teacher retention, teacher induction programs, and principals' involvement in induction programs.

Miller and Youngs (2021) shared that induction programs may have helped new teachers' ability in the classroom, but relationships with peers and principals are what had the greatest impact on retention. School leaders must ask themselves how they can better support and be more inclusive of the new team members in their building so that they can reduce annual teacher turnover (Buckman, 2021). Not only do induction programs with a focus on relationships have an impact on human resource efforts and financial resources, but there is also a lasting impact on academic achievement for students (Tran & Smith, 2020).

### *Teacher Attrition*

The United States is facing an all-time high in teacher attrition rates, with nearly half of the new teachers leaving the classroom in their first 5 years (NASSP, 2020). Teacher attrition is also a costly venture that many school districts are navigating annually (Tran & Smith, 2020). Beyond the dollars and cents that are lost each year, districts are not able to cash in on their professional development training and recruitment efforts because they are being forced to restart the recruiting and training process each year (Maready et al., 2021). School climate, learning outcomes, and student achievement are negatively impacted each time a teacher leaves the profession (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Understanding why a teacher chooses to leave a school or even the education profession so early into their career is important (Perrone et al., 2019). Some research reports that teacher attrition rates are high due to poor salary, benefits, lack of a supportive work environment, and inadequate working conditions (Tran & Smith, 2020). Nguyen et al. (2020) supported the fact that turnover has less to do with the support that teachers receive from the school or district officials and more to do with personal characteristics. The job market is experiencing changes as new generations of workers enter the workforce (Chen et al., 2021).

Teacher retention continues to be a challenge in schools across the country because teachers are reporting burnout due to poor working conditions and unsupportive leadership (Napoles, 2022). The question remains as to whether the administrative teams are unsupportive or simply not experienced enough to support the new generations of educators (DeMatthews et al., 2022). Administrative turnover is another layer of concern that must be considered when reviewing teacher retention concerns (Buckman, 2021).

### *School Climate*

School communities work hard to build an environment that is warm and welcoming to all who enter the community. A positive school climate is listed as one of the main reasons why teachers stay at a school (Scott et al., 2022). On the opposite side of the spectrum, a negative or poor school climate is listed as one of the main reasons teachers leave a school (Perrone et al., 2019). Teachers are also reporting burnout from compassion fatigue while constantly working with students who are facing critical life issues (Farmer, 2020). With school climate and culture being the main factors for why educators either stay or go, educational leaders must put a high level of importance on a positive school climate at their school (Perrone et al., 2019).

A positive climate can be established by making sure that all team members feel valued and supported, and this can be developed in a variety of ways (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Principals should be visible and approachable in the schools (Dunlap, 2019). At the core of the participative leadership theory is the notion that a principal must establish a level of trust with their team before they can implement a shared decision-making approach (Zohair et al., 2021). Being visible and approachable is one way to begin to build that trust (Anthony et al., 2019).

Miller et al. (2020) suggested that school climate can be affected by subpar working conditions. An unsupportive administrative team, student behavioral challenges, large class sizes, and a lack of unencumbered planning time can cause teachers to feel disgruntled (Dunlap, 2019). Farmer (2020) shared that perception is a reality for teachers in challenging work conditions. In a time when education is already struggling to regain the respect and support of the community, any additional challenges that new teachers face seem to be weighing even more heavily on teacher turnover rates (Scott et al., 2022). With the reboot of large numbers of staff members at the beginning of each school year, long-term school improvement efforts can be negatively affected (Sulit, 2020).

### ***Leadership Involvement***

The level of involvement of a principal has a direct effect on the satisfaction of a teacher who is new to the profession (Maready et al., 2021). School administrators need to understand what type of support is helpful and necessary to improve teacher retention rates (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b). Kurt (2020) shared that a teacher who has various layers of support during the induction process has the benefit of learning from each of those layers. Resch and Schrittmesser (2021) revealed that the gap in preparation from preservice teacher programs to new teacher induction programs is too broad to not have numerous layers of support. The benefit of hands-on support from the principal allows the novice teacher to feel valued and supported the more they interact (Kurt, 2020).

