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A Study of the Perceptions of New and Veteran Elementary
School Teachers Regarding Stress Factors That Impact Their
Careers

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership
and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education

by
Kristi Christopher
December 2004

Dr. Nancy Dishner, Chair
Dr. Cecil Blankenship, Committee Member
Dr. Louise MacKay, Committee Member
Dr. Russell West, Committee Member

Keywords: Stress, New Teachers, Mentoring Programs,
Induction Programs

ABSTRACT

A Study of the Perceptions of New and Veteran Elementary School Teachers Regarding Stress Factors that Impact Their Careers

by

Kristi Christopher

The goal of this study was to identify some of the key stressors novice and veteran teachers face and to determine if there are any particular steps that administrators of the school systems can take to ensure the success of all teachers.

The qualitative research method was used in this study. An interview guide was developed and used during the interview process. Eighteen teachers, nine new teachers and nine veteran teachers, all with general education classroom experience participated in the research. The interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim and then analyzed to develop themes.

Themes emerged regarding issues that teachers indicated were the biggest stress factors that they face. They were also found in relation to the traits that participants noticed were crucial to the success of new teachers including the teacher preparation program, and types of mentoring and induction programs in place, as well as the leadership style of the principal and professional development opportunities that were offered, and their impact on stress.

Themes from the study show that teaching is a very stressful occupation, and that all teachers, regardless of the number of years they have been teaching, face similar stress factors. However, steps can be taken to help relieve stress that both new and veteran teachers are facing. Some changes may need to be made in teacher preparation programs as well as the implementation of formal mentoring and induction programs. Principals and supervisors can also play an important role in the stress

levels that teachers face through their leadership style and professional development plans.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Carl, who provided constant love and support and without whom this would not have been possible.

To my children, Chandler and Cole, who were very patient with me and didn't mind too much, that I wasn't there as much as they would have liked.

To my parents who raised me to be strong and independent, and provided support and guidance as needed.

To my grandmother, who inspired me to go into the field of education and strive to be like her.

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First and foremost, I thank the Lord for His guidance and direction in my life to allow me to not only undertake this process but to complete it. He has blessed my life in too many ways to count, and without His grace and salvation, nothing is important.

Words cannot begin to describe the feelings of gratitude I have for the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Nancy Dishner. She has provided numerous hours of guidance and support throughout this entire process and this would not have been possible without her unending dedication.

Many prayers were said for me as I continued my work by my family and co-workers, and I would not have been able to complete this task without their constant support and words of encouragement. My co-workers offered more support than they will ever know, and without their help and understanding, this task would have been much more difficult.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	9
Overview.....	9
Statement of the Problem.....	11
Research Questions.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
Limitations of the Study.....	14
Delimitations of the Study.....	14
Definitions of the Study.....	14
Organization of the Study.....	15
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	17
Background.....	17
Stress.....	20
Occupational Stress.....	22
Teacher Stress: First-Year Teachers.....	26
Teacher Stress: Veteran Teachers.....	31
Role of Administration to Reduce Stress.....	34
Programs That Work.....	37
Summary.....	42

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	45
Overview	45
Design of the Study.....	46
Description of the Participants.....	48
Data Analysis.....	50
Summary.....	51
4. DATA ANALYSIS	52
Introduction	52
Stress Factors.....	56
Paperwork	57
No Child Left Behind/High Stakes Testing	59
Outside Factors	63
Teacher Preparation Programs.....	65
Classroom Experiences	66
Student Teaching	68
Parent Contact and Classroom Management	70
Mentoring and Induction Programs.....	72
Formal Mentoring Programs	73
Harry Wong Induction	76
Role of the Principal.....	77
Supportive Principal	79
Instructional Leader	81
Professional Development	82
Offer Choices in Programs	83
Stress Management	84
Summary	85

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS	87
Summary of Findings	87
Research Question 1	88
Research Question 2	90
Research Question 3	91
Research Question 4	93
Research Question 5	94
Conclusions	95
Recommendations for Further Research and Practice ..	97
Implications for Future Practice	99
REFERENCES	101
APPENDICES	105
Appendix A: Interview Guide	105
Appendix B: Letter of Request to Participate	107
Appendix C: Demographic Chart of Participants	108
Appendix D: Auditor Certification	109
Appendix E: Debriefing Certification	110
VITA	111

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview

Attracting and keeping quality new teachers in the profession has become a more challenging task with every passing year. More and more teachers are reaching the age of retirement, and a major teacher shortage has already affected many regions of our nation and some specific subject areas. Although the pool of new teachers continues to remain constant, 20% to 50% of the new teachers who are hired will quit within the first five years (Colley, 2002). Research shows that, "Since the early 1990's, the annual number of exits from the teaching profession has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount, putting pressure on the nation's hiring systems" (Darling-Hammond, 2003). School systems will have to make recruiting and maintaining good teachers a priority in order to be successful.

In many professions, employees are introduced slowly into job duties, may experience on-the-job training, or complete an internship before being handed the full duties of the job. However, in education, first-year teachers are expected to fulfill the same job duties as the experienced

teachers from the first day. They are given the same responsibilities and are provided a minimum amount of support in most situations. The stress levels are excessively high, and many new teachers find it difficult to cope. The feelings of fatigue, depression, and intense stress cause many new teachers to contemplate leaving the profession. If there are not strong support systems in place, a substantial percentage of those new teachers typically decide to leave.

Although many programs are beginning to focus on supporting new teachers, the attrition rate is still very high. The turnover of new teachers is costing school systems large sums of money annually and it is continuing to rise. According to the United States Department of Education (Taps, 1994), many bright new teachers annually leave the teaching profession. Within 6 years, 50% of all new teachers have left the profession, and 15% have changed careers after the first-year (Grossman, 1997).

Another problem facing administrators is maintaining morale and keeping competent, professional, veteran teachers growing in their profession without experiencing burnout. Even teachers who have been teaching for a number of years experience a variety of stress factors within the profession. Adverse school conditions can

provoke psychological distress and poor morale in even the most adapted teacher (Schonfeld, 2001). Teachers who have taught a number of years can begin to experience burnout due to the additional responsibilities that are being placed on educators with each passing year (Schonfeld).

Statement of the Problem

First-year teachers and veteran teachers all face job related stress. As in many service professions, research indicates that both new and veteran teachers are choosing to leave the profession at alarming rates. The purposes of this study were to identify some of the key stressors novice and veteran teachers are facing and to determine if there are any particular steps that the administrators of the school systems can take to ensure the success of all teachers. This study was confined to three school systems in Northeast Tennessee.

Research Questions

The study focused on the perceptions of beginning and veteran teachers and answered the following research questions:

1. What are perceived to be the major causes of stress for new teachers and for veteran teachers?

2. What role did undergraduate teacher preparation play in preparing new and veteran teachers for their teaching experience?
3. If the new and veteran teachers are/have been involved in planned programs or activities to assist in their development as a new teacher, did they reduce stress or help them deal with stressful situations, what role did they play in their success, and what are some of the specific characteristics that would classify these experiences as positive or negative?
4. What are the perceptions of the new and veteran teachers concerning the role of the principal in orienting and supporting new teachers and relieving or eliminating stress?
5. Have professional development opportunities met the needs of new and veteran classroom teachers including relieving stress?

Significance of the Study

Forlin (2001) stated that teachers are experiencing symptoms of stress at an increasing rate. Since the early 1990s the annual number of exits from teaching has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount.

This scenario has continued to put increasing pressure on the nation's hiring system (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

This study shows some of the various stress factors that may affect teachers and provide some insight for administrators as to ways that might provide support for the teachers that are most vulnerable. School systems must take notice of the importance of recruiting and maintaining quality new teachers. As competition for the best and brightest available new teachers increases, it will be the responsibility of principals and central office staff to ensure that the new teachers are given the support necessary to make their teaching careers successful.

