RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS FOR PRINCE GEORGE INNER-CITY SCHOOLS

by

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Abstract

Inner-city schools are complex institutions and provide challenging working conditions for inner-city teachers. School districts have experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining effective teachers for their inner-city schools. This study examined potential strategies and programs to attract and support teachers for inner-city schools. The research followed a collective case study methodology and data were collected through interviews with seven experienced inner-city teachers in the Prince George School District. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for resonant themes. Important themes emerging from the data were: Relationships, Working Conditions, Mindset, Attributes, and Skills. Findings suggest that teachers choose to work and stay in inner-city schools because they derive enjoyment and rewards from this meaningful work. Relationships, especially those with colleagues, provided important supports for inner-city teachers. Recruitment and retention strategies should focus on the altruistic motivation of teachers rather than on financial enticements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Acknowledgement

CHAPTER 1

In an era of looming teacher shortages the task of replacing the corps of experienced teachers marching en masse towards well-deserved retirement is a daunting task. Attracting teachers to inner-city schools becomes even more difficult when the abundant supply of teaching positions signals a buyer's market. In this environment, schools compete for effective teachers to fulfill their staffing needs. Inner-city schools, with their reputation for being more difficult places to work, are viewed as less attractive assignments to the majority of teachers. This reputation means, if given a choice, the qualified candidate will usually accept a position in a more "desirable" school which leaves the inner-city schools to staff their classrooms with either those teachers new to the profession or passed over by other schools.

Since the enactment of the "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) in 2001, inner-city and other "low-performing" schools in the United States have been under close scrutiny to close the achievement gap. All aspects of school programming including teacher qualifications and teaching practices have been studied. An important requirement of the NCLB legislation is that states must provide "highly-qualified" teachers for all students. Creative incentives, both financial and non-financial, were used as a means to attract desirable teaching candidates to these "low-performing" schools with the belief that highly qualified teachers would positively influence student achievement.

Inner-city schools can be complex institutions. The needs of their student populations dictate that additional programs and supports beyond those found in most suburban schools be provided. Resources such as breakfast and lunch programs, community programming, and counseling services are provided to support students and their families. Many of these

families are trapped in the cycle of generational poverty and are unable to move out of the inner-city due to factors such as affordable housing, transportation, and availability of government support programs.

Sachs (2004) identified the following characteristics of inner-city neighborhoods and their citizens: population mobility, low socioeconomic status, diverse ethnic/cultural identity, and limited language proficiency.

Nelson (2004) observed that many new teachers are unsuccessful in high-needs schools because, despite best intentions, teacher credential programs fail to prepare them for success in these complicated environments. Teacher education programs and limited life experiences do not provide training or strategies to deal with issues surrounding poverty. Teachers may struggle in their assignments and opt to change schools as soon as possible. For many inner-city students, school is the only place in their lives with predictable routines and stability. A constantly-changing teaching staff undermines the stability of the school and disrupts the student learning. The investment of resources, both material and time, into new teachers can be considerable.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) stated that when schools lose teachers, administrators and remaining teachers must expend precious energy to find replacements and bring them up to speed. This repeated investment in new teachers, while not always a loss to the district, presents a cost to the individual school which must continually train and support new staff. It is difficult to move forward with development of school culture with a perennially-changing staff. Initiatives and programming specific to those schools must be reintroduced and training and support provided each time a staff member is replaced.

Inner-city students tend to lag behind their suburban counterparts in all areas of academic achievement. The Prince George School District (PGSD) has invested considerable resources in the development of programs to narrow this achievement gap. An initiative called the *Primary Project* evolved from research conducted by a PGSD principal as part of her Master's program for Royal Roads University. The project focused on reduction of primary class sizes as an intervention for children at risk. The Primary Project was implemented in September 2004 in Kindergarten and Grade 1 in the three inner-city schools with the highest proportions of vulnerable children: Ron Brent Elementary, Carney Hill Elementary, and Harwin Elementary. In September 2005, the program expanded to include Grades 2 and 3 at these schools. In September 2006, the program grew to include Kindergarten to Grade 3 at Quinson Elementary.

The goal of the Primary Project initiative was to help students who entered school without expected skills and language experiences achieve grade level reading benchmarks by the end of Grade 3. The project comprised the following interventions: reduction in class size, teacher professional development in best practices for reading instruction, implementation of common instructional programs across the project schools, comprehensive assessment plan to track student progress, training in the understanding of generational poverty and its effects on child development, and culturally appropriate and effective strategies to support Aboriginal learners. The issue of teacher retention affects the efficacy of programs such as the Primary Project as student progress will not be optimized if teachers do not remain at these schools long enough to fully implement the interventions.

A goal, in any educational setting, is to successfully recruit and retain quality teachers who can positively influence student learning. Darling-Hammond (1998) asserted that

teacher expertise significantly influenced what students learned. The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2001) found that quality, effective teaching was a more powerful factor in improving students' academic success than reduction in class size. Since many students in inner-city settings start school at a competitive disadvantage, they need high quality, effective teachers to help shrink the achievement gap between them and their more advantaged peers. Educational parity for inner-city students will not be achieved with faculties comprised of inexperienced or uncommitted teachers. The identification of suitable teaching candidates with requisite skills and willingness to take on the challenges of inner-city schools, enticement of these professionals to accept positions and creation of conditions so that they will stay for a productive tenure was the focus of this study.

Rationale for the Study

As an administrator in an inner-city school, I have personally experienced the difficulty of hiring teachers with the desired mix of maturity, knowledge, and commitment to work effectively with our challenging students. A special combination of ability and attitude is required to work effectively and flourish in an inner-city school environment. Teachers are frequently placed in inner-city schools unprepared for the complexity of the students' needs and the extra challenges associated with these settings. As the phenomena of teacher shortages and teacher retirements collide over the next decade, the need for proactive strategies to recruit and retain suitably qualified teachers for our inner-city schools becomes paramount.

This study added to the findings within the research literature. The results are specific to British Columbia and provide a Canadian perspective on the issue of recruitment and retention of teachers within inner-city settings. The research that has been conducted on

this topic is predominantly American. As Canadian public education systems operate overwhelmingly within unionized environments and American public education systems do not to the same extent, the incentives and supports available to recruit and retain teachers in Canada could be quite different than those attempted in the United States. This research could be extrapolated to other Canadian regions as there are many similarities between provinces with respect to the manner in which public education is delivered.

Theoretical Framework for the Research

The purpose for completing this study was to look without and within the Prince George School District to study the problem of teacher recruitment and retention for inner-city schools. By reviewing the vast quantity of literature on this topic, information was collected about successful and less successful initiatives attempted by other jurisdictions. By interviewing effective and committed inner-city teachers within this district we gained insight into why they chose to work in these schools and why they stayed. Their opinions regarding potential incentives and strategies to improve recruitment and retention of teachers for these hard-to-staff settings were also considered. As this study deals primarily with the practical concerns of staffing and efficient school function, it can be considered pragmatic in nature. We attempted to discover ways to attract teachers to inner-city schools and nurture their development so that they would remain, grow professionally, and contribute to a stable learning environment for their students.

Severe teacher shortages and record teacher retirements are predicted throughout North America over the next decade. School districts compete on a provincial level for available teachers. Within districts, schools also vie for suitable teaching candidates. The inner-city school, like the non-athlete in schoolyard games, is usually the last one chosen.

The problem with this scenario is that the students who require the best teachers may get those least suited to handle their special circumstances. We cannot hope to level the playing field for inner-city students using this process. The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to research and identify potential recruitment strategies for teachers for inner-city schools, (2) to research and identify factors that contribute to successful retention of quality teachers in inner-city schools, and (3) to develop a profile of desirable characteristics and attributes for inner-city teachers to guide hiring and training programs.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Based on the literature and the opinions of interviewees, what strategies, initiatives, or programs show promise in recruiting effective teachers for inner-city schools?

2. Based on the literature and the opinions of interviewees, what strategies, initiatives, or programs show promise with respect to retaining effective teachers in inner-city schools?

3. Why do teachers choose or not choose to work in inner-city schools?

4. Why do teachers stay in or leave inner-city schools?

5. What are the characteristics and attributes of an effective teacher for an inner-city school?

Delimitations and Limitations of the Research

The research was subject to several delimiting and limiting factors.

The most important delimiting factor was the size and composition of the group selected for interviewing. I decided to restrict the interviews of inner-city teachers to those who had worked in an inner-city school for at least three consecutive years. I felt that this group best represented inner-city teachers because they had experienced several cycles of students, parents, colleagues, and administrators and had adapted to these changes. I also included teachers in the interview group who had left inner-city schools in the last five years but were still employed by the school district and fit the three consecutive year criteria. These educators contributed valuable insight into the differences between teaching in an inner-city school and another setting. I interviewed seven teachers who currently work or have recently worked at one of the three Prince George inner-city elementary schools: Carney Hill Elementary, Ron Brent Elementary and Harwin Elementary. Although Quinson Elementary School joined the Primary Project in September 2006 it was not one of the original Primary Project schools and was excluded from this study.

An important limitation of this research was the willingness of the interview subjects to participate candidly in the interview process. I felt that this was not a serious limitation as each interviewee volunteered to participate and was provided an opportunity to tell their personal story and perhaps by doing so, positively influence future working conditions within their schools and district. Another limitation of the research was that the interview candidates were professional colleagues of the researcher. This relationship might have attracted some to participate in the research and discouraged others from doing so.

Definition of Terms

Most of the terms in this study have meanings that are commonly understood but several require specific definition in the context of this study.

effective teacher   In the context of this study, an effective teacher is one that is able to assist their students, in a caring manner, to realize their academic and social potential. An effective teacher, in this environment, would be able to adapt to constant and unscheduled change.

inner-city school   An inner-city school is generally characterized by being located in the downtown or central core of an urban center. This area is usually an older part of the city with less expensive housing and significant numbers of rental properties. Inner-city schools can also be called urban schools. Inner-city schools are generally housed in older school buildings with fewer modern amenities.

Primary Project   This program was developed and implemented in the Prince George School District to address low academic achievement of students, especially in reading, in four inner-city schools. It was modeled on a similar initiative in the Central Okanagan School District (SD 23) and was researched by a local principal as her Master's project for Royal Roads University. Its cornerstones include: reduced class sizes in the primary years, balanced literacy instruction using prescribed resources, and mandatory teacher professional development.

suburban schools   A suburban school is generally located in a residential area away from the downtown or central core of an urban center. These areas are

usually in newer parts of the city and contain a higher proportion of detached homes that are family-owned. There are generally fewer rental property complexes. These schools are usually housed in newer buildings with more modern amenities.