Shared decision-making, new teacher induction support, modeling of high expectations, and maintaining visibility are just a few of the research-supported suggestions for how principals can be more involved in their schools (Redding & Henry, 2019; Stanley, 2021). Identifying the needs at the school level is not a challenge in education (DeMatthews et al., 2022). The challenge is the actual implementation of the supports that have been identified (Albert, 2020). When school leaders analyze teacher turnover rates, they are not simply considering the turnover rates for new teachers (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Turnover rates of all professional educators are at an all-time high (Redding & Nguyen, 2020). Experienced staff are needed to implement the supports that are being identified as essentials for early career educators (Anthony et al., 2019). In some cases, the most experienced teachers in the building still only have less than 5 years of experience (Kim, 2019).

Attrition rates of 70-90% are being reported in some high urban or very rural areas (Doran, 2020; Miller et al., 2020). Even with experienced staff, putting direct and indirect support in place is not enough to ensure that teachers experience a positive work environment (S. B. Holmes, 2021). Direct support is defined as mentor assignments and professional development (Redding & Henry, 2019), while indirect supports are described as a defined vision and shared instructional expectations (Redding & Henry, 2019). The physical presence of the administrator is the driving force behind the sense of a supportive work environment for early career educators (Redding & Henry, 2019).

### ***Supportive Leadership***

The principal's role in supporting mentorship and induction programs for beginning teachers has proven to be effective in the retention of teachers (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Supports such as having a mentor in the same content area, common planning with teachers in their content area, and being part of an external group of teachers for collaborative purposes are all components that have a positive impact on early career teachers (Doran, 2020). Shuls and Flores (2020) also suggested that principals allow mentors and mentees to have paid release time so that they can meet and plan together.

Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to set up an environment for success is one of the best ways for a leader to show support (Whalen et al., 2019). Besides being visible and willing to roll up their sleeves to get the job done, supportive administrators are aware of the challenges that new teachers face, and they are willing to invest the time and resources necessary to help them succeed in their new careers (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Gratitude has been expressed by early career teachers for the administrators who have created an environment that allows them to be successful (Redding & Henry, 2019). Early career educators recognize that they are most fearful of how to build meaningful connections with students, staff, and families (Shuls & Flores, 2020). If a growth mindset is not adopted by the school leadership, team members will be challenged to develop their skill set and feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment at work (Scallon et al., 2021). However, when principals work to set their teachers up for success and show gratitude and appreciation, career educators notice these support efforts (S. B. Holmes, 2021).

There are many instances where new teachers do not feel supported in their environment because they do not see an opportunity for growth and they do not feel that they have a voice (Whalen et al., 2019). Their voices are muted, behavioral challenges are not addressed, and countless mandates and poor working conditions are noted as being some of the top indicators of why teachers leave the education field early in their careers (Redding & Henry,

2019). When undergraduate educators enter their degree program, they are excited, passionate, and ready to change the world (Miller et al., 2020). Principals are challenged with keeping that excitement alive and passion for education ablaze (Redding & Henry, 2019).

Support can come from a variety of perspectives, but support from the principal and acceptance from peers are two of the primary areas of focus (Will, 2020). Building a sense of community within the school, with colleagues, students, and administration are some ways that induction teachers can begin to build their sense of belonging in their new environment (McLeod, 2022). As the younger generations begin to join the workforce, remembering that their career expectations may be different than the generations before them will be important. Many of the younger generations are approaching their first job as a steppingstone to their next career move (Moser & McKim, 2020). One-way principals can satisfy the new career educators' needs is to provide hands-on leadership and offer them a voice so that these teachers feel valued and supported (Loewus, 2021).

## **Methodology**

A qualitative approach has been selected for this study because qualitative research allows participants to have a voice (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021). Qualitative research is important because this methodology allows for questions to be asked that cannot simply be put into numbers (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021). A qualitative methodology is the best fit for this study because the research methodology allows for the use of questionnaires and interviews to collect data (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020).