This study examined the specific aspects of occupational stress factors as they relate to teachers in three school systems in East Tennessee. It will help the administrators become more aware of the specific needs of their beginning teachers as well as their veteran teachers. School systems must be aware of veteran teachers' needs as they gain experience and increase responsibilities and the stress factors that new teachers are facing as they enter the profession. This study identified the kinds of professional development opportunities that can meet the needs of all teachers regardless of their years of teaching

experience, in order to raise morale, reduce stress, and maintain positive teacher attitudes.

Limitations of the Study

As an educational professional who, as a first-year teacher, left the profession, some personal biases may exist. However, these biases did not affect the validity or reliability of the research.

Delimitations of the Study

The population in this study is restricted to teachers in the Upper East Tennessee Region. Although the population covers teachers in grades K-8, the generalization of this study outside of these school systems will be limited. However, some generalizations may be applied to similar school systems within the region.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purpose of this study:

1. Stress- A response to a stressor, which is an object, event or situation, seen as disruptive (Matteson, p. 10).

2. Mentoring Programs- A process to improve teaching. Mentoring pairs a veteran teacher with a new teacher to provide support and help the new teachers become good teachers through open communication, analysis, and reflection (Blank & Kershaw, 2002).
3. Burnout-This involves a subtle but progressive erosion of behavior, attitude, health, and spirit that eventually inhibits an individual's ability to function effectively at work (Berg, 1994).
4. Induction Program- A program that aims at supporting beginning teachers who have completed their professional preparation, using assessment strategies to inform support (Stansbury, 2001).
5. New Teachers: For the purpose of this study will refer to teachers with 1-3 years experience.
6. Veteran Teachers: For the purpose of this study will refer to teachers with 7 or more years experience.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the limitations, the delimitations, and the definitions of the terms. Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and procedures used in the study

to obtain data. Chapter 4 contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. Chapter 5 contains the summary, conclusions, and the recommendations resulting from the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Background

Every school deserves the best teachers for its students (Blank & Kershaw, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Education, American schools will need two million new teachers over the next decade (Colley, 2002). In a country that seems to be in a panic over an impending teacher shortage, many are doing very little to stop the outflow of trained teachers (Jehlen, 2001). In Tennessee alone, an astounding 42% of new teachers will leave the profession within the first five years of service (Blank & Kershaw) and not return to the field of education. Nationally, the figures range from 20% - 50% for the percentage of new teachers leaving the field within the first five years. Coupled with the fact that there are more teachers retiring than entering the field of education (Blank & Kershaw), administrators must continue to increase their efforts of recruiting and maintaining quality teachers.

The problem is not that there are not enough people majoring in education across the country. Colleges graduate more than enough teachers each year to fill the

vacancies that are occurring (Jehlen, 2001). The problem is that many graduates never enter the field of education and many who do enter the field of education leave within the first few years of service. While there is not a shortage of certified teachers, there is a shortage of certified teachers in the classroom (Jehlen). These facts increase the pressure on administrations to provide opportunities and services that will not only attract quality educators but keep them in the teaching profession in their schools.

There are several stress factors that teachers are facing that have caused the rate of teacher attrition to be so high. Teacher burnout is thought to be the reason that an increasing number of competent, veteran teachers are leaving the classrooms across the nation (Russell et al., 1987). Many of the reasons for burnout include relationships with students and parents, unrealistic expectations, organizational culture, inadequate career development opportunities, and a lack of social support. Many of these situations lead to job stress that can affect employee performance and health and eventually lead to a change of career if they do not receive the support that they need.

New teachers are also facing a variety of stress factors. Without the support and affirmation of the administrator, beginning teachers may feel abandoned and lack the resources they need to become successful veteran teachers (Brock, 1999). One of the major reasons reported by new teachers who leave the profession is that they found the work too isolating and unsupported (Colley, 2002). Being isolated and unsupported are both major signs of stress. When principals provide instructional leadership within a supportive climate they are helping new teachers cope with the stress factors they are facing and giving them the chance to refine their craft and mature as educators (Colley).

This review of the literature looks at stress and its relationship to the number of new teachers who leave the profession and what administrators can do to help veteran teachers deal with the stressors that they face. The literature review has been divided into the following categories: a) Stress, b) Job Stress, c) Teacher Stress: Beginning Teachers, d) Teacher Stress: Veteran Teachers, e) Roles of Administration to Diminish Stress for Teachers, f) Programs that Work.

Stress

In today's society, there are not any adults that will honestly say that they do not experience stress. Stress is a word that everyone is familiar with, and stress is something that everyone experiences in some form on a daily basis. Although stress affects most people at some point, "Type A" personalities have been found to experience stress and ill health more often than most (Peterson, 1991, p. 31). Everyone experiences stress at work, in their personal lives, or both (Matteson, 1987, p. 51). However, work is the leading cause of stress for most Americans. In fact, people are three times more likely to be affected by occupational stress than any other demand they face (Caudron, 1998). But what is stress? Stress means many different things to many different people (Matteson, p.9). There are literally hundreds of definitions that could apply to different people in different situations. In a very basic definition, stress can be defined as a "response to a stressor, which is an object, event or situations seen as disruptive" (Matteson, p.10).

The autonomic nervous system and the endocrine glands are the most important defenses that the body has against stressors (Peterson, 1999, p. 22). The response to a stressor can be regarded as psycho-physiological: A

psychological response that has a corresponding physiological response (Peterson, p.25). The basic response to stress is always the same- it is a psycho physiological response activated by biochemical changes that help us to deal successfully with the stressors that we are facing (Matteson, 1987, p. 12). There is a link between the mind and the body that is powerful and real (Matteson, p.55). Stress affects both the body and the brain in individuals as they deal with stressors.

Adrenocorticotrophic Hormone (ACTH) is an essential hormone that controls a number of other hormones when we deal with "a stressor being introduced" (Peterson, p. 22). As the stressor is introduced, the release of ACTH and other hormones result in increased heart rate, dilation of the pupils, increased blood pressure, and increased perspiration (Peterson, p.22).

Stress impacts individual lives in a variety of ways, and everyone deals with stress factors differently. Being able to cope with stress factors is one of the most valuable skills one can learn in life. When dealing with personal stress, many are left to determine the best way to handle stressful situations on their own. However, most experience more stress at work than in any other aspect of their lives (Caudron, 1998), and although many employers

appear to be doing very little about it, others are coming up with creative ideas to help employees deal with work-related stress.

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is an increasing concern for industry leaders in every field. As demands increase for production at every level and individuals continue to strive for balance between their personal and professional lives, stress factors tend to be increasing in both size and rate of occurrence. Business leaders are becoming more aware of the number of incidences of occupational stress and the implications it has on employee health as well as productivity levels (Peterson, 1999, p. 2). Workers experiencing excessive stress are more likely to get sick and miss work (Borra, 1999). Although 70% of American workers say they experience great stress on their jobs (Koshland, 1991), the impact of stress and the illnesses that can result are affecting workers all over the world (Veninga, 1998).

Prolonged exposure to stress factors without any effective coping strategies eventually leads to distress or negative stress (Gold & Thornton, 2001). Research has shown that there is an inverse relationship between job

satisfaction and job stress (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). The higher the stress levels that employees experience, the lower the level of job satisfaction they experience. Occupational stress is not only linked to job dissatisfaction, but to employee turnover as well (Gold & Thornton). Therefore, as employees are exposed to stress factors over a prolonged period of time, their stress increases, causes job dissatisfaction, and increases the likelihood that they will leave their occupation.

While many leaders are ignoring the situation (Caudron, 1998), aggressive leaders are striving to overcome the stressors that employees are facing by encouraging more compassionate, embracing work places in which employees can excel. Offering family and social supports including on-site day-care centers or recreational opportunities such as work-out centers, and encouraging healthy living has become a recent trend in many large companies hoping to help workers deal with the stresses of work (Borra, 1999). This trend has made an impact in some companies like Husky, a company located in Canada, that spent three million dollars implementing this type of program, and claims to have saved twice that amount over previous years due to costs associated with absenteeism and injuries (Borra).