Tier One schools   The Prince George School District (SD 57) designates elementary schools as being Tier One, Two, or Three depending on the percentages of vulnerable children attending them. Tier One schools have the highest percentage of vulnerable children and receive additional funding for resources such as community school support workers and meals programs. Tier Two schools receive some additional funding for community programming and Tier Three schools do not receive any additional funds.

vulnerable children   This terminology derives from the work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman and the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) from the University of British Columbia (UBC). Their work identified socioeconomic factors that affected the development of children. Their "vulnerability index" considered such factors as family involvement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), level of educational attainment of parents, number of parents in the home, family income and other related indicators of risk for children. The information used to determine the vulnerability index is derived from the Early Development Instrument (EDI), an assessment tool developed by the

Offord Centre for Child Studies in Ontario, and completed annually by

Kindergarten teachers.

Chapter Summary

In part, the problem addressed in this research is rooted in the economic concept of

supply and demand. In times of teacher shortages, the supply of suitable teaching candidates

becomes limited, a scarce commodity. When this situation is coupled with record numbers of

teacher retirements, the demand for teachers outstrips the supply. Inner-city schools, with

reputations for having challenging students and difficult working conditions, are at a

disadvantage when competing for available, quality teachers. The problem of how to recruit

effective teachers and retain them in inner-city schools was the focus of this research.

Chapter 1 provided background information on why recruitment and retention of

teachers for inner-city schools is a growing problem. The rationale for the study is that there

is a need for strong, effective teachers who are committed to working in inner-city schools

and bettering the learning conditions for the vulnerable students who attend these

institutions. In times of teacher shortages, inner-city schools compete with suburban schools

for available teachers. The purpose of the study was to determine if incentives and programs

could attract suitable teachers to these schools and encourage them to stay. The research

questions are stated and form the basis for the interview questions. The delimitations and

limitations of the research are identified. The definitions of terms specific to this study are

mentioned.

The project continues with four further chapters. Chapter 2 involves a comprehensive

review of related literature on inner-city school staffing, qualities of effective teachers for

inner-city schools, incentives for recruiting teachers, and programs for retaining and

supporting teachers in inner-city schools. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology and research procedures used in this study. The results of the project research including a summary of the research findings are reported in Chapter 4. The implications of the research, interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations for future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

The issue of improving student achievement in inner-city schools has many inter-related components that contribute to its complexity. The importance of teacher effectiveness in enhancing student learning is one factor that has been researched extensively. The identification of specific attributes of effective teachers for inner-city schools has been another area of study. Districts have struggled with finding teachers with the qualities necessary for success in the challenging environments of urban schools. School districts, hoping to improve student achievement results in their inner-city schools, have focused on the development of teacher recruitment and retention strategies and related teacher support programs. The array and quantity of literature in the area of improvement of student performance in low-performing and hard-to-staff schools is extensive. This review focuses on three areas of research: qualities of effective teachers for inner-city schools, strategies for teacher recruitment for inner-city schools, and programs to support retention of effective teachers for inner-city schools.

No Child Left Behind

A major impetus for school assessment and improvement was the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) signed into law on January 8, 2002. The enactment of this federal legislation governing K to 12 Education in the United States created significant waves that resonated throughout the national and global educational communities. The NCLB legislation sought to narrow the achievement gap between "have" and "have not" populations by ensuring that all students had access to high quality learning opportunities in American public schools. The legislation focused on areas such as: accountability for schools, adequate yearly progress, getting results, and shrinking the achievement gap for minority students

(NCLB, 2002). A major focus of the NCLB plan was "the requirement that teachers in all schools be *highly qualified*" (P.L. 107-110, 2002; original emphasis). This requirement placed major pressure on schools, especially those considered under-performing, to hire and retain high quality teachers (Williams and Kritsonis, 2007). Schools and school districts unable to demonstrate "adequate yearly progress" as measured by standardized test scores risked losing federal funding (Raudenbush, 2004).

Teacher shortages that have been predicted since the 1980s have arrived. Reports from some urban districts in the United States showed a loss of nearly half of their newly hired teachers in the first five years of employment (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Teacher shortages occurred at the same time that NCLB reforms dictated that districts hire only the highest quality teachers. This situation provided even greater challenges for hard-to-staff schools such as those in urban centers as they are perceived as less attractive working environments by teachers. Schools located in low-income urban settings tend to have higher teacher turnover rates than suburban schools (Strunk and Robinson, 2006). Many are located in the inner-city and are characterized by community poverty, high teacher turnover, insufficient resources, and low performance on state administered standardized tests (SECTQ, 2001).

Inner-City Schools

Inner-city schools face a competitive disadvantage when competing with suburban schools for experienced and highly qualified teachers. Inner-city schools are characterized as having a large percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, difficult teaching environments, undesirable school locations, and low academic achievement of their student population (Morgan and Kritsonis, 2008). These schools face such challenges as: inadequate

student readiness for school, low rates of parental involvement, poor access to learning resources, lack of student discipline, language barriers, and poor student health (Sachs, 2004). Urban inner-city schools have been described as more dangerous, overcrowded, poorly maintained, having higher rates of staff and student turnover and absenteeism, and having environments that are less conducive to learning than those of other schools (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005). Schools with inner-city characteristics are not necessarily a "downtown" phenomenon but can exist in any area with a large concentration of students living in poverty (Toronto District School Board, 2005). Poverty in inner cities correlates highly with minority status resulting in high proportions of non-white students in their school populations (American Federation of Teachers, 2007). Inner-city schools enroll higher rates of students who are English language learners and have disproportionate numbers of students with special needs (Glassman, Johnson, Mackell, and Wexler, 2001). Teachers seek to work in schools that provide supportive working conditions and are deterred by factors such as: student discipline problems, personal safety concerns, lack of on-site support and interventions for students experiencing learning difficulties, poor administrative leadership and support, unhealthy physical plant, lack of faculty influence on decisions that affect student learning, inadequate professional development and supports, inadequate preparation and planning time, excessive classroom intrusions, and lack of student academic success (AFT, 2007). Working conditions are an extremely important consideration for teachers when deciding upon a teaching assignment (Glassman et al., 2001). Inner-city schools are invariably low performing and teachers choose not to work in them if they have other options (Prince, 2002).

Effective Teachers for Inner-City Schools

Inner-city schools contend with complex issues and are challenging environments in which to teach. School districts are looking for teachers with the appropriate qualities to teach effectively within these schools. Knowing what characteristics and preparation equip teachers best for inner-city assignments could assist schools and districts in focusing recruitment efforts on specific teachers and programs.

Sachs (2004) found that several attributes could be identified as indicators of a teacher's potential success in urban inner-city settings. Teachers need to be conscious of socio-cultural connections between academic material and their students so that learning can be made relevant to their students' lives. Successful teachers in urban environments have strong interpersonal skills and ability to perceive and respond to the complexities of the urban environment. Awareness and acknowledgement of personal biases and prejudices is a necessary teacher quality. Successful urban teachers see themselves as change agents and embrace the challenges of their assignments. Effective teachers are persistent and accept responsibility for student motivation, learning and success. They set high standards for their teaching practice and for the academic attainment of their students.

The Toronto District School Board (2005) in researching model schools for the inner-city developed criteria for inner-city teachers and support staff. They sought staff with the following qualities, beliefs, and practice: belief in the success of inner-city students; commitment to honoring student achievements; warm, approachable, supportive, fair and consistent; reflective of their practice; understanding of and able to implement programs for multiple intelligences; recognition of and able to program for diverse learning styles; highly skilled in ESL theories; highly skilled in special education; understanding of language

acquisition and the distinction between ESL and special education students; and trained to deliver a non-segregated model of special education.

The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) identified several desirable qualities of effective inner-city teachers. The ability to assist students to consistently make significant academic progress was important. Teachers were expected to have a strong knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy of how students learn. Effective inner-city teachers require a broad repertoire of teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Stotko, Ingram, and Beaty-O'Ferral (2007) researched qualities of successful urban educators. They found the following attributes to be represented in this group: problem-solving abilities, tenacity, persistence, a sense of urgency, grounding in academic content, ability to communicate content to students in engaging and developmentally appropriate ways, refusal to give up on their students, flexibility, willingness to adapt and modify aspects of practice (planning, classroom management, instructional strategies) to improve student learning, setting of high standards for their students, cooperative and willing to work with other teachers, administrators, parents, and students, and they are constantly engaged in activities to improve their knowledge and skills.

Delpit (2006) asserted that there are many factors that are difficult to change with respect to urban education. The inner-city community dynamics such as poverty, crime, drugs, and violence lie outside the control of the school system. Her research looked at attitudinal shifts that could be made by inner-city staff that would improve learning opportunities for students. She promoted the development of "intentional communities" within these schools. Such communities would build on students' strengths, passions, and

knowledge of their home community. Recognizing and building on children's strengths

requires knowledge of children's out-of-school lives. "Street smarts" and life, survival skills

of inner-city students could be developed into strong problem-solving skills. Understanding

that children come to school with many different kinds of knowledge guides development of

appropriate instructional strategies that utilize these skills. The development of a sense of

family and connectedness is important for inner-city students. If students don't feel

connected to a teacher on an emotional level they will expend less effort and will not

progress in their learning.

Obidah and Howard (2005) examined how teachers were prepared to effectively

work in inner-city schools. They studied the perceptions that teachers brought with them,

both conscious and unconscious; of their students and school community and how those

biases affected their teaching practice. When teachers confronted their negative perceptions

about their students they were able to change their teaching and discipline practices resulting

in more effective teaching methods. Teachers developed action-oriented pedagogy that was

informed by reflection on their classroom practice and interactions with their students. They

became more effective teachers to their students by going through this process. Obidah and

Howard (2005) recommend that all pre-service teachers be given opportunities in their

teacher education programs to thoroughly explore their own cultural and personal values and

social beliefs.

Bell (2001) examined high-performing, high-poverty schools and observed that in

most inner-city communities the characteristics of the students' home backgrounds were

used as an excuse for students' lack of academic progress. Bell (2001) labeled this idea

"demographic determinism", a belief that demographic variables will overwhelm school-

related variables. In high-performing, high-poverty schools, the quality of the curriculum and instruction were extremely high and were found to be a significant determinant of students' academic progress. In the high performing schools students were given the same learning opportunities as students in more affluent communities. These learning activities were more academically challenging than those usually offered to inner-city students. These schools were "community schools" where a family feeling was cultivated on campus and meaningful and enduring relationships were developed with the students, parents, and the community in which the school was located. The teachers designed learning tasks that had application to real life and students were encouraged to interact with people and businesses within their community.

<div align="center">Recruitment of Teachers to Inner-City Schools</div>

The literature on inner-city schools suggests that these schools are difficult places for teachers to work and that they would not be a typical teacher's first choice of teaching assignment. Research on effective teachers for inner-city schools identifies desirable teacher qualities and attributes for these specialized environments. Schools and districts have attempted various strategies to recruit individuals with the desired traits to their challenging schools (Kitchenham and Chasteauneuf, 2010). Some strategies have been successful and others have had little effect on teacher shortages. Recruitment strategies generally fall into two categories: financial or "in-kind" incentives and non-monetary incentives.