### ***Design***

This explanatory research approach will take a deeper look into the research questions by collecting data that may provide an understanding of the study participants' experiences (Stutterheim & Ratcliffe, 2021). The study is seeking to obtain real-life perspectives from teachers in the field of education and focus on the phenomena of high teacher turnover rates among early career teachers. By using a case study approach, a variety of viewpoints may be collected to gain better insight into the topic and decrease the possibility of bias (Rashid et al., 2019). Research questions that seek to answer why and how questions are best aligned with a case study research design (Mishra & Dey, 2021).

### ***Population and Sample Selection***

Participants were secondary teachers from grades 9-12 who have been in the profession for less than 3 years, teach a variety of content areas, are in the induction program, and are employed in the district. The total population of secondary induction teachers was 20 teachers. Therefore, a target of 15 teachers was the goal for participation in the questionnaire and interview. Study participants were excluded from this study if they worked at the same school as the researcher, did not teach in a secondary school, did not complete the initial questionnaire, or chose not to be included in the interview portion of the data collection.

### ***Questionnaire***

A questionnaire was selected as an appropriate data collection tool because questionnaires may help to address the research questions concerning teacher turnover (Varela et al., 2021). By implementing a questionnaire, the prospective participants were provided with open-ended questions that asked for personal input on how principals implementing shared decision-making may impact the induction process. The objective of implementing a questionnaire was to collect some demographic data and collect preliminary data that includes real-life opinions on the topic of shared decision-making and principal involvement in the induction process (Einola & Alvesson, 2021).

### ***Interview Protocol***

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the second data collection tool. The interview protocol aligned with the research questions because interviews may allow for the collection of feedback about the implementation of a shared decision-making model during the induction progress and provide information on how principals can support the induction process to improve teacher turnover in a secondary school.

### ***Subject Matter Experts***

Field testing with subject matter experts was used as an instrument validation method because the questionnaire and interview had not been field tested previously. The rationale for including a questionnaire and interviews as data instruments is that questionnaires are quick and inexpensive ways to collect information (Braun et al., 2020). Interviews help to explore a subject's opinions and experiences (Saarijarvi & Bratt, 2021). During the construction of the data collection instruments, open-ended interview question models that had been used in earlier research were reviewed. The subject matter experts included three secondary teachers who completed the district induction program last year.