Still, others state that family support systems alone are not enough to reduce occupational stress. Those advocates mention that employers must be willing to look at what they are asking employees to do on a daily basis (Caudron, 1998). Caudron goes on to give examples including one worker who spoke of how great it was to finally have an on-site day-care center, but the company still expected employees to go out of town on only one day's notice. How well the work is organized and designed has a larger impact on the wellness of the workplace than family support systems. Situations in which the workers feel they have little or no control cause the most stress (Borra, 1999).

According to previous work By Cooper and Marshall, Levi argued that there are four broad job factors that are critical to occupational stress (Levi, 1984). The four areas include: 1) qualitative overload, 2) quantitative overload, 3) lack of control, and 4) lack of social support. If you add to the job factors listed by Levi, the intrinsic factors that are a part of the job including physical conditions, organizational role, conflict and ambiguity, and career development, there are a number of factors that cause stress on a daily basis for many employees (Levi). In his book, Matteson (1987) lists a

comprehensive list of seven sources of organizational stressors that impact employee production and health. These include 1) job design, 2) role conflict, 3) role ambiguity (not knowing what is expected of them), 4) inadequate career development, 5) organizational culture, 6) leader relationship, and 7) lack of performance (Matteson, p. 41-50). Although a number of these stressors may be present in a variety of job sites, some professions are more prone to occupational stress than others.

Although all of the factors listed above can play an integral role in causing stress, vast literature on stress suggests that social supports have proven to be a successful tool in dealing with occupational stress. According to Russell et al. (1987), social support has been identified as a resource that enables individuals to cope with stress factors in general. Individuals who have access to high levels of social support are in better physical and mental health than those who do not have social support systems in place (Russell et al.). Social support systems may be a cheaper alternative for employers who cannot afford millions of dollars on health-care systems and on-site day-cares. Social supports can also help employees cope a little better with the fact that they

may have little control over the daily decisions that are made in the workplace.

Teacher Stress: First-Year Teacher

The first-year teacher faces a number of stress factors that are unique to the profession of education. While undergraduate teacher preparation programs are trying to meet the needs of the students who choose to begin a career in education, there are a variety of gaps within the system. Teacher prep programs have made some progress in the number of hours that students actually spend in classroom settings, but the majority of the curriculum still focuses on theory as opposed to practical "hands-on experience" (Rubin, 2002). The Carnegie Corporation has stated that there should be a more "clinical" training for teachers. They have encouraged educational schools to offer clinical "residency programs" based on medical residency programs (Rubin). Carnegie launched a new grant initiative for teacher prep programs called "Teachers for a New Era," which allows schools of education to qualify for funding to overhaul their current programs. They are certain that providing better teacher preparation and support through the clinical residency program, beginning teachers will be better prepared to assess students'

capabilities, diagnose their learning styles, and adjust teaching strategies to reflect the latest research (Bobek, 2002).

Others state that teacher education programs must focus on teaching the students about work-related stress and other issues that may arise as they enter the professional ranks (Wadlington & Partridge, 1998). They also state that the needs of education students will only be met if stress management techniques are taught. They must be made aware of the potential for isolation within the teaching profession (Walsdorf & Lynn, 2002) and help them to gain the abilities they need to function within an organizational climate. These experts agree with the Carnegie Corporation that changes need to be made to the current practice of training teachers; but place more emphasis on making the students aware of how organizations may be structured and how to effect change from within (Walsdorf & Lynn), as well as focusing on stress management techniques on a regular basis (Wadlington & Partridge).

Under the current system, most first-year teachers have been through a general undergraduate program that included an increasing number of hours in an educational classroom setting. The grand finale of the teacher-training program is typically 12 to 15 weeks of student

teaching. The unfortunate scenario is what tends to follow. Once the students become full-time faculty members and transition into the role of professionals, many of the supports that have been available to them are removed. Although they do not have the experiences that veteran teachers have to rely upon, they are treated in very much the same manner as veteran teachers: "Here is your plan book, grade book, and classroom roll, if you need any help, just ask." Unfortunately, this scenario has many problems, and the Carnegie Corporation stands behind the position that by overhauling the current trends in teacher preparation programs, improvements can be made in the experiences of many new teachers (Rubin, 2002).

The first-years of teaching are particularly challenging (Johnson & Birkland, 2003) because even though new teachers have had four or five years of undergraduate experiences and many hours of classroom experiences, none of those experiences can completely prepare novice teachers for the first days of controlling their own classroom. First-year teachers not only get very little support in many instances, they also get the least desirable classrooms, grade placements, and most challenging students (Johnson & Birkland). Schools with high poverty rates and low student achievement tend to hire the largest number of

new teachers each year, and this fact also contributes to the large number of teachers who leave the profession after a few years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Novice teachers should not be thrown into teaching having to deal with the most difficult teaching assignments that may include difficult students and having to prepare for many different classes (Bobek, 2002). According to Kati Haycock, the director of the Educational Trust in Washington DC, these students (who typically suffer other disadvantages outside of school) should not be "training fodder" for any teacher (Bobek).

If the high turnover rate of new teachers is going to decrease, working conditions must improve, teacher preparation programs must change to meet the needs of future teachers, and support for new teachers must be provided (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Most administrators are not aware of the phases that first-year teachers typically experience. According to Gless (1995), there are five phases of development that first-year teachers experience (Tipton, 1997).

First-year teachers begin the school year in an anticipation phase because they are still excited from the prospect of leaving the rank of students and becoming professionals (Tipton, 1997). As they work through their

first two weeks of school, they begin to realize that their expectations are not meeting the realities of the classroom. They are now immersed in the second phase called survival. They work harder and harder to keep their heads above water and maintain their work requirements (Tipton).

Unfortunately, after weeks of working, new teachers begin to enter the disillusionment phase. Low morale may accompany the feelings of being overwhelmed with the stress of meeting certain requirements before the holiday breaks (Tipton, 1997). Rejuvenation tends to occur after the winter break and last through the months of February and March. The holiday break provides a chance for the first-year teachers to catch their breath and finally realize some of the things that they actually did accomplish in spite of all the setbacks they may have faced over the past several months (Tipton).

Finally, as the school year begins to come to a close, the first-year teachers will experience the final phase of reflection. If they have a strong support system, they are more likely to reflect on their experiences in a positive light and find ways to improve the upcoming school year (Tipton, 1997). However, if strong support systems like mentoring are not in place, the disillusionment phase

becomes overwhelming and many first-year teachers may be lost to the profession forever (Tipton).

In order to meet the growing demand for excellent teachers, the first step is to do more to keep the good teachers who are already in the classroom (Chase, 2001). The retention of these good teachers must begin with the recognition of how difficult teaching really is (Chase). The lack of social supports is listed as one of the four major causes of occupational stress (Levi, 1984), and first-year teachers may be faced with fewer social supports than most other occupations which may offer internships, residencies, and on-the-job training programs. Many industries invest a great amount of time and money to ensure their employees are trained and acclimated to the culture in the work place. First-year teachers do not typically have a great support system like in many other industries. Because teaching can be a very isolating profession and there are very few support systems in place, many new teachers choose to leave teaching (Colley, 2002).

Teacher Stress: Veteran Teachers

Although the first-year teacher faces an overwhelming amount of stress, veteran teachers also experience stress for a variety of reasons. Teaching has become increasingly

multifaceted with teachers feeling more and more responsibility in a number of avenues (Forlin, 2001). While teachers in the past had a huge responsibility, today's teachers face increasing accountability for test scores and are playing a much larger role in educational reform and the school improvement process (Forlin). The student population is also becoming increasingly diverse and is faced with a number of problems outside of school. All of these factors lead to work-related stress and must be addressed by the teachers so they will be better able to help their students face the future with confidence too (Wadlington & Partridge, 1998).