Financial incentives are the most common form of recruitment incentive and can take many forms. Prince (2002) asserted that low salaries are a major deterrent to attracting people into the teaching profession and that school districts have adopted financial incentives as a popular recruitment strategy. Typical financial incentives include: signing bonuses,

certification stipends, summer internship programs, tuition reimbursement programs, loan

forgiveness, tax credits, professional development stipends, additional retirement benefits,

housing incentives, relocation assistance, reduced or free rent and utilities, teacher housing,

housing loans and reduced-price homes, low-interest mortgages, assistance with down

payments, tuition assistance, scholarships, and salary increases for hard-to-recruit positions.

AFT (2007) identified the following recruitment incentives: pay differentials, signing

bonuses, scholarships, loan forgiveness, housing assistance, moving expenses, free utility

hook-ups, tuition reimbursement, free tuition towards a Masters degree in a relevant field,

new teacher summer institute with daily stipend, laptop computers, gift cards for classroom

supplies, district mentoring program, up to 20 years of salary credit on the salary schedule,

and a finder's fee for current teachers who recruit a teacher for a hard-to-staff school. Prince

(2002) found that higher salaries could help teachers overcome their reluctance to work in

hard-to-staff schools if the increases were substantial. Her research suggests targeting

incentives, such as salary increases, for hard-to-recruit positions. Teachers in these positions

would be compensated at a higher rate of pay for the harder work and more difficult working

conditions that these jobs entail. She acknowledged that the concept of differential pay is not

typical of the teaching profession and would require a departure from accepted practice.

Imazecki (2008) examined various strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers for

high-needs schools. She observed that while financial incentives were the most direct

policies for school districts to adopt their effects were quite small. She concluded that

teachers would respond to differences in wages but to have noticeable effects on teacher

recruitment, the salary increases would have to be quite large. Programs that targeted

teachers for high-needs schools used incentives such as: housing assistance, tuition support,

loan assumption, bonuses, and permanent increases in teacher's base pay. The research indicated that teachers appreciated the bonuses for the financial support and also for the recognition of their work in difficult and challenging environments.

Guarino, Santibanez and Daley (2006) examined current teacher recruitment and retention practices. They observed a trend among school districts towards reliance on financial compensation as a recruitment strategy. This included bonuses, salaries and other forms of monetary compensation. They discovered an important influential factor in teachers' decision-making. The personal satisfaction and rewards derived from teaching although unquantifiable were integral to teacher decisions about the kind of school they chose to work in. Guarino et al. (2006) concluded that individual schools and districts could improve their relative attractiveness to current and prospective teachers by the opportunities, financial and otherwise, that they offered to teachers. These opportunities could include financial incentives as well as pre-service and in-service programs.

Cochran-Smith (2006) examined the factors that attracted teachers to the profession and why they chose to stay teaching. She discovered that a dramatic shift had taken place between the previous generation of teachers and those that were currently entering the profession. The previous generation had chosen to become teachers at a time when the profession garnered considerable public respect. Teachers chose to teach for altruistic reasons and were not as concerned about the discrepancies in compensation between teaching and other professions. Current teachers expect to be compensated at rates commensurate with their level of education, experience, and representative of the complexity of their assignment. In her study, Cochran-Smith (2006) found that successful urban teachers were still motivated by altruistic concerns and were invested in the welfare of their students.

She discovered that teachers who stayed in urban settings cared deeply about their

relationships with their students. They acknowledged the difficulties of their assignments but

they persevered because they believed that they made a difference in the lives and futures of

their students.

Miller, Duffy, Rohr, Gasparello, and Mercier (2005) examined a partnership between

an inner-city school and university as a means to prepare teachers for work in high-poverty

schools. Their research chronicled a nine-year relationship between Hunter Elementary and

the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. This "grow-your-own" program provided field

experiences in an inner-city school for 25 pre-service teachers during the third and fourth

years of their undergraduate education program. This professional relationship proved to be

symbiotic for both parties. Education students received rich learning experience in an inner-

city setting and the elementary school benefitted from the support of 25 additional adults in

their building. The teacher graduates were veterans of teaching in a high poverty school and

were better prepared for future employment in these environments.

Imazecki (2008) compared the effectiveness of salary incentives with the

effectiveness of induction and mentoring programs in supporting new teachers for high-

needs schools. She found that salary incentives were less successful in recruiting new

teachers than well-designed and supported induction and mentoring programs. Typical

programs included combinations of the following supports: mentoring, collaboration time

with other teachers during the school day, an external network of teachers, reduced teaching

load, and the assistance of a class paraprofessional. These programs had a positive impact on

teacher retention and substantially reduced the probability of teachers leaving the school or

profession. Imazecki (2008) concluded that salary and financial incentives were more

straightforward than other options but over the long term school districts would make better investments in the development and support of well-designed mentoring programs.

Morgan and Kritsonis (2008) researched the problems of recruitment, retention, and development of quality teachers for hard-to-staff schools. They suggested innovative strategies that focused on "early recruiting". Such programs offered on-the-job training for new teachers in the year prior to their actual employment, an early immersion into the school environment. Other non-monetary recruitment strategies supported by their research were: university partnerships, pre-service preparation, job shadowing, early contract signing, and welcoming celebrations for new teachers.

Glassman, Johnson, Mackell, and Wexler (2001) surveyed teachers to discover why Baltimore City was experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers in their inner-city schools. Respondents identified negative working conditions in these schools such as: unsafe and unstable working environments, lack of adequate pay and benefits, lack of parent involvement, and lack of support of teachers by administration. Glassman et al. (2001) concluded that working conditions were a more important factor in teacher decision making regarding where they chose to work than financial incentives. They suggested a network of support for urban teachers that utilized full-time, on-site mentors who held confidential, non-evaluative positions. Mentors would co-teach with new teachers and cover the teachers' classes so that they could observe master teachers in action within the building. Their research suggested that districts invest primarily in networks of support for inner-city teachers and use financial incentives as a secondary recruitment tool.

Stotko, Ingram, and Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) studied the motivation behind teachers' decisions to teach in inner-city schools. They observed that altruism was a strong motivator

for urban teachers and teacher candidates. Many of their survey respondents indicated that they were drawn to teaching because they wanted to help at-risk students and by doing so make a positive contribution to society. Stotko et al. (2007) advised districts to develop recruitment strategies and incentives that emphasized altruism and personal development. Such campaigns could include promotional materials with altruistic themes and photos, videos and printed materials that profiled student success stories, student recruiters, information on mentoring and peer coaching programs for new teachers, and opportunities for applicants to interact with recruiters who were successful urban educators.

AFT (2007) recommended that best hiring and placement policies for hard-to-staff schools include school staff in the interview and selection process. This ensured that applicants would have a complete picture of the school including its mission, student expectations and standards, and staff responsibilities.

Retention of Quality Teachers in Inner-City Schools

The problem of retention of quality teachers in inner-city schools is directly related to the complex dynamics of these schools. Many teachers enter the teaching profession for idealistic reasons, for example, they love children and learning and want to make a difference. When the going gets tough, as it invariably does in inner-city schools, teachers choose to move to schools that offer less complicated learning environments. Researchers have examined retention issues for hard-to-staff schools and have identified common issues and potential solutions to halt the revolving door.

Ingersoll (2003) questioned the widely held belief that teacher shortages, especially in high-needs schools, were a result of a shortfall in the production of new teachers to replace those entering retirement. He discovered that although the demand for teachers has increased

in recent years and many schools with teaching vacancies have experienced difficulty with recruitment, there is no overall shortage of teachers in the United States. Staffing difficulties were attributed to teacher turnover, teachers moving from job to job or choosing to leave the teaching profession altogether. Teachers chose to leave schools for retirement, because of various school staffing actions, for family and personal reasons, to pursue other jobs, and due to dissatisfaction with their school or assignment.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) asserted that the retention challenge was due to three factors: new teacher attrition, losing teachers to other careers, and movement of teachers from school to school and from district to district. Schools serving high-poverty communities were particularly vulnerable to this "revolving door effect" with a perennial loss of teachers and pressure to hire new ones.

Cochran-Smith (2006) found that as many as 46 percent of new teachers left the profession within the first five years. Half of the teachers opting to quit teaching cited job dissatisfaction and a desire to find better jobs outside the field of education as their reasons for leaving. Job dissatisfaction was due to a combination of factors including low salaries, student discipline problems, lack of support, and limited opportunities to participate in school decision-making.

Morgan and Kritsonis (2008) argued that retention of teachers is important for the long-term stability of school environments and necessary for school improvement initiatives to take hold. They suggested that financial incentives that offered graduated sums of money for each year that teachers chose to return to the same school could positively influence teachers' decisions to stay. Glassman et al. (2001) also supported financial bonuses at five,

ten, and fifteen year increments in an educator's career as incentives to remain at a particular school.

Imazecki (2008) discovered that teachers who transfer generally move to schools with lower percentages of poor, minority, and low-performing students. District hiring, assignment, and transfer policies can facilitate or make it more difficult for teachers to move to where they want to be.

Nelson (2004) explored the problem of low teacher retention rates in high-needs schools and the relationship that teacher preparation played in this phenomenon. She observed that teacher shortages were not equitably distributed as there were greater shortages in high-needs, low-performing schools. Her assertion was that teachers were frequently unsuccessful in inner-city schools because their teacher training programs did not prepare them for success in these complex environments. Critical elements were missing from the teacher-preparation experience. Teachers needed to understand the socio-cultural and political contexts of their school communities. Teacher candidates needed practical teaching experiences in high-needs schools. Nelson (2004) studied a successful and innovative program at San Jose State University that focused on preparing teachers for the complexities of high-needs schools. Teacher candidates were required to complete at least one student teaching placement in a high-needs school with the hope that this experience would better equip them to understand the complexities of these schools. Student teachers were encouraged to analyze the culture of their school and create differentiated lessons that incorporated the diverse knowledge that their students brought with them to the classroom.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) examined why teachers chose to change schools. "Movers" sought working environments that provided appropriate course assignments,

sufficient curriculum guidelines, efficient systems for discipline, open communication with parents, and supportive administrators. Teachers especially sought interaction with other professionals and the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded colleagues.

Glassman et al. (2001) suggested exit interviews of teachers who were leaving inner-city schools as a means of determining their concerns and discovering ways of mitigating these issues in the future.

Chapter Summary

There is consensus in the academic literature that inner-city schools are complex institutions and provide extremely challenging working environments for teachers. Districts experience difficulty in recruiting teachers to work in these schools and struggle to retain quality teachers for extended periods of time. Teachers were willing to start their careers in inner-city schools but were quick to move to less challenging assignments when opportunities arose. Teachers indicated that they would choose to stay in schools more because of desirable working conditions than because of monetary compensation. Districts have focused on financial incentives as a means to entice teachers to hard-to-staff schools. It appears these financial resources would be better directed towards supporting teachers with mentorship and new teacher induction programs. Districts have found promising success through partnerships with university teacher education programs. By supporting pre-service teacher training in inner-city schools, districts were able to "grow-their-own" teachers who graduated with practical experience and understanding of the complexity of these school communities.