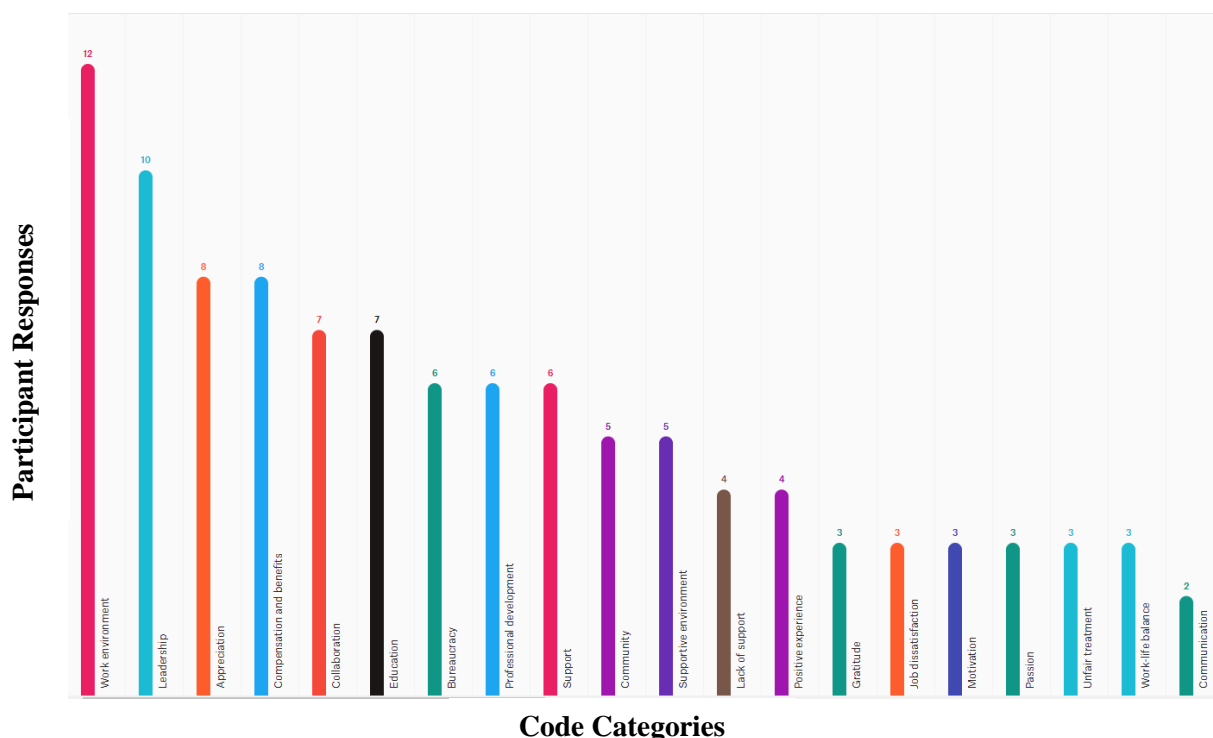
## Results

A thematic analysis approach was used to prepare the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis method is used when analyzing qualitative data by looking for patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). There are six phases to identifying themes and patterns when using this analysis method. Step one included familiarization. The data were examined for broad themes, and codes were assigned that best represented the data. Step two involved adding codes to the data. Codes were used to describe the data. Step three was where the themes emerged. In this step, codes were combined to begin to create themes. Step four was the review of the themes. The themes and data were matched to ensure that no themes were overlooked. In step five, the themes were defined and named. Defining what was meant by each theme and then determining how the theme would help classify the data was an important part of this step. Step six was the final step in this model and involved the production of the report. In this step, the final analysis of the data was presented. A full examination of the data was included and illustrated how the analysis had answered the research questions. Figure 1 illustrates the six steps that were taken during the thematic data analysis.



**Figure 1: Thematic Analysis Process**

During step one of the data analysis process, each interview was transcribed using the Microsoft TEAMS transcription software. Then the transcriptions were reviewed, and pseudonyms were assigned to participants. Bracketing was implemented to remove all personal assumptions and comments during the interview. During the bracketing process, the researcher reviewed each interview transcript, highlighted any personal comments or feedback during the interview, and coded that text yellow to indicate personal comments that were removed during the interview. Next, the interview transcriptions were uploaded into the Atlas.ti document manager. The web-based questionnaire responses were downloaded, and each question was converted to an individual document. All participant responses were included in the document for that specific question. The questionnaires were also uploaded to the document manager of Atlas.ti. The next step in the analysis process included the coding phase. Manual coding was implemented by using the coding tools in Atlas.ti. Each document was reviewed, and keywords were coded. Figure 2 displays 20 codes that included multiple tags throughout the manual coding process and helped to address the emergent themes.



**Figure 2: Codes With More Than One Tag**

The third step in the thematic analysis process included identifying themes with the data. To identify themes, the research questions had to be reviewed again. Data were analyzed from the perspective of addressing both research questions. Principal support during the induction process and the implementation of a shared decision-making process during the induction year were the focus when analyzing the data for appropriate themes. The tagged codes were associated with five initially emergent themes.

The fourth step in the analysis process yielded five themes that aligned with addressing the research questions. Those themes included induction experience, administrative characteristics, teaching challenges, retention strategies, and shared decision-making. But after further analysis, the theme of shared decision-making was removed because shared decision-making will be able to be addressed by using a combination of the remaining four themes that emerged. Figure 3 illustrates the four emergent themes and codes that were tagged multiple times for this study.