The scope of the problems that all teachers are facing is becoming more complex and increasing in number. According to Russell et al. (1987), some of the most frequently listed problems that teachers encounter are: overcrowded classrooms, involuntary transfers, excessive paperwork, inadequate teacher salaries, unsupportive parents, and lack of administrative support. Although new teachers experience some of the same problems, they may feel they are minute compared to the stressors they face as they try to adapt to their new environment. While these stress factors may be influential in causing first-year teachers to leave the profession, they are also some of the

primary factors that contribute to burnout in experienced teachers (Russell et al.).

Burnout in veteran teachers is also a major point of concern for administrators. "Burnout is a state of physical and emotional and mental exhaustion marked by physical depletion and chronic fatigue," (Matteson, 1987, p. 239). It is a psychological process that is brought about by unrelieved work stress and results in emotional exhaustion and feelings of decreased accomplishment (Matteson p. 240). Burnout tends to be a particular problem in the service industries: doctors having too many patients to see, social workers and parole officers having too many cases to handle, and teachers having too many papers to grade and classes to prepare (Matteson, p. 249). Teacher burnout is thought to be the reason that an increasing number of competent, veteran teachers are leaving the classroom (Russell et al., 1987).

Burnout is a problem that cannot be overlooked when discussing education reform (Berg, 1994). Burnout "involves a subtle but progressive erosion of behavior, attitude and health" and eventually leads to an inability to function effectively at work (Berg). Research indicates that younger teachers report higher burnout rates than older teachers, secondary teachers report higher burnout

rates than elementary teachers, and males report higher rates of burnout than females (Berg).

To help teachers deal with work-related stress and resist the effects of burnout, experts suggest that they form support groups and partner with other teachers to save time and foster team teaching activities (Wadlington & Partridge, 1998). Teachers should regularly evaluate their commitment and participation in meaningful professional development activities as well as making an extra effort to have a positive attitude and share that attitude with others (Wadlington & Partridge).

Role of Administration to Reduce Stress

The role of administrators in public schools has experienced a drastic change over the past few decades and is continuing to change. As principals are becoming more and more accountable in the changing school environments, the job of ensuring that teachers are professional, competent, and satisfied with their working conditions will become more important. Although the principals must meet the day-to-day needs, central office staff must also be aware of the needs of teachers so the principals will have the tools and support they need. They must do more to change the conditions that teachers are facing (Nieto,

2003). It is the principal who must ensure that the needs of all teachers are being met so that the needs of the students will be met. They must recruit new teachers, keep new teachers, and serve the needs of the veteran teachers by providing instructional leadership within a supportive climate (Colley, 2002).

While there will be some strategies that administrators can use for all teachers, there are some definite techniques that are available to help new teachers become acclimated to their new work environment and able to perform their job duties. According to Walsdorf & Lynn (2002), there are some specific strategies that will help new teachers become adjusted more quickly. They suggested that principals provide structured meeting times to introduce new teachers to the school culture and climate and schedule social events where they can get to know the faculty better. Administrators must also remember not to hold new teachers to the same expectations that they have for more experienced teachers (Gonzales & Sosa, 1993). If new teachers are showing growth and helping students learn, they will likely continue to improve their practice over time (Stansbury, 2001).

Administrators must also give beginning teachers advice and support. While administrators must encourage

new teachers to participate in quality professional development activities and become involved in school activities (Wadlington & Partridge, 2002), they must also protect them from their own enthusiasm (Stansbury, 2001) by helping them set limits. Most importantly, as tempting as it may be, principals must resist the urge to place beginning teachers in the toughest classroom settings. This may require convincing the veteran staff that they must help shoulder some of the responsibilities that have often been placed on beginning teachers through the years (Stansbury).

There are four major factors that strongly influence a beginning teacher to remain in the teaching profession or leave for another career. They are: salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support in the early years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). A formal mentoring program can help overcome some of the shortcomings of preparation and can help improve working conditions through a strong, social support system.

When administrators are dealing with veteran teachers, their tactics may need to vary from those used with the beginning teachers because many of their needs may be very different. Administrators and supervisors must look for "better ways to make teaching a meaningful profession"

(Berg, 1994, p. 185) to help veteran teachers remain positive and deal with their work-related stress (Berg). Veteran teachers must continue to grow professionally through professional development opportunities, and principals must find the time to allow them to be involved in these activities. Empowerment of veteran teachers is a great way to encourage them in their careers as well. By providing opportunities for growth and giving them some control over their day to day situations, they will be less likely to experience burnout (Berg).

There are a number of ways that principals can ensure that the needs of all teachers are being met, but one of the most useful strategies is providing a formal mentoring program. Mentoring has proven successful for helping new teachers become better teachers and remain in the profession and has also given veteran teachers "new life" by providing them an additional purpose for teaching (Blank & Kershaw, 2002). (Mentoring will be discussed in more detail in the next section.)

Programs That Work

There is an emerging consensus that the retention of new teachers depends on formal mentoring and induction programs. Induction programs should provide support for

beginning teachers that will allow them to become better teachers over time (Stansbury, 2001). Unfortunately, induction programs are often designed primarily to help new teachers survive their first-year on the job (Feiman-Nemser, 2003) rather than serving as a long-term solution for helping new teachers become good teachers. The first-year of teaching should be treated as a "phase in learning to teach and surround new teachers with a professional culture that supports teacher learning" (Feiman-Nemser, p. 25). Although more states are mandating induction programs and policymakers are funding them, it is ultimately up to the principal and school leaders to ensure that the induction programs are offering the full range of supports that teachers need (Johnson & Birkland, 2003). Unfortunately, many of the induction programs that do exist are poorly coordinated and are not always mandated for all new teachers (Rubin, 2002).

One aspect of induction programs includes using veteran teachers as mentors to the beginning teachers. Mentoring is a process to improve teaching and transmit the culture of the school (Blank & Kershaw, 2002). Every student deserves the best teacher; therefore, mentoring programs are essential because every new teacher deserves the best support and experience available, and every

veteran teacher also deserves the opportunity to serve as a mentor and help other teachers (Blank & Kershaw). It is true that mentoring programs are being used to help curb the high attrition rate of new teachers, but mentoring programs can also serve as a source of professional development for veteran teachers as well. Veteran teachers reach the point in their career when burnout can occur or complacency can set in.

Teachers need to be given opportunities to determine and understand their own needs and then be given the opportunity to have a voice in planning how to meet those needs (Yost, 2001). Mentoring programs can give them the opportunity to do just that. They can become revitalized and rejuvenated because teachers who believe in themselves and their abilities will also believe in their students and their abilities to learn (Yost). Participation in a mentoring program is essential for new teachers to succeed and learn to become the best teacher they can be, but it is also essential for helping veteran teachers maintain focus and purpose for their own careers (Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999).

Participating in a formal mentoring program provides a variety of positive experiences for the novice teacher and the veteran teacher alike. However, every veteran teacher

may not be ready to be a mentor. In many ways being a mentor is an unnatural role for teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Although teachers may know how to manage and maintain their own classroom environment, they may not fully understand the needs of beginning teachers and be able to help them in a positive manner without some direction. Mentor teachers need to have certain qualities that will ensure their success, but they also need to be trained about how "to make their thinking visible, explain the principles behind their practice, or break down a complex teaching move into components understandable to a beginner" (Feiman-Nemser). Becoming a mentor teacher can provide some of the best professional development opportunities a veteran teacher may receive because of the many benefits it has to offer. The mentor teachers can expand their roles within the school, have the opportunity to reflect on their teaching strategies, and share ideas with others while also offering the support a beginning teacher needs to become a good teacher and choose to remain in the profession of education.

