Factors Influencing the Retention of Teachers in Private Schools Serving Students with Autism

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Factors Influencing the Retention of Teachers in Private Schools Serving Students with Autism

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Leah M. Farinola has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Spring Semester.

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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate’s file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.
Abstract

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study explored the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators' scope of control. The research design consisted of two phases, with the first phase guiding the second. The first phase was quantitative and included collecting and analyzing data through teacher responses from an online survey. Survey data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. This analysis led to the creation and review of the interview questions utilized in the second phase. The second phase was qualitative and included interviewing, coding, and analyzing teacher interviews. In the second phase of this research, a qualitative collection of text data was gathered through structured interviews. These interviews were used to explain further what organizational aspects may influence teachers to remain in the school. These interviews allowed for additional insight into the teachers’ perspectives that quantitative research alone would not have been able to identify. The rationale for selecting this mixed-methods approach is that the quantitative data and subsequent analysis will provide a general understanding of the research problem, and the qualitative data and subsequent analysis will refine and explain the results through an in-depth analysis of teachers’ responses. Results revealed that the most consistent themes and areas for administrators to consider included growth and leadership opportunities for teachers, training and professional development, support for staffing and challenging behavior, recognition and acknowledgment of work, and pay and compensation. Additionally, school administrators should solicit employee feedback, utilize human resource strategies, and consistently evaluate and modify efforts as needed.

Keywords: special education, autism, attrition, retention, private schools
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the four most important people in my life. Without you all this would not have been possible.

- My sister, Amber Zambrana: To my nurturing, kind, and compassionate as “sister” ant – you have been and will continue to be my co-pilot, reader, email sender, memo taker, recaller of things when I forget… the list goes on. You have no idea how much you mean to me. I am so blessed to be your sister and lucky to be your friend. I am incredibly proud of you, and it is inspiring to see the woman and educator you have become. Thank you so much for your help throughout this process and everything always. You continue to go above and beyond.

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Chapter I
Introduction

This study was designed to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in private schools for students with disabilities, specifically autism disorder, in New Jersey. An overview of the evolution and history of special education is provided as a context for this study to help facilitate an understanding of where the field has been to understand where it may be going.

The roots of special education in the United States can be traced back as early as 1893 when the Massachusetts Supreme Court upheld a decision to expel a student based on poor academic performance. Later, in 1919 the Wisconsin Supreme Court excluded a child with cerebral palsy from the public school because teachers and students felt depressed and nauseous in this child’s presence. Most significant advancements in the special education field have occurred in the last 65 years (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

In the 1950s, there was a change in the attitudes toward students with disabilities due to the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) landmark case in which the decision that segregation based on race violated equal educational opportunities. This decision paved the way for a growing understanding that all individuals have a right to public education regardless of race, gender, or disability. Following Brown v. Board of Education, funding for special education programs and training increased. However, public school districts still had the right to elect to participate in special education incentives through the 1960s. It was not mandatory to provide these services to all students (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provided an allocation of federal funds for public education. This act was amended in 1966 to set funds aside specifically for students with disabilities. In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act indicated that a
person with a disability could not be deprived or excluded from any activity or program receiving federal funding and assistance, whether public or private. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), was the next phase of evolution for special education. This act introduced individualized education programs, free and appropriate public education, and least restrictive environments (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

Another significant milestone occurred with the Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley (1982), the first U.S. Supreme Court case ruling that students must benefit from an educational program. It was no longer at the discretion of the district. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) required additional compliance of districts and institutions that do not receive federal assistance. Education that was previously seen as a privilege for special education students was now a legal right.

IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 to emphasize academic outcomes for students with disabilities. In 2004, there was a second authorization of IDEA in which Congress reiterated the importance of special education and related services meeting students' unique needs. In this reauthorization, students with disabilities should have “access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible” (1400 section, c5) (IDEA, 2004). Furthermore, this reauthorization required scientific, research-based interventions, also known as response to intervention (RTI) practices.

One of the core components of least restrictive environments (LRE) is to ensure that the educational setting contains as many non-disabled peers as appropriate. However, given the severity of some individuals with disabilities, education in the sending school district may not always provide a meaningful education. In these instances, approved private schools for
individuals with disabilities (APSSD) may be the most appropriate educational setting. One particular population that often receives services from APSSDs is students with autism due to their individualized needs, including significant behavioral and communication challenges. With the increase in autism prevalence in recent years, special education services have been increasingly allocated for individuals with autism. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has consistently released increasing prevalence rates of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) that reflect the need for special education services. In 2014, the overall prevalence of ASD was one in 54 eight-year-old children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Nowhere in the United States is the prevalence of autism more striking than in New Jersey, where rates are one in 32 children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). As these high rates continue to be evident in New Jersey, the quality of specialized programs for students with autism is essential. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website lists 137 approved private schools for students with disabilities (APSSDs). Approximately 46% of these schools serve individuals with autism (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2019).

Many of the schools for children with autism utilize the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA), the only empirically based effective intervention for individuals with autism (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). High-quality ABA requires intensive staff training, on-going supervision, modification, and individualization of students’ educational programming. As such, the retention of skilled instructors is essential to ensure the efficacy of the students’ academic programs (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004).
Teacher turnover and retention, specifically in special education, have been a topic of discussion for school leaders, educational advocates, and researchers for decades. Qualified and experienced teachers are crucial to academic excellence, and high turnover in specialized programs is challenging. Many times, certified teachers leave APSSDs to pursue a position in public schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Although public schools may be a more appealing option due to benefits such as tenure, higher salaries, 180-day school year, and pension, many teachers choose to remain in APSSDs, despite these apparent public school benefits. Examining why these certified teachers stay is necessary to enhance retention in approved private schools for children with autism utilizing ABA principles.

**Statement of the Problem**

Employee retention is essential for organizational success. Teacher turnover has many negative implications (Ingersoll, 2001). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) discussed how high turnover undermines student achievement. For approved private schools for students with autism, teacher turnover potentially undermines student achievement as new teachers require time to learn the principles of ABA. Valuable instructional time may be lost as teachers are receiving training and working to build trust and rapport with students and colleagues. As such, the process of familiarizing a new teacher into a classroom can significantly impact educational progress for students. Teacher turnover also imposes additional financial costs (Barnes et al., 2007; Billingsley, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) indicated that the cost of replacing a teacher includes expenses related to termination, recruitment, hiring, and training, which can cost over $10,000. As private schools tend to have smaller budgets, the amount spent on additional recruitment, hiring, and training is magnified.
Whereas some research focuses on teacher turnover and reasons for leaving, this study centered on attitudes and perceptions of teachers as they relate to satisfaction and retention (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Cerino-Britton, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Mertler, 2016). Research gaps remained regarding staff retention in APSSDs to meet the needs of individuals with autism. Guided by motivational and organizational theories, I looked to identify and explore the factors associated with teacher retention in private schools for students with autism. Teaching students with autism can be demanding and stressful; much of the literature acknowledges special education teachers’ factors to leave the profession or transfer to public school settings (Billingsley, 2004; Cerino-Britton, 2016). This study sought to provide some insight as to why teachers remain in private schools. Additionally, this study added to the existing literature on teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism. Understanding retention factors in schools may likely impact school administrators' decisions to put measures in place to facilitate teacher retention.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study explored the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators' scope of control. Literature indicated a persistent gap between the scientific and educational fields related to linking scientific evidence-based recommendations to academic practice (Gersten et al., 1997; Klingner & Boardman, 2011). This gap is attributed to many preexisting barriers and an overall lack of communication between the two fields. Consequently, research gaps remain regarding staff retention in APSSDs to meet the needs of individuals with autism. Billingsley (2004) identified a need for research specific to special education teacher perspectives in addition to an
in-depth analysis of teachers who continue in the field to understand why these teachers remain committed to working with students with disabilities.

Klingner and Boardman (2011) suggested a mixed-methods approach to investigate the challenges in special education. Using a mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative study design and collecting and analyzing data by way of teacher responses to an online survey, this study sheds light on why teachers choose to remain in private schools for students with autism in New Jersey. This study explored the most influential variables in retention within the scope of control of school administrators. The findings were shared with school administrators to decrease teacher turnover and increase practices that foster teacher retention.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates various factors for teacher satisfaction, dissatisfaction, retention, and turnover. Characteristics may be specific to individual teachers, the organization, or the workplace. The focal issue of this study is teacher retention in private schools for students with autism. Several researchers have identified theories of motivation as impacting employee retention (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Abraham Maslow (1954), an existential psychologist, developed one of the most prominent theories on human needs and motivation. The theory's core was that individuals’ most basic needs must be met before they become motivated to achieve higher level needs. People are motivated by a variety of wants, and some are more fundamental than others. The hierarchy is composed of five levels: (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) social/belonging, (4) esteem, (5) self-actualization (Mangi et al., 2015; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). An employer that successfully identifies and meets these needs will get the most drive and talent that employees can offer (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Operating under the mindset that investing in people is a benefit, not a
cost, will create and retain a skilled and committed workforce that promotes employee satisfaction.

Furthermore, the research of Herzberg et al. (1959) offered insight into the motivation of workers through their two-factor motivation-hygiene theory. The researchers sought to identify factors that lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The five motivational factors that consistently influenced positive work performance and attitudes are: (1) doing the job, (2) liking the job, (3) experiencing success, (4) receiving recognition, and (5) moving upward as an indication of professional growth (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The approach of the current research explored the factors associated with teacher retention. Attracting and retaining good teachers may be accomplished by ensuring satisfaction and motivation. To analyze the factors related to teacher retention, we must identify what factors motivate teachers.

**Research Questions**

Research questions that guided data collection and analysis to achieve the purpose of this study are as follows:

1. How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?
2. How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?
3. How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?
Design and Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods design utilizing a sequential explanatory procedure. The sample population came from approved private schools for students with disabilities located in New Jersey that were listed on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website. The sample population constituted a sample of convenience. The NJDOE website provides a list of 137 APSSDs located in New Jersey under the Special Education Department. I called each school on this list and confirmed the population served. If the school reported that they received individuals diagnosed with autism, they were added to the schools' sample to contact for participants. Of the original 137 APSSD listed on the NJDOE website, 63 (or 46%) schools served students with autism. I contacted each school to obtain written permission, via e-mail, from the school principal or director to participate in the study. Upon receiving permission from the school principal or director of the schools, a survey was disseminated to potential staff participants via email from addresses provided by the participating school’s administration using Qualtrics (Seton Hall University’s online survey platform). Of the 63 schools contacted, 25 (40%) provided consent to provide me with school email addresses of teachers meeting the study criteria. Additionally, six schools responded indicating they did not have any staff members who met the criteria. The instrument used for the collection of data was a self-reporting survey developed by Mertler (2016) adapted from an earlier version with the author’s permission.

The subjects who were administered the survey were full-time teachers at schools serving students with autism. Criteria for inclusion required that the individual completing the survey was an educational professional (Teacher of Students with Disabilities [ToSD or ToH] or Board Certified Behavior Analyst [BCBA]) employed at the APSSD for at least 3 years and oversaw the programming for one classroom/group of students.
Nationally, about 30% of new teachers leave the profession before the second year, and 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within 5 years, according to some estimates (Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). For this study, we are including teachers who have been at APSSDs for 3 years or longer.

Of the 91 teachers sampled, 40 (44%) completed the survey instrument. A detailed description of the characteristics and demographic information of the subjects is provided in Chapter IV.

The instrument used for collecting data was a self-reporting survey developed by Mertler (2016) adapted from an earlier version with the author’s permission. Mertler originally developed this survey in 1992, drawing from Herzberg’s (1966) work. Mertler’s original 1992 survey and most recent 2016 survey included Likert-type, self-rating scales for responses. Mertler (1992) cited various researchers' work indicating that Likert scales are successful for the assessment of motivation and satisfaction in educational research (Ainley et al., 1986; Chapman, 1982; Holdaway, 1978). Maurer and Pierce (1998) indicated that Likert scales are an acceptable method for measuring self-efficacy as they have similar reliability, error variance, and equivalent levels of prediction as alternative measures. All data were analyzed using Qualtrics. Data analyses of the survey were primarily descriptive, and the descriptive statistical findings led to the development of the interview questions.

Participants who consented to participate in a follow-up interview for the qualitative study were contacted by phone to provide qualitative data. The 12 follow-up participants were selected via random sampling to include various demographic variables. Participants who volunteered for the interview but were not selected were contacted to thank them for their willingness to participate. Participants who did not consent to the follow-up interview were not
identified and remained anonymous. Participant interviews were coded as a measure to safeguard confidential data. Data files and code lists were stored in separate locations. I analyzed themes and trends in the survey results to develop follow-up interview questions. The questions were then presented to a panel of experts for review and revisions, which was composed of three clinical/administrative professionals in the field of private special education for individuals with autism who did not supervise any participants in the sample.

Data Analysis

All quantitative data were analyzed using Qualtrics. Data analyses were primarily descriptive in nature. However, tests of independence between variables were conducted for the survey items asking respondents about their satisfaction levels with the job of teaching and various demographic variables. The descriptive statistics findings led to the development of the interview questions, which was the second instrument used for data collection.

I followed a specific protocol to analyze the qualitative data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. After the interviews were transcribed, I began to look for overarching themes with the data by reviewing each transcript three times. Open coding was conducted by reviewing the interview responses line by line in order to break the responses down into emerging thematic codes to interpret them better. The response of each participant was then analyzed based on categorical responses taken from the interviews and categorized into themes. The coded participant interviews were analyzed for commonalities and summarized accordingly.

A table was created with the various themes that emerged from the interviews to determine similarities and patterns resulting from the discussions conducted. The table was then analyzed to identify themes that reoccurred during each of the interviews and within each of the questions. These themes were further examined to determine any sort of pattern within the data.
From the table of the various themes, it was determined if any overarching ideas stood out as having made an impact on teacher retention. It was from this chart of items that I was able to answer the research questions. This qualitative information about teacher attrition and retention was used to form recommendations for APSSD administrators to implement in an effort to decrease teacher turnover.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited by the selection of approved private schools serving individuals with autism as the type of school from which teachers were chosen for completion of the survey and response to Likert-scale, ranking, and open-ended questions and data analysis. This study is limited by the use of a modified version of the Teacher Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and Retention Survey published by Craig Mertler (2016). This study is also limited by the dependence upon voluntary teacher response to the completion of the online survey instrument. Because this is a mixed-methods approach and based on data collected from a survey, there is no way to verify the accuracy of the respondents’ statements. Using a qualitative interview method may lead to researcher subjectivity and issues with respondents’ perceptions of each question.

Additionally, this study is limited by the truthfulness of the respondents for the survey and interview. Whether intentional or unintentional, respondents may provide inaccurate responses when they misread a question, do not understand what is being asked, or report what they believe the researcher will want as a response. Furthermore, researcher bias limits this study. All efforts to minimize researcher bias were made including, but not limited to, survey and interview question development and selection, participant selection, data analysis, and interpretation.
Another limitation of the current study is most of the literature consulted investigated attrition and retention in public school settings. As such, many of the discussed findings may have different implications when applied to private settings. Furthermore, various climate and culture factors were specific to the public school setting and may be mitigated in the private school setting.

A more recent limitation of this study is the potential impacts of COVID-19. This study was conducted during a global pandemic that affected all schools. Teachers may have resigned due to this unique phenomenon, which would have decreased the sample size. Additionally, as some teachers worked remotely, participation may be affected. It should be noted, however, that unlike public schools, most APSSD are providing in-person services.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study only includes data from the teachers in NJ private schools for students with autism who completed the survey during a specific study period. Additionally, caution should be observed when generalizing the findings, as 80% of the participants were females in suburban schools. This study does not examine every aspect of turnover or retention but focuses on the areas related to approved private schools for individuals with autism located in New Jersey. This study is further delimited by the definition of a teacher being someone who oversees a classroom regardless of certification from the NJDOE as a Teacher of Students with Disabilities.

**Significance of the Study**

The increasing number of studies focusing on teacher turnover and dissatisfaction that examine the factors that influence retention and satisfaction may prove to be beneficial for private school administrators. Identifying experiences and practices that are viewed as favorable
by teachers may provide useful data for program and policy development and implementation to increase the likelihood of teacher retention.

Influencing factors in organizational success are employee retention, reducing dissatisfaction, and incorporating preferred and best practices and may influence a teacher’s decision to stay within a school. This study also explored areas of satisfaction that encourage retention and made recommendations on ways to decrease dissatisfaction and turnover. Much of the available literature discusses turnover and retention in public schools. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) has conducted numerous research studies on improving the teaching profession through recruitment, development, and retention of skilled teachers. McKinney (2011) and Cerino-Britton (2016) discussed the scarcity of literature and research focusing on teachers in private schools working with students with autism.

Definition of Terms

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)** is the science of learning and behavior. The goal is to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease behaviors that impede learning or are harmful. According to Baer, et al. (1968), Applied Behavior Analysis is the process of systematically applying interventions based upon the principles of learning theory to improve socially significant behaviors to a meaningful degree, and to demonstrate that the interventions employed are responsible for the improvement in behavior.

**Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** is a developmental disability defined by diagnostic criteria that include deficits in social communication and social interaction and the presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities that can persist throughout life (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).
**Private school:** for this study, a private school is a New Jersey Department of Education approved program, which receives and provides services for students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21.

**Teacher:** for this study, a teacher is someone who, regardless of certification, oversees a classroom.

**Summary**

This chapter presented an introduction to the dissertation and the research on which it is based. Information specific to the problem, purpose, significance, and research questions were provided. Additionally, limitations, delimitations, and definitions were explained. Chapter II presents a review of the literature. Chapter III includes details on the methodology followed for this study. In Chapter IV, the results of this study are explained. Lastly, Chapter V provides a summary of the study with implications and recommendations for further research.
Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature and research focused on teacher satisfaction and retention, which included theories of motivation. This chapter also examines the dynamic of public schools and private schools, along with the challenges administrators face in private schools for students with disabilities. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss various motivation factors, incentives, and changes that have been identified as relevant to teacher retention (Mertler, 2002). Lastly, this chapter examines the Autism Program Quality Indicators (APQI) to illustrate the importance of staff retention for students with autism (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004). This study's primary focus was teacher motivation to remain within private schools for children with autism in New Jersey. A brief overview of human needs as they relate to motivation and satisfaction theories was essential to this study.