### Induction Experience

- Too much of a time commitment
- Hassle
- Not very helpful

### Administrative Characteristics

- Supportive
- Approachable
- Consistent

### Teaching Challenges

- Compensation and Benefits
- Bureaucracy
- Work Environment

### Retention Strategies

- Professional Development Support
- Appreciation
- Culture

**Figure 3: Research Themes and Subthemes**

#### ***Induction Experience***

The themes were defined in step five. Induction experience was listed as the first theme because the questionnaire and interview included questions that allowed the participants to reflect on their induction experience. Most of the participants felt that the induction meetings were not as helpful as they would have liked them to be. The participants shared that the induction program was taking valuable time away from their school and the meetings did not give them information that they could implement effectively in their classroom. Several of the participants interviewed in this study were also educators who were participating in an alternative certification program and the amount of work that was required for both the induction program and the alternative certification program was very overwhelming. The induction meetings simply seemed like one more thing to do that took them out of their school and away from their students.

#### ***Administrative Characteristics***

The second theme that was explored was administrative characteristics that early career educators like to see their administrators have or demonstrate. Collecting information regarding the characteristics that the study participants liked to see in their administrators was important because the focus of this study was to see how administrators can support the induction process to reduce attrition rates. The administrative characteristic feedback was consistent when considering what the participants preferred to see demonstrated by their administrators. There was an overwhelming theme of support, consistency, and approachability. The interview participants used words such as “consistent,” “dependable,” and “reliable” to explain the characteristics that they not only see in their administrators but that they would like all administrators to possess.

#### ***Teacher Challenges***

Theme number three emerged as the research participants were discussing the characteristics that they liked administrators to possess. Their comments started to shift towards things that administrators can do to support them in the classroom and the challenges that they face as classroom teachers. Work environment, compensation and

benefits, and bureaucracy were the three sub-themes that surfaced. The sub-theme of work environment included student behavior, parental involvement, and consistency with discipline. The participants noted that most administrators do a good job with discipline, but when they were inconsistent or not timely with the discipline, that causes problems in the classroom.

### ***Retention Strategies***

Theme number four was retention strategies and was the culminating theme for the research study. This theme included participant suggestions for what administrators could do to help reduce attrition rates for new teachers. When asked about specific teacher retention strategies P4 stated that “it is important to recognize all the good things that are already happening in our schools. We need more of the same fun teacher appreciation events.” Participants shared comments about “jeans days,” “protecting personal time,” and “supportive school climate” as the things that have made the biggest impact on their decision to return to their school next year.

Step six of the thematic analysis was the analysis report. The data analysis included in this report was reflective of most of the participants’ feedback. There was one outlier who was not returning to education after this year. The participant’s feedback was set aside after coding because the feedback did not align with the rest of the participants’ perspectives. This participant was extremely negative about the entire induction experience over the past year. Words such as unfair treatment, frustrated, and inadequate support were used throughout the interview.

### ***Answers to Research Questions***

The first research question asked how a principal can implement a shared decision-making approach during the induction year to improve teacher retention rates. Through inductive analysis, the data supported that early career educators appreciate a principal who was supportive, approachable, and consistent. None of the participants mentioned anything about wanting to be involved in shared decision-making in their first year as an educator. Most feedback included comments about how the participants wanted and needed support from their administrators. They looked to their administrator for guidance and support, and they appreciated consistency with discipline and communication when it came to school initiatives. Table 1 illustrates direct feedback from the participants as it relates to a shared decision-making approach from administrators with induction teachers.

<b>Early career educator needs</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
Support	“And allowing the teachers some leeway while still providing them support, because I think that sometimes if you're going to try something new, there's going to be failures. But allowing that failure and then telling them, OK, that didn't really work, here's what maybe we can do.” (P2)
Guidance	“Most of my admin have my back depending on the situation or they'll be able to kind of guide me in what I did wrong and how to handle the situation. I think that it's very important that there are supports and stuff, especially with someone coming in with no clue on anything dealing with education.” (P4)
Consistency	“One thing is consistency. I think consistency is a big one. Knowing what you're going to get day-to-day from your administrator is important. I think the ups and downs of a school year are really hard. So knowing that you have someone who will consistently be there for you is key.” (P6)

**Table 1: Early Career Educator Needs from Administration**

The second research question asked how principals can support the induction process to improve teacher retention rates. All the efforts that the principals were currently putting in to making the participants feel appreciated and respected as professionals were noted as being important. There was mention of positivity around professional development supports being accessible whenever needed, and additional data were shared about how the participants appreciated the care that went into protecting teacher work hours both during the school day and during teacher workdays. Most of the feedback that was shared was favorable regarding current administrative support inside their building. The consistent frustration was centered around the usefulness of the induction program itself and then outside of the building bureaucracy at the district, state, and federal levels. However, every participant recognized that much of their frustration could not be handled at the school level. Table 2 highlights direct comments from the research participants concerning principal support during the induction year.