Many district and state bulletins and newsletters as well as academic journals have devoted space to the issues of teacher recruitment and retention. Some have specifically

focused on the issue as it pertains to inner-city schools. The literature was predominantly based on research conducted in the United States and there were few Canadian examples. American legislation, hiring procedures, and collective bargaining agreements may differ significantly from Canadian practices so extrapolation of results may be inappropriate in some cases. There was little research on the potential recruitment of experienced teachers to inner-city settings as the focus was primarily on newly credentialed teachers.

CHAPTER 3

This study addressed the issues of recruitment and retention of effective inner-city teachers in the Prince George School District (PGSD). The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with established inner-city teachers. The interviews sought teachers' opinions and experiences in such areas as: hiring and assignment, specialized professional development, mentorship programs, qualities of effective inner-city teachers, efficacy of incentives in recruitment and retention efforts, and the challenges and rewards of inner-city teaching.

Research Methodology

This study took the form of a collective case study where information gained from individual cases was compiled to provide insight into the central issue of inner-city staffing. Richards and Morse (2013) described case study as, "a method that seeks understanding of a social situation or process by focusing on how it is played out in one or more cases" (p. 76). Cresswell (2005) defined case study as, "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection [which means] that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries" (Cresswell, 2005, p.439). Richards and Morse (2013) described a collective case study as research involving the comparison of cases with the purpose of identifying patterns. Cresswell (2005) interpreted collective case study to be a "study of several cases that provide insight into an issue or theme" (p. 440). In this study, the "cases" were individual educators who had been successful in their work in inner-city schools in Prince George and the "issue" was recruitment and retention of effective teachers for inner-city schools.

Specific Procedures

The study was conducted in the Prince George School District between March 2010 and January 2012. Permission to conduct research within the school district was obtained from School District 57 and approval was received from the research committee and the UNBC Research Ethics Board prior to commencement of the research.

The Human Resources department of the Prince George School District was approached for a listing of staff members who fit the research criteria for potential interview candidates. An email message was sent to those teachers extending an invitation to participate in the research (Appendix A). Numerous teachers indicated their willingness to join the study. Consideration was given to all teachers who responded with an attempt to select teachers from each of the three schools represented in the study: Carney Hill Elementary, Ron Brent Elementary, or Harwin Elementary.

Interview times and locations were determined in consultation with interviewees. The interview questions were provided to the interview subjects prior to the session so that they could prepare thoughtful responses for the interview (Appendix B). An agreement outlining the procedures and safeguards for protecting the anonymity of the interviewees and their information was explained thoroughly to the interview subjects before obtaining their written consent to participate in the study (Appendix C). Participants were asked if they wished to receive a summary of the results of the study and were offered an information form to complete (Appendix D).

Research Participants

The research sample was comprised of seven teachers who fit the following criteria: worked three consecutive years in one of three Prince George inner-city schools (Carney Hill

Table 1

Background of Research Participants - Gender, School, and Teaching Experience

Research Participant	Gender (Male/Female)	School	Total Teaching Experience (years)	Inner-City Teaching Experience (years)
A	Female	Carney Hill	19	6
B	Male	Carney Hill	23	13
C	Female	Harwin	24	10
D	Female	Harwin	13	4
E	Female	Harwin	4	3
F	Female	Harwin	35	8
G	Female	Ron Brent	23	7

Elementary, Ron Brent Elementary, or Harwin Elementary) and at the time of the study were working in or a portion of their tenure occurred in one of these schools during the time period of 2004 to 2009.

Background information of the research participants including gender, school, and teaching experience is presented in Table 1. Six of the participants were female which is representative, according to Sachs (2004), of typical gender distribution of teachers in elementary classrooms. Four of the seven teachers had in excess of 20 years of total teaching experience. The range of inner-city teaching experience represented was 3 to 13 years. Each of the three schools had at least one participant in the study.

Instrumentation

Interviews formed the source of data for this study. Interview protocol and questions that were utilized are included as Appendix B.

Interviews followed a semi-structured interview format. Richards and Morse (2013) described semi-structured interviews as "open-ended questions that are developed in advance, along with prepared probes. Unplanned, unanticipated probes may also be used" (p.

124). Kvale (1996) suggested that an "interview guide", an outline of topics to be covered with suggested questions, be used to organize semi-structured interviews. The same questions were asked of all participants in the study and probes were used for clarification or expansion of ideas expressed by the participants.

Data Collection

Personal interviews were conducted with selected subjects. The interview subjects were provided in advance with a copy of the interview questions so that they could suitably prepare for the session. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis. Anonymity of research participants was assured by identifying each interviewee by a letter code rather than their name. The transcribed interviews, both digital and paper versions, were stored in a secure location. The interview data were backed up to a secure server account and removable hard drive device that was stored in an alternate location. Transcripts of the interviews were offered to the participants for verification of their responses and correction of errors arising from the transcription process.

Treatment of the Data

The interviews generated a substantial quantity of transcribed text for analysis. Digital filing and organizational structures were designed to organize the data. The transcribed text was analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the data. The categories or codes were not determined prior to data collection but emerged from the data during the process of analysis. The transcribed text was read several times with the intent to discover distinct concepts and categories in the data. Descriptive notations or "codes" were made along the side of the manuscript using "track changes" in a word processing program. Codes that conveyed the intent of the text were assigned to words, phrases, and sentences.

For example, an interviewee stated that, "a teacher would need to have open arms" (C). This segment was coded as "positive attribute". Another teacher shared that, "I guess there needs to be a different hiring process for inner-city schools" (G). This sentence was coded as "staffing". Initial coding was a non-linear process with frequent revisiting of the data and "re-naming" and revaluation of the assigned codes. Memos were made throughout the process noting interesting statements and observations contributed by the research participants. During the coding process the text was examined closely for similarities, differences, and relationships between concepts emerging from the different interview transcripts. The codes were grouped into categories based on common properties and content thus determining important themes and patterns in the data. The resulting themes and supporting categories or codes were tabulated to organize the data for further descriptive analysis.

Chapter Summary

The research utilized a collective case study approach with interviews of seven experienced inner-city teachers forming the research data. The interviews followed a semi-structured format with established questions provided to participants prior to the interview. Interviews took place at mutually agreeable times and locations and the research participants were encouraged to share relevant insight, opinions, and experiences with the interviewer. The transcribed interviews were analyzed and coded for common themes and concepts. The research findings are interpretations of these data and will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

The purpose for this study was to examine the issues of teacher recruitment and retention for inner-city schools both inside and outside the boundaries of the Prince George School District. A review of educational literature on recruitment and retention of inner-city teachers provided a global perspective on these issues. Interviews were conducted with seven experienced and dedicated inner-city teachers to access their knowledge of these issues within the Prince George School District. The goal of these interviews was the collection of data that would assist with answering the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The research participants were invited to share their opinions and experiences on a variety of topics relating to inner-city education. They were asked about their beliefs regarding effective teaching practices and systems that could enhance educational opportunities for inner-city students. They were encouraged to reflect on their personal inner-city teaching experiences and to share the challenges and rewards of being a teacher in these settings. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for meaningful and recurring patterns, concepts and themes. This chapter is a discussion of the findings from this analysis.

Findings

During the initial stages of analysis it was difficult to discern common threads within the transcripts as each interview reflected the unique nature, style, and voice of its speaker. Text segments were highlighted and coded with descriptive phrases and words and recorded in a "codebook". As analysis of the transcripts progressed, the codebook was continually reviewed and re-assessed and commonalities began to emerge through interpretation of the spirit and intent of the respondents' statements. For example, when asked their opinion about what makes a teacher effective in an inner city setting, two interviewees responded with:

"You're effective if you can reach the kids" (A) and "The teachers who've been effective here really know their kids well and know everything about that kid" (B). These statements were each identified with the code of "student relationships" which was later subsumed into the larger theme of *Relationships*. These statements demonstrated a shared belief in the importance of relationships between student and teacher as a component of effective teaching. The analysis of the transcripts continued with the recursive process of assessment of codes and categories and absorption and amalgamation of codes into larger categories. This process continued until five major themes emerged from the data. These themes were labeled as *Relationships, Working Conditions, Mindset, Attributes,* and *Skills*.

Miles and Huberman (1994) described a data display as, "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (p. 11). Table 2 displays the results of the coding analysis of seven interviews of inner-city teachers.

The table shows five themes and 21 major categories emerging from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The themes are represented in Table 2 in order of greatest to least number of associated codes attributed to the theme resulting from the transcript analysis. This ranking signifies relative importance of themes to the research participants as their interview responses touched upon them with greater or less frequency. The table indicates that between two to six major categories are associated with each theme. These categories represent subdivisions of each theme into groupings based on commonalities. For example, the "Wellness" category, a subdivision of the *Working Conditions* theme, represents such ideas as: stressors, self-care, mental health, exhaustion, and coping mechanisms. These concepts all relate to teachers' need to protect their personal health in the stressful work environment of an inner-city school.

Table 2

Themes, Major Categories and Associated Codes from Interview Data

Theme	Major Category	Associated Codes
Relationships	Colleagues	Advice, support, actions, collaboration, networks, work together, mentorship, modeling (in situ), community, committed, get along, sharing resources
	Students	Emotional connection, accepting, respect, purpose, being needed, making a difference, understanding, knowing kids well, connections, taking care of, there for them
	Trust	Parental role, boundaries, stability, reliable, be there for them, constant, authentic, rely on you, be real
	Administrator	Support, discipline, dissatisfaction, leadership, values students, understands, honesty
	Family	Consideration, support, life outside teaching
	Parents	Support, working as a community
Working Conditions	Needs of the Students	Hurt, trauma, uncared for, how they arrive at school, lack of parent support, lack of nurturing, behind in skills, readiness, lack of home routines, lack of exposure, learning needs, hungry, dealing with a lot, giving up, self esteem, hard background, gone without, behaviors, vulnerable
	Complexity	Tough assignment, conflict management, needy, diversity, challenging, intensity, specialized programming, energy, cultural sensitivity, diverse background, overwhelming, fend for self, out of ideas, isolated, clique, outsider, crying, more management than teaching, poverty, insufficient support
	Wellness	Stressors, parental pressure, stress, self care, mental health, physical health, take it home with you, struggle with complexity, detrimental, exhausted, drained, rejuvenate, downtime, stress release, coping mechanisms, tired, discouraged
	Staffing	Applied, assigned, hired, want to be there, retention, recruitment, experience, incentive, extra pension contributions, financial incentives, every teacher should teach in inner-city school, priority transfer preference, promotion of positives, part of the system