Literature Search Procedure

I predominantly found research studies and other pertinent information using the Seton Hall online access to educational databases. The online databases used for the research of this literature review included ERIC, ProQuest, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, and SAGE. Peer-reviewed journals included, but were not limited to, the Journal of Special Education, Journal of Teacher Education, Journal of Educational Administration, American Educational Research Journal, Review of Educational Research, Journal of Research Initiatives, and Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. The data were obtained for each influencing factor by searching variations of related terms, including but not limited to, "special education teacher retention," "teacher attrition and retention," and "teacher turnover." I read each article to determine its relevance to the topic. Other data sources included key motivational theory authors' works,
educational associations' publications, and information from the Centers for Disease Control and New Jersey Department of Education.

**Needs and Motivation**

No single theory for needs, motivation, or satisfaction exists. The earliest studies of motivation involved an examination of individual needs (Bolman & Deal, 2008). An existential psychologist, Abraham Maslow, was a pioneer of motivational theory. Maslow (1954) developed one of the most prominent theories on human needs and motivation. The theory's core is that individuals’ most basic needs must be met before they become motivated to achieve higher level needs. Individuals are motivated by a variety of wants, some more fundamental than others. The hierarchy is composed of five levels: (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) social/belonging, (4) esteem, (5) self-actualization (Mangi et al., 2015; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). An employer utilizing this philosophy will successfully identify and meet employees' needs to increase productivity and employee efficiency (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011).

Operating under the mindset that investing in people is a benefit, not a cost, will create and retain a skilled and committed workforce that promotes employee satisfaction. To garner higher levels of teacher satisfaction, thus leading to teacher retention, Moores-Abdool and Voigt (2007) applied Maslow’s theory to educational research. Findings indicated that when reporting an overabundance of work, due to both caseload and a lack of administrative support, teachers feel isolated and morale decreases. These areas relate to teachers’ psychological needs that must be addressed to reach higher level needs and satisfaction, subsequently facilitating staff retention (Moores-Abdool & Voigt, 2007).

American psychologist and business management expert, Frederick Herzberg, further developed the literature for motivational theories. The research of Herzberg et al. (1959) offered
insight into the motivation of workers through their two-factor motivation-hygiene theory. The researchers sought to identify factors that led to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The research concluded the five motivational factors that consistently influence positive work performance and attitudes are: (1) doing the job, (2) liking the job, (3) experiencing success, (4) receiving recognition, and (5) moving upward as an indication of professional growth (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The motivating factors typically focus on achievement, recognition, responsibilities, advancement, and learnings, while the hygiene factors mainly focus on the workspace environment and types of restrictions surround employees (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Herzberg (1966) concluded that most employee motivation would occur when all hygiene factors are adequately addressed with a focus on satisfaction factors, including achievement and recognition. Giving employees more freedom, authority, feedback, and challenges will enrich their jobs (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Employee performance will increase in a healthy work environment where success and recognition are achievable.

A third motivational theory prominent in the literature is the self-determination theory (SDT) of Richard Ryan and Edward Deci. SDT focuses on intrinsic motivation as opposed to the extrinsic motivation from rewards and incentives. This theory suggested that people have three primary psychological needs to create intrinsic motivation, which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are met in personal or professional settings, individuals will be more proactive and engaged (Rigby & Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT is illustrated as a continuum, and the right side of the SDT continuum is full, active, and engaged motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This level of motivation will facilitate employee
retention. The left side of the SDT continuum, amotivation, exemplifies unwillingness, poor performance, and decreased efficacy and capability, which employers must avoid (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Meeting the needs of employees in a school setting will likely increase a teacher’s job satisfaction and retention, in addition to productivity and commitment.

Public Schools and Private Schools

Research gaps remain regarding staff retention in APSSDs, based explicitly on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to meet the needs of individuals with autism. Teaching students with autism can be very demanding and stressful, and much of the literature acknowledges special education teachers' factors to leave the profession or transfer to public school settings (Billingsley, 2004; Cerino-Britton, 2016). Before reviewing special educator retention and attrition factors, this literature review examines public and private schools’ dynamics.

In 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) mandated free and appropriate public education be provided for all eligible students between the ages of 3 and 21 (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Another major special education milestone occurred in 1982 with the Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley. This was the first U.S. Supreme Court case ruling that students must benefit from an educational program, and it was no longer at the discretion of the district. IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 to emphasize academic outcomes for students with disabilities. In 2004 there was a second authorization of IDEA in which Congress reiterated the importance of special education and related services meeting students' unique needs. In this reauthorization, it was also decided that students with disabilities should have “access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the
maximum extent possible” (1400 section, c5). Furthermore, this reauthorization required scientific, research-based interventions, also known as response to intervention (RTI) practices.

One of the core components of least restrictive environments (LRE) is to ensure that the educational setting contains as many non-disabled peers as appropriate. Given the severity of some individuals with disabilities, however, education in the sending school district may not always provide a meaningful education. In instances such as these, approved private schools for individuals with disabilities (APSSD) may be the most appropriate educational setting. One particular population that often receives services from APSSDs is students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This is often due to the complexity of their individualized needs, which can include significant behavioral and communication challenges. With the increase in autism prevalence in recent years, special education services have been increasingly allocated for individuals with autism.

According to the Condition of Education 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 7.1 million students ages 3 to 21, or 14% of all students, received special education services under IDEA (Hussar et al., 2020). Hussar et al. indicated that 11%, or 781,000 students, have autism among these students receiving special education services. Furthermore, approximately 95% of students with disabilities were served in regular public schools. The remaining five percent were served in a separate school for students with disabilities (three percent), placed in traditional private schools by their parents (one percent), or served in a different residential facility, homebound, in a hospital, or a correctional facility (less than one percent; Hussar et al., 2020).

Teacher turnover and retention, specifically in special education, has been a topic of discussion for school leaders, educational advocates, and researchers for decades. As qualified
and experienced teachers are crucial to academic excellence, high turnover in a specialized program proves to be a challenge. Many times, certified teachers leave APSSDs to pursue positions in public schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Ingersoll and Rossi (1995) indicated that teacher turnover was higher in private schools than public schools, citing the reasons due to lower salaries and fewer benefits according to the 1990-1991 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The researchers substantiated this claim by citing data from the 1991-1992 NCES Teacher Follow-up Survey (TF), in which 17% of former private school teachers indicated salary as a leading source of dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). Furthermore, Ingersoll (2001) indicated that small private schools have relatively higher turnover rates when looking at the size of a school compared with larger public school districts that included high-poverty urban public schools.

Although public schools may be a more appealing option due to benefits such as tenure, higher salaries, 180-day school year, and pension, many teachers choose to remain in APSSDs despite these apparent public school benefits. Various researchers investigated teachers' satisfaction levels in public and private settings, and the research indicated that private school teachers are more satisfied than their public school counterparts (Choy, 1997; Council for American Private Education, 2014; Perie & Baker, 1997). In a study conducted by the Council for American Private Education (2014), the researchers reviewed data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Findings indicated that private school teachers reported higher levels of satisfaction and lower stress levels than their public school colleagues (Council for American Private Education, 2014).

Additionally, the researchers indicated that only 10% of private school teachers reported concerns about job security in regards to student test performance, with reports of 44% for public
school teachers. Furthermore, the Council for American Private Education (2014) reported that although the base salary of public school teachers was substantially higher than that of private school teachers, a slightly higher percentage of private school teachers (50%) indicated that they were satisfied with their salary when compared to public school teachers (47%). Choy (1997) reinforced this by reporting that although private school teachers are paid less, they do report to be more satisfied with their jobs compared to public school teachers due to other aspects. Private school teachers report more autonomy in the classroom and influence over curriculum and policies (Choy, 1997).

Perie and Baker (1997) analyzed teacher satisfaction data from the NCES 1993-94 SASS. This included data from more than 55,000 educators across the country, representing 5,378 public school districts and 3,074 private schools (Perie & Baker, 1997). These findings also indicated that private school teachers tend to be more satisfied than public school teachers. Teachers with greater autonomy, administrative support, and control show higher satisfaction (Perie & Baker, 1997).

Private school teachers reported higher rates for parental support and access to necessary resources and lower rates for workload and challenging student behavior (absenteeism, tardiness, preparedness) than public school teachers (Council for American Private Education, 2014). Choy (1997) indicated that public school teachers attribute poor student behavior, negative student attitudes towards learning, and a lack of parental involvement as contributing factors of school-wide issues compared to their private school counterparts. Choy stated that private school teachers reported a more positive sense of community and culture for their schools; however, the Council for American Private Education said that professional relationships and the school's culture and community are viewed in a positive light by both private and public school teachers.
It is imperative for teachers to feel a strong sense of community in their schools, as this will increase satisfaction and efficacy (Choy, 1997).

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

For the last two decades, teacher characteristics and their relationship to attrition have received extensive study in general education but less in special education (Billingsley, 2004). Ingersoll (2001) indicated special education teachers are more likely to leave a school setting than other teachers, and current research suggests a challenge in retaining special educators, specifically those who work with children with autism (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

According to the *Condition of Education 2018* report by the NCES, 7.1 million students, ages 3 to 21 (14% of all students), received special education services under the IDEA. Only about three percent or 240,000, are served in a private specialized day or residential program (National Association of Private Special Education Centers, 2020). One of the core components of IDEA is accessibility to the least restrictive environment (LRE) to ensure that the educational setting for each student is one that contains as many non-disabled peers as appropriate. As such, IDEA requires that various alternative educational programs and services exist to meet and address the individualized needs of students with disabilities.

Given the severity of some individuals with disabilities, however, services in the local public school district may not provide a meaningful education. In these instances, APSSDs may be the most appropriate educational setting. Students with autism often receive services from APSSDs due to their individualized needs, which can include significant behavior and communication challenges.

With the increase in autism prevalence in recent years, special education services have been increasingly allocated for individuals with autism. It is essential to understand the history of
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder that typically presents with impairments in social functioning and communication that is often accompanied by repetitive behaviors, a strong interest in specific topics or activities, and a preference for sameness and consistency (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Deisinger (2011) provided an overview of the evolution of treatments for individuals with autism. In the 1940s, the treatment of choice for ASD was play therapy, as the experts believed the cause of autism resulted from cold, rejecting parents. From the 1950s through the 1960s, ASD was viewed as a childhood psychosis that included many controversial, ineffective, and inappropriate medical treatments, including electroconvulsive and psychopharmacological therapies. Between the 1960s and 1970s, researchers conducted studies involving behavioral therapies and introduced positive reinforcement for children with autism. These behavioral interventions, specifically ABA, are the only data-driven, scientific intervention supported by empirical research (Deisinger, 2011).

ASDs present unique challenges for school administrators and special education teachers. Effective programs for students with autism require skilled and well-trained staff. For decades, New Jersey has been known for its exceptional autism services and developed the Autism Program Quality Indicators (APQI) in order to identify research-based indicators found in successful autism programs (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004). A review of the APQI illustrates the importance of staff retention for students with autism.

One of the core components is personnel, which exemplifies the importance of maintaining a skilled and trained staff. The recommendation of the APQI is to provide ongoing
administrative support and professional development opportunities for staff and to solicit input through satisfaction and program effectiveness surveys to maximize the satisfaction of school staff (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004).

**Attrition and Retention Factors**

This section of the literature review explores the factors associated with teacher retention and attrition. Darling-Hammond (2003) reported that approximately one third of new teachers will leave the field of education within 5 years. Attracting and retaining adequate teachers may be accomplished by ensuring satisfaction and motivation. To do so, school leaders and policymakers must identify motivational and deterring factors. The literature illustrated various aspects of teacher satisfaction, dissatisfaction, retention, and attrition. Characteristics may be specific to individual teachers, the organization, or the workplace.

Experts studied teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction rates for decades with varying rates of satisfaction reported. For example, the dissatisfaction rate was 32% in 1997, according to Perie and Baker (1997). Though we have seen a decrease since that original study, the dissatisfaction rates are rising yet again, according to Markow et al. (2013) and Mertler (2016). Mertler (2016) reported a teacher dissatisfaction rate of 26%, which expressed an increase from his 2002 research that revealed only a 23% dissatisfaction rate. The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher reported that nationwide, teacher satisfaction and morale continues to decline. Teacher satisfaction has decreased from 62% to 39% and is at its lowest level in 25 years since 2008 (Markow et al., 2013). Studies also reported that provided the chance to start another career, one fourth to one third of teachers would not select teaching (Mertler, 2002, 2016; Perie & Baker, 1997).
If teachers are dissatisfied, what are the implications for students? If teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs, are they providing effective and high-quality daily instruction for students? It is important to attempt to improve motivation and satisfaction consistently.

Many researchers have investigated the reasons that teachers leave, reasons that teachers stay, or a combination of both (Billingsley, 2004). Understanding the factors that influence the decision to leave the field, along with providing frameworks and conceptual models to investigate, is important for reducing attrition. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2003), the four most prominent reasons that teachers indicated dissatisfaction with working conditions included student discipline problems, lack of support from school leaders, low student motivation, and a lack of teacher influence in decision-making.

A comprehensive study by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) reported that 55% of the teachers surveyed most frequently cited job dissatisfaction as a reason for resigning. In their research, dissatisfaction included results of accountability pressures (25%), administrative support (21%), and teaching conditions (21%). The teacher conditions variable was multifaceted, indicating dissatisfaction with teaching assignments, lack of opportunities for advancement, and input. Within that 21%, ten percent reported large class sizes, and nine percent reporting a lack of resources (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Additional findings by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) indicated that 43% of the teachers cited family or personal reasons, 31% retired, 31% pursued alternative job offers, and 18% cited financial reasons. Furthermore, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond investigated the highest predictors of teacher turnover when controlling for student, teacher, and school factors, which included teacher preparation, administrative support, and salaries. Data indicated that candidates who began teaching through an alternative certification program were
25% more likely to leave schools compared to their colleagues who entered through a regular certification program. Additionally, teachers who strongly disagreed that they had supportive administrators were two times more likely to leave than individuals who felt supported.

Although salaries were not a significant factor, teachers were less likely to leave schools that had higher maximum salaries. Strong salary scales, better prepared teachers, and teachers who felt supported by the school leaders were likely to stay in their schools and not leave teaching altogether (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Supportive and positive working conditions can improve teacher retention. Johnson (2006) defined seven areas of working conditions:

1. The physical features of buildings, equipment, and resources, which serve as a platform for teachers’ work
2. The organizational structures that define teachers’ formal positions and relationships with others in the school, such as lines of authority, workload, autonomy, and supervisory arrangements
3. The sociological features that shape how teachers experience their work, including their roles, status, and the characteristics of their students and peers
4. The political features of their organization, such as whether teachers have opportunities to participate in important decisions
5. The cultural features of the school as a workplace that influence teachers’ interpretation of what they do and their commitment, such as values, traditions, and norms
6. The psychological features of the environment that may sustain or deplete them personally, such as the meaningfulness of what they do day to day or the opportunities they find for learning and growth
7. The educational features, such as curriculum and testing policies, that may enhance or constrain what teachers can teach (p. 2).

For this literature review, attrition and retention factors have been summarized into six different domains. However, the themes will overlap throughout the discussion with a great deal of crossover amongst domains as school systems are fluid in operation. These domains include (a) salary and other compensation; (b) work settings, roles, and responsibilities; (c) teacher
support, performance, and professional development; (d) administrative support and leadership; (e) environment and culture; and (f) personal factors.

**Salary and Other Compensation**

One of the first factors mentioned in much of the literature is the impact of salary and other compensations on teacher retention and attrition. There is a sweeping disagreement in the research in regard to salary (Petty et al., 2012). Many researchers argued that compensation is not the leading factor in employee turnover; individuals reported interest in challenging and meaningful work, supportive administration, and opportunities for growth and development (McCoy et al., 2013; Perie & Baker, 1997; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016).

The research of Perie and Baker (1997) indicated a weak relationship between teacher satisfaction and salary. Compensation is an important element and may act as an adequate motivator to attract and retain staff members, but it must be coupled with many additional motivators such as transparency and equity (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016).

Hein et al. (2016) introduced the terminology “total rewards” to describe the salary, compensation, and incentive packages to attract and retain desired staff members. Some of the most influential components of a satisfactory rewards package include salary, medical and prescription drug coverage, paid time-off programs, retirement plans, workplace flexibility, incentives and bonus pay, career, professional development, and training programs, work/life and well-being programs, supplemental insurance policies, long-term incentives, and recognition programs (Hein et al., 2016).
Ingersoll (2001) indicated that teachers are less likely to leave when given opportunities for tenure, which protects academic freedom and job security, and a teacher union, which provides a mechanism to voice opinions and disagreements. Many schools have a salary guide developed, and teachers can see where they will be based on years of service and educational level completed. With all this taken into consideration, Silletto (2018) still held that the answer to retention is not salary. Workforce studies report that employees will stay in positions that are lower paying in their current organization if they feel valued, appreciated, heard, and well-managed (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Stern & Wagner, 2016).

However, it should be noted that many researchers contradict the claim that salary is not a leading factor of turnover (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas, & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Petty et al., 2012; Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Approximately 75% of teachers leaving private schools stated poor salaries as a leading reason (Ingersoll, 2001). Although satisfaction is higher for private school teachers, lower salary positions cause financial restraints, which causes turnover within private settings (Ingersoll, 2001).

Ingersoll and Smith’s (2003) findings indicated that money was more important than respect, recognition, and resources. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) reported that private school teachers earn significantly lower salaries, on average, when compared to public school teachers. Turnover rates will increase if teachers continue to be underpaid and unmentored. School leaders must understand all factors encouraging staff turnover that decreases staff commitment and loyalty, which is highly attributed to stagnant pay.
Work Settings, Roles, and Responsibilities

Darling-Hammond (2003) acknowledged that pay is a factor in teacher turnover, but a larger influence in a teacher’s decision to leave is other conditions including, but not limited to, class size, teaching workload, support, resources, and input into decision making. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) provided a 15-year literature review for special education attrition and retention and found they are closely impacted by working conditions.