Several school systems have been using mentoring programs with great success. With the help of the State Education Association in Michigan, a training program for mentors has been implemented. The Education Association

has provided training for 100 mentors, and they have negotiated a small stipend for teachers who participate (Jehlen, 2001). In Seattle, Washington 12 "expert" teachers have been relieved of their teaching duties for three years. During this time they will be trained and continue to work with an average of 18 teachers as their mentors. On top of their teaching salary they will receive \$5665.00 as a stipend for completing their duties (Jehlen). Even though the Seattle school district has gone a step further than the State of Michigan, they are both moving in the right direction of maintaining quality teachers in their school districts.

The State of Connecticut has taken a slightly more specific route to increasing teacher performance and keeping quality teachers in the classrooms. They have established what they call BEST: The Beginning Educator Support and Training Program (Miller, Morley, & Westwater, 2002). This program has evolved into a comprehensive two to three year program for beginning teachers that offers support and assessment for beginning teachers. Beginning teachers in Connecticut are introduced to the program through a series of professional development seminars. They are required to maintain a comprehensive teaching portfolio that will become the basis for professional

licensure (Miller, Morley, & Westwater). The program also involves veteran teachers by allowing them to serve as mentors and portfolio scorers as well as assessors of beginning teachers. Currently, nearly 40% of the teaching force has been trained by this program, or participated in it during the early part of their careers (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2000). The BEST program is constantly evolving and becoming stronger through ongoing research, and will continue to have a tremendous impact on the educational process in Connecticut for years to come if they continue to meet the needs of their teachers (Miller, Morley, & Westwater).

Summary

Stress is an ever-present factor in the workplace and teachers tend to face a variety of stress factors throughout their career. Although new teachers deal with some of the same stress factors that veteran teachers face, they are dealt with much differently due to the phase of their career. Teachers move through their careers in response to the environment and organizational structure that surround them (Fessler, 1992). As teacher attrition rates continue to increase, it is the role of the principal and other school officials to ensure that there are strong,

social supports in place to meet the needs of beginning teachers as well as veteran teachers. There are many steps that administrators can take to ensure quality teachers remain in the classroom for years to come (Stansbury, 2001).

Many proponents argue that the most important steps to take to put an end to the number of teachers leaving the profession are increasing pay and health benefits, and not placing first-year teachers in the toughest teaching assignments (Jehlen, 2001). While these are admirable first steps, they are not the only changes necessary to change the state of the teacher shortages. By implementing induction programs, larger increases in the retention rates of new teachers should be recognized. Teachers who participate in induction programs are twice as likely to stay in the profession as those who do not (Jehlen).

Formal mentoring and induction programs may keep the stress factors that new teachers face from becoming too overwhelming and keep the beginning teacher in the profession of education when they might not have remained without the support. Participating in mentoring programs can also help veteran teachers rejuvenate their careers and decrease the likelihood of experiencing burnout and leaving the profession early. Chapter 3 explains the methods and

procedures of the research methodology to be used in this study to investigate the different stress factors that teachers face throughout their careers and what they believe has enabled them to succeed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

Knowing what makes teachers successful and how to keep new teachers in the profession of education are crucial elements of being a successful administrator. As teacher shortages increase in scope, administrators will need to become more aware of the essential elements to keep competent, professional teachers. The leaders who create positive, nurturing environments where teaching can flourish and grow will become successful leaders while others will continue to struggle (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

The purposes of this study were to identify some of the key stressors novice and veteran teachers are facing and to determine if there are any particular steps that the administrators of the schools system can take to ensure the success of all teachers.

The study is qualitative in design, specifically, a phenomenological study because the resulting data analysis describes "...the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The purpose of this chapter is to identify the participants, describe the data-

gathering process that was used, outline the process by which individual interviews were be conducted, and delineate the procedures that were used for data collection and analysis.

Design of the Study

The design of the study is a qualitative, phenomenological study in order to collect data using open-ended questioning with the primary intent to be to develop themes from the data (Creswell, 1998, p.18). Qualitative research methods are appropriate because, according to Patton, a qualitative study is like a documentary film that offers a fluid sense of development, allowing for movement and change (Creswell, p. 54). This form of study allowed for a more meaningful study due to the personal nature of qualitative inquiry.

In a qualitative research design, interviews may be used as the primary source of data collection or in conjunction with other forms of data collection, including observations. In this study, individual interviews are the dominant strategy of data collection. The study consisted of 18 individual interviews in which teachers were allowed to discuss openly their experiences in the teaching profession. Purposeful sampling was used to determine the

populations that were used for the interviews because it emphasizes in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002, p. 46). This method ensures that everyone involved in the interviews met certain requirements and has experienced the phenomenon being studied. Contact was made with supervisors in each school district to obtain names of individuals who met the criteria and might be willing to participate in the study. The people who were recommended by the principals or supervisors were then contacted to determine their willingness to participate in the study.

The individual interviews were conducted with 18 teachers from school systems in East Tennessee who have been teaching for a designated number of years in grades K-8. Each individual's pseudonym along with demographic data including how many years they have been teaching and in which school system can be found in a table in Appendix B. A general interview guide was used as they discussed the topics that were presented to them. While many of the questions cover the same general information, many of the interviews contained one or two questions that were unique due to the individual being interviewed.

The individual interviews were directed by the researcher and were taped to allow for detailed analysis of responses. The tapes were then transcribed verbatim and

analyzed by reading and listening to the tapes by the researcher and the independent auditor. Lori Wilhoit, an ELPA doctoral student and teacher of five years, served as the independent auditor for the study. QSR NUD.IST, a software program designed to assist in analyzing qualitative data, was used to develop themes from the data collected through the individual interviews. Lori Wilhoit, the independent auditor, to ensure the validity and accuracy of the study, then reviewed these themes.

Description of the Participants

The participants in this study were chosen using purposeful sampling techniques. The participants were chosen based on their experiences in the field of education and their willingness to share those experiences within the research study.

Participants in the study all met the same criterion; they were considered to be either new (1-3 years experience) or veteran (7+ years experience) teachers within the school systems that were studied. Three school systems within the East Tennessee Region participated in the research study. Permission to use these 3 school systems was granted by supervisors within the school systems. One school system is a small, city system with 4

elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school. The other 2 systems are larger, rural systems with 10 or more elementary schools and multiple high schools within the systems.

One system was chosen because of its implementation of a formal mentoring program and induction program for new teachers. Another of the two systems also provides a formal induction program for its new teachers, while the third system leaves the responsibilities of new teacher training to the principals. The diversity of the three programs allowed for a rich, comprehensive study.

Principals and supervisors were contacted to provide names of teachers they felt met the criteria as stated and would be willing to participate in the research study. Prior to scheduling the individual interviews, contact was made with potential participants to explain the purpose of the study, and invite them to participate. In addition, I provided written verification outlining the purpose of the study to each teacher who accepted my invitation to participate. Each research participant was asked to sign a consent form and I obtained permission to tape-record the interviews and transcribe them verbatim and guaranteed the confidentiality of each participant in writing.

Data Analysis

An independent party transcribed each of the individual interviews, and then transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher to determine accuracy while listening to the tapes of the interviews. Transcribed notes of the interviews were imported into the NUD.IST software program to determine if any themes or reoccurring ideas could be formulated.

Triangulation assured the validity of the findings by allowing for the analysis of the researcher, the analysis of an independent auditor, and the analysis of the NUD.IST software to be compared and to confirm conclusions. All individual interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim to establish referential adequacy. Member checking was also used to ensure all participants had the opportunity to review the transcript of their individual interview and determine the accuracy of their statements.

I sought assistance from a peer debriefer who helped ensure honesty and accuracy throughout the study. The peer debriefer is a fellow teacher, Cheryl Bueck, who agreed to serve in this capacity during the research study. She is a retired Air Force veteran who is now teaching seventh grade in the Greene County School system.