	Resources	Lack of, unfamiliar, state of physical plant, smaller class sizes, good resources, support staff, specialized staff (counselors)
	Safety	Dangerous, crime, neighborhood, "bad school"
Mindset	Motivation	Rewarding, negative, want to be there, enjoyment, making a difference, incentives, want to stay, help others achieve potential, appreciated, see they get it, accomplishment, witness growth, reaching that kid, recognition, love what I do, love learning, vocation, social justice, service, hiding out, a calling
	Outlook	Perspective, optimism, look at whole picture, learning all the time, open-minded, high standards, high expectations, become harder, negative, flexible mindset, happy, excited, opinion, reflective, world-view, adventurous
	Change	Shift in focus, philosophical differences, growth, professional growth, putting into practice, expand horizons, maturity, uncertainty, apprehension, unknown, disagreement, angst, frightened, retirement, unsuccessful, experimental, open your eyes, daunting, disruption, unprepared, scared
	Decision-making	Informed, ignorant, unfamiliar, uninformed, bias, pre-conceived opinions, perception, choice, locus of control, right fit, own will, aware
Attributes	Positive	Compassion, calm, patient, understanding, value, sympathetic, selfless, dedication, adaptable, empathy, reflective, confident, resilient, tough skin, non-judgmental, hard-working, optimistic, responsive, accountable, knowledgeable, think outside the box, nurturing, flexible, sense of humor, don't sweat the small stuff, life experience, ability to ask for help
	Negative	Unforgiving, lack of caring, staleness, authoritarian, judgmental, inflexible
Skills	Training	Specialized training, mandatory, embedded, preparation (pre-service), workshops, student teaching practica in inner-city schools, job shadowing
	Classroom Management	Well-prepared, organized, planning, setting expectations, routines, control
	Instruction	Instructive, practical, differentiated instruction, child-focused, individualized, knowledge of special ed, strategies, personalized, interventions, curricular knowledge, technology

Decisions were made regarding the suitability and fit of codes for particular categories and themes. For example, the topic of "mentorship" was moved among several categories until it was decided that it fit best within the theme of *Relationships*. Mentorship could be a program or system facilitated through a Human Resources department within a school district to provide support to teachers. Considering this basic definition it could fit into the category of "Staffing" within the theme of *Working Conditions*. In the context of this research "mentorship" was seen as a collegial relationship that provided peer support for teachers and was deemed to be a better fit within the theme of *Relationships*. The role of administrators was also a difficult one to categorize. Administrators could easily fit into the theme of *Working Conditions* if only the practical operations of a school were being considered. As the research examined the reasons why teachers chose to leave or stay in inner-city schools it was determined that the relationships between administrators and teachers could be an important factor affecting those decisions and thus inclusion in the theme of *Relationships* was a better fit. Some ideas and concepts, when the context was considered, needed to be represented in more than one category. The idea of "reflective practitioner" was one such concept. It fell into the theme of *Attributes*, which was comprised of the categories of "Positive" and "Negative" attributes of effective teachers. It was also included under the theme of *Mindset* within the category of "Outlook" as it was determined to be an important tool utilized by inner-city teachers in self-assessment and improvement of their practice.

Discussion

The interviews provided considerable quantities of data for analysis. Once these data were studied collectively and common threads were identified they were placed into logical groupings. Each of the resulting themes reflects important beliefs and experiences of inner-city teachers and provides valuable insight into the issues surrounding staffing of inner-city schools. This portion of the chapter will focus closer on each theme and its supporting categories.

Relationships

The theme referred to most frequently in the interviews was the theme of *Relationships*. These involved interactions with "Colleagues," "Students," "Administrators," "Family," and "Parents." Another major category within this theme was "Trust" which described the important relationships teachers have with different stakeholders within school communities and especially with their students and their families.

It was apparent from the frequency that colleagues were mentioned in the interviews that collegial relationships were valued highly by the research participants. One interviewee when asked what type of support she requested from her colleagues responded, "Daily, what do you want to call it, debriefing? How is the day going? How did this go? How is that child doing? It's always talking and supporting and backing you up. I totally feel that way here with many of my colleagues" (C). Another reported, "I expected my teaching colleagues to have my back if I was having a problem in my classroom, to look after my other kids. If I was having a big problem to get help and I had some great colleagues that would do that" (A). Colleagues provided advice and support networks. They shared resources and collaborated on lesson design and delivery. One teacher described the type of help she

received as "idea help". She described the school environment as: "I feel like I'm in a hothouse and I had everything that I mostly need, a good compost and moisture and everything I need to grow here and a really important part of that is that I have access to experienced teachers" (E). Colleagues formed the foundation of a supportive school community. One participant stated, "You watch out, like you can see if somebody is getting exceptionally stressed out over something and go in and…like last year we made a little basket for somebody who was feeling stressed out with just a little chocolate or whatever right? I think that helps" (D). The Primary Project, a program that focused on supports for primary grades in inner-city schools within the Prince George School District, was lauded by several participants for its use of teacher experts as leaders of training initiatives. One interviewee described this approach as, "We also had mandatory professional development where we learned from experts and we learned from other teachers and we shared our ideas and it was good" (A). Teachers valued the opportunity to work together with like-minded educators. All respondents saw mentorship by peers within inner-city schools as a potentially valuable strategy for supporting teachers new to inner-city settings. One interviewee stated that, "I think they need a mentor teacher who's in an inner-city school whether it's their school, whether it's another school" (D). Another suggested modeling a lesson for a new teacher by, "going into the classroom, showing them this is the model, this is what I'm going to teach your kids, this is how I'm going to deal with the behaviors, this is how I'm going to earn their trust" (A). Relationships with colleagues were an important determinant in whether a teacher decided to leave or remain in an inner-city school. One teacher who has left an inner-city position explained, "I didn't like the way the staff was going, it wasn't about kids, it was turning into being more about adults and I didn't like that" (A). Another teacher who

had requested a transfer decided to stay in her inner-city assignment because she, "felt very supported here, this is the place for me still" (C).

Relationships with students were extremely important to inner-city teachers. Teachers spoke frequently about the strong "emotional connections" they felt with their students. They knew that they were doing important work. They felt needed and that they had a purpose. They were sure that they were making a difference in the lives of vulnerable students. One teacher described this feeling as, "the most rewarding part is knowing that you're here and what you do is going to make a difference" (B). Another teacher shared that; "you build different relationships with the kids in an inner-city school when you're there to support them emotionally" (A). The category of "student relationships" shared many common descriptors with the category of "Motivation" under the theme of *Mindset*. This demonstrated a linkage between positive student relationships and the rewards and enjoyment teachers derive from inner-city teaching. There are also important connections between the complex needs of inner-city students and the responsibility teachers feel for the safety and nurturing of their students. One teacher stated that "you might be their one constant and so reliability is important, you need to be there for them and they need to know that and you need to develop that relationship with them too" (C). Many descriptors were shared between this category and "Positive Attributes" within the theme of *Attributes*. Qualities such as respect, understanding, and acceptance were deemed important for inner-city teachers to demonstrate in the development of caring relationships with their students.

The category of "Trust" applied to relationships with all stakeholders within the school community. Teachers felt that trust was foundational to meaningful relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and administrators. One educator described the trust building

process with students as, "you become a key person in that student's life and school becomes a safe place and a place that is a very positive part of their life" (B). Taking good care of their children helped develop trust with parents. One teacher stated, "what they needed to know was that you were caring for their kid and looking out for their best interests" (B). Teachers frequently found themselves in parental roles with tremendous responsibility for the welfare of their students. One teacher shared; "We were there for the kids. We were there for Christmas, we were there for the holidays, we were there to make sure that they were clothed and fed and to make sure that they got meals" (A). Building trust with students required being authentic with them. One teacher described her students as being able to, "spot phonies from a mile away" (A). Teachers identified a need to establish boundaries with their students, as it was difficult to not take student concerns home with them.

The interviewees perceived relationships with administrators as either supportive, neutral, on non-supportive. Most teachers had experienced support from their school administrator either directly or indirectly. A teacher reported that, "I've always felt supported and I've always felt that if there was an issue that I brought down to the administration that it was always taken seriously" (D). Direct support involved such actions as removing children who were experiencing behavior issues and dealing with the disciplining of students. One teacher recounted that as a new teacher she appreciated, "being able to send a kid away for fifteen minutes or half an hour if they were violent" (E). Administrators were credited with facilitating indirect support when they provided needed resources, such as paraprofessionals and teaching materials, for a classroom. Administrators were expected to demonstrate leadership in how they interacted with their students. Teachers wanted them to show by their actions that they valued children and understood their needs. If

administrators were perceived as non-supportive or philosophical differences arose, the resulting dissatisfaction could cause a teacher to leave the school. A teacher who has since left her inner-city assignment describes such a situation. "I have left, yes, and I left because I didn't feel like I had the support of the administration anymore. I didn't agree with their policies and I thought I'd better go" (A).

Teachers took into account the needs and wishes of their own families when deciding about working in inner-city schools. Their relationships with their families were important considerations when choosing where to work. One teacher described being placed in a rural school and deciding to accept an inner-city position instead. "I had a brand new baby and I chose to stay in town and not do the drive" (A). One teacher described how volunteering in her inner-city classroom had affected her own children in a positive way. "What did my kids buy? They saved money and put two girls into school in Africa. I'm not sure that their vision would have been there had I stayed teaching in a middle class school. My kids volunteer and I think it makes them appreciate their life" (G). Teachers acknowledged that they had a "life outside of teaching" and that the support of their families was necessary for them to manage the complexity of their assignments.

The development of relationships with the families of their students was an important focus of the teachers. Although rates of parental participation are typically low in inner-city settings, teachers sought avenues to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education. They viewed parents as an important source of support and worked hard at building trusting relationships with them.

Working Conditions

The theme of *Working Conditions* represents ideas and concepts associated with the institutional aspects of inner-city schools. To some extent these are conditions that teachers have limited ability to change as they lie beyond the purview of individual schools. Generational poverty, educational funding formulae, and staffing processes are functions of societal and political structures that can directly and indirectly affect teachers within their classrooms and schools. The categories comprising the theme of *Working Conditions* were: "Needs of Students," "Complexity," "Wellness," "Staffing," "Resources," and "Safety."

Teachers spoke frequently and passionately about the needs of their students. They discussed the hurt, trauma, poverty, and lack of nurturing that their students experienced. They described children who arrived at school hungry, tired, angry, and unprepared for the school day. One teacher described her ignorance about students' living conditions when she first arrived at an inner-city school. "I had no clue that those types of environments were out there, those types of living conditions. I know you hear about it, you read about it, but I hadn't experienced it" (F). Another teacher described her struggle to detach from the problems of her students. "The stories just spill out of them, knowing no child should ever go without food, without proper clothing, without proper love and care, that was the hardest part not to take home" (A). I had initially labeled this category as "Neglect" but later changed it to "Needs of the Students" as I felt "Neglect" assigned all responsibility for these issues to the parents and let social systems and structures off the hook for their part in the problem. All research participants agreed that the diversity of needs of their students contributed to the challenges of their teaching assignment. One teacher described the uncertainty of what state students would arrive in at school each day. "You just don't know what is going to happen or how kids are going to show up. The range of diverse needs is huge in the building and in

your classroom" (B). Despite the negative influence of these needs the teachers were not deterred by their existence. They persevered in developing strong relationships with their students and endeavored to build stable and predictable environments in their classrooms.