Of all studies that were reviewed, the definition of working conditions varied. As a result, it was difficult to conclude the specific variables or combinations of variables that were the most meaningful. The studies do suggest that attrition is more likely when work demands are too high (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Intertwining work problems, including oversized classes, excessive paperwork, diminished support, and minimal resources, may weaken a teacher’s effectiveness (Billingsley, 2004). Excessive and prolonged exposure to these variables may lead to negative affective reactions, including more stress, less job satisfaction, and a decrease in commitment to the field. These factors may inhibit a teacher’s opportunity to experience intrinsic rewards. Billingsley indicated that stress is the most powerful indicator with respect to attrition for special educators. Specific factors that contribute to stress include managing the varying ranges of students’ needs and abilities, organizational requirements, and unclear or conflicting expectations, goals, and directives. There are over two decades of research on the effects of stress and burnout regarding special educators (Billingsley, 2004). Stern and Wagner (2016) reported that employees are much more likely to leave when burnout is high. Addressing the variables that impact well-being and mental health to decrease stress and burnout will increase teacher retention. Additionally,
Markow et al. (2013) found that more than half of the teachers surveyed by The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher indicated feeling a great amount of stress weekly.

Johnson (2006) provided an overview of some challenges that teachers may face, including class sizes, workload, and teaching assignment models. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) noted that special education teachers have many challenging, multifaceted responsibilities to meet, which may elicit feelings of frustration and thoughts of attrition. Large caseloads with unmanageable and unrealistic demands are reported as a leading reason for turnover (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Many special educators viewed paperwork as overwhelming, difficult, and redundant and claimed it interfered with teaching time (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Billingsley (2004) indicated increased paperwork and decreased resources as leading factors in teacher attrition and reported it as a large variable in almost two thirds of special educators who resigned from various positions. The research also revealed that when teachers responded to open-ended questions about concerns in special education, paperwork was always listed as one of the greatest frustrations (Billingsley, 2004).

McCoy et al. (2013) reported that a teacher’s decision to leave often mentioned undesirable working conditions, a stressful workload, and a lack of support with classroom management. Additionally, factors that influenced teacher turnover included the demands of testing and accountability and having to demonstrate familiarity with vast and varied instructional procedures (McCoy et al., 2013). These role-related issues are complex and woven throughout multiple aspects of the profession, which sometimes encourage turnover and dissatisfaction (Billingsley, 2004).

One of the highest reported reasons for teacher dissatisfaction included student discipline problems and lack of student motivation (Ingersoll, 2001). Johnson (2006) and McCoy et al.
(2013) indicated that teachers have reported increased student challenges citing decreased motivation, respect, and family support. There has been a link to caseload issues in terms of discipline, student progress, safety, and the diverse needs of more students (Billingsley, 2004; Johnson 2006; McCoy et al., 2013). Billingsley found that when compared to administrative support and role problems, student issues and variables were less likely to influence teacher attrition.

Many times, the requirements around standardized testing harm teacher satisfaction, with special educators citing testing and accountability as a reason for leaving (Adams, 2010; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), there has been an increased emphasis on standardized state testing and accountability measures. Johnson (2006) specified the teachers reported focusing on standardized test content and frequently skipped untested content. For that reason, instruction is now less individualized and not as focused on enrichment opportunities. Teachers have reported that this shift in focus has impacted their satisfaction due to the inability to focus on celebrating student success. Instead, it focuses on following excessive compliance and testing procedures (Johnson, 2006).

Although many school buildings tend to be similar in terms of the physical structure, there are many differentiating factors with maintenance and functionality. Johnson (2006) stated that satisfaction may not be contingent upon the construction date of the actual school, but instead, importance is placed upon if a facility is cared for or neglected. Nonworking features or malfunctioning systems in a school facility communicate a message of disrespect towards students and staff, ultimately influencing effective and efficient instruction (Johnson, 2006). Alternatively, teachers who work in safe and well-resourced facilities indicate a higher level of
satisfaction, which has an equal influence on retention rates as an increase in salary (Johnson, 2006).

Adams (2010) reported a primary factor in employee satisfaction is meaningful work and professional fulfillment. Sargent (2003) stressed that to have committed staff, teachers must feel connected and feel that their work is meaningful and acknowledged. Considering the aforementioned challenges, teachers may have difficulty completing required tasks while feeling productive, efficient, and engaged in meaningful practices.

**Teacher Support, Performance, and Professional Development**

Darling-Hammond (2003) suggested that in addition to improving working conditions, schools need to provide effective teacher support to retain staff. Robust orientation and mentoring programs increase retention rates by allowing teachers to develop more positive attitudes and feelings towards their skills (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond illustrated that these mentoring opportunities demonstrate benefits for new and veteran teachers. New teachers learn the skills necessary to navigate the beginning of their teaching career, while veteran teachers are revitalized by these collaborative partnerships.

Empirical research provided evidence of a positive impact on teacher retention when teachers participate in a comprehensive mentoring program (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2006; McCoy et al., 2013). McCoy et al. found that teachers who reported inadequate mentoring were more likely to leave the field of education. Furthermore, teachers who continued often cited a positive mentoring experience and support from colleagues and administrators (McCoy et al., 2013).
Employees have reported the importance of a company’s ability to assess their performance effectively. Many teachers indicated that comprehensive evaluations and meaningful feedback from administrators and mentors influence a more effective way of teaching (McCoy et al., 2013). Hein et al. (2016) reported satisfactory evaluation processes lead to more engaged employees. In many professional arenas, managers and employees are looking for a simple, streamlined evaluation process, and the current “one size fits all” practice is no longer preferred (Hein et al., 2016). These findings may be generalized to education.

Autonomy significantly impacted teacher satisfaction levels (Adams, 2010; Perie & Baker, 1997; Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Teachers with greater autonomy showed higher levels of satisfaction compared to teachers who lack autonomy. Professional practices that have a clear impact on teacher satisfaction include professional development opportunities and classroom autonomy, according to Queyrel-Bryan et al. (2019).

Research suggests a relationship between professional development opportunities and retention and commitment to the field (Billingsley, 2004). On the contrary, other research has indicated varied forms of mentoring do not impact job satisfaction (Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Queyrel-Bryan et al. identified that personal and professional growth opportunities stem from professional development experiences, which over 85% of teachers have reported as meaningful (Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019).

One of the highest reported reasons for teacher dissatisfaction includes the lack of opportunity for professional advancement (Ingersoll, 2001). Stern and Wagner (2016) delineated that employees who can envision positive growth and advancement opportunities are 17 times more likely to be happy with their current organization. Sargent (2003) stressed the importance of professional growth experiences, illustrating that they provide a positive and supportive social
setting. A lack of a structured and supportive environment will ultimately deter teachers and inhibit student learning.

**Administrative Support and Leadership**

Administrative support can influence retention and attrition in many ways (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Perie & Baker, 1997; Petty et al., 2012; Silletto, 2018). Ingersoll indicated an important factor for teacher dissatisfaction includes inadequate administrative support. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) defined administrative support in terms of an inclusive culture that fosters collaboration and ensures that all teachers have the resources to do their job effectively. Providing classroom supplies and resources or assigning teachers to mentors demonstrates administrative support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Billingsley (2004) reported that when teachers receive adequate support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to stay. Educators also stated that higher levels of support from the principal increased the likelihood of loyalty. Studies indicated that higher levels of support from principals led to fewer role problems and increase job satisfaction, lessen stress, and increased levels of commitment from staff (Billingsley, 2004; Petty et al., 2012).

Petty et al. (2012) summarized that providing a teacher with respect and recognizing teaching successes are important factors, as the school environment is typically reported as a leading factor in teacher retention. Recognition of achievement trends in staff satisfaction literature (Adams, 2010; Hein et al., 2016; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016). Employees are grateful to be recognized for a job well done and look forward to future recognition; when not recognized, an employee may question their work and not repeat it due to a dialed back interest (Stern & Wagner, 2016).
Sargent (2003) acknowledged that relationship-building does take time away from the many daily tasks that school leaders face but cautions that if neglected and not given time and a plan for the future, school culture will suffer. Desired qualities for school administrators that will likely increase teacher retention include democratic, supportive, and respectful as these will boost the staff morale (Petty et al., 2012).

**Environment and Culture**

Models of teacher satisfaction following the research of Herzberg et al. (1959) have typically presented two mutually exclusive domains for teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction: intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Dinham and Scott (2000) identified the third type of incentives: school-based factors, which include school administration, culture and climate, and organizational structure. This third domain of teacher satisfaction/dissatisfaction is embedded in the wider environment surrounding the school itself. The incorporation of this third domain aimed to assess and understand teachers’ occupational satisfaction to make informed decisions and develop policies (Dinham & Scott, 2000).

Dinham and Scott (2000) found all members of the school communities should create relationships, foster collaboration, and actively participate in meaningful dialogue to improve teacher satisfaction. Additionally, administrators and policymakers should consider this third domain of teacher satisfaction when addressing the issues of teacher retention.

Throughout expert literature, a satisfying factor that increases teacher retention is collaboration. Johnson (2006) indicated that teacher collaboration is rewarding for teachers and likely increases student achievement due to consistency, efficacy, and commitment. Specifically, the author indicated that shared planning time had the highest impact on reducing attrition rates. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) reported that, for special education teachers, peer support and
collaboration can often improve a teacher’s experience because it enhances learning, provides emotional support regarding workplace demands, and helps navigate school structures. Many special educators rely on the support of and collaboration with paraprofessional staff members. As such, many times, attrition and retention may be influenced by special education teachers’ access to paraprofessional support or the quality of the paraprofessional staff (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Billingsley and Bettini (2019) found that administrative support, collegial support, and school culture all contribute to teacher retention. For school culture, the findings were indicative of a specific culture of collective responsibility, in which all stakeholders assume responsibility for student success. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) indicated that many times turnover impacts a culture as one person leaving may initiate a domino effect. Employees may be expected to take on additional responsibilities, which will negatively affect personal morale, thus impacting culture.

Billingsley and Bettini (2019) indicated that when a positive school climate is experienced by special educators, they are more likely to stay than those who reported a negative school climate. Many times, special educators reported that they prefer a culture of collective responsibility that provides a cooperative effort among staff members (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). As special educators interact with various stakeholders, including general education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, district administrators, and parents, the need for collegiality and support are frequently indicated as a top reason for attrition or retention (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Many researchers mentioned the importance of providing a platform for employees to voice their opinions and make recommendations (Hein et al., 2016; Silletto, 2018; Stern &
Wagner, 2016). Adams (2010) indicated that teachers reported higher levels of satisfaction when they were able to participate in decisions regarding budgets, hiring, and professional development. Silletto discussed the importance of open-mindedness and communication to impact school culture and retention efforts positively.

Hein et al. (2016) reported that employees want more information and better communication from management. Forty-two percent of employees say the employer does not provide enough recognition information, and out of that percentage, 37% shared that sentiment in the area of career and development opportunities.

Hein et al. (2016) stated that participants feel that better communication will lead to higher engagement. Areas of communication that impact staff performance and satisfaction involve open and honest communication and encouraging staff to share ideas and opinions (Hein et al., 2016). This makes understanding the preferred methods of communication for staff members imperative to their success. According to Hein et al., staff members reported preferring timely, relevant, personalized, and concise emails when receiving updates with open and honest communication. Furthermore, Sandhya and Kumar (2011) stated the importance of creating an environment of positive communication, open-mindedness, and transparency within work culture. This type of environment will “facilitate accountability, trust, communication, responsibility, and pride” for employees (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011, p. 1781).

Some of the highest reported reasons for teacher dissatisfaction include the lack of influence over decision-making and lack of community support (Ingersoll, 2001). McCoy et al. (2013) found that approximately 80% of beginning teachers reported a sense of abandonment, indicating a lack of support from administrators, mentors, colleagues, and parents.
Many factors, including work environment, programs and policies, communication, and leadership, have been reported to shape employee satisfaction (Hein et al., 2016; Stern & Wagner, 2016). According to Hein et al., the top six factors that differentiate employers from others include rewards, fun work environment, flexibility, fit with values, stimulating work, and innovation. Additional factors that differentiate some organizations from others include strong leaders and management, recognition of individual achievement and performance, providing meaningful work, encouraging collaboration and teamwork, and effective communication (Hein et al., 2016). Attending to these areas can ensure that employers are meeting the wants and needs of employees.

Many studies demonstrated that employee happiness, satisfaction, and engagement go hand in hand with demonstrating increased performance (Hein et al., 2016; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016). Stern and Wagner stated employees who are engaged, happy, and satisfied are more likely to be innovative, committed to their job, mindful of resources, and to speak highly of the organization.

The research of Stern and Wagner (2016) attempted to bridge the relationship between engagement and happiness within organizations. The same study also aimed at prioritizing and understanding the specific areas that organizations can address to increase employee happiness and ultimately increase performance and commitment. Although employees' happiness may be described as satisfaction, morale, or engagement, it is the core of the connection to employment. There is a mutual benefit when organizations and employees offer support (Stern & Wagner, 2016).

Places of employment can affect the areas of retention that are influenced by employee happiness and satisfaction. Stern and Wagner (2016) reported that 54% of the employees that are
unhappy at work will resign within 12 months. Stern and Wagner developed factors for managers to address to increase employee happiness, but a one-size-fits-all model may not work. Leadership members need to individualize plans for their employees and assess the areas of mental health and wellbeing to prevent burnout, discuss career goals and opportunities for advancement, and create a culture of collaboration.

**Personal Factors**

Many studies cited personal reasons unrelated to work as contributing factors to teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Ingersoll, 2001; McCoy et al., 2013; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016). These personal factors may include departures due to pregnancy and child-rearing, health problems, and family relocations. According to Billingsley, personal factors and perceived opportunities may influence a teacher’s decision to stay or leave. Research indicates that special educators serving as the primary source of income were more likely to stay in the field. Billingsley and Bettini indicated these reasons for leaving that are not related to teaching may not be impacted by school-wide interventions.

Silletto (2018) explained that for the newer employees entering the workforce, visibility at work does not always equal productivity. Three decades ago, the expectation was that employees had to physically be in the workspace to be productive. With enhanced technology and smartphones, that is no longer the case. Although this does not apply to all organizations, it does impact many and the mindset of the youngest generation in the field.

Under the work–life balance domain, Silletto (2018) also discussed the drastic change in family dynamics. With an increase in women entering the workforce over the past 25 years, household responsibilities have changed. It had switched from work/life balance to work–life integration. College-educated individuals making modest wages may have to choose between
certain financial decisions. When considering student debt, affording a place in a good neighborhood, or saving for retirement, many times, one paycheck cannot meet all of these needs. Stern and Wagner (2016) reported that employees who receive work–life balance acknowledgment or wellness programs are far more likely to be committed.

**Summary of Attrition and Retention Factors**

Most studies have focused on the effects of school working conditions, assignment factors, and teachers’ perceptions and affective reactions. Factors associated with retention include increased salaries, a positive school climate, adequate support and resources, positive working conditions, professional development opportunities, and reasonable demand and expectations for the teacher’s role (Billingsley, 2004). The literature also mentioned feeling connected, important, and recognized, having growth opportunities, and developing relationships with/support from supervisors and colleagues as very influential factors in a teacher’s decision to stay. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) indicated that positive changes to “compensation, growth, support, relationships, and environment” (p. 1780) will encourage staff to stay.

According to Sandhya and Kumar (2011), some of the leading factors leading to teacher turnover include no opportunities for growth, stress from challenges maintaining a work–life balance, and a lack of appreciation and trust. Additional factors that contribute to teacher attrition are low salaries, a poor school climate, lack of support, role overload, and dissonance, as these lead to increased stress and decreased job satisfaction and commitment (Billingsley, 2004). Furthermore, the literature discussed poor working conditions, classroom control, behavioral climate, student discipline, limited faculty input in decision making, and job dissatisfaction as leading factors in a teacher’s decision to leave.
Job satisfaction is consistently and strongly linked to attrition in studies for career intentions. Creating supportive relationships between teachers and administration, decreasing stress, providing clear roles and expectations, and professional support can increase teacher satisfaction. Special educators with an increased level of organizational and professional commitment are more likely to stay within the program. Higher levels of commitment are also associated with less stress, decreased role problems, increased and positive leadership support, more teaching experience, and higher levels of job satisfaction (Billingsley, 2004).

Specific workplace conditions that affected satisfaction were identified by teachers as administrative support and leadership, parental support, student behavior, school atmosphere, and teacher autonomy (Perie & Baker, 1997). Perie and Baker found that these workplace conditions had a positive relationship with a teacher’s job satisfaction regardless of the teacher’s background or the school demographics, setting, or grade level.

**Administrative Challenges**

Some turnover is beneficial and expected at times. When schools replace subpar educators with a more committed and effective teacher, productivity may be increased. School administrators do not want schools to become stagnant environments lacking new ideas, approaches, and innovations. Often, businesses aim to maintain a healthy level of turnover (Barnes et al., 2007).

High turnover rates, however, pose many administrative challenges, including lowering student achievement and increasing costs for schools (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Schools must remediate the organizational sources that lead to turnover instead of focusing on recruitment plans (Ingersoll, 2001). With the job market
being flooded with a new generation, administrators must adjust to the needs of new teachers. Given the nature, complexity, and continued changes in the special education field, school administrators are faced with many challenges.

Silletto (2018) indicated that some negative impacts of employee turnover include a decrease in quality or quantity of goods, services, and clients served, increased costs, potential reputation damage, decreased profitability. Additionally, many researchers indicated that remaining staff may also leave due to the negative effects of burnout and stress, which leads to overburdening (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Petty et al., 2012; Siletto, 2018). Darling-Hammond indicated some of the challenges that administrators will experience due to turnover include: increased costs; increased stress; and burnout on veteran staff that supports new teachers and the reteaching of basic skills to new teachers each year, leading to a loss in the organizational knowledge base. Having to constantly educate new staff on the vision, mission, and direction of the school wastes time, money, and resources (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Researchers have provided more than two decades of work addressing special education turnover and shortages (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). Cooley and Yovanoff reported that the cause of the issue of teacher shortages is retention, not recruitment efforts or a short supply of qualified teachers. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond stated that teacher turnover rates also vary by subject area.

Throughout the nation, there is an apparent shortage of qualified teachers in the areas of mathematics, science, special education, and English language development. Often, these teachers have opportunities to make more money outside of education. Ingersoll (2001) stated that special education teachers are more likely to leave the profession when compared to any
other teaching group. When looking closely at turnover rates by subject area data, research indicated that the predictive turnover rate, when compared to elementary school teachers, is 37% greater for mathematics and science teachers, 46% greater for special education teachers, and 87% greater for foreign language teachers. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

When a teacher leaves, the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement teacher is considerable (Barnes et al., 2007; Billingsley, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Although it is difficult to calculate an actual turnover cost, researchers have estimated that it may be up approximately over 25% of an average employee salary and over $10,000 (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Calculating turnover cost is very complicated when considering the cost of recruitment, advertisement, administrative processing, and training (Barnes et al., 2007). Queyrel-Bryan et al. stressed the importance of administrators making improvements to retention efforts to reduce employee costs ultimately.