Summary

This chapter has presented a description of the process of the qualitative research design, specifically of the phenomenological tradition, that was used to investigate the actual teaching experiences of beginning teachers and veteran teachers in the East Tennessee Region. The purposes of this chapter were to identify the participants, and describe the data gathering process that was used.

This description included an overview, a synopsis of the research design, a description of the make up of the participants, and a description of the data analysis. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the research findings organized by responses to questions and then by themes. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results along with recommendations for further research and implications for future practice.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purposes of this phenomenological study were to identify some of the key stressors novice and veteran teachers face and to determine if there are any particular steps that administrators of school systems can take to ensure the success of all teachers. With increasing numbers of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of service (Blank & Kershaw, 2002), it will continue to be increasingly important to determine if there are steps that can be taken to ensure quality, experienced educators remain in the field of education.

The study involved 18 participants who were teachers in one of three school systems in East Tennessee. All participants were regular education classroom teachers in grades K-8 and were either considered to be new teachers (1-3 years experience) or veteran teachers (7+ years experience) in the school systems that were chosen. Each participant was interviewed using an interview guide that allowed for "cross-case analysis by grouping together answers from different people to common questions" (Patton, 2002, p. 440).

The school systems that were chosen included two small county systems and one very small city system. County System A is the largest of the three systems serving approximately 8560 students. It employs approximately 500 teachers and provides a formal mentoring program that was implemented in 2004, and a semi-formal induction program for the new teachers who are hired. The per pupil expenditure is approximately \$5690.00 and 46% of the student population fall into the free or reduced lunch category. County system B is the second largest system serving approximately 6900 students and employing 443 teachers. It does not provide any formal mentoring program or induction program for its new teachers. This system has the largest percentage of students eating free or reduced at 53%, and per pupil expenditure for County System B is \$5360.00. The third system chosen is referred to as the City System. It is the smallest of the three systems serving only 2700 students and employing fewer than 200 teachers. While the City System does provide a formal induction program for its new teachers, it does not provide a formal mentoring program but encourages the use of mentor teachers. The system spends an average of \$7626.00 per pupil each year, and the number of students eating free or

reduced is the smallest of the three systems with only 32.8% qualifying.

The three systems were equally represented with 3 new teachers and 3 veteran teachers from each of the systems. Of the 18 participants who volunteered to be interviewed, 3 were male, 15 were female, 9 of the teachers either had master's degrees or were working to complete them, and 1 held a specialist degree. Of the 18 interviewed, 9 were new teachers and 9 were veteran teachers and for 5 of them, teaching is a second career choice. In addition, the participants' ages, at the time of the interviews, ranged from 21 to 53: The mean age of the new teachers was 25, and the average age of the veteran teachers was 46. (See Table in APPENDIX B for summary information of all participants. Pseudonyms are used for the names of all teachers throughout the study).

Permission was obtained from the Director of Schools for two of the systems and from the Assistant Director in the third system to conduct the interviews. Once permission was obtained, participants were contacted via email to determine if they would be willing to participate in the study. In county System A, the supervisor in charge of the formal mentoring program referred names. The veteran teachers, who had been trained to be mentors, then

provided names of new teachers whom they mentored. In County System B and in the City System, the individual principals of the schools referred participants. These referrals were based on the number of years they had taught and their willingness to participate in the study. Once participants expressed their willingness to participate, interviews were scheduled at a time and place that was convenient for them. Before the interviews began, the Informed Consent process was explained in detail to each participant, and then they were asked to sign consent to show they were voluntary participants. Once the interviews were conducted, the tapes of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were then imported into NUD.IST software to code and develop themes.

Once the transcripts were coded, the individual nodes were clustered to develop themes. The themes that emerged are identified in the analysis presented using descriptions from the teachers' interviews. Themes emerged regarding issues that teachers reported were the biggest stress factors that they face. Themes were also found in relation to traits that participants stated were crucial to the success of new teachers including the teacher preparation program, and types of mentoring and induction programs in place. The leadership style of the principal and the

professional development opportunities that were offered were also themes that emerged.

Stress Factors

During the 18 interviews, one question that was answered the same by every participant dealt with stress. They were all asked if teaching was more or less stressful than they expected it to be, and every participant answered emphatically that it was more stressful than they had anticipated. Regardless of years of experience, education level, or the type of environment where they teach, all agreed that although they knew teaching would be stressful, it was more than they could have imagined when they entered the profession. Melinda Ramsey, a third-year teacher in the City System who is working on her master's degree, captured it best when she said,

I knew it would be stressful, but you don't really realize what extra things you are going to have to do until you really get into it. You know you are going to have to plan lessons and get materials and things like that but that is so not the whole picture. When you really get into it you have committees and you have other things in the school system that you have to do and then you have other responsibilities that you have to take care of for your students like you know, just parent meetings and things like that.

Although she had been in the school setting for one year as an assistant prior to her first teaching job, she was still overwhelmed by all of the extra duties that were required.

Stress was apparent in every interview that was conducted. Whether they were new teachers or veteran teachers they all noted the impact of the stress factors they faced on a daily basis. Although there was a large range of stress factors mentioned throughout the interviews, there were some stress factors that were apparent in many of the interviews. Even though the number of years of experience varied from 1 to 30 years, the stress factors faced by new teachers mirrored those faced by the veteran teachers. There were several themes that emerged as some of the biggest causes of stress for the teachers who were interviewed.

Paperwork

One theme that was apparent regardless of the number of years experience a teacher had was the amount of paperwork that is involved in teaching. Although both new and veteran teachers mentioned the amount of paperwork they had to complete as a major source of stress, veteran teachers often mentioned the increased paperwork as a more recent development in their career.

Chandler Jacobs, whose first year teaching was this past school year in County System B, talked about the amount of paperwork involved as she explained what her biggest stress factors were as a new teacher:

I had been in the school setting and I had been in the classroom and I had worked with the children but as far as the paperwork...the students' paperwork, my paperwork, I had never been shown how to do that.

Although this was her first year teaching, she has held two full-time jobs while attending school full-time prior to becoming a teacher. She has been working on her master's degree since September of last year.

Veteran teachers also mentioned the amount of paperwork involved with 8 out of 9 saying it was one of the biggest stress factors they faced. Laiken Moorehouse, a veteran teacher in the City System with 10 years of experience in two different systems, mentioned that she puts stress on herself through her own expectations to consistently be able to be a better teacher, but when asked what the biggest stress factors she faces are, she quickly responds,

Paperwork. I feel like sometimes it's just not, something I need to be doing at the time or maybe I feel like I've already answered that once when I filled out something and I feel like it is just redundant so why should I be doing this again, and I feel like I should be used in the classroom more.

Lisa Johnson, a veteran teacher of 20 years in the City System, mentions how the paperwork has increased throughout her career when she stated,

When I first started out, it was more fun than it is now...We didn't have all of these supervisors and all of this paperwork, but it has, it has been a lot more stress lately because of the paperwork....Paperwork has been very stressful with all of these new forms that we have to fill out for our supervisor.

No Child Left Behind/High Stakes Testing

The second theme that evolved as the biggest stress factors was the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB), and the increased emphasis on standardized testing. While new teachers felt the pressures from the emphasis on standardized testing, veteran teachers were not only stressed due to emphasis on standardized testing, one was also concerned about the "highly qualified" portion of the legislation. Most new teachers are highly qualified due to the new certification requirements; however, some veteran teachers are having increased stress because even though they are certified to teach and have been doing so for many years, they did not have to take the National Teachers Exam (NTE) to become certified and may not be considered to be "highly qualified" depending on the grade levels and subject areas they teach.

Regardless of the grade level taught, 14 of the 18 teachers interviewed seemed to be feeling the pressure of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) tests given in Tennessee. Even kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade teachers feel the pressure imposed by the state tests even though they don't give the tests to their students. Patty Shepherd, a kindergarten teacher in the City System who has been teaching for 26 years notes that the pressure seems to "trickle down" from the other teachers. Bruce Roark who has been teaching for 24 years in County System B at several different schools, mentioned the pressure of state testing when he said,

I think there is a lot more stress now because the state has mandated things we have to do...There is a lot of pressure I think these days to not enjoy your kids as much and get to know them as they are trying to make sure they pass the gateways and TCAP tests and all their testing that they have to do...and pressure adds to a lot of stress.