Induction year supports	Example quote
Appreciation and respect as professionals	“I think honestly continuing a lot of the things they're doing would be great. I do feel like all of the admin we have here are very genuine and I think that's huge. Things like handwritten notes, teacher appreciation goodies, and the random jeans day show us that they care about us.” (P3)
Professional development supports	“At my school, we have mentor teachers, and online access to PD videos to help with various skills as a teacher. We also have professional development courses that are required and extra opportunities offered to us throughout the year.” (P8)
Protected teacher work hours	“I think respect for time and compensation in some form for asking us to work extra or do extra things around the school.” (P5)

**Table 2: Principal Support During the Induction Year**

### Discussion and Future Implications

The findings of the study produced expected and unexpected outcomes. Rashid et al. (2019) shared that once a teacher feels supported, they begin to develop a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging has a positive effect on attrition rates. This statement was confirmed to be true throughout the study because much of the data included feedback about the positive support, consistency, and appreciation that was shown by the school-based administration. In addition to the participants feeling a sense of belonging at their school sites, they also stated that the reason they are staying in the education profession, and more importantly, at their school, was because of the level of appreciation that they felt from the administration.

One area that was surprisingly disconfirmed was the need for district induction support. Garcia and Weiss (2019b) shared that induction supports are one way that early career educators can be supported. However, many of the participants in this study shared that they did not see enough value in the district induction program with its current structure. The amount of time that was required for the program took teachers out of their classrooms or infringed on personal time after school. The participants in this study stated that the induction program added more stress to their already overwhelming responsibilities as year-one educators. Several of the teachers shared that they were going through an alternative teacher education program and as a first-year teacher who had requirements through their certification program and school-specific requirements, the addition of the district induction program was overwhelming. They also noted that many of the topics they were learning in their certification programs overlapped with what they learned in the district induction program. Traditionally trained teachers, who had just graduated from a teacher preparation program, felt that the current structure of the induction program was not benefiting them either. There was more time spent on topics that they had learned in college and less time spent on real-life topics that they needed guidance from immediately in their classroom. The data collected also confirmed that the major factors impacting attrition rates involved bureaucracy at the district, state, and local levels. These factors included pay, state testing, and less instructional oversight by the state and federal government.

Support for increased principal participation during the induction process was discovered through the participative leadership theory by learning ways that principals can be more engaged with their early career educators but at the school level. Redding and Henry (2019) reported that principal involvement and support during the induction year lays a solid foundation of support for new teachers. The study participants agreed and noted the importance of their principals being visible, available, and approachable. These traits were consistently noted as being important to the early career educator. Administrative expectations and visible participation in the school are key factors to early career educators' perception of the school climate.

Regarding an administrative shared decision-making approach at the induction level, many teachers expressed discomfort with the concept of working with their principal on shared decision-making at the school level. The participants looked to their principals as being their support system. However, they were unanimous in their positioning of wanting to be treated as professionals. The participants stated that they enjoyed working collaboratively with their PLCs. These PLC groups allowed the teachers to plan with their peers and have a voice in their department. Miller and Youngs (2021) reported that relationships with peers had the greatest impact on early career educator attrition. Common and collaborative planning with peers reduces the feeling of isolation and burnout for early career educators (Farmer, 2020). Therefore, collaborative planning and shared decision-making with colleagues were more in line with what the participants stated that they needed in their induction year.

Taking this information into consideration, the sociocultural theory proved to be valid in this study because all the participants confirmed that they were learning and growing through their PLC meetings and common



planning time with peers. Social interaction was confirmed to play an important role in the development of a new teacher (McLeod, 2022). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was strengthened as early career educators had time to collaborate with fellow teachers (McLeod, 2022). Two main principles of more knowledgeable other (MKO) and zone of proximal development (ZPD) were demonstrated when the participants noted that they felt their time was best spent collaborating with peers.