There is also a decrease in student achievement with high turnover as classrooms are directly affected by this (Barnes et al., 2007; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). When turnover requires new training and supports from veteran staff for new staff, students in multiple classrooms feel the impact (Barnes et al., 2007). Students may have substitute teachers and less skilled novice teachers providing more frequent instruction from year to year.

**Recommendations in the Literature**

Much of the literature provided an understanding of teacher turnover or lack thereof (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). However, this research begs the question of discovering effective ways to prevent attrition and improve retention among special education teachers. Schools can
improve teacher retention by having systems and processes in place that provide staff with the skills and resources necessary to avoid reasons for turnover. The current literature base provided many recommendations and general practices to increase teacher retention and satisfaction.

Silletto (2018) advised that employers and leaders must change to make progress. Organizational leaders appropriately address employee wants and concerns to ensure successful retention. Although the assumption is that employees leave for better pay, scheduling, or personal issues, Silletto indicated that often employees leave due to lack of training, compassion, and support.

Research that employers gathered through staff surveys indicated that turnover reasons included lack of communication and appreciation, outdated resources and supports, and feeling undervalued (Silletto, 2018). School administrators should not make assumptions regarding the reasons for turnover. Retention will not improve unless organizational issues causing turnover are addressed.

Many companies and organizations conduct market research to learn the needs and expectations of the individual clients and customers they serve. The data that are collected are utilized to make changes and improvements to services offered. Silletto (2018) indicated that organizations are often not implementing the same practices for their employees. Employers can solicit feedback from employees to monitor the needs and expectations of the organization. Feedback is essential, and much of the research on teacher retention and attrition has indicated the use of surveying staff to guide policy development for teacher retention.

Sandhya and Kumar (2011) suggested that administrators develop a retention program to create a work environment that encourages and supports staff to stay within an organization. This should be a systematic approach that continuously evaluates, modifies, and maintains tactics and
procedures to meet the staff’s diverse wants and needs in order to be successful (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011).

Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) recommended stress-management and peer-collaboration programs as they have been found to improve a teacher’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing burnout. Cooley and Yovanoff conducted a study that provided participants with a series of stress-management workshops and the opportunity to participate in peer-collaboration programs as both of these factors affect staff turnover. The findings revealed that these programs had the potential to provide support for special educators at risk of burnout or leaving the field. The participants also reported they learned practical and valuable strategies that addressed their needs (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

According to Stern and Wagner’s (2016) recommendations, fostering a collaborative environment allows employees to work cohesively as a team and builds strong working relationships. Many times, this may be done through feedback and acknowledgment for staff. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) reported that performance appraisals are valued for appreciating and recognizing a well-done job. Employees also appreciate the recognition of professional or personal accomplishments or significant events. Silletto (2018) stated that if administrators want specific behaviors repeated, these behaviors should be acknowledged and recognized. Saying thank you for a job well done goes a long way, even if it is a part of the actual job description.

School climate is a comprehensive variable, but overall, many studies suggested that a positively viewed school climate will increase the likelihood of teacher retention (Billingsley, 2004; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018). Silletto suggested administrators conduct investigative surveys, solicit feedback from various stakeholders, and conduct research online to gain an overall understanding of the school’s image.
Another leading recommendation is to ensure an environment of trust (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018). Silletto reported that information is more available with an increase in transparency. In general, employees seek information and explanations regarding decision making. The staff takes time to trust the leaders and companies (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018). Leaders must be authentic and demonstrate good intentions. Trust will increase productivity and drive profitable results.

Leaders must also be aware that trust is very fragile and can be undone in moments. Researchers have recommended that leaders enhance transparency to understand the "why" and improve communication by giving staff more information (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018). Newsletters are a way to share company updates, celebrations, and provide opportunities for buy-in. Newsletters can be incentivized by having fun games and prizes for the readers.

Research also discussed supports and guidance for new teachers (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Sargent, 2003; Silletto, 2018). To establish strong school relationships for new teachers, school administrators should consider including new hires in various ways, including end-of-year meetings, student orientations, school tours, and opportunities to attend summer workshops (Sargent, 2003). Principals may also introduce the new staff to the grade-level or subject-area coworkers, provide information about new hires in a newsletter, develop an orientation program for new staff, and assign new staff with a mentor teacher.

Silletto (2018) suggested evaluation and potential modification to the orientation and onboarding process to meet new staff members' needs. Checking in with new hires on an ongoing basis to see what additional training or support they made need during the first few weeks or months of the job proves to be very helpful (Silletto, 2018).
Handbooks and orientation may be used to bridge the gap in missing information. Employees must know employment expectations and grounds for termination. Many times, employees are not aware of its intricacies, and it is essential to provide a rationale behind specific decisions. Staff report increased satisfaction when employers provide additional clarity or elaboration (Siletto, 2018). This communication will increase buy-in and commitment from staff. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) stressed the importance of supporting early teachers as they are at an increased risk of leaving.

As previously mentioned, Queyrel-Bryan et al. (2019) identified that personal and professional growth opportunities come from professional development experiences. When rating professional development experiences, more than 85% of teachers have reported that professional development is meaningful, and providing teachers with the opportunity to lead professional development workshops will increase ownership, engagement, and collaboration amongst teachers (Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Furthermore, the research of Sandhya and Kumar (2011) supported this, claiming a valuable retention strategy includes encouraging and providing professional training and development for personal growth opportunities.

Queyrel-Bryan et al. (2019) discussed the importance of school leaders recognizing the variation of teachers’ autonomy throughout their tenure. School administrators must assess their staff’s wants and needs in this regard as no two teachers are alike.

Although the compensation domain findings varied, multiple studies included salary as a factor related to turnover, indicating that leaving decreased as salary increased (Billingsley, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Special educators with higher salaries were more likely to stay than those with lower salaries. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) indicated that policies to address teacher turnover should include
compensation, as almost 20% of teachers leaving the profession of education reported financial reasons as very or extremely important. Policymakers should consider providing comprehensive packages that are equitable across districts and provide competitive rates and benefits compared to other occupations requiring similar levels of education. Additionally, policymakers should consider scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to decrease the debt burdens one may incur from entering the field of education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Special education retention studies focused on administrative support and suggested that principals can enhance teachers' commitment to remaining by fostering a collegial environment (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). One recommendation for administrators is creating a positive school climate with support for all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, instructional staff, and other service providers (Billingsley, 2004). Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond indicated that effective leadership would produce high-quality support for teachers, improve teaching conditions, and increase teacher retention.

One of the most critical steps toward improving employee retention includes enhancing organizational management (Silletto, 2018). However, after reviewing the literature base, the focus of retention efforts is not on developing and strengthening principal preparation and training programs. Providing soft-skills training to managers will increase the likelihood of staff retention and efficacy for the organization (Silletto, 2018). By enhancing principals' skill sets and knowledge, robust learning environments may be created to improve student and teacher experiences (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Silletto illustrated that most staff leave because they do not have a desirable relationship with their supervisor.

Silletto (2018) and Sandhya and Kumar (2011) discussed the importance of acknowledging the work–life balance. Silletto (2018) highlighted that employers should be
aware of the shift from work–life balance to work–life integration. Employees want the ability to put their families first. Some administrative recommendations discussed suggested learning about staff members' priorities to ensure their retention and success within an organization. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) acknowledged that special educators' demands continue to increase, and leaders should monitor these demands. As caseloads rise and extensive collaboration is needed for student success, administrators may be able to make adjustments to specific demands to decrease the workload, and as a result, the likelihood of a teacher resigning (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Policymakers and administrators who want to focus on reducing attrition must assist in developing better work environments for special education teachers. Areas of concern include work overload and providing critical resources and supports (administrative support and professional development). Focusing on small aspects may not significantly reduce attrition, but a holistic review to create a positive environment may not only minimize attrition, but it may also increase a teacher's involvement and commitment to their work (Billingsley, 2004). My discussion will provide appropriate recommendations based on survey data findings and specific research questions.

The challenges administrators face often determine what key factors will motivate staff to remain engaged and committed. One thing all successful leaders and managers realize is that different people will be motivated by various factors. Having a firm grasp on the motivational factors mentioned in this chapter will significantly aid any leaders. This research will analyze and prioritize motivating factors to assist with special education retention in private schools for students with autism.
Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study explored the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators' scope of control. The research design consists of two phases, with the first phase guiding the second. The first phase is quantitative and includes collecting and analyzing data through teacher responses from an online survey. The second phase is qualitative and includes interviewing, coding, and analyzing teacher interviews. The rationale for selecting this mixed-methods approach is that the quantitative data from a survey and subsequent analysis will provide a general understanding of the research problem, and the qualitative data and subsequent analysis will refine and explain the results through an in-depth analysis of teachers’ responses (Creswell, 2009; Ivankova et al., 2006; Klingner & Boardman, 2011; Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Findings will be shared with school administrators to decrease teacher turnover and increase practices that foster retention.

Research Problem

Research shows that teacher turnover is an issue facing many schools. Private schools face an even higher than average attrition rate (Ingersoll, 2001). With a high teacher turnover rate, it is essential to examine the factors that increase teacher retention likelihood. The inability to retain qualified teachers is a costly problem that may impact student success. Although there is a great deal of research on teacher attrition and retention, there is very little research on private special education school retention and whether these schools identify factors that influence teachers to remain in private special education schools. This study explored the factors
associated with teacher retention at private schools for children with autism located in New Jersey.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided data collection and analysis to achieve the purpose of this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Research Question 2: How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Research Question 3: How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: It was not possible to determine teacher motivation to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism.

Null Hypothesis 2: It was not possible to determine factors that may inhibit teachers' likelihood of remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism.

Research Design

According to Billingsley (2004), most of the research on special education teacher attrition and retention is either an investigation of bivariate relationships to determine if a particular variable was associated with special education attrition or multivariate methods to investigate attrition and retention. Only a few researchers have used qualitative methods in
attrition studies, including open-ended surveys of teachers who want to leave and interviews with teachers who have left (Billingsley, 2004). The current research utilizes a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach to explore teacher retention in Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (APSSD). A more in-depth analysis of teachers that remain may provide more understanding regarding retention when working with students with autism.

The mixed-method approach utilizing a sequential explanatory procedure was appropriate for this study because it integrated quantitative and qualitative data to allow for a total overview of teacher retention factors in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. If the study had been exclusively quantitative, a valuable component of understanding teachers' perceptions could be lost. Conversely, had the research solely been qualitative, it would have been more challenging to ascertain the impact of all factors identified in the literature. The mixed-method approach allowed the analysis to examine both perceptions of the teachers and the influence of many variables for a larger population. The rationale behind this approach was while the quantitative data and survey results provided a general picture of the research problem, the qualitative data and its analysis delivered a more refined explanation of the statistical results by exploring the participants’ views in greater depth.

This sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was the best fit for this research study. The first phase of this study focused on conducting the quantitative aspects of the research. The quantitative phase's goal was to identify what factors teachers find most important in influencing their decision to stay in an APSSD. The data were then subject to descriptive statistical analysis. This analysis led to the creation and review of the interview questions to be utilized in the second phase.
In the second phase of this research, a qualitative collection of data was gathered through structured interviews. These interviews were used to explain further the factors associated with teacher retention in private schools serving individuals with autism. These interviews allowed for additional insight into the program that quantitative research alone would not have been able to identify (Billingsley, 2004; Creswell, 2009). A visual model of the research design is presented in Figure 1.

Sample

This study's sample population came from approved private schools for students with disabilities located in New Jersey and listed on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website. The sample population constituted a sample of convenience. This type of sampling was used because participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to volunteer (Creswell, 2009). The NJDOE website under Special Education Department provides a list of 137 APSSDs located in New Jersey. I called each school on this list and confirmed the population served. If the school reported that they received students with autism, they were added to the sample of schools to contact for potential participants. Of the original 137 APSSD listed on the NJDOE website, 63 (46%) were schools identified as serving students with autism.
The participants who were administered the survey were full-time teachers at schools serving students with autism. Criteria for inclusion required that the individual completing the survey was an educational professional (Teacher of Students with Disabilities [ToSD or ToH] and/or Board Certified Behavior Analyst [BCBA]) employed at the APSSD for at least 3 years and overseeing the educational programming for a classroom/group of students with autism. For this study, 3 years of employment or longer was selected as inclusionary criteria as, nationally, approximately 30% of new teachers leave the profession before the second year, and, according to some estimates, 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within 5 years (Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Odell & Ferraro, 1992).

Of the 91 teachers sampled, 62 (68%) completed the survey instrument. Of these 62 responses 22 were incomplete and deleted. Table 2 contains a summary of demographic information. The special education teachers who completed the survey were all employed for at least 3 years by private schools for students with disabilities located in New Jersey. I recruited participants by contacting each school and asking a school administrator for permission to conduct the study and supply the school email addresses for potential qualified teachers to participate in a survey via email. Additionally, approval was granted to me from the Institutional Review Board of Seton Hall University to conduct the proposed study.

This study's sequential design allowed me to select participants for the qualitative phase based on the quantitative phase results. The first (quantitative) phase survey was anonymous; however, at the end of the survey, each participant had the option to indicate their identity to be contacted for a follow-up qualitative interview. Volunteers that consented to participate in a follow-up interview were contacted by phone to provide qualitative data. The 12 follow-up participants were selected via random sampling to include various demographic variables.
Participants who volunteered for the interview but were not selected were contacted to thank them for their willingness to participate. Participants who did not consent to the follow-up interview were not identified and remained anonymous.

Throughout the study, the participants' confidentiality was maintained, and the purpose and rationale for the research were fully disclosed to all participants in the study through the initial informational letter and the letter of consent that clearly stated the purpose of the research.

**Phase I: Quantitative**

**Data Collection**

For the quantitative data, the instrument used for the collection of data was a self-reporting survey developed by Mertler (2016) adapted from an earlier version with the author’s permission (see Appendix D). Mertler originally developed this survey in 1992, drawing most of the items from the work of Herzberg (1966). Although numerous survey instruments were available to measure job satisfaction, few were designed to measure job satisfaction specifically within education. Mertler’s original 1992 survey and most recent 2016 survey included Likert-type, self-rating scales for responses. A complete copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C. Mertler (1992) cited various researchers' work indicating that Likert scales are successful for assessing motivation and satisfaction in educational research (Ainley et al., 1986; Chapman, 1982; Holdaway, 1978). As a result, Mertler’s (2016) Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey was identified as a valuable and appropriate instrument for quantitative data collection as the initial phase of this sequential explanatory study focused on determining what factors, motivators, incentives, and other variables influence teacher retention.

The survey asks the respondent to rate their overall level of satisfaction relating to their teaching position and asks the respondent to rate various items/activities/behaviors that would
serve as potentially motivating factors for teachers. A digital format for completing the survey was used due to the different hybrid and remote teachers' schedules as a result of COVID-19. Items on the Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey are aligned with the critical elements of motivational/educational theory; teachers are asked to rate aspects of their jobs, such as recognition, interpersonal relationships, sense of achievement, responsibility, sense of accountability, and so forth.

The survey instrument was transcribed and formatted in Qualtrics, a survey tool offered by Seton Hall University, to ease distribution and data collection. The Qualtrics version of the survey instrument went live on November 24, 2020. All data collection occurred over a 3-week period between November 24 and December 15. In total, 62 teachers initiated the survey, and 40 complete usable responses were obtained.

I distributed the cover email message with identifying information, such as my return email address, to the list of previously identified and consenting private school teachers via email. I recruited participants by contacting each school and asking a school administrator for permission to conduct the study and supply the school email addresses for potential qualified teachers to participate in a survey via email. A letter of invitation was sent via email to each potential participant, clearly explaining that participation in the survey is voluntary, anonymous, and has neither anticipated risks for involvement nor repercussions for non-involvement. The letter explained the nature and purpose of the research study, my identity and affiliation, and outlines the criteria necessary for participation. Included in the letter was a link to the questionnaire itself, and consent to participate was considered to be given by the invited participant accessing and completing the online survey. See Appendix B for the email of invitation and informed consent.
A brief email reminding the teachers of the December 15, 2020, due date for survey responses was sent to all 91 potential participants on December 8, 2020, requesting their participation if they have not already responded. A total of 62 responses to the survey were received. Incomplete response sets were deleted from the final data analysis procedures resulting in a final, usable data set composed of responses from \( n = 40 \) New Jersey special education teachers in private schools serving students with autism, representing a 44% usable response rate. The weblink of the survey remained open for 4 weeks.

Survey Instrument

Items 1, 6, 11, and 12 asked the teachers to indicate demographic information. Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 indicated criteria for inclusion. Research Question 1 was addressed via items 16, 17, 22, and 23. Research Question 2 was addressed via Items 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21. Lastly, Research Question 3 was addressed through Items 24 and 25. A table (Table 1) has been created to indicate which area each survey question will address. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix C.
Table 1

Research Questions and Survey Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Survey questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Demographic information</td>
<td>1, 6, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for inclusion</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?</td>
<td>16, 17, 22, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2: How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3: How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?</td>
<td>24, 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

After the survey window closed, I began data analysis to determine relationships among the variables. The demographic questions, such as those related to gender and age, were linked to what percentage of the participants fell into each category. In the subsequent question categories, the Likert-scale items were scored accordingly, with positively worded (e.g., strongly agree) statements equaling four points and negatively worded (e.g., strongly disagree) statements equaling one point. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, central tendency, variance, standard deviation, and range for each variable within the data. The determination was made to use descriptive statistics. These statistics provide the ability to determine the mean, median, and standard deviation of the data, affording the researcher an overview of the factors that may influence teacher retention (Witte & Witte, 2010).
All data were analyzed using Qualtrics. Data analyses were primarily descriptive in nature. However, tests of independence between variables were conducted for the survey items asking respondents about their satisfaction levels with teaching and various demographic variables. The descriptive statistics findings led to the development of the interview questions, which was the second instrument used for data collection.