The second category of "Complexity" is closely related to "Needs of Students" but moves beyond the human component to include structures and systems that contribute to the complicated working conditions in inner-city schools. The research participants used many adjectives to describe the complex nature of inner-city schools. Descriptors such as diversity, intensity, energy, and chaos were used to paint a picture of a work environment in a constant state of flux. The needs of the students contribute significantly to the complexity of inner-city schools. Supports are required in the areas of programming and human resources to ensure that conditions that support learning are in place for the students. These supports included meals programs, educational assistants, and professionals with specialized training in counseling and special education. Teachers agreed that rarely are sufficient supports available to accommodate the diversity and volume of needs represented in their classrooms. One teacher described the complex nature of her classroom environment at a particular point in time. "There was just too much, there were just too many, it was like triage, you know, and kids come in at this level without any diagnoses, without any support" (E). Another teacher shared the multiple roles she juggled as a classroom teacher. "I realized I had a big job because you're doing, I mean you're not just teaching, you're managing behaviour and you're trying to be nurturing and you're trying to be all of those things" (C). It is clear that insufficient support systems combined with extreme needs of students contribute to complex teaching assignments.

The category of "Wellness" focused on the stresses and pressures teachers experience in inner-city schools on a daily basis. Teachers described themselves as tired, discouraged, exhausted, and stressed at various times during the school year. The needs of the students combined with the complexity of the school environment create a stressful environment for teachers. One teacher shared a typical workday. "It's very extreme work, it's very extreme. I typically work a ten-hour day whether here or taking my work home with me. Sometimes it's just a busy job. This is a very complicated environment" (E). Another teacher described the challenge of detaching from the issues children bring with them to school. "You're dealing with these students, dealing with their adversity at such a young age is really hard. Sometimes you take more of that home with you, you start to struggle maybe a little bit more with it" (C). Teachers identified the need for coping mechanisms and outlets for stress release in order to achieve balance in their lives. A teacher stated that, "We also have a life aside from teaching and we need to be aware of our own health and wellness, if you don't take care of yourself nobody else will" (C). Several of the interviewed teachers linked wellness to incentives that could support and keep teachers in inner-city schools. One teacher suggested that "days-in-lieu" would be appropriate incentives. "I think that days-in-lieu would be good. It's such a high stress job that having the option to take a day off without it going off your sick days or just take a day to be you and take time for yourself because you have to be well to be there" (A).

The category of "Staffing" became a repository for all topics relating to the business of staffing a school. Teaching experience, hiring practices, and recruitment and retention incentives were important topics assigned to this category. The research participants shared their personal journeys to becoming inner-city teachers. Of the seven participants, only two

had applied for an inner-city position. The other five teachers were assigned to inner-city

schools with no choice in the decision. They felt that this was an acceptable practice as long

as supports were in place to provide the specialized training that new teachers would require.

"You have to have the skills to deal with the kids and if you don't have that training you're

going to have a miserable year. I've seen teachers come and go that didn't have the training"

(A). A common belief expressed by the research participants was that a teacher had to "want

to be there" for them to be successful. One teacher stated, "You have to want to be there. If

you're put in there for the sake of just putting a body in there, there's no point. You might as

well not have anybody there" (D). Several teachers expressed the opinion that all teachers

should work in an inner-city school at some point in their teaching career and that this

experience would enhance their teaching practice. One teacher stated that, "I think it is a very

valuable experience for someone who has some experience because it forces you to meet the

needs of kids" (B). The research participants found the idea of incentives to encourage

recruitment and retention of teachers to be an abstract concept as these are not part of

accepted practice in this jurisdiction. They felt, as a group, that incentives that focused solely

on financial enticements would attract people to inner-city schools for "the wrong reasons".

Several teachers suggested that more subtle financial incentives such as: student loan

forgiveness or support, early retirement incentives, acceleration up the pay scale, and

additional pension contributions would encourage teachers to stay in inner-city assignments.

They supported "days-in-lieu" and increased collaboration and preparation time as incentives

that could help compensate for the complex working conditions they experience. One teacher

suggested use of "information sessions" to prospective candidates highlighting the rewards

and challenges of inner-city education as a recruitment tool. The teacher described this

process as, "holding information sessions so you can let teachers know who are maybe interested in coming here. I like the idea of sharing with them what some of the positive things about being in this building are" (B). Another teacher noted that inner-city schools rarely do a good job of promoting the good things that happen at their schools. "Maybe we don't promote it enough, maybe we don't get involved in things, maybe we like to keep it a secret" (D).

The category of "Resources" represented topics that related to the both the physical and human resources provided in inner-city schools. Physical resource concerns included the state of the physical plant and availability of adequate teaching resources. Human resource concerns focused on the scarcity of support professionals such as teaching assistants and specialist teachers. The lack of, adequacy, or abundance or resources in a school depended on the particular school, classroom, and perspective of the reporting teacher.

The category of "Safety" is closely connected to the neighborhoods that most inner-city schools are located in. Teachers mentioned, usually prior to working in an inner-city school, that they were concerned with the reputation of the neighborhood surrounding the school. One interviewee described the neighborhood as, "it was in the 'hood, it was inner-city, it was all the drugs, it had a bad reputation" (A). The teachers accepted the neighborhoods as part of the conditions of working in inner-city schools and their concerns diminished as they established relationships within the community.

Mindset

The theme of *Mindset* represents actions and beliefs that teachers can exert control over. Unlike *Working Conditions*, which they have little influence on, teachers can make practical and philosophical choices about their teaching assignment. They can approach their

work with optimism and view its related challenges as opportunities to stretch and grow. Alternatively they can look upon their assignment with despair and see the work ahead as an impossible task. They can seek the support of colleagues when they encounter difficulties. They can acquire special training and resources to better support their students. Many choices can be made on a daily basis that affect the quality of their teaching experience and the rewards they derive from their work. The categories comprising the theme of *Mindset* were: "Motivation," "Outlook," "Change," and "Decision-making."

We have learned that inner-city schools are complex institutions with unpredictable climates. Inner-city students lead complicated lives and their problems accompany them to school each day. Still, inner-city teachers remain motivated to work in these environments and they derive immense satisfaction from the work they do. One teacher described the "service" aspect of her work. "There's a huge component of service to my job. I don't really think about it as a job. I totally think about it as a vocation" (E). The research participant with the greatest amount of teaching experience was assigned to an inner-city school when her previous school experienced decreased enrolment. She described her move to an inner-city school as a career-defining experience. "Probably like me, who would never have chosen to be here but went there and found it to be my calling" (F). Teachers were motivated by the possibility of making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children. They wanted to see students achieve their potential and were thrilled when they had an opportunity to witness academic and personal growth in their students. One teacher described such a moment. "When you can see that somebody's found a window finally and they're not just banging on the door. You know they've gotten it. That is a good feeling" (F). Another teacher shares

that, "there's nothing like having a day when you're teaching kids and you see that they get it or they're motivated to learn and they want more" (C).

The category of "Outlook" focused on the perspective inner-city teachers adopted towards the challenges they face in their work. The research participants used the following words or phrases to describe how they viewed their assignments and life in general: optimism, whole-picture, open-minded, flexible, happy, excited, and adventurous. They maintained high standards and expectations for their students. They identified themselves as lifelong learners and viewed the challenges they encountered as learning opportunities. They reflected on what went well and what didn't and used this information to craft better lessons and learning experiences for their students. The capacity to "reflect" on one's practice was highly valued by the research participants and was identified as a desired quality in an effective teacher for inner-city schools. The research participants supported a positive outlook on the challenges they faced. One teacher stated that, "you have to be positive, a lot of the children have enough negatives in their lives so you've got to hit those positive things" (F). The collegial support provided in their schools helped to maintain positivity when the going got tough. One teacher described the staffroom atmosphere as, "It was a fun staff and we could howl at the silliest things" (A). Another teacher stated that, "there's something very genuine about humor and its very unifying to laugh with people and I want to work with people who laugh because this work is hard" (E). The research participants acknowledged that they had worked with teachers who viewed inner-city schools in a negative light and they did not receive the same rewards from their work. Some of these teachers moved on to other assignments and some remained within their schools.

"Change" was the third division identified in the theme of *Mindset*. This category was a compilation of ideas and thoughts surrounding the topic of change. Change and uncertainty were recurring refrains in the research participants' accounts of their inner-city experiences. Professional growth and growth in the skillsets of their students were both seen as positive examples of change. Phrases such as: shift in focus, expanding horizons, and putting into practice describe the processes of adaptation and growth. In the words of one participant, "Change isn't inherently good or bad, it's just change. Sometimes it's what's required for stability" (E). Change could also have negative connotations. Several of the teachers identified their initial experiences in an inner-city school with words such as: apprehension, angst, frightened, daunting, and scared. These negative emotions were connected to the uncertainty that accompanied change to a new assignment in an unfamiliar setting.

The final category identified in the theme of *Mindset* was "Decision-making". Decision-making in the context of this analysis was about making choices regarding information, biases, and preconceptions about inner-city schools and inner-city students. Teachers related conversations they had with colleagues prior to teaching in inner-city schools. One teacher reported that, "colleagues said that it wasn't a good choice to go there and not one of them had been there" (A). The research respondents recounted numerous instances where colleagues and others had perpetuated negative stereotypes and misinformation about their schools and students. The teachers demonstrated decision-making when they chose to accept or discard these beliefs.

Attributes

We understand the complexity of inner-city classrooms and acknowledge the repertoire of abilities and attitudes a skilled teacher, in this context, should possess. Research

participants were asked to identify the attributes they felt were necessary for a teacher to be effective in an inner-city school. The theme of *Attributes* is a compilation of the respondents' ideas and thoughts regarding these desired qualities. There were two categories within this theme: "Positive" and "Negative."

The research participants were generous with their descriptions of the qualities of an ideal teacher in an inner-city school. The list of desired attributes represented qualities primarily drawn from the affective domain as the more practical skills are identified under the theme of *Skills*. Teachers identified the following characteristics as being desirable in an effective teacher: compassionate, calm, collaborative nature, patient, understanding, sympathetic, dedicated, adaptable, empathetic, reflective, confident, resilient, non-judgmental, hard-working, optimistic, nurturing, flexible, and possessing a sense of humor. There was considerable discussion about whether effective teachers needed to have previous teaching experience to be effective in an inner-city setting. Several teachers did not think that it was a necessity but the majority of the respondents felt that prior teaching experience would be a valuable asset.