Nell Chandler, a veteran teacher of 27 years in County System A who has taught mostly in grades 6-8, mentioned the stress of TCAP scores when she mentioned that expectations had been raised because scores are being "held over the teachers head." She went on to discuss how school wasn't "fun anymore." She explained how they used to have more

fun, and now things are "so structured to get scores up, that we miss out on some other things."

Carl Hinkle, who chose teaching as a second career, has been teaching for 10 years in the City System and is married to a teacher, stated that he felt stress has increased over the past 10 years because of the increased emphasis on test scores. He explained,

When I first started it (stress factor) was keeping my kids in the same classroom and being sure I didn't lose anybody. Now it's dealing with test scores; how are my classes doing, and how am I doing? Did we score very well on the last TCAP, and how can we improve because test scores are now very important and looked at?

Similarly, Samantha Cole, another teacher of 27 years in County System A who stated that teaching "is my life," noted one of the problems with putting too much emphasis on standardized testing when she stated,

There is just so much more to teaching and being able to teach or having to get to teach than being able to take a test and score well. I think there is so much more to it and to understand what the children are going through and seeing their environment and making an environment where they realize that learning has a reason and that it goes far beyond the laws of school. I guess one of the greatest joys I see is when they make connections between what they have read in the paper and what has happened at school.

One of the new teachers, Chandler Jacobs, who was aware of TCAP testing and was a student teacher in the

fourth grade when they were given in the spring, mentioned TCAP testing as a stress factor when she replied,

Just finishing TCAP, TCAP was a big stress factor. I didn't realize, I knew there was a lot of emphasis placed on the scores but it seems that once you are in the school setting, you feel a lot more pressure than you thought you would.

Even Shelia Myers, who teaches first grade in the City System, mentioned how the pressure of the high stakes testing was impacting her stress level as well when she explained,

It seems to me like children are expected to do things much quicker than they used to be expected to do them and I'm not getting that from my own experience but I'm hearing it from other teachers also. I think that pressure is there and I think in first grade we are expected to get them ready to do things that may or may not be really appropriate for them to do, just to get them ready for the next year when they do have the test.

When new teachers were asked specifically about NCLB and becoming highly qualified, many responded similarly to Chandler Jacobs when she said,

I know I have already passed all the tests as far as what I can teach, I know that there are some teachers that are not being highly qualified...The high stakes testing, the TCAP, was the pressure felt at my school.

When August Peters, who has 2 years of experience within County System A, was asked about NCLB, she answered,

I was already (highly qualified)...it wasn't any problem being highly qualified you know like some of

the other teachers have done, it was really just the high stakes testing.

The veteran teachers continued to mention the stress of TCAP testing, but only one mentioned the stress to become highly qualified due to the change in certification requirements. Although two new teachers mentioned veteran teachers in their schools who had to worry about becoming highly qualified, most of the participants in this study did not state that as one of their stress factors.

Outside Factors

Another theme that emerged regarding stress factors for both new and veteran teachers was the impact of outside sources on their day-to-day jobs. Veteran teachers tended to call it the influence of outside sources including parents and central office staff along with the challenges that students are facing outside of the school environment; while new teachers tended to mention the lack of support they received from outside sources including families and society in general. Cathy Smith, who entered teaching as a second career and has 8 years experience in County System A, put it this way,

The biggest stress factors are all of the outside factors in the environment. The parents, your central office, you know, your regulations, all of that it just, has a big impact on teaching. The classroom

itself and the students, you know is not a problem, it is everything that you have to deal with beyond that.

Another veteran teacher, Patty Shepherd, who has been teaching for 26 years in several different systems and in several different grade levels, echoed the sentiment when she stated,

I think, sometimes it's harder to please the public you know, used to be years ago that the teacher, I think, people held a teacher in high regard and now a days, you have some people that they don't think of you as a professional, they think of you more as a day care worker or a babysitter instead of someone who is a professional...Maybe dealing with some of the parents is stressful, we find more children come to school with behavior problems and autism..."

New teachers also spoke freely about the impact the outside environment has on the stress that they feel in the classroom with 6 of 9 listing it as one of the largest factors. Jordan Rose, a third-year teacher in County System B who had been an accountant for two years before returning to school to get her MED, also mentioned the influence of the outside environment as she explained,

My biggest stress is the kids not learning. They, it's basically like we're babysitters. Parents don't care, and in the community I'm in, the parents don't care about what the kids do, and the kids are just there because their parents make them come.

Shelia Myers, a second-year teacher who entered teaching after working in another profession for several years also stated that dealing with the outside influences was one of

her biggest stress factors she faces. Her answer reflects that sentiment when she states:

Worrying about, well the children that you can't do anything about their situations. If they have situations that just prevent them from doing their best while they are here and preventing them from coming to school and be ready to listen and stuff, you can't do anything about that....

Although outside factors were mentioned by both new and veteran teachers, this was the only stress factor that was mentioned more by new teachers than veteran teachers. As mentioned earlier, 6 of the 9 new teachers voiced concern about outside factors while only 5 of the 9 veteran teachers listed it as a major cause of stress.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Although the process through which students are trained to become professional teachers has changed some throughout the years, there are still many inadequacies that have not been overcome. Albeit there is a basic foundation for the program that teachers must complete, the programs definitely vary from one institution to another. The high percentage of teacher turnover can not be attributed entirely to the shortcomings of the teacher preparation programs; however, there were several themes that developed within the context of this study that

suggest there are certain characteristics that could be improved or that might decrease the amount of stress new teachers face by helping them to feel more prepared when they begin their career.

Classroom Experiences

Most teachers stated that although they had not spent enough time in the classroom prior to student teaching, they did feel that most new graduates were spending more time in the classroom through their teacher preparation programs. Nell Chandler, a veteran teacher in County System A, summed it up when she said, "When I was in school, you were not put in the classrooms like you are today, which I think is better for you." Laiken Moorehouse also said that she felt spending more time in the classroom would be a great benefit.

I wish I had more time in the classroom because I think sometimes what is going on in the classrooms now compared to the college classrooms, it's different and it's hard to prepare somebody if you haven't been in it for a while, so I wish I had more practice in that classroom to work with students and teachers and things.

The only veteran teacher who mentioned that she was prepared for the classroom was Lisa Johnson, a veteran teacher in County System B who attended college over 20 years ago. Although her response was different from other

veteran teachers, it follows the theme that emerged showing that the teacher preparation programs need as much time in the classroom as possible. She stated,

I was very prepared to go... we were in the classroom every quarter, we were on the quarter system, but I had classroom experience every quarter, but I felt so, ready. We had to do plan books, we had to do grade books, and I told the people who went to other schools and they didn't know what they were doing when they came in but I felt very, very, prepared.

These sentiments mirror what the newer teachers stated, which were that they needed more time in the classroom. Seven of the newer teachers, who had more experience in the classrooms during their college preparation programs than the veteran teachers, remarked that classroom experience was the only way to become more familiar with classroom situations. According to Roberta Brown, a first grade teacher in the City System who has been teaching for three years and is currently working on her master's degree,

I feel that because of the college that I attended I was very well prepared because they did put us in the classroom a lot but I think it would've been better if we'd been in the classroom even more. I think student teaching a semester is a very short time, you know, 8 or 9 weeks that you are there, I mean, you don't really get the full effect, and I think it would be better if some of the classes were taken out of that last year and you were put in the classroom.