**Reliability and Validity**

The data collection instrument and analysis must be both reliable and valid to ensure the research’s validity. Concerning the instrument selected for data collection in Phase I, the Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey, Maurer and Pierce (1998) indicated that Likert scales are an acceptable method for measuring self-efficacy as they have similar reliability, error variance, and equivalent levels of prediction as alternative measures. Additionally, Mertler (2016) reported an acceptable overall level of reliability of the instrument ($\alpha = .74$) after analysis of the entire set of teacher responses ($n = 9,053$) from his research. I also confirmed that the teachers’ demographic information did indicate that they were eligible candidates that met the criterion for participation. The survey data were compiled and saved on a spreadsheet, and the necessary statistical calculations were completed via Qualtrics. The data were checked multiple times to ensure reliability. All teacher information was kept confidential to protect the anonymity of the participants.

**Phase II: Qualitative**

**Data Collection**

A qualitative strategy was used to gather additional data. The research was conducted using an interview approach. This approach's value is that it involves an in-depth analysis to seek
to explain what is happening concerning the issue, teacher retention in APSSD serving students with autism in New Jersey. Qualitative research is deeply and broadly descriptive in nature, and the interview data revealed thoughtful and insightful information from the teachers in the study. Qualitative research's general design is useful when there is a concept to be explored that has little research. It allows the researcher to gain insight into the participants' experiences and examine variables that are important, especially when existing research may not apply to the particular group or sample to be studied (Creswell, 2009).

For the qualitative data, the descriptive statistic findings from the quantitative survey data, in addition to a thorough literature review, led to the development of the interview questions utilized to collect data in Phase II. The follow-up interview questions were developed by analyzing themes and trends in the survey results and the literature presented in Chapter II. The questions were then presented to a panel of experts for review and revisions. The panel was composed of three clinical/administrative professionals in private special education programs for individuals with autism who did not supervise any participants in the sample.

The second phase of this research focused on interviews conducted with the 12 teachers who have completed at least 3 years in an APSSD serving students with autism in New Jersey. The interviews were used for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. The technique for qualitative data collection was the use of in-depth, semi-structured open-ended questions. This format was selected as researchers may receive different kinds of information depending on the wording of questions (Billingsley, 2004). The exact wording of each question was determined in advance of the interviews. There were a total of 8 questions that were asked of each participant. The interview questions were the same for all 12 participants to ensure that they were standardized and focused on the same information. Using the same predetermined structured
questions in a set order, as opposed to an informal interview protocol, increased the likelihood of obtaining more consistent and reliable data (Creswell, 2009).

Open-ended questions yielded more detailed data by allowing for additional input. These questions also allowed the interviewee the opportunity for personal reflection and to explore perceptions and provide detail. The drawback of using open-ended questions is that they can make coding more difficult for the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The questions were developed specifically for use in this research to fit the sampling and type of data needed. I provided different prompts or probes during the interview, as needed, that were pertinent to the interview. The participants were asked to provide any suggestions regarding their perceptions of elements that influenced their decision to remain in APSSDs that could help administrators address teacher retention.

The interviews were conducted individually. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the study, each interview was held via Google Meet or Zoom to help all participants feel safe and comfortable in their environment. Names of teachers were not used in the gathering of data to ensure confidentiality. I scheduled the interviews outside of school hours at the interviewees' convenience and conducted interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes in duration.

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, and I transcribed and coded them to ensure confidentiality. I housed the audio recordings and transcriptions in a secure and locked location throughout the duration of the study; at the conclusion of the study, the data have been, and will remain, stored securely for 3 years and then disposed of properly.

All participants volunteered their time for each interview by indicating interest and consent to contact them during Phase I of the research. Participants were randomly selected for
this study from the pool of the teachers who agreed to participate. I provided details regarding the length of the interviews and the measures to maintain confidentiality. Recording the conversations assisted in the analysis of interview notes and ensured that all quotations were accurately reported. All interviewees were given a code number to ensure the protection of their identity.

Participants were assured of confidentiality before the start of the interview. I also obtained a signed consent of participation from each participant. While the quantitative survey questions examined teachers' characteristics in three main areas—job aspects, incentives, and factors that impact turnover—the emphasis of Phase II was to examine what organizational aspects may influence the teacher to remain in the school. Interviews further examined which factors are of greatest influence on teachers who choose to remain in an APSSD serving students with autism after Year 3 of their teaching career. Broad and deeply descriptive information helped develop the themes for analysis of teacher retention factors in APSSDs in New Jersey and the factors that increase retention based on teachers' perceptions.

**Interview Questions**

The follow-up interview questions were developed by analyzing themes and trends in the survey results and the literature presented in Chapter II. The emphasis of Phase II was to examine what organizational aspects may influence teachers to remain in the school. It further examined which factors are of greatest influence on teachers who choose to remain in an APSSD serving students with autism after Year 3 of their teaching career. A table (Table 2) has been created to indicate which research question each interview question will address. The interview questions for each participant in Phase II were as follows:
1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and how you got into the field of education?
2. Describe the factors that might influence your decision to remain in a private school.
3. Are there additional supports and resources that could enhance your experience at your current school?
4. What do you consider as some of the reasons you or other teachers might decide to leave your current school?
5. What kinds of things make your work stressful or create stress for your colleagues?
6. What policies or procedures could be implemented to decrease the stress and burnout?
7. What incentives would you recommend to your school administration to assist with teacher retention?
8. Any other concerns and opinions you would like to share in regard to teacher retention in private schools serving individuals with autism?

Table 2

*Research Questions and Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?</td>
<td>2, 3, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2: How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3: How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?</td>
<td>6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Analysis*

I followed a specific protocol to analyze the qualitative data. I transcribed the interviews verbatim. The interviews were then member checked to ensure that validity. Member checking was done during the interview process by the researcher restating and summarizing the
information and then questioning the participant to determine accuracy. During the member checking processes, the participants either affirmed that the summaries reflect the information provided, which indicates credibility, or the participants clarified and corrected any misrepresentations.

After the interviews were transcribed and member checked, I began to look for overarching themes with the data by reviewing each transcript three times. The method of data analysis selected was coding. Creswell (2009) indicated that coding is a process of organizing data into segments of text prior to applying meaning to it. Open coding was conducted by reviewing the interview responses line by line in order to break the responses down into emerging thematic codes to interpret them better. The response of each participant was then analyzed based on categorical responses taken from the interviews and categorized into themes. The coded participant interviews were analyzed for commonalities and summarized accordingly. Using the mathematical approach of coding responses provided more reliability than solely using the discretion of the interviewer (Creswell, 2009).

A table (Table 11) was created with the various themes that emerged from the interviews to determine similarities and patterns resulting from the discussions conducted. The table was then analyzed to identify themes that reoccurred during each of the interviews and within each of the questions. These themes were further examined to determine any sort of pattern within the data.

From the table of the various themes (Table 11), it was determined if any overarching ideas stood out as having made an impact on teacher retention. It was from this table of items that I was able to answer the research questions. This qualitative information about teacher attrition and retention was used to form recommendations for APSSD administrators to
implement in an effort to decrease teacher turnover. From this framework of themes, the data were analyzed, and the findings are reported in Chapter IV.

**Reliability and Validity**

Creswell (2009) suggested that in order to maintain reliability and validity, the qualitative researcher must check for the accuracy of the findings. As such, I followed those practices. Although reliability is challenging to verify when conducting one-on-one interviews, standardized interview questions present themselves as the most reliable for this qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). Each interview that was done was recorded with the full consent of the participants. Once the interview was concluded, I transcribed each interview. The transcripts were member checked two times, which allows the interviewee to review the transcript to determine if it was correctly recorded, and the meaning was captured. Creswell stated that member checking ensures the reality, meaning, and truth-value of the collected data. Reliability has been evidenced through consistent data presented in the interview transcripts. Transcripts were reviewed and compared with coded data and themes to ensure accuracy. Any discrepancies were immediately reviewed and addressed. The meaning indicated by each code remained the same throughout the process.

Validity is based on the fact that the researcher is accurately attributing meaning to the data (Creswell, 2009). Using predetermined questions in a semi-structured format allowed the interviewee the opportunity to answer questions in their own words. The conversation was able to flow at their pace without leading prompts. The panel for this study reviewed the instrument for content validity and suggested changes to ensure clear and concise questions and avoid interviewer bias and leading or emotive questions. I was aware of avoiding biases to provide a higher level of validity.
Reliability and validity were established to ensure the legitimacy of the study. The data collected and analyzed produced results that should have important implications for private special education school administrators. The data provide some predictive information that, if applied, can potentially benefit APSSDs, their teachers, and, most important, their students in the retention of qualified teachers. This can ultimately assist all stakeholders and the schools in providing quality services to students with autism. The sample population provided a large enough sampling to increase the likelihood that the results can be generalized when considered along with the study's reliability.

**Ethical Considerations**

During the research, ethical protocols, as set forth by the “Protecting Human Research Participants,” were followed. As per the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the permission for conducting the research was first obtained (see Appendix A). Throughout the study, the confidentiality of the participants was maintained, and the purpose and rationale for the research were fully disclosed to all participants in the study through the initial informational letter, the letter of invitation, and consent that clearly stated the purpose of the research (see Appendix B). All of the participant information was protected by numerically coding each completed survey and ensuring confidentiality. Due to the study’s qualitative components, it was important for me to be aware of any biases or judgments that could have been present in the researcher-interviewee interaction. All individuals who were interviewed were assigned coded numbers, and schools were not be mentioned by name in the description or reporting. No identifying data of the subjects were recorded so that no one would be able to link the responses. All recordings and notes were stored electronically on a USB flash storage drive and kept in a locked, secure drawer to be saved for 3 years after the study is completed.
Role of the Researcher

I have always valued the consistency of quality services for children with autism. Having worked with the special needs population for almost 20 years and serving as a principal at an APSSD for the past 12 years, the need for reducing teacher turnover is apparent.

As the researcher, I held two different roles while conducting this research. The first was gathering the necessary data to do the quantitative portion of the study. The second was conducting the interviews via Zoom and Google Meet with the special education teachers currently employed at APSSDs. I sought to remain objective during the interviews to ameliorate any bias that could interfere with the answers given during the interviews.

Summary

In summary, Chapter III presented the methodology intended for use in this study. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach may help determine the influences on teachers’ decisions to remain in APSSDs. Reliability and validity were established and maintained to ensure the legitimacy of the study.
Chapter IV

Analysis of Data

The research that was conducted utilized a sequential mixed-methods model to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study sought to explore the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators' scope of control. The research design consists of two phases, with the first phase guiding the second. The first phase was quantitative and included collecting and analyzing data through teacher responses from an online survey. The second phase was qualitative and included interviewing, coding, and analyzing teacher interviews. Findings to decrease teacher turnover and increase practices that foster retention will be shared with school administrators.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Research Question 2: How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Research Question 3: How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: It was not possible to determine teacher motivation to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism.
Null Hypothesis 2: It was not possible to determine factors that may inhibit teachers' likelihood of remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism.

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

This study included 40 teachers from APSSDs serving individuals with autism in New Jersey. To be included in the study, each participant had to be an educational professional (Teacher of Students with Disabilities [ToSD or ToH] or Board Certified Behavior Analyst [BCBA]) employed at the APSSD for at least 3 years and oversaw the programming for one classroom/group of students. After obtaining permission to contact them via email from their school’s administrator, any teacher who fit the criteria was included in the study. Table 3 contains a summary of demographic information.

Table 3

Demographics of Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>27–54</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at APSSD</td>
<td>3–20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variables

The variables studied included various potential influences for motivation to remain at an APSSD. Variables were divided into the following classifications: (a) aspects of teaching that may serve as motivating or unmotivating, (b) incentives that may serve as motivating or unmotivating, (c) variables that may entice a teacher to remain at an APSSD, (d) level of satisfaction with current teaching position, (e) consideration to start over in a new career, and (f) reasons considered for a career change.

The determination was made to use descriptive statistics, as descriptive statistics provide the ability to determine the mean, median, and standard deviation of the data, which would provide me with an overview of each factor's influences (Witte & Witte, 2010).

Procedures

The quantitative data needed to complete Phase I of the study were obtained from survey responses via Qualtrics. Upon completion of the survey period, I exported the data to analyze and summarize. The information was organized by research question. The teachers were not identified on the spreadsheet. Qualtrics conducted the statistical analyses to report the mean, standard deviation, and variance.

The qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers who indicated voluntary participation during the completion of the survey. The participants were selected by random. All 12 participants were asked the same eight questions during the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed and member checked. The transcripts were coded to determine different themes from each of the questions.
Presentation of Quantitative Findings

Research Question 1: Analysis and Results

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Table 4 summarizes aspects of teaching that may serve as motivating or unmotivating. Table 5 summarizes the incentives that may serve as motivating or unmotivating. Table 6 summarizes the variables that may entice a teacher to remain at an APSSD.

Table 4

Aspects of Teaching that may Serve as Unmotivating or Motivating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Teaching</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition (e.g., receiving praise from administrators, parents, students, or others)</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for professional growth (e.g., possibility of improving one's own professional skills)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision (e.g., by a competent administrator)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships with colleagues (e.g., interaction with other teachers)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary (e.g., financial compensation)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security (e.g., tenure)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status (e.g., professional status of teaching)</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships with administrators (e.g., interaction with administrators)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of achievement (e.g., experiencing success)</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions (e.g., building conditions, amount of work, facilities available)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The top three motivating aspects of teaching are a sense of achievement ($M = 3.75$), interpersonal relationships with students ($M = 3.73$), and potential for professional growth ($M = 3.50$). The bottom three motivating aspects of teaching are teacher evaluation ($M = 2.85$), factors in personal life ($M = 2.83$), and status ($M = 2.80$).
Table 5

Incentives that may Serve as Unmotivating or Motivating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Highly unmotivating</th>
<th>Unmotivating</th>
<th>Motivating</th>
<th>Highly motivating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A one-time monetary award (supplemental to a step increase)</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being selected as teacher of the year in the school</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An instructional professional development workshop offered by the school for a fee (you pay)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An instructional professional development workshop offered and paid for by the school</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a student thank you for assisting in the understanding of a difficult concept</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being given the opportunity to participate in teacher projects (e.g., curriculum development)</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early retirement/contract buy-out</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing vast improvements in your students’ performance since the beginning of the year</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being permitted to purchase additional equipment, technology, and/or supplies for your classroom</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being supported to engage in your own professional growth through the implementation of classroom-based action research</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top two motivating incentives are observing student improvements \((M = 3.75)\) and having a student say thank you \((M = 3.67)\). The bottom two motivating incentives are being selected as “teacher of the year” \((M = 2.80)\) and paying for a professional development workshop offered by the school \((M = 1.88)\).
Table 6

Variables that may Entice a Teacher to Remain at an APSSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay increase</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different administrator</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in leadership style(s)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller classes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time to plan or prepare</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater opportunities for collaboration with colleagues</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better facilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater opportunities for advancement</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top three enticing variables to influence teacher retention in an APSSD were a pay increase (30.65%), more time for prepping and planning (17.74%), and greater opportunities for advancement (17.74%). The bottom three enticing variables to influence teacher retention in an APSSD were a different administrator (6.56%), smaller classes (3.28%), and better facilities (3.28%). This survey response was followed by an open-ended response where participants could indicate any additional reasons. Tables 4 through 10 and open-ended answers were all considered when developing the interview questions for Phase II qualitative research.

Research Question 2: Analysis and Results

Research Question 2: How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

Table 7 summarizes the teacher-reported levels of satisfaction in their current teaching assignments. Table 8 summarizes if teachers would remain in education if given the opportunity to start a new career. Table 9 summarizes teachers’ considerations to leave the field of teaching. Table 10 summarizes the likelihood of various factors influencing teachers’ decisions to leave their current position.
Table 7

*Overall Level of Current Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately satisfied</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No participant reported a level of dissatisfaction with their current teaching assignment.

Table 8

*Consideration to Remain a Teacher if Opportunity to Start a New Career*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the opportunity to start a new career, almost half of the participants reported that they would remain in education. A substantial number of teachers reported uncertainty. A much smaller group of participants stated they would not continue as a teacher if given the opportunity to start a new career.