Negative attributes were identified as: unforgiving, uncaring, authoritarian, judgmental and inflexible. The majority of the discussions focused on positive attributes but several interviewees highlighted specific situations where they had observed teachers demonstrating these negative qualities.

Skills

Effective classroom teachers demonstrate many practical skills that are the result of training and professional development opportunities. The theme of *Skills* represents concepts and ideas relating to expertise that can be learned through specialized training and honed

through reflection and repetitive practice. There were three categories within this theme, "Training," "Classroom Management," and "Instruction."

The category of "Training" represented the research participants' views on what training was necessary for effective teaching in an inner-city school. They also shared their opinions on the best delivery models for training programs. The teachers agreed that the best training was embedded in the practice of the school, would be mandatory for all teachers and would help to build a community of professionals who were all "on the same page". Many of the interviewees cited the Primary Project, a Prince George School District initiative, as a good example of this model. As part of an informal contract, teachers who accepted positions in Primary Project schools, agreed to participate in monthly professional development sessions. These sessions covered relevant topics such as generational poverty, promising literacy initiatives, and Aboriginal traditional teachings. One teacher suggested that all inner-city teachers should have, "training in strategies for dealing with de-escalation of behaviors and other issues" (A). Research participants looked beyond typical training models for pre-service teachers and suggested such experiential approaches as job shadowing and student teaching practica in inner-city schools. They strongly believed that practical experience under the guidance of an experienced teacher was the best training available for a future inner-city educator.

Classroom management was deemed such a necessary skill for inner-city educators to master that it was assigned a separate category. Research participants stressed the need for teachers to be well prepared and organized. They believed that an effective inner-city teacher must have excellent planning skills. One teacher described this requirement as, "you have to have every minute of your day well planned out in order to be effective here and as soon as

you kind of let your guard down that's when things kind of go off the tracks" (B). Good planning included setting curricular goals as well as consideration of classroom structures and routines. One teacher described her planning for the management of her Kindergarten class. "I'm very careful, I think a lot about how long do kids sit, how long are we at tables, how much free time can we have, how much choice am I giving. That's all about structure" (E). Classroom management included the setting of high expectations for both student behaviour and academic progress.

The final category under the theme of *Skills* is "Instruction". Concepts emerging from the interview data pertaining to classroom instruction were placed in this category. The research participants believed that thorough curricular knowledge was necessary to be an effective inner-city teacher. One interviewee stated that, "you really have to have a very strong, solid knowledge of curriculum". (F) Another teacher suggested that a background in Special Education would assist teachers with personalizing and differentiating instruction for the range of abilities that exist in an inner-city classroom. "People who are trained in Special Education, it's all about meeting individual needs so you already have that kind of approach to things" (B). The research participants believed that instructional skills could be learned through training and collaboration with an experienced teacher.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Interviews were conducted with seven experienced inner-city teachers to obtain their perspectives on a variety of issues affecting staffing of inner-city schools. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for dominant themes. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were: *Relationships*, *Working Conditions*, *Mindset*, *Attributes*,

and *Skills*. The purpose of the data analysis was to discover information to assist with answering the research questions set out in Chapter 1.

The first research question focused on identification of promising strategies, initiatives, and programs for recruitment of effective teachers for inner-city schools. A review of the literature showcased many different financial incentives that have been utilized in the United States to attract teachers, especially those new to the teaching profession, to inner-city schools. These included: signing bonuses, tuition reimbursement programs, student loan forgiveness, tax credits, housing incentives, retirement benefits, relocation assistance, low-interest mortgages, and salary increases for hard-to-staff schools. The research participants were uneasy about the idea of financial incentives such as bonuses and increased pay. They believed that such overt financial enticements would attract people to inner-city school for the "wrong reasons." Several of the teachers supported less obvious financial incentives such as student loan forgiveness, additional pension contributions, and acceleration up the teacher pay scale as appropriate compensation for the complexity of their work. Cochran-Smith (2006) asserted that teachers choose to teach for altruistic reasons. This assertion was confirmed by the data from this research. Teachers placed high value on student relationships and the rewards they derived from teaching. Stotko et al. (2007) suggested utilizing the altruistic motivation of teachers as a recruitment theme by designing recruitment campaigns around the rewards of inner-city teaching. Such strategies could utilize photos and videos of experienced teachers and students sharing testimonials and stories. A research participant shared a similar plan suggesting "information sessions" for prospective teachers that would be hosted by the inner-city staff. The experienced teachers could share their rewarding experiences and promote the positives of their schools. The

literature suggested that mentorship and induction programs for new teachers could be utilized as effective recruitment tools. Several teachers suggested that student teachers would be better prepared for inner-city teaching assignments if they were required to do at least one practicum in an inner-city setting. The consensus among the research participants was that this type of experience could help dispel negative perceptions of inner-city schools and provide a supply of teachers who were prepared for the complexity of inner-city teaching. This type of "grow-your-own" program has been successful in North Carolina and other jurisdictions. (Miller et al., 2005) Development of such programs would require coordination between institutions offering teacher education programs and school districts.

The second research question echoed the spirit of the first one but shifted the focus from recruitment to retention of teachers for inner-city schools. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) studied the reasons why teachers chose to change schools. They discovered that teachers sought supportive working environments with opportunities to work and collaborate with their professional colleagues. The theme of relationships, especially those with colleagues, resonated throughout the research data. The research participants strongly valued the support, guidance, and mentoring they received from their teaching colleagues. Teachers were motivated to stay in inner-city schools because they felt they were providing a needed service, they were making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children, and they found this work to be rewarding. To retain motivated teachers in inner-city schools we need to facilitate conditions that support them in their work and to provide opportunities for collaboration and team-building. One participant suggested staff retreats as an example of this type of opportunity. The goal would be the creation of a school climate that encouraged collegial support, staff wellness, and sense of community. Supportive working conditions also

included the provision of adequate resources, both human and physical. Financial incentives were less important concerns to the research participants but they would appreciate compensation for the complexity of their teaching assignments. They suggested similar financial incentives as described in the response to the first research question. Several teachers suggested the possibility of "in-lieu" days that they could use at their discretion. They felt that these would support mental wellness and allow for recuperation from the stress they felt from their difficult assignments.

The third question focused on the reasons why teachers choose or choose not to work in inner-city schools. A very practical consideration is that some teachers don't have a choice and others do. Of the seven teachers interviewed in the research study, five were assigned to inner-city schools. They had no choice in where they were placed. If teachers are able to apply and exercise choice they tend to choose "easier' assignments in less complicated working environments. Prince (2002) asserted that teachers choose to not work in inner-city schools if they have other options. Many negative perceptions and stereotypes surround inner-city schools. They are in inner-city neighborhoods that are characterized as dangerous and crime-ridden. They serve high-needs populations and are complex institutions. Despite those detractions, many teachers are highly satisfied by their inner-city experience. They are optimistic in their outlook and find the work and relationships to be exceptionally rewarding. The teachers interviewed for this study overwhelming described their inner-city experience as a positive one. They attributed personal and professional growth to managing the challenges they faced in providing educational programming to appreciative students with diverse needs. The choice to teach in an inner-city school appears to be influenced greatly by the mindset of the particular teacher.

The fourth question considered why teachers choose to stay or leave inner city schools. The answers to this question are closely related to the issue of retention discussed in the response to question two. We have determined that teachers choose to work in supportive and collegial environments. If these conditions erode and the supports are no longer evident they may choose to leave. One research participant, who has left an inner-city school, made the choice to leave after a new administrator arrived in the building. The focus shifted from child-centered education to collection of data. The teacher found this climate unacceptable and moved on. Other teachers, after lengthy assignments, decided to move on to other opportunities that would challenge them professionally. Some teachers, who had been assigned to inner-city schools, could not adapt to the complex environment and decided to find schools that were a better fit for their abilities and skillsets. Teachers primarily choose to stay in inner-city schools because they find enjoyment and rewards in the work.

The final question looked at the desired characteristics and attributes of an effective teacher for inner-city schools. These are comprised of skills or practical abilities and attributes, which deal with elements from the affective domain. Our research identifies skills identified with classroom management and curricular knowledge to be desired in an effective inner-city teacher. Teachers would be well prepared, organized, and planned as the complexity of the teaching environment means that anything can happen at any point in time. An effective teacher would build strong relationships with their students and know each one on a personal level. They would be familiar with the home environment of their students and be able to support them when they were having difficulties. An effective teacher would approach their students with compassion and understanding. They would demonstrate empathy and be non-judgmental in how they dealt with students and their families. An

effective inner-city teacher would be resilient and be able to "bounce back" from a tough day. They would demonstrate an optimistic outlook and view students and their progress in a positive light. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to change were identified as desirable traits. An effective teacher would provide a nurturing environment for their students. They would reflect on their teaching practice and its effect on the progress of their students. They would laugh with their students and colleagues and support the common vision of the school. They would derive enjoyment from their work and strive to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Chapter Summary

The focus of this chapter was discussion of the research findings. The research data were derived from face to face interviews with seven experienced inner-city teachers. The teachers responded to a series of questions posed on a variety of topics relating to inner-city teaching and their personal experiences in inner-city schools. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for resonant themes. The themes of *Relationships, Working Conditions, Mindset, Attributes,* and *Skills* and the supporting categories and concepts formed the basis of discussion in this chapter. The themes were discussed in detail with quotes from the interview transcripts provided to support the analysis. The literature review and research data were referenced in providing answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

The purpose of this study was to examine the issues surrounding staffing of inner-city

schools. All schools wish to attract the best teachers and build strong and cohesive faculties.

Inner-city schools have greater difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff as they offer

more complex working environments. When given the option, most teachers choose to work

in schools with positive reputations, "easier" clientele, and simpler working conditions.