Early career educators seeking a sense of belonging in their school during their induction year is the most important conclusion that can be taken away from this study. To achieve that sense of belonging, principals should implement a shared decision-making approach that is in the best interest of early career educators. The original intent of a shared decision-making approach was to allow the teachers to have a voice in the decision-making process at the school level (Hopper et al., 2022). Allowing teachers to have a voice and build a sense of community in the school building is still important. However, principals should understand that shared decision-making comes in the form of collaboration with peers and community support throughout the school.

The key points from this study indicate that the early career educators in the selected district are happy with the support that they are receiving from their principals. A sense of belonging has been established through consistency, dependability, and reliability from their administrators. During the induction year, the principals must understand the challenges that early career educators are facing, and they work hard to protect both professional and personal time. The study illustrated that the shared decision-making process that benefits early career educators the most is involvement with their peers. Having a developing voice with colleagues is what is needed most during the first year as an educator (Martinot et al., 2022). Principals do not have to include the shared decision-making responsibilities with induction-level teachers because they are not interested in that level of decision-making at the school. The focus should remain on the development of the teacher as a professional, continuing support, and building a community of belonging.

Administrators need to understand the needs of the teachers who are new to their staff. Many of the study participants were second-career educators who indicated a sense of being overwhelmed with the amount of work that was required of them outside of their instructional day. A principal who is focused on how the induction process can improve must note the change in the type of teacher that is working in their building. Paperwork, meetings, and the misalignment of induction and teacher preparation programs had many teachers feeling overwhelmed in their first year. Furthermore, teachers who are entering into education from a teacher preparation program felt that much of what was covered in the induction meetings were topics that they learned during college. Customized induction experience may better suit the changing demographics of early career educators (Hulme & Wood, 2022).

New knowledge was shared about what supports are in place and working at the school level. A sense of recognition, appreciation, and respect is what provides satisfaction for early career educators. The study results confirmed that external factors such as pay, bureaucratic oversight, and parental involvement were issues that were challenges in year one. Nevertheless, the support and acknowledgment that was displayed by the administration was the key piece that kept these educators feeling connected and motivated to continue their careers beyond the first year. Early career educators have a lot to learn in their new roles and educators understood that the learning curve will take time. Regular support and guidance from colleagues and administration help when early career educators must navigate the challenges that educators regularly face.

The study implications are summarized by restating the importance of a supportive school environment with a positive climate and culture. One way to aim for positivity in the workplace is to build a strong sense of belonging and appreciation (Bjorklund et al., 2021). By providing a positive work environment, teachers will have a better outlook on work, and that positivity will be felt throughout the school (Duraku et al., 2022).

Likewise, providing appropriate support for induction teachers is a way to aid in the retention rates for early career educators. The demographics of an early career educator are changing in today's landscape. Some teachers are coming into education with a traditional path where they have attended college and earned a teaching certificate the traditional way. But many others are joining the ranks of education through an alternative certification program and as second-career professionals. The induction needs are different for these groups of professionals, and recognizing these needs at the onset of their careers is critical. Providing appropriate pedagogical support, and behavior management strategies, and respecting the time restraints that new educators are facing is a necessary step toward improved retention.

Critical outcomes of this study show that the education field is changing. The demographics of an early career educator do not look like they looked even five years ago. School systems and school leaders must recognize the needs of their staff and work to provide the support that they are seeking. Many factors impact attrition rates, but this study focused on factors that can be controlled inside a school building. Things like pay, benefits, bureaucracy, and student behaviors are not factors that can single-handedly be solved at the school level. But educators who are entering the workforce understand the challenges that they will face regarding pay and state and federal oversight. The willingness to work beyond those challenges is only going to withstand the test of time if there is support from within the school environment. Administrators must meet their teachers where they are and

work to provide them with continuous growth and support opportunities to ever be able to combat the rapidly rising attrition rates for early career educators.

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