Table 9

*Consideration to Leave the Field of Teaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the participants indicated that they have not considered leaving the field of teaching.
Table 10

Likelihood of Reasons Influencing a Decision to Leave Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n = 40</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career change (within education)</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change (outside of education)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek more competitive salary</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with current assignment</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of desire/willingness to support various reform efforts</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51.28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21</td>
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<td>2.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for advancement</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate mentoring</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supportive work environment</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate training necessary for position</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.59</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative leadership</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of autonomy</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of shared leadership</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.03</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unethical treatment</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61.54</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The top three most likely variables influencing a teacher’s decision to leave teaching were unethical treatment ($M = 3.33$), lack of a supportive work environment ($M = 3.15$), and to seek a more competitive salary ($M = 3.05$). The bottom three most likely variables influencing a teacher’s decision to leave teaching were lack of shared leadership ($M = 2.62$), lack of desire/willingness to support various reform efforts ($M = 2.15$), and a career change outside the field of education ($M = 1.97$). This survey response was followed by an open-ended response where participants could indicate any additional reasons. The above tables and open-ended answers were considered when developing the interview questions for Phase II qualitative research.
**Presentation of Qualitative Findings**

The presentation of the qualitative findings will identify themes in each question that were asked of the teachers that volunteered for Phase II. Each interview question examined the perspective of teachers. It was essential to look at each through a separate lens and compare the differences and similarities at the end of each question. Table 11 summarizes the various themes that emerged from the interviews to determine similarities and patterns. It is from this table of items that I was able to answer the research questions. The conclusion of the section will discuss the overall themes that emerged from the data.
### Table 11

**Interview Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Introduction</td>
<td>This question familiarized the researcher and the participants. All 12 participants had varied stories for entering an APSSD. This question is not relevant to the data and not summarized or analyzed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Retention factors</td>
<td>Small school, student focus, ABA, tuition assistance</td>
<td>Opportunities for growth, professional development, resources</td>
<td>Support from supervisors, collaboration</td>
<td>The population, connections, relationships</td>
<td>Leadership and administration, tuition assistance</td>
<td>Relationships, family commitment, support, resources</td>
<td>The population, individualization, training</td>
<td>Support, collaboration</td>
<td>Connections, family involvement</td>
<td>Feeling appreciated, making a difference</td>
<td>The population, enjoying my job</td>
<td>Professional development, growth opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 Additional supports and resources</td>
<td>Flexible hours, planning, scheduling</td>
<td>Training, support</td>
<td>Opportunities, responsibilities, leadership roles</td>
<td>Training, opportunities, conferences</td>
<td>Collaboration, money, opportunities for growth</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>More time to plan and train</td>
<td>Money for salary and resources</td>
<td>More training, resources, technology improvements</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Training and support, technology</td>
<td>Professional development, support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Attrition factors</td>
<td>Summers, hours, health benefit, salary, pension</td>
<td>Growth opportunities</td>
<td>Pay, challenging behaviors, compensation and perks of public schools</td>
<td>Administration/leadership, appreciation, challenging behaviors</td>
<td>Growth opportunities</td>
<td>Better compensation, less hours and less responsibility in public schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Salary, summers</td>
<td>Challenging behaviors</td>
<td>Challenging behaviors, lack of teamwork, collaboration and respect</td>
<td>Challenging behavior, training and support</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 Stressors</td>
<td>Families, pressure, cannot disconnect</td>
<td>Challenging behaviors</td>
<td>Challenging behaviors, cannot disconnect, being down staff, appreciation</td>
<td>Paperwork and responsibilities</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>Families, challenging behaviors</td>
<td>Paperwork and longer hours</td>
<td>Challenging behavior, training and support</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6 Policies and procedures to decrease stressors</td>
<td>Train parents on boundaries</td>
<td>Teacher autonomy, prioritize workload, no micromanaging</td>
<td>Appreciation/recognition</td>
<td>Appreciation/recognition</td>
<td>Support, strong leadership and guidance, clear communication</td>
<td>Encouraging mental health and disconnecting</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Compensation, disconnecting, mental health</td>
<td>Extra planning time</td>
<td>Training and support with challenging behaviors</td>
<td>Mental health and self-care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 Incentives to increase retention</td>
<td>Tuition assistance, salary, increase responsibilities and opportunities</td>
<td>Recognition, must be consistent</td>
<td>Appreciation, recognition and acknowledgment, use ABA principles, rewards, bonuses, training</td>
<td>Recognition, salary</td>
<td>Extra opportunities for money and growth</td>
<td>Incentive systems for training and retention, longevity pay, bonuses and perks</td>
<td>More pain support</td>
<td>Breaks, compensation, reliable and consistent support and resources</td>
<td>Money, raise or bonus, teacher of the year</td>
<td>Tuition and professional development opportunities</td>
<td>Opportunities for growth, increase responsibilities, small leadership opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 Additional concerns or opinions</td>
<td>Mental health, slack schedules, training, educational opportunities</td>
<td>Resources provided are amazing</td>
<td>Extra responsibility opportunities, environment of collaboration and respect, school culture is important</td>
<td>Need to individualize incentives and have various methods in place for retention, more training</td>
<td>Empathetic, compassionate and human approach for administration and colleagues, support</td>
<td>Staff morale, realistic expectations and goals, survey staff, reevaluate and adjust processes in place</td>
<td>More pay, promotions, support</td>
<td>Compensation, tenure and time off in public school is better</td>
<td>Here for the students</td>
<td>Focus resources on retention, provide growth opportunities, grow talent from within, staff will feel valued</td>
<td>Love the students, needs strong leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Interview Question 1: Can you tell me a little about yourself and how you got into the field of education?

This question was selected to familiarize the researcher and the participants. All 12 participants had varied experiences and reasons for entering an APSSD. This question presented an opportunity to transition into the next seven questions that provided the data to answer Research Question 3.

Interview Question 2: Describe the factors that might influence your decision to remain in a private school.

Half of the teachers interviewed specified that the most significant factor influencing their decision to remain at a private school was the population served. Participants illustrated the importance of making a difference in the lives of their students and families. The connections teachers formed with these students while teaching functional, life, and academic skills and troubleshooting challenging behaviors created a lot of value and influenced the decision to remain at their APSSD. Autism is a unique disorder that presents at different levels in all students. Tasks that may be simple for typically developing children will be harder for students with autism to learn. As such, teachers reported the enjoyment in experiencing the moments when a student acquires a new skill that they worked so hard on. Teachers highlighted their commitment and passion for this population and also highlighted the involvement of their students’ families. It was reported that parents and caregivers are much more involved and invested in the education that their children with autism receive from APSSDs.
“The students are incredible, and I think that is a huge part of my positive experience. I keep in touch after so many of them after they graduate. It really makes me stay because now I'm fully invested.”

“I am so passionate about the autism population. At my school, I am still contacting enough reinforcement and enough of the things that get me excited about teaching. You know you're making a difference, and you know you're affecting someone's life, and that's awesome.”

“I have a number of friends who are teachers in public schools, and I hear horror stories about families being checked out, difficult to keep in touch with, and taking zero responsibility for anything that happens, either in the classroom or at home. But that's the exact opposite of my experience; there is a lot of collaboration that goes on with families. I think that's important. It keeps me refreshed and ready for every day, knowing that I'm going to have the opportunity to work so closely with the families.”

“The level of commitment and participation that I see on behalf of the families is something that's really important to me.”

Additional consistent themes were those of culture, support, resources, and collaboration. Teachers remarked that a positive culture of respect contributed to their decision to remain at their current school, and it fostered an environment that was beneficial for staff and students. Support was reported as received from administrators, supervisors, and colleagues. Whether it be access to resources, training, or staffing, the element of support was echoed in many of the interviews. Opportunities to collaborate gave teachers a sense of commitment, support, and shared ownership.
“When staff is respectful towards each that creates a better environment for them to be happy and to teach the kids.”

“I'm just thankful, thankful for my team, thankful for the administration. I'm just so happy where I work. I honestly don't know if I'd work anywhere else in education.”

“I feel a ton of support from the administration. Our administration, in my experience, is amazing. They have helped me grow as a teacher and as a leader. I very much love it.”

“There's so much support and so many resources that are provided, from the administrative staff to the clinical team.”

“I very much enjoy the support that I get. I work with a team of four to six paraprofessionals, direct support professionals. My students all require either one-to-one support or, in certain cases, two-to-one support, so they have two DSPs to one student. I really enjoy a team atmosphere. I enjoy being in a room with other adults. I enjoy being able to bounce ideas off of people.”

Other factors indicated included opportunities for growth, professional development, and training. Teachers highlighted the experiences at specialized schools as providing robust opportunities for growth, development, and enhancement of skills.

“The main thing for me is my professional growth. I've learned something new every day because the people who work in private schools are so well versed in their specific areas, specifically for us, ABA. So it's always a learning opportunity for me every day when I go into work, and that's really important to me.”

**Interview Question 3:** Are there additional supports and resources that could enhance your experience at your current school?
Although training and professional development were identified as factors influencing retention, based on the unique needs and individualization for all students, many participants have also identified it as an area to continue improving. Ongoing support and training are required for efficient and consistent programming for students with autism. Teachers indicated that ongoing training for support staff and new staff would enhance the experiences of all stakeholders. Training may be provided through hands-on support, school-wide professional development opportunities, or attendance at conferences.

“There aren't age-appropriate and cognitive-appropriate leveled materials for my students aged 18 to 21. It's either cartoony or not relevant or functional. I have to make a lot of what I do. That's printing, laminating, binding, building my own curriculum. I do feel like having more resources, having more funds for me to really do that would be more beneficial.”

Additional supports and resources acknowledged included opportunities for leadership and growth, flexible planning and scheduled hours, increased collaboration, and opportunities for supplemental responsibilities that may result in additional compensation.

**Interview Question 4:** What do you consider as some of the reasons you or other teachers might decide to leave your current school?

The majority of the participants indicated reasons that would influence them or their colleagues to leave their schools as the higher salaries and improved compensation packages typically offered by public schools. Specifically, the increase in pay, a more comprehensive health benefits plan, pension, and tenure are the most appealing. Participants also identified the longer hours, increased responsibilities, and 12-month school year in private schools as factors to consider leaving APSSDs.
“Unfortunately, while private schools are wonderful for the services we provide for students, the pay is not very great. And I think that's really what deters a lot of the people.”

“I think private schools need to be competitive with public schools to the greatest extent possible. The biggest draw for people away from private schools is that a public school seems like such a better option. They have better pay, tenure, and summers off.”

Another leading factor in the decision to leave their current position involved the challenging behaviors that students with autism may present. Many of the participants indicated that encountering these challenging behaviors on a day-to-day basis is emotionally, mentally, and physically exhausting.

“Working in schools like this, you deal more with obviously aggressive and self-injurious behaviors. I think that some teachers aren't interested or don't want to do that for a long time because it is taxing after a while.”

The last theme identified was the limited opportunities for growth into leadership positions, which participants attributed to the smaller size of APSSDs. As teachers become more skilled and obtain advanced degrees, licenses, and credentials, that lack of upward mobility opportunities could encourage them to seek opportunities outside of their organizations.

**Interview Question 5:** What kinds of things make your work stressful or create stress for your colleagues?

Specific factors reported to create stress, indicated by nine of the 12 participants, were the required work and responsibility to individualize programming and supports for the varied needs of all students. Teachers also illustrated that the paperwork continues to grow, and the hours are becoming longer.
“The amount of paperwork has increased. I think that there's a lot of pressure to turn a lot of documents around in a very short period of time. It always feels like there are not enough hours in a day to complete everything.”

Participants responded that they feel that they are always connected, and it is hard to “unplug” from work. Many times, the constant contact and communication with families is stressful. Also, five of the 12 participants highlighted challenging behaviors as a stressor. Teachers frequently face challenging behaviors and must focus on critical functional skills that impact daily life directly.

“I think another piece of that stress is self-generated in that a lot of people who get into this field are doing it because they care deeply about it. So I think there's this sort of personal investment into everything. And when things don't go right, when progress is not being made, when behavior is not improving, there's sort of this feeling of, what could I be doing better, what can I be doing differently, what could I be doing more of? That can have a negative impact on a person's stress level.”

“It can be very emotionally draining to deal with some of the behaviors that we may see. Everything from aggressive behaviors to tantrums and self-injury, I think that can be very emotionally draining.”

Another challenge in private schools serving individuals with autism is that one-to-one services are frequently required, and staff absences and turnover negatively impact the opportunity to provide one-to-one services. Four of the 12 participants reported being down staff as a stressor. When classrooms are down staff members, teachers may struggle to manage challenging behaviors, teach certain skills, and collect the necessary data while in a reduced ratio.
“Another driver of stress is the amount of turnover that happens within classrooms. Not just with veteran staff, but new instructors and support staff. There are definitely times where I feel like as soon as I finished training the staff member and get them to a place where they can really work independently and be on their own, someone else has left and I have to start that process over again.”

Interview Question 6: What policies or procedures could be implemented to decrease the stress and burnout?

Four of the 12 participants remarked that formal procedures addressing the support of challenging behaviors would likely have a beneficial impact on stress and burnout. Providing additional training and staffing would better enable the management of challenging behaviors. Another leading recommendation, addressing the mental health and well-being of teachers, was identified by 25% of the participants. Staff members may benefit from support and training on how to disconnect from the stressors of their job. Lastly, teachers indicated the need to feel appreciated and recognized for their hard work and dedication.

“We use the ABA principles for our students to increase their motivation and likelihood of preferred behaviors. I think if those same principles are applied to staff as well, that can make a big difference. It is a human behavior, if we feel appreciated and if we feel motivated, we can maybe get bonuses, or we can get access to certain trainings that we would like, or we feel comfortable being able to talk to a director without feeling nervous or inferior. I think all those things really would help just increase the likelihood of a teacher staying, and actually really being happy with the school that they’re in.”

Interview Question 7: What incentives would you recommend to your school administration to assist with teacher retention?
The leading incentive identified by teachers to assist with retention includes monetary compensation. Whether it be a bonus, an annual raise, or a built-in increase based on longevity, six of the 12 participants highlighted the importance and power of financial compensation.

“Every single person on my team has to have a second job in order to live. Whether it's picking up, within my organization, picking up at the residential programs. I know teachers who have to pick up in residential programs. Whether it's picking up extra shifts or working in a restaurant or their own side business. I personally feel very strongly that they're not compensated enough for what they do, and nobody, I don't care if you're a direct support professional or a teacher, you shouldn't have to have two jobs to support yourself. If I could have one biggest, biggest gripe, it's that. We've given our support staff opportunities elsewhere in the organization, so that way they continue to work, which is phenomenal.”

The next leading recommendation by the participants was the need for appreciation and recognition. Teachers identified verbal praise or written feedback as desirable. The development of reward systems is encouraged and may include coffees, snacks, newsletter highlights, or announcements in staff meetings. Celebrating the successes of staff by naming a “teacher of the year” may increase the feeling of appreciation and recognition. Teachers did indicate that many times these efforts are made but they quickly cease. Participants stressed the importance of consistency with these initiatives.

“Recognition and appreciation are needed. People are doing great things and that's a good thing for the school. It's a good thing for that person. We should recognize and celebrate it.”
Additional themes included more opportunities for increased responsibilities and leadership, tuition assistance, and access to professional development opportunities through training and conference attendance.

“Having the chance to assume more responsibility and learn leadership skills made me really want to stay at my school. By having growth opportunities, I felt valued and appreciated. This made me a stronger teacher and ultimately improved the program.”

**Interview Question 8:** Any other concerns and opinions you would like to share in regard to teacher retention in private schools serving individuals with autism?

This question provided participants with the opportunity to include anything they may have missed or reinforce any ideas that they have shared. The participants reiterated the importance of a positive culture and environment. Some highlights included the need for a supportive and reassuring administration that encourages staff mental health and well-being. Fostering an environment of collaboration and respect is also essential. Staff morale is very important. Additionally, teachers want to have realistic expectations and goals. Soliciting feedback and input from the staff may provide administration with an opportunity to reevaluate and implement various systems to address teacher retention.

“I think that staff, their happiness and the way that they feel is probably more important than everything else, because they're the ones that lead the whole school throughout the day.”

“I'm here because I love what I do and I love the kids that we work with. There may be issues if you don't have strong leadership in certain core positions, service provision suffers because of difficulty with retention.”
“I've seen so many people come and go and so many efforts at retaining them that maybe a new approach or a fresh approach needs to be taken. Some staff needs more money, some staff needs to feel more appreciated, some staff is staying too late, some staff wants a different schedule; we individualize for students but struggle to for staff. So administrators can have better reinforcement and recognition systems; it might be a little bit of a bunch of different things that it works for each person.”

Participants also reiterated the desire for growth opportunities to increase their leadership skills, instructional techniques, and behavior management methods. Focusing resources on retention and giving opportunities to staff will show staff that they are valued. Some participants did take this opportunity to restate their happiness with the APSSD setting, indicating their commitment to and affection for students with autism and a continued appreciation for the access to support, training, and resources provided by their schools.

Overall, the themes that emerged from the interviews were consistent and aligned with the quantitative data. The interviews allowed for a more thorough investigation into specific factors and influences of teacher attrition and retention. Based on the interview responses, there is a need for administrators to research and investigate growth and leadership opportunities, training and professional development, support for staffing and challenging behavior, recognition and acknowledgment, and increased pay and compensation. These qualitative findings regarding teacher attrition and retention were used to form recommendations for APSSD administrators to implement in an effort to decrease teacher turnover. These recommendations are presented in Chapter V.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study sought to explore the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators' scope of control. The research design consisted of two phases, with the first phase guiding the second.

The sequential mixed-method approach was appropriate because Phase 1 results guided the development of Phase 2 interview questions. The first phase of this study focused on conducting the quantitative aspects of the research. The quantitative phase's goal was to identify what factors teachers find most important in influencing their decision to stay in an APSSD. The data were then subject to descriptive statistical analysis. This analysis led to the creation and review of the interview questions to be utilized in the second phase.

In the second phase of this research, a qualitative collection of data was gathered through structured interviews. These interviews were used to explain further the factors associated with teacher retention in private schools serving individuals with autism. These interviews allowed for additional insight into the participants’ responses that quantitative research alone would not have been able to identify (Billingsley, 2004; Creswell, 2009). In the qualitative portion of the study, I conducted interviews with 12 teachers. These interviews were then transcribed and coded to determine various themes that emerged from the data. Three research questions were explored in this study.

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?
**Research Question 2:** How do teachers describe factors, if any, that may inhibit the likelihood of their remaining in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism?

**Research Question 3:** How, if at all, can school administrators increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism?

**Summary of Research Question 1**

The first question investigated how teachers describe their motivation, if any, to remain in approved private schools for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism. The research found the top three motivating aspects of teaching to include a sense of achievement, interpersonal relationships with students, and a potential for professional growth. This current study aligns with Mertler’s (2016) findings reporting that the highest rated factors of motivation for teachers were ranked in the following order with sense of achievement being first followed by interpersonal relationship with students, recognition, and interpersonal relationship with colleagues.

In support of a sense of achievement, Petty et al. (2012) summarized that providing a teacher with respect and recognizing teaching successes are important factors because the school environment is typically reported as a leading factor in teacher retention. Employees are grateful to be recognized for a job well done and look forward to future recognition; when not recognized, an employee may question their work and not repeat it due to a dialed back interest (Stern & Wagner, 2016). Furthermore, Adams (2010) reported a primary factor in employee satisfaction is meaningful work and professional fulfillment. Sargent (2003) stressed that to have committed staff, teachers must feel connected and feel that their work is meaningful and acknowledged.
Many teachers indicated the importance of their relationships with the students. This feeling of connection and the need for strong relationships was supported by the literature. It is imperative for teachers to feel a strong sense of community in their schools, as this will increase satisfaction and efficacy (Choy, 1997). Additionally, research suggests a relationship between professional development and growth opportunities and retention and commitment to the field (Billingsley, 2004).

Many researchers indicated that a lack of opportunities for growth and development was a leading factor of teacher attrition and retention (McCoy et al., 2013; Perie & Baker, 1997; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018; Stern & Wagner, 2016). Queyrel-Bryan et al. (2019) identified that personal and professional growth opportunities come from professional development experiences. When rating professional development experiences, over 85% of teachers reported that professional development is meaningful, and providing teachers with these opportunities will increase ownership, engagement, and collaboration amongst teachers (Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Furthermore, the research of Sandhya and Kumar supported this, claiming a valuable retention strategy includes encouraging and providing professional training and development for personal growth opportunities.