Conclusions

We discovered, as a result of this research, that inner-city schools would benefit from

targeted recruitment strategies that marketed their schools differently. We found that teachers

generally chose to enter the profession of teaching for altruistic reasons. They enjoyed the

rewards of helping children and felt that their work was meaningful. They derived

satisfaction from being of service to others. This type of motivation was especially prevalent

in the teachers who chose to work in inner-city schools. Inner-city students were likely to

come from backgrounds of generational poverty, be of a minority, be a recent immigrant, and

lag behind their peers academically. The inner-city educator is more than a "teacher" to his

or her students. That teacher becomes a stable, nurturing, empathetic, and safe adult in their

students' lives. This responsibility was important to inner-city educators and was viewed as a

reward rather than a detraction of the job. Collegial relationships that offered emotional

support, pedagogical advice, and professional mentorship were valued highly by inner-city

teachers. They accepted that their work was difficult but was made easier by the support of a

strong team. Teachers acknowledged the challenging environments of inner-city schools and

recommended specialized training to support teachers new to inner-city environments. They

felt that training that focused on understanding students' backgrounds, adapting curricula and

activities for student needs, and organizational strategies for complex environments would assist teachers to be successful in their new assignments. A strong mentorship program was seen as a valuable support for new teachers. New teachers would be matched with experienced inner-city teachers for considerable periods of time and would work together on lesson design and delivery, classroom management, and other areas of professional interest. We discovered that teachers were not motivated by overt financial incentives such as signing bonuses and were in fact wary of the quality of teacher they would attract. They would appreciate financial support in the areas of student loan repayment, acceleration up the pay scale, increased pension contributions, and early retirement incentives as compensation for the complexity of their assignments. Teachers also supported the concept of "in-lieu" days that could be used at their discretion. They felt that extra days away from their demanding classrooms would assist with their personal wellness and help reduce the stress they felt at times during the school year. It was apparent that recruitment strategies should focus on appealing to the altruistic nature of teachers. Campaigns that utilized testimonials from inner-city teachers and students and highlighted the rewards of the work were suggested. Opportunities for teachers to visit schools and experience the supportive environments would help dispel negative stereotypes and preconceptions they might have. "Grow-your-own" programs that gave pre-service teachers inner-city teaching experiences were suggested as promising practices. These programs were seen as beneficial to both parties as the schools received the support of additional adults and the teacher candidates gained practical inner-city experience.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The data for this research study were collected from interviews of seven experienced and dedicated inner-city teachers. The interview questions touched on a variety of topics regarding inner-city school staffing. The research participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and beliefs regarding the challenges and rewards of inner-city teaching. The experiences and insight shared by these inner-city educators formed a rich database for analysis and provided authenticity to the study. The findings of this study were based on a small sample of interviews. This is one limitation of the study. The research participants were colleagues of the researcher and this personal connection may have affected the type of information that was shared. I think this familiarity influenced the interviews in a positive manner, as there was an implicit shared understanding of the workings of inner-city schools from the outset. The Prince George School District is centered in a medium-sized city in central British Columbia. The local issues and practices of this school district might not be generalizable to larger urban centers or other provinces and jurisdictions.

Implications

The implications of this study are primarily pragmatic in nature. The findings suggest practical strategies and programs that can be implemented in school districts to recruit and retain quality teachers for their inner-city schools. Promising practices reported in the educational literature and suggestions from successful inner-city teachers were both considered in this research.

Future research could focus on the study and design of successful mentorship programs for inner-city schools. Mentorship in a collegial environment was suggested as a valuable vehicle for supporting teachers who were new to inner-city schools. Experienced

inner-city teachers were interviewed for this study but it would be interesting to hear the perspective of non inner-city and pre-service teachers as well. A pilot study involving an inner-city practicum experience for student teachers could give insight into better pre-service preparation for future teachers.

Recommendations

One message that emerged clearly from the data was that teachers felt tremendous responsibility for the welfare of their students. They frequently adopted parental roles because the families of their students were absent from or under-represented in their children's school experiences. Empowering families to become active partners in the education process is necessary for positive change to happen in inner-city schools. The concept of a "community school" considers all aspects of the inner-city school community. Programs that support parents and families could be offered in the same buildings where students attend school. The school then becomes the heart of the community. Development of these programs requires coordination with public agencies that provide social supports as well as altering the image we have of what schools are. I feel that the support of strong community school initiatives would strengthen inner-city communities and result in increased success for inner-city students.

The research findings were clear that teachers chose inner-city teaching for altruistic reasons. They derive rewards from their work and value the emotional connections they develop with their students. Recruitment campaigns for inner-city schools should consider this motivation in their design. The data show that teachers would respond positively to testimonials and stories shared by successful inner-city teachers and students. There should be opportunities for prospective teachers to spend time in inner-city classrooms and talk to

inner-city teachers. Recruitment materials should focus on the positive feelings that teachers receive from inner-city teaching.

If financial incentives to attract teachers to inner-city schools are considered they should be offered in the form of student loan repayment assistance, "in-lieu" days, extra pension contributions, early retirement incentives, or acceleration up the pay scale. Teachers did not support overt financial incentives such as signing bonuses and recruitment incentives as they felt they would not attract suitable candidates.

Pre-service teachers were seen as a source of potential future inner-city educators if they were offered practica and other preparatory experiences in inner-city settings. Several university programs in the United States have experimented with such cooperative educational programs. Students would be required to do have at least one practicum experience in an inner-city school and they would study educational theory at the same site where they were gaining practical knowledge. Such programs would utilize the expertise of inner-city teachers and immerse pre-service teachers in the complexity of inner-city schools. A strong recommendation of this research is that a relationship such as this be explored between the Prince George School District and the University of Northern British Columbia.

Concluding Statements

Inner-city schools are complex institutions. Teaching in inner-city schools is difficult and demanding work. I have experienced the challenges and rewards of inner-city schools as a teacher and as an administrator. I have always believed that it took special people to accept the challenges of inner-city education. This research has confirmed that belief. The value of a strong collegial community was affirmed in this study. I believe this to be true in all school settings and will encourage my current and future staff to create supportive collegial cultures.

It was a lengthy journey to the completion of this research and I have benefitted from the process of self-examination that was integral to the project. I am not alone in declaring that I became a better teacher, a better administrator, and a better person from my inner-city experience.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information Letter

Dear Participant:

Please accept this letter as an invitation to participate in research into the subject of recruitment and retention of teachers for inner city schools. I am an administrator in School District #57 and a graduate student at the University of Northern British Columbia.

I am conducting research into the beliefs, experiences, and practices surrounding the recruitment and retention of teachers in inner city schools in Prince George. Interviews of practicing teachers will provide data for the qualitative research portion of my thesis for the degree of Master of Education in Multidisciplinary Leadership. The proposed research has been approved by School District #57.

The criteria for participation in this study are that interviewees must have worked as classroom teachers for a minimum of three consecutive years in an inner city school within the last five years. The interview process involves meeting with the researcher and answering a series of questions regarding your experiences and thoughts about the work of a teacher in an inner city setting. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately one hour of your time and will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for common themes and ideas. I hope to discover what practices, preparation, training, incentives, and hiring practices are effective in attracting and retaining quality teachers in inner city settings.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your identity will remain confidential. A code will be assigned to all of the information you provide protecting your anonymity. All interview transcripts and recordings will be maintained in a secure location and will be destroyed a year after completion of the thesis. You may view the transcribed interview and clarify statements prior to my analysis of the data.

There are no risks or negative effects of participation in this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time and the information provided by you will be withdrawn as well. The benefits of participation in this study may include the satisfaction of utilizing your knowledge and experience to improve teaching situations for future teachers in inner city schools and subsequent improvement of the educational experience for inner city students.

I hope that you will participate in this project as your experience is the most authentic data available to answer my research questions. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at (250) 563-5086, (250) 562-3076 or by emailing karichardson@sd57.bc.ca. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Andrew Kitchenham, at (250) 960-6707 or by emailing kitchena@unbc.ca. The Research Ethics Board may be contacted at reb@unbc.ca.

Thanks for considering this request, your assistance and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Richardson

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

A time and location for the interview will be arranged at the convenience of the

participants. The length of the interview will vary with participants but will not exceed two

hours. The process for protecting the confidentiality of each participant will be explained

prior to having him or her sign the consent form. The consent form will be signed before

starting the interview process. Interviews will be recorded digitally with the participant's

permission and written notes may also be recorded. A written transcript of the interview will

be made available to each participant when this stage of the research has been reached.

Participants will be given the opportunity to meet in person with the interviewer to discuss

the transcript if they wish. Any errors or misrepresentations in the transcribed interviews will

be corrected at this time. A written summary of research results will also be provided to each

of the participants prior to project completion.

The following set of questions will provide a guide for the interviews:

1. How many years have you been teaching? Describe your previous teaching experience
prior to working at an inner-city school.

2. Did you apply for a job in an inner-city school or were you otherwise assigned there?

3. How long have you been there or how long were you there?

4. Do you remember how you felt when you knew that you were going to be working at an
inner city school? Describe your fears, reservations, preparations, biases, and preformed
opinions prior to joining the teaching staff at the school.

5. How did your family, friends and colleagues react when they found out about your
assignment?

6. What were your first impressions of the school?

7. Did you do any research about the school before you accepted the position? If so whom did you talk to? What did they tell you?

8. Did you take part in either a formal or informal mentoring program at the school? If so, was this participation in this program voluntary or mandatory? Is so, how long was support provided?

9. If you have left an inner-city position, why did you make that decision? Would you return to teaching in an inner-city position? Why or why not?

10. If you are still in an inner-city position, why do you stay?

11. If you were in a position to hire teachers for inner-city schools what characteristics, personality traits, qualities, experience would you be looking for in potential teaching candidates?

12. What do you think makes a teacher an effective teacher in an inner city situation?

13. Did you receive any special training, resources, or professional development opportunities that helped you to work effectively with your students? Describe these opportunities. Was this training offered prior to starting your position or during the school year?

14. What type of support did you ask for from your administrators? Did you receive it?

15. What type of support did you ask for from your teaching colleagues and school staff? Did you receive it?

16. What do you think inner-city schools could do to make themselves more attractive to potential teaching staff?

17. Would incentive programs, financial or otherwise, attract you to an inner-city teaching position? Why or why not?

18. Would incentive programs, financial or otherwise, encourage you to stay at an inner-city school? Why or why not?

19. What type of incentive programs do you think would attract suitable candidates to work in inner-city schools?

20. What type of incentive programs do you think would encourage suitable teachers to remain in inner-city schools?

21. What do/did you find to be challenging about working in an inner-city school?

22. What do/did you find to be rewarding about working in an inner-city school?

23. Do/did you think that working at an inner-city school is/was beneficial, neutral, or harmful to your mental well-being?

24. Do/did you think that working at an inner-city school is/was beneficial, neutral, or harmful to your physical well-being?

25. Would you describe teaching at an inner-city school as a positive experience to potential teachers? Why or why not?

26. What type of preparation: special training, resources, or professional development opportunities do you think would help newly-hired teachers to be effective in inner-city schools?

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

☐I understand that provisions have been made to ensure the confidentiality of any information that I may give and that my name will not be used in this research but I will be identified by a code number or pseudonym.

☐I understand that the interview data and transcripts will be kept secure on a password-protected computer. Paper copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed a year after thesis completion. Digital information will also be destroyed a year after thesis completion.

☐I understand that only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the raw data.

☐I understand that if I have any questions or wish to discuss this study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

☐I understand that my participation is completely voluntary.

☐I understand that I may withdraw from this study at anytime I wish without penalty. If I choose to withdraw from the study the information I provided will also be withdrawn.

Name of Participant:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

My signature indicates agreement to participate in this study on the recruitment and retention of teachers for inner city schools.

APPENDIX D

Study Results Summary Request

☐ I wish to receive a summary of the results of this study on recruitment and retention of teachers for inner city schools.

Please print your name, mailing address, phone number and email address in the space below.

Name:_____

Address:_____

Phone Number:_____

Email Address:_____