It should also be noted that the bottom three motivating aspects of teaching reported by participants are teacher evaluation, factors in personal life, and status of the profession. In agreement, the lowest rated job factors, as per Mertler’s (2016) research, were teacher evaluation, factors in personal life, status of the profession, sense of accountability, and district policies.
The top two motivating incentives that may increase the likelihood of teacher retention include observing student improvements and having a student say thank you. The bottom two motivating incentives include being selected as teacher of the year and the teacher paying for a professional development workshop offered by the school. Mertler’s (2016) findings reported the three highest rated incentives were having a student thank you, observing vast improvements in your students, and being permitted to purchase additional equipment technology and supplies for your classroom. In addition, the three lowest incentives reported were being given the opportunity to participate in teacher projects, an instructional professional development workshop offered by the district that the teacher would have to pay for themselves, and early retirement/contract buyout (Mertler, 2016).

The top three enticing variables to influence teacher retention include a pay increase, more time for prepping and planning, and greater opportunities for advancement. The research supports this indicated that strong salary scales, better prepared teachers, and teachers who felt supported by the school leaders were likely to stay in their schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Furthermore, Stern and Wagner (2016) delineated that employees who can envision positive growth and advancement opportunities are 17 times more likely to be happy with their current organization. Sargent (2003) stressed the importance of professional growth experiences illustrating that they provide a positive and supportive social setting. A lack of a structured and supportive environment will ultimately deter teachers and inhibit student learning. The bottom three enticing variables to influence teacher retention in an APSSD were a different administrator, smaller classes, and better facilities.
Summary of Research Question 2

The second research question describes what factors, if any, teachers identified as inhibiting their likelihood to remain in an approved private school for students with disabilities, specifically serving individuals with autism. Overall, no participant reported a level of dissatisfaction with their current teaching assignment. Mertler (2016) reported significantly different findings with 26% of teachers reporting they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their current job as a teacher.

In the current study, teachers reported that if given the opportunity to start a new career, approximately half would remain in education, while 37% reported uncertainty, and 15% indicated they would not continue as a teacher if they were given the opportunity to start a new career. These findings also differ from Mertler (2016) in which 31% of the total teachers responded affirmatively to starting over in a new career, 45% of the total teachers said they were not really sure, and 24% of the total teachers said they would remain in teaching. Furthermore, Mertler (2016) indicated that 69% of teachers reported that they have seriously considered leaving the profession.

The research found that the most influential factors of a teacher’s decision to leave the field were unethical treatment, the lack of a supportive work environment, and to seek a more competitive salary. Variables that were identified as less likely to influence a teacher’s decision to leave teaching were a lack of shared leadership, a lack of desire and willingness to support various reform efforts, and a career change outside of the field of education. According to Mertler (2016), the leading reason influencing a teacher’s consideration to leave was to seek a more competitive salary. These claims are also substantiated by the literature. Factors associated
with retention include increased salaries, a positive school climate, adequate support and resources, positive working conditions, professional development opportunities, and reasonable demand and expectations for the teacher’s role (Billingsley, 2004). The literature also mentioned feeling connected, important, and recognized, having growth opportunities, and developing relationships with/support from supervisors and colleagues as very influential factors in a teacher’s decision to stay. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) indicated that positive changes to “compensation, growth, support, relationships, and environment” (p. 1780) will encourage staff to remain at their current school.

According to Ingersoll and Smith (2003), one of the most prominent reasons that teachers indicated dissatisfaction with working conditions included lack of support from school leaders. Billingsley (2004) reported that when teachers receive adequate support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to stay. Educators also stated that higher levels of support from the principal increased the likelihood of loyalty. Studies indicated that higher levels of support from principals led to fewer role problems, increased job satisfaction, lessened stress, and increased levels of commitment from staff (Billingsley, 2004; Petty et al., 2012). Teachers who strongly disagreed that they had supportive administrators were two times more likely to leave than individuals who felt supported (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Lastly, Ingersoll and Smith’s findings indicated that money was more important than respect, recognition, and resources.

The lowest rated reasons were inadequate training and mentoring (Mertler, 2016). Furthermore, Mertler (2016) indicated that the top two responses reported by teachers on enticing reasons to stay included an increase in pay and more time to prepare, while the bottom two responses included a better facility or different administrator.
Summary of Research Question 3

The third research question explores what, if anything, school administrators can do to increase teacher retention in private schools serving students with autism. When further investigating factors that might influence a teacher’s decision to remain in a private school, half of the teachers interviewed indicated their commitment to the autism population and the enjoyment from experiencing student success. This reinforced the findings in Research Question 1 where achievement and relationships with students served were indicated as highly motivating factors for teacher retention. Teachers also illustrated the importance of culture, support, resources, collaboration, and growth. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) supported this as their research indicated that when a positive school climate is experienced by special educators, they are more likely to stay than those who reported a negative school climate. Many times, special educators report that they prefer a culture of collective responsibility that provides a cooperative effort among staff members (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019).

Additional supports and resources identified as being able to enhance a teacher’s experience at their current school included additional training and professional development, ongoing support, opportunities for leadership and growth, flexible planning and scheduled hours, increased collaboration, and opportunities for supplemental responsibilities that may result in additional compensation.

The finding that administrative support can influence retention and attrition is indicated throughout the literature (Billingsley, 2004; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Perie & Baker, 1997; Petty et al., 2012; Silletto, 2018). Ingersoll indicated an important factor for teacher dissatisfaction includes inadequate administrative support.
Billingsley and Bettini (2019) defined administrative support in terms of an inclusive culture that fosters collaboration and ensures that all teachers have the resources to do their job effectively. Providing classroom supplies and resources or assigning teachers to mentors demonstrates administrative support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Desired qualities for school administrators that will likely increase teacher retention include democratic, supportive, and respectful as this will boost the staff morale (Petty et al., 2012).

Additionally, during interviews, teachers also mentioned autonomy when speaking about growth, development, and leadership opportunities. According to the literature, autonomy significantly impacted teacher satisfaction levels (Adams, 2010; Perie & Baker, 1997; Queyrel-Bryan et al., 2019). Teachers with greater autonomy showed higher levels of satisfaction compared to teachers who lacked autonomy. Professional practices that have a clear impact on teacher satisfaction include professional development opportunities and classroom autonomy, according to Queyrel-Bryan et al.

Johnson (2006) indicated that teacher collaboration is rewarding for teachers and likely increases student achievement due to consistency, efficacy, and commitment. Specifically, the author indicated that shared planning time had the highest impact on reducing attrition rates. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) reported that, for special education teachers, peer support and collaboration can often improve a teacher’s experience because it enhances learning, provides emotional support regarding workplace demands, and helps navigate school structures.

Specific factors that would increase the likelihood of teachers leaving their current school included the higher salaries and improved compensation packages provided by public schools, the challenging behaviors that students with autism may present, and the limited opportunities
for growth and leadership positions due to the smaller size of private schools. Ingersoll and Rossi (1995) indicated that teacher turnover was higher in private schools than public schools, citing the reasons due to lower salaries and fewer benefits. The researchers substantiated this claim by citing data from the 1991-1992 NCES Teacher Follow-up Survey (TF), in which 17% of former private school teachers indicated salary as a leading source of dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). Hein et al. (2016) introduced the terminology “total rewards” to describe the salary, compensation, and incentive packages to attract and retain desired staff members. Some of the most influential components of a satisfactory rewards package include salary, medical and prescription drug coverage, paid time-off programs, retirement plans, workplace flexibility, incentives and bonus pay, career, professional development, and training programs, work–life and well-being programs, supplemental insurance policies, long-term incentives, and recognition programs (Hein et al., 2016).

Further, McCoy et al. (2013) reported that a teacher’s decision to leave often mentioned a lack of support with classroom management. As many teachers indicated the lack of support and stress caused by managing challenging behavior, it is imperative to acknowledge the impact of the challenging behaviors that students with autism present. Lastly, one of the highest reported reasons for teacher dissatisfaction includes the lack of opportunity for professional advancement (Ingersoll, 2001). Stern and Wagner (2016) delineated that employees who can envision positive growth and advancement opportunities are 17 times more likely to be happy with their current organization. Sargent (2003) stressed the importance of professional growth experiences, illustrating that they provide a positive and supportive social setting. A lack of a structured and supportive environment will ultimately deter from teachers and inhibit student learning.
When investigating stress and burnout experienced by teachers in private schools, the specific factors identified as stressful included the required work and responsibility to individualize programming and supports for the varied needs of students, the challenges of disconnecting from the workday and acknowledging mental health and well-being, managing challenging behaviors, and being down staff due to absences or turnover. The participants indicated that formal procedures addressing the support of challenging behaviors, additional training and staffing, and appreciation and recognition of hard work and dedication would assist with decreasing stress and burnout.

Billingsley (2004) indicated that stress is the most powerful indicator with respect to attrition for special educators. Specific factors that contribute to stress include managing the varying ranges of students’ needs and abilities, organizational requirements, and unclear or conflicting expectations, goals, and directives. Furthermore, Billingsley and Bettini (2019) noted that special education teachers have many challenging, multifaceted responsibilities to meet, which may elicit feelings of frustration and thoughts of attrition. Large caseloads with unmanageable and unrealistic demands are reported as a leading reason for turnover (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Many special educators viewed paperwork as overwhelming, difficult, and redundant and claimed it interfered with teaching time (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Additionally, Stern and Wagner (2016) reported that employees who receive work–life balance acknowledgment or wellness programs are far more likely to be committed.

Stern and Wagner (2016) reported that employees are much more likely to leave when burnout is high. Addressing the variables that impact well-being and mental health to decrease stress and burnout will increase teacher retention. Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) recommended stress-management and peer-collaboration programs as they have been found to improve a
teacher’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing burnout. Cooley and Yovanoff conducted a study that provided participants with a series of stress management workshops and the opportunity to participate in peer collaboration programs as both of these factors affect staff turnover. The findings revealed that these programs had the potential to provide support for special educators at risk of burnout or leaving the field. The participants also reported they learned practical and valuable strategies that addressed their needs (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). Employees also appreciate the recognition of professional or personal accomplishments or significant events. Silletto (2018) stated that if administrators want specific behaviors repeated, these behaviors should be acknowledged and recognized. Saying thank you for a job well done goes a long way, even if that action is a part of the actual job description.

Teachers in this study indicated that incentives likely to decrease stress and burnout, and ultimately encourage retention, included monetary compensation, tuition assistance, appreciation and recognition, opportunities for increased responsibilities and leadership, and access to professional development opportunities through training and conference attendance. According to Sandhya and Kumar (2011), some of the leading factors leading to teacher turnover include no opportunities for growth, stress from challenges maintaining a work–life balance, and a lack of appreciation and trust. Additional factors that contribute to teacher attrition are low salaries, a poor school climate, lack of support, role overload, and dissonance, as these lead to increased stress and decreased job satisfaction and commitment (Billingsley, 2004). Stern and Wagner’s (2016) recommendation, fostering a collaborative environment, allows employees to work cohesively as a team and build strong working relationships. Many times, this may be done through feedback and acknowledgment for staff. Sandhya and Kumar reported that performance appraisals are valued for appreciating and recognizing a well-done job.
This research found that the most consistent themes and areas to address included: growth and leadership opportunities, training and professional development, support for staffing and challenging behavior, recognition and acknowledgment, and increased pay and compensation.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks upon which this research is centered are those of Maslow and Herzberg, two different theories of motivation identified as impacting employee retention (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Maslow (1954) developed one of the most prominent theories on human needs and motivation. The theory's core is that individuals’ most basic needs must be met before they become motivated to achieve higher level needs. Individuals are motivated by a variety of wants, some more fundamental than others. The hierarchy is composed of five levels: (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) social/belonging, (4) esteem, (5) self-actualization (Mangi, Kanasro & Burdi, 2015; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). An employer utilizing this philosophy will successfully identify and meet employees’ needs to increase productivity and employee efficiency (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Operating under the mindset that investing in people is a benefit, not a cost, will create and retain a skilled and committed workforce that promotes employee satisfaction.

Herzberg (1966) further developed the literature on motivational theories and offered insight into the motivation of workers through a two-factor motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg sought to identify factors that lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The five motivational factors that consistently influenced positive work performance and attitudes are: (1) doing the job, (2) liking the job, (3) experiencing success, (4) receiving recognition, and (5) moving upward as an
indication of professional growth (Herzberg et al., 1959). The motivating factors typically focus on achievement, recognition, responsibilities, advancement, and learnings, while the hygiene factors mainly focus on the workspace environment and types of restrictions surrounding employees (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Herzberg (1966) concluded that most employee motivation would occur when all hygiene factors are adequately addressed with a focus on satisfaction factors, including achievement and recognition. Giving employees more freedom, authority, feedback, and challenges will enrich their jobs (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Employee performance will increase in a healthy work environment where success and recognition are achievable.

The findings of this research aligned with and supported the research of both Maslow and Herzberg. Teachers are motivated to remain in their current teaching position by experiencing a sense of achievement, interpersonal relationship with students, the potential for professional growth opportunities, a pay increase, and more time to prep and plan. Factors that may increase the likelihood of teachers leaving included unethical treatment, the lack of a supportive work environment, and pursuing a more competitive salary. Administrators may want to reevaluate and consider implementing policies to address growth and leadership opportunities, training and professional development, support for staffing and challenging behavior, recognition and acknowledgment, and increased pay and compensation.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Schools can improve teacher retention by having systems and processes in place that provide staff with the skills and resources necessary to avoid reasons for turnover. This research found that the most consistent themes and areas to address included growth and leadership opportunities for teachers, training and professional development, support for staffing and
challenging behavior, recognition and acknowledgment of work, and pay and compensation. Additionally, school administrators must solicit employee feedback, utilize human resource strategies, and consistently evaluate and modify efforts as needed.

**Growth and Leadership Opportunities**

Through the data analysis, the need to increase opportunities for growth, advancement, responsibilities, and compensation has been identified as a factor to increase teacher retention. School administrators may want to consider creating opportunities for teachers to have more involvement, responsibilities, and leadership experiences. Teachers have shared the desire for autonomy and growth within the school. Silletto (2018) suggested that administrators broaden the definition of advancement. The needs and expectations of staff members will continue to evolve and change throughout the years. Employers must make changes to meet these needs and expectations. The staffing models that worked in the past may not work in the current landscape. As such, school administrators may want to create leadership roles, mentoring programs, and a “promote from within” mindset, as those strategies will foster retention.

Furthermore, administrators may want to create more advancement opportunities. By allowing smaller advancement opportunities on a continuous basis, employees will realize they are valued and have an opportunity for more frequent and meaningful praise. To create more levels, administrators may identify key competencies and break them into a few areas. Job descriptions can be developed based on these competencies and shared with employees to move up a level. By doing this you can also create levels for staff members that have senior technical skills but not necessarily senior management skills (Silletto, 2018).
Training and Professional Development

Administrators must stay abreast of best practices and provide training and professional development opportunities to staff. This area is very comprehensive and includes training for instructional techniques and managing challenging behavior, mental health support and awareness, in-service trainings, and conference attendance. A needs assessment can be conducted to identify areas for growth and improvement. Varied models of training delivery can be researched including experiences for guest speakers or veteran staff. Training may be provided school-wide, individually, in small groups, in-person, or virtually based on the wants and needs of the school and staff.

Employee wellness opportunities must also be considered in regard to training and professional development. Administrators should provide mental health awareness and encouragement for staff to address their mental health needs in a field with high stress and burnout. Administrators may want to provide in-service or onsite professional development that is geared towards self-care and mental well-being on an annual basis. Administrators should be mindful and encourage staff to take personal time off when appropriate or needed. This recommendation is supported in the literature as Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) recommended stress-management and peer-collaboration programs, as they have been found to improve a teacher's job satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing burnout.

Support for Staffing and Challenging Behavior

Many times, private schools serving individuals with autism are staffed with a one-to-one ratio. When students engage in challenging behavior and require the support of additional staff,
or when staff members are absent, classrooms may be down-staffed, which poses many challenges and affects teacher stress.

As autism is a spectrum disorder, challenging behaviors may present in various ways. Students may engage in aggression, self-injury, or tantrum behavior that can range from low to severe intensity. When challenging behaviors are severe, staff may become injured. As such, it is imperative that administrators provide the necessary support and training to manage these challenging behaviors. Administrators should provide teachers with the necessary time to assess behavior intervention plans, further knowledge and training, troubleshoot and collaborate with coworkers of specialized staff members, and secure necessary resources. Many schools may benefit from a crisis management team and training.

To address being down-staffed due to absences or staff resignations and to support the times of extreme challenging behaviors, administrators may want to consider having extra support staff available. Some schools hire full-time or part-time floaters who would be available to cover when needed. While not providing direct support, floaters may be utilized to collect data, provide training, or assist with various other tasks. Administrators may also want to develop a bank of pre-trained substitute staff members as specialized training and knowledge is required. An inexperienced instructor cannot provide support in a classroom without having previous training and experience on student programs and behavior intervention plans.

**Recognition and Acknowledgement**

Teachers strongly indicated the importance of recognition and acknowledgement. Too frequently, the impression of school administrators is that they respond to issues and provide corrective feedback. Staff members ask to receive more consistent positive feedback.
Administrators may want to consider embedding time in their schedule to conduct building walkthroughs to acknowledge and praise good observed behaviors, as well as to identify problems. Administrators may also want to consider conducting monthly meetings to highlight student and staff success and accomplishments. This positive feedback must be ongoing and consistent. It can be verbal and written. It can be shared privately or publicly via conversations, meetings, emails, or newsletters.

Teachers in this study have shared preferences for particular rewards and incentives. They are varied and may be individualized to meet the restrictions of the school or wants and needs of the staff. Some rewards or incentives may include opportunities to leave early, attending staff events, appreciation/recognition awards and announcements, thank you notes, treats/presents, or permission for purchases. Administrators should work with the staff to identify and develop incentives and reward systems.

**Employee Feedback**

Teachers reported that when they have open communication with administrators, feel supported by administrators, and have input on school decisions they are more likely to remain at their school. Areas of communication that impact staff performance and satisfaction involve open and honest communication and encouraging staff to share ideas and opinions (Hein et al., 2016). As such, it is recommended that administrators open up channels of communication for staff and actively seek their input, as appropriate, on school-wide issues, decisions and initiatives.

School administrators should not make assumptions regarding the reasons for turnover. Retention will not improve unless organizational issues causing turnover are addressed.
Employers can solicit feedback from employees to monitor the needs and expectations of the organization. Feedback is essential, and some research has indicated the use of surveying staff in order to guide policy development for teacher retention. As such, it is my recommendation that school administrators utilize surveys and employee data to guide decisions. These surveys may be conducted on an ongoing basis.

Administrators may be interested in implementing “stay” interviews, as most organizations already conduct “exit” interviews. With a stay interview, administrators will provide an opportunity to build a rapport and understand the various perspectives, issues, and dynamics. These interviews can occur at varied frequencies, once midyear or randomly. Silletto (2018) provided examples of stay-interview questions to include asking about a good workday recently, a frustrating workday recently, thoughts and feelings on recognition, treatment, trust, and respect. Other areas for this interview may include feelings on communication, most or least preferred aspects of the job, interest in learning something new, or resources that may be needed (Silletto, 2018). The framework for this interview is that the leadership is looking for ways to better support staff and ensure commitment to the organization.

**Recommendations for Policy**

**Pay and Compensation**

Although the literature review provided varied findings of the impact of salary and compensation on the attrition and retention of teachers, this study indicated that pay is a very important factor. Policymakers may want to conduct a formal salary study every 2 to 3 years to ensure that their school salaries and benefits are competitive with local salaries and benefits. Also, it may be beneficial for policymakers to make the salary system more transparent by
informing staff members how the school determines salary and salary increases. Developing and sharing a salary guide will illustrate to staff where they can be over time. Incorporating longevity increases may be an added bonus as staff members remain and reach these milestones of 5 years, 10 years, and so forth. Lastly, policymakers may want to explore various “pay-for-performance systems” that reward excellence and pay additional stipends to teachers who take on leadership roles and/or more work. The findings of this study did indicate the desire for these opportunities.

Policymakers should assess and respond to the benefit needs of staff members at various life stages. Gathering information to learn about what benefits are most valued by experienced teachers may facilitate employee retention. Policymakers may also want to think outside of the box and consider benefits that are not typically offered, for example, student loan assistance, more time off, additional time provided for administrative tasks, planning and prepping, and professional development, providing breakfast or lunch, wellness benefits for exercise or health clubs, and so on. Some of these benefits may be low in cost and could greatly lower teacher stress levels and increase overall job satisfaction.

Silletto (2018) indicated that, many times, employees experience the reward of an increase after an annual evaluation or review. School policymakers may want to reposition reward timelines and consider smaller incremental rewards instead of the annual model. It is also important for policymakers to base compensations, rewards, and benefits on what works best for the staff population. Often, younger employees are not interested in retirement benefits (Silletto, 2018). Surveying staff to provide input and identify rewards and incentives may be beneficial.

Another benefit schools may want to explore is developing partnerships with local colleges and universities. Schools can become practicum and student teacher sites for incoming
teachers and recruit them upon graduation. Additionally, policymakers may be able to develop a decreased tuition rate agreement for current employees. Providing staff with continuing education and professional development opportunities at decreased rates or tuition covered by the school may benefit retention. Many teachers indicated an interest in these opportunities.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) indicated that policies to address teacher turnover should include compensation, as almost 20% of teachers leaving the profession of education reported financial reasons as very or extremely important. Policymakers should consider providing comprehensive packages that are equitable across districts and provide competitive rates and benefits as compared to other occupations requiring similar levels of education. Additionally, policymakers should consider scholarships and loan forgiveness programs to decrease the debt burdens one may incur from entering the field of education (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Human Resource Strategies**

One of the most critical steps toward improving employee retention includes enhancing organizational management (Silletto, 2018). However, after reviewing the literature base, the focus of retention efforts is not on developing and strengthening principal preparation and training programs. Providing soft skills training to managers will increase the likelihood of staff retention and efficacy for the organization (Silletto, 2018). By enhancing principals’ skill sets and knowledge, robust learning environments may be created that improve student and teacher experiences (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Silletto illustrated that most staff leave because they do not have a desirable relationship with their supervisor. As such, it is the
recommendation that policymakers and administrators actively receive training and stay abreast on the best retention and human resource strategies.

Policymakers may want to consider hiring a dedicated retention specialist. Many times, leaders in an organization assume and appropriately manage additional responsibilities. Retention specialists may be helpful in collecting information and analyzing information, developing the policies and procedures to implement new changes and initiatives (Silletto, 2018). Because money will be saved with retention improvement, budgets may allow for the hiring of a retention specialist. Responsibilities of the retention specialist may include, but are not limited to, gathering and analyzing staff data, identifying gaps in leadership training, developing operational or system changes for retention, investigating, rewards and incentives, recognition and appreciation programs, and opportunities for advancement, promoting transparency with employees, improving communication, and improving the school’s culture (Silletto, 2018). While this person will not be the sole responsible party for all of these initiatives, they will take the lead as the conductor and spearhead these initiatives.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

This research had its limitations due to the small sample size and was limited to the voluntary participation of administrators and teachers at APSSDs serving students with autism located in New Jersey. Additionally, caution should be observed when generalizing the findings, as 80% of the participants were females in suburban schools. Future studies should look at other schools that serve other populations. By looking at the teachers of students with various disabilities, it would be interesting to see if they provided the same results as the teachers of students with autism. By speaking with other teachers, it could be determined whether the recommendations of this study can be generalized to other APSSDs. Future research can also
interview school administrators to investigate the efficacy in applying the recommendation to school practices and its impact on teacher retention.

**Summary**

The challenges administrators and policymakers face are often determining what key factors will motivate staff to remain engaged and committed. One thing all successful leaders and managers realize is that different people will be motivated by various factors. Leadership members need to individualize plans for their employees and assess the areas of mental health and wellbeing to prevent burnout, discuss career goals and opportunities for advancement, and create a culture of collaboration. In order to develop the most effective staff retention strategies, employers need to become familiar with the wants and needs of the staff. A holistic review to create a positive environment may not only minimize attrition, but it may also increase a teacher's involvement and commitment to their work (Billingsley, 2004).

Although the recommendations of this research will not stop turnover, they will likely decrease it and allow for a more productive workplace for all stakeholders. These changes will not happen overnight. Silletto (2018) suggested categorizing the issues at hand into three areas: "low-hanging fruit, long-term initiatives and not at this time" (p. 108). Low-hanging fruit can be addressed quickly and immediately. Staff will see that administrators and policymakers are working on making a meaningful change. It is important that administration does not address these changes from a defensive and guarded angle. An open-minded and collaborative approach will ensure continued positive communication, collaboration, and growth in the right direction (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Silletto, 2018). Organizational leaders must be committed to changes in management approaches over time to change the retention culture. Organizations must realize that employees do have options to go somewhere else, but it is our job to convince the employees
to stay. It is important to give the benefit of the doubt to the employees. Administrators should try their best to understand why employees feel a certain way about preferences and requests and do their best to make these things come to fruition.
References


Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

November 19, 2020

Leah Farinola
Seton Hall University

Re: Study ID#2021-155

Dear Leah:

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, “Factors influencing the retention of teachers in private schools serving students with autism” as submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval as exempt. If your study has a consent form or letter of solicitation, they are included in this mailing for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Factors influencing retention of teachers in private schools serving students with autism

Principal Investigator: Leah M. Farinola, Doctoral Student

Department Affiliation: Department of Educational Leadership Management and Policy

Sponsor: This research is supported by Seton Hall University

Brief summary about this research study:
The following summary of this research study is to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. You have the right to ask questions at any time. The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study is to explore the factors associated with teacher retention in New Jersey private schools serving children with autism. This study seeks to explore the most influential variables in teacher retention within school administrators’ scope of control.

You will be asked to complete an online survey and consider volunteering for a follow-up interview. We expect that you will be in this research study for 20 minutes for the quantitative online survey and an additional 30 minutes should you volunteer and be selected for the qualitative interview. The primary risk of participation is minimal. The main benefit of participation is contributing to the knowledge base for retention in private schools serving students with autism.

Purpose of the research study:
You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are an educational professional (Teacher of Students with Disabilities [ToSD or ToH] and/or Board Certified Behavior Analyst [BCBA]) employed at an APSSD for at least three years and overseeing the educational programming for a classroom/group of students with autism.

Your participation in this research study is expected to be for one to two 30 minute sessions over a 5 week period which will cover two phases of data collection. You will be one of approximately 60 people who are expected to participate in this research study.

What you will be asked to do:
Your participation in this research study will include:

- The completion of a 65-item online survey that includes demographic information questions and Likert-scale responses to rate teacher satisfaction, incentives, and motivators.
- The potential for participating in a 30-minute virtual interview via Zoom or Google Meet. Upon completion of the online survey each participant may volunteer to participate in the follow-up interview. The researcher will contact participants to schedule and conduct each interview. The quantitative survey data, in combination with the review of relevant literature, will help to guide the development of the qualitative interview questions. Interviews will occur a few weeks after survey completion. As such, interview questions are not available at this time, however, examples of questions may include:
  - Have you ever considered leaving your current school? If so, why?
  - What aspects of your current school make you want to remain there?
  - What aspects of your current school could influence you to leave?
Informed Consent Form

- What changes could occur that could influence you to leave?
- Please provide any suggestions regarding your perceptions of elements that influence your decision to remain in APSSDs that could be beneficial to administrators in assisting early teacher retention.
- Specific questions regarding specific factors and variables that were identified through the quantitative survey data analysis.

Your rights to participate, say no or withdraw:
Participation in research is voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate. You can choose to participate in the research study now and then decide to leave the research at any time. Your choice will not be held against you.

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include missing study visits, non-compliance with the study procedures, or incomplete data and responses.

Potential benefits:
There may be no direct benefit to you from this study. You may obtain personal satisfaction from knowing that you are participating in a project that contributes to new information. Recommendations will be shared with school administrators at APSSDs, as such, the participants may benefit from changes that occur to increase staff retention.

Potential risks:
The risks associated with this study are minimal in nature. Your participation in this research may include a minimal risk of breach of confidentiality, however all necessary safety precautions will be taken in order to minimize this. The participants will not be identified in the study, therefore a breach of confidentiality is minimal. No images or identifying information will be collected.

Confidentiality and privacy:
Efforts will be made to limit the use or disclosure of your personal information. This information may include the research study documents or other source documents used for the purpose of conducting the study. These documents may include an online survey or interview transcripts and audio recordings. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that oversee research safety may inspect and copy your information. This includes the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board who oversees the safe and ethical conduct of research at this institution.

This survey is being hosted by Qualtrics and involves a secure connection. Terms of service, addressing confidentiality, may be viewed at https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/. Upon receiving results of your survey, any possible identifiers will be deleted by the investigator. You will be identified only by a unique subject number. Your email address, which may be used to contact you to schedule a study visit will be stored separately from your survey data. All information will be kept on a password protected computer only accessible by the research team. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

Data sharing:
De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance knowledge. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one
Informed Consent Form

will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Cost and compensation:
You will not be responsible for any of the costs or expenses associated with your participation in this study. There is no payment for your time to participate in this study.

Conflict of interest disclosure:
The principal investigator and members of the study team have no financial conflicts of interest to report.

Contact information:
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, you can contact the principal investigator (Leah M. Farinola) at (leah.fanning@student.shu.edu) or the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) at (973) 761-9334 or irb@shu.edu.

Audio recording consent:
Audio recordings will be performed as part of the research study. Please indicate your permission to participate in these activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

I agree  I disagree

The researcher may record my audio interview. I understand this is done to help with data collection and analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the study team.

I hereby consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent
Appendix C

Teacher Motivation Survey (APSSD)

Q1 What is your gender?
   - Male (1)
   - Female (2)
   - Non-binary (3)

Q2 Are you an NJ certified special education teacher (ToSD, ToH)?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

Q3 Are you a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

Q4 Are you working at a private school for students with disabilities?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

Q5 How many years have you been at your current school? ________

Q6 School setting location
   - Urban (1)
   - Suburban (2)
   - Rural (3)

Q7 Do you work with students with autism?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)
Q8 Do you utilize the principles of applied behavior analysis?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q9 Current position - **NOTE**: For the purposes of this survey a teacher is classified as someone who oversees a classroom regardless of certification.

- ▼ Teacher (1) .. Aide (4)

Q10 Do you oversee the programming for one classroom/student group?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q11 What is your age?

________________________________________________________________

Q12 What is your race/ethnicity?

- ▼ American Indian or Alaska Native (1) .. White (6)

Q13 What is your overall level of satisfaction with your current position as a teacher?

- Extremely satisfied (1)
- Moderately satisfied (2)
- Slightly satisfied (3)
- Slightly dissatisfied (4)
- Moderately dissatisfied (5)
- Extremely dissatisfied (6)
Q14 If you had the opportunity to start over in a new career, would you choose to become a teacher?

○ Yes (1)

○ Maybe (2)

○ No (3)

Q15 Please briefly explain why you answered the previous question as you did.

__________________________________________________________

Q16 On the following 5-point scale, please check the degree to which each of the following aspects of the job of teaching serve as a UNMOTIVATING factor or an MOTIVATING factor for you as a teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition (e.g., receiving praise from administrators, parents, students, or others) (1)</th>
<th>Highly Unmotivating (1)</th>
<th>Unmotivating (2)</th>
<th>Motivating (3)</th>
<th>Highly Motivating (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential for professional growth (e.g., possibility of improving one's own professional skills) (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision (e.g., by a competent administrator) (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships with colleagues (e.g., interaction with other teachers) (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary (e.g., financial compensation) (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job security (e.g., tenure) (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Status (e.g., professional status of teaching) (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships with administrators (e.g., interaction with administrators) (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of achievement (e.g., experiencing success) (9)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working conditions (e.g., building conditions, amount of work, facilities available) (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher evaluation (e.g., appraisal of classroom instruction by evaluator) (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility (e.g., autonomy, authority and responsibility for own work) (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential for advancement (e.g., possibility of assuming different positions in the profession) (13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work itself (e.g., aspects associated with the tasks of teaching) (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors in personal life (e.g., effects of teaching on one's personal life) (15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationships with students (e.g., interaction with students) (16)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of accountability (e.g., directly held responsible for student learning and academic performance) (17)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17 On the following 5-point scale, please check the degree to which each of the following incentives serve as a UNMOTIVATING factor or an MOTIVATING factor for you as a teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Highly Unmotivating (1)</th>
<th>Unmotivating (2)</th>
<th>Motivating (3)</th>
<th>Highly Motivating (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A one-time monetary award (supplemental to a step increase)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being selected as &quot;Teacher of the Year&quot; in the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>An instructional professional development workshop offered by</td>
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<tr>
<td>the school for a fee (you pay)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a student thank you for assisting in the understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>of a difficult concept</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>An instructional professional development workshop offered and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>paid for by the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being given the opportunity to participate in teacher projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e.g., curriculum development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early retirement / contract buy-out (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observing vast improvements in your students' performance since</td>
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<tr>
<td>the beginning of the year (8)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Being permitted to purchase additional equipment, technology, and/or supplies for your classroom (9)

Being supported to engage in your own professional growth through the implementation of classroom-based action research (10)

Q18 Have you ever seriously considered leaving teaching?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q19 If you answered “Yes” to the previous question, please briefly explain why you considered leaving or why you chose to stay.

________________________________________________________________
Q20 How UNLIKELY or LIKELY would the following be reasons that you would seriously consider leaving teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Highly unlikely (1)</th>
<th>unlikely (2)</th>
<th>Likely (3)</th>
<th>Highly Likely (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career change (within education) (1)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change (outside of education) (2)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek more competitive salary (3)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with current assignment (4)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of desire/willingness to support various reform efforts (5)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for advancement (6)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate mentoring (7)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supportive work environment (8)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate training necessary for position (9)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture (10)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative leadership (11)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of autonomy (12)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of shared leadership (13)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unethical treatment (14)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q21 Are there any other reasons that would cause you to consider leaving teaching?

________________________________________________________________

Q22 If you were hypothetically considering leaving teaching, which of the following might entice you to stay? (Please check all that apply)

☐ Pay increase  (1)

☐ Different administrator  (2)

☐ Change in leadership style(s)  (3)

☐ Smaller classes  (4)

☐ More time to plan or prepare  (5)

☐ Greater opportunities for collaboration with colleagues  (6)

☐ Better facilities  (7)

☐ Greater opportunities for advancement  (8)

________________________________________________________________

Q23 If you were hypothetically considering leaving teaching, are there any other reasons that would entice you to stay?

________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Teacher Retention

Start of Block: Conclusion
Q24 Would you consider taking part in a follow-up interview? Your answers will be confidential.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q25 If you answered yes above please provide the following:

- Name (1) ________________________________________________
- Email (2) ________________________________________________
- Phone Number (3) _________________________________________

End of Block: Conclusion
Hello Ms. Farinola,

Thanks for your email. Yes, you may have permission to use and/or adapt my teacher motivation and job satisfaction survey.

You might also be interested in an updated version that I used a couple of years ago in a statewide study that I did in Arizona. The major difference is the addition of items that address teacher perceptions of retention.

I've attached both the survey (I apologize for the formatting; it was done in Qualtrics, so saving it as a PDF is always a bit awkward, but at least you have access to all of the items) and the article I published from this study.

Best of luck with your dissertation research!!

On Wed, Oct 2, 2019 at 8:58 AM <no-reply@parastorage.com> wrote:

A site visitor just submitted a new Contact Form
https://www.craigmertler.com/

Message Details:
Name: Leah Farinola
Email: leah@reedacademy.org
Subject: Dissertation request
Message: Hello Dr. Mertler, I hope this email finds you well. I am currently completing my doctorate from Seton Hall University located in New Jersey. I am the Principal at REED Academy - a school for children with autism. My area of research centers around teacher retention in private schools for children with autism. While doing some research I came across your work and found your teacher motivation and job satisfaction survey via this link: http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/510/522780/forms/jobsatis.pdf I am requesting permission to use this for my dissertation study. Can you please let me know if this is something you would be able to provide me? I would also be more than happy to discuss my research with you as well as find out more about your areas of study if you are interested :-) I have already included your work in my references for my literature review. Thank you for your contributions to the field. Sincerely, Leah M. Farinola Principal, REED Academy leah@reedacademy.org 201-852-4524