August Peters agreed with Roberta when she said,

Just being in the classroom was the only way. I had a lot of field experience way before student teaching. Twelve placements and all throughout K-8, actually pre K-8, I think prepared me more than anything just being able to be out there and see all the different classrooms and all the different school systems and what is expected where.

Jordan Rose who received her MED after completing her BS in Accounting, described her course work and student teaching experiences this way,

As far as taking the classes, I didn't feel like I was ready at all to become a teacher. But when I did my student teaching, I had to do my student teaching for a year for the master's program, and that is what prepared me to become a teacher, was my student teaching. The classes I felt like did nothing for me.

Student Teaching

A second theme that emerged dealt with the student teaching experience. Ten of the 18 teachers that were interviewed stated that there was a huge difference between student teaching and having their own classroom. Four of the new teachers mentioned that a big difference was the reliance that student teachers had on their mentor teachers. Basically no matter how great the student teaching experience was, they always had the support of the mentor teacher who, without meaning to, may have sheltered them from some of the basic necessities of maintaining

their own classrooms. Chandler Jacobs, who obviously had a positive student teaching experience noted however,

I think that when you are doing your student teaching or still in college you need to see a lot of the paperwork and stuff that is required and I think it would be good to take on. I know that when you are doing student teaching, you have to take on the responsibilities of the teacher, but you can never really fully do that until you have your own classroom. I think it would be helpful if they could see what you have to do with your special education students, all the paperwork, just show them the files and things like that. Both placements were really good experiences...but I always had the support of the teachers there, I always had someone to go get help from and it's not actually like that.

Sallie May Whitehead, a second-year teacher in County System B who went into teaching because she watched her mother as a teacher and knew she wanted to work with children, also mentioned her student teaching experience in relation to her real-life experience. She mentioned how much different it is once the support of the mentor teacher isn't there when she stated,

I didn't feel like I had the right training. You can never be prepared for it really. Student teaching was hard, I did have to deal with a lot more, but I think then when you get on your own, you are just like, whoa, that was so easy.

Another MED student, Shelia Myers, who student taught for a full year mentioned the extra time in the classroom as being a plus also. She stated,

My college required a year long internship and that was beneficial because you are there for a year....It was beneficial because you are exposed to that day to day situation, planning, curriculum, the whole deal, and that was very helpful....The coursework could have been more focused I guess.

Carl Hinkle, a veteran teacher who thinks all student teaching would be better if it was required for a full year, explained,

You should begin the year and end the year. I don't know if that's changed or not, but I went in the fall, and I didn't see school start, and I definitely did not see school end. I just hit a little part of it and I think it should be more hands on.

Parent Contact and Classroom Management

Other than spending more time in the classroom, the other theme that emerged regarding teacher preparation programs was that new teachers needed more training on dealing with parents and discipline. Although the veteran teachers all mentioned that they wish they had the opportunity for more classroom experiences, most stated that overall, the new teachers they have seen enter the system and student teachers they have observed are fairly well prepared to enter the classroom. The two areas that both veteran (5 of 9) and new teachers (6 of 9) mentioned were a lack of practice in classroom management and parent contact. Melinda Ramsey, a third-year teacher in the City

System, discussed her classes and their lack of emphasis on certain subjects that would have been beneficial when she shared,

I had some really good methods classes like for social studies,...but I don't think I really had any classes that prepared for stress relief, or for really good methods for communicating with parents, you know that is something that you just kind of end up figuring out on your own.

Patty Shepherd, who has supervised several student teachers, noted:

The student teachers that I've had have been very well prepared. I think behavior management would be the one place where they need to strengthen, but I think that also comes with experience...something I don't think that they handle and of course it would be hard, I don't know if it is role play or what, but is parent-teacher conferences. I think that is a very stressful situation for a teacher. And you know, even after the experience that I've had, it is still very stressful...I don't know how to go about teaching that to student teachers, but I think conferencing is a very hard skill and even for somebody that has had experience.

Diana Byrd, a veteran teacher with 30 years experience in County System B and a variety of classroom experiences has also supervised many student teachers and practicum students. Her opinions were similar to those already mentioned,

The ones I've had seem to be pretty good. I don't know if there is any way, but if they could have classes that taught them how to deal with parents, parent conferences...and record keeping the kinds of contacts they have with parents.

There were many different ideas suggested throughout the interview process, but based on the responses, the teachers stated the teacher preparation programs in this region need to make some adjustments to meet the needs of new teachers. These ideas represent only the major themes that emerged through these interview transcripts.

Mentoring and Induction Programs

When it comes to discussing formal mentoring or induction programs, the good news is that more and more systems are implementing them. The bad news is that most of them are implemented quickly, and without much structure (Rubin, 2002). Two of the three systems that were used in this research study had mentoring programs in place but provided no support for the mentor teachers and the programs were not structured. However, the third system had implemented a formal mentoring program with structure and training for the mentors that appeared to be working well. A formal induction program has been started in two of the three systems, including the use of Harry Wong materials and formal meetings for new teachers throughout the school year. However, the third system had yet to implement any formal program to help support and retain new teachers.

Formal Mentoring Programs

The theme that emerged from the interviews was that a formal, structured mentoring program with training and support for the mentor teachers works better to help new teachers adjust to their new work environment and reduce stress. The new formal mentoring program that was implemented in one system has been good for both the new teachers and the veteran teachers. According to Nell Chandler, a veteran teacher of 27 years in County System A, who has mentored new teachers before, this program has helped make the process of mentoring more beneficial. She expressed her feelings about the program when she talked about the relationship she and the new teacher have established.

We kind of bonded. No, we really got to know each other and like on the floor, I had an ideal situation, I ate lunch with her, together every day, and she'll come to me and say I need your opinion on this or that. I feel like she feels comfortable enough like she can come and talk to me about anything...There are some wonderful activities and things we can do for first-year teachers. Things that I'd never even thought of, you know, just getting them out in the community and showing them things and talking to them.

Mark Austin, who just completed his first-year teaching in County System A and was lucky enough to be one of the new teachers benefiting from this formal mentoring program, had this to say,

Like with the grade books, you know, don't start your grade book until two weeks after school starts and those sorts of things, it has been a help just knowing she is just down the hall and if I have a problem, I just go down the hall to her.

And Alison Jones, a second-year teacher in County System A who didn't have the benefits of a formal mentoring program her first year teaching but has had to opportunity to be involved her second year added, "It's nice having that one person you know you can go to and they can offer advice."

As mentioned earlier, the mentoring program is helping form relationships that offer support for the new teachers, and it is also teaching the mentors how to help the new teachers. Cathy Smith, another veteran teacher who has also mentored without the formal program in place, stated one of the biggest assets is the checklist that gives the mentor teachers ideas about what the new teachers need to know.

We started a comprehensive checklist, that involves everything in the school building and hopefully when we begin it fresh next year, they will check off the items when we talk about it or discuss it. Then as they go throughout the year, they say, OK, you haven't told me about the computer lab yet, so let's discuss that because you don't need to go over everything at the first of the year.

The teachers from the other systems all mentioned that mentor teachers were assigned to the new teachers in the building. However, beyond being assigned a mentor none of

the new teachers could tell me much about what the mentors had done to help them. Many of the new teachers mentioned establishing a support system with other teachers who taught in the school, but not necessarily with the mentor teacher who had been assigned. One new teacher from County System B really stood out. Although her case is a little extreme, it is not very different from many of the other answers received. She noted,

I was assigned two mentor teachers and it was the two teachers that taught with me in the third grade. I felt they had only five years or less experience themselves and I don't think that they were probably the best choice for mentors. I think that if you and someone in the school mesh well, you should have some say... The two that were assigned to me didn't really want to be mentors.

A veteran teacher from the same school system indicates that though they are giving "lip service" to offering support to their new teachers, a whole lot hasn't changed in 26 years.

When I started, it was pretty much you walk in and this is your classroom, congratulations you've been hired, this is your classroom, let's get to it. So it makes it tough. You first get that, you're all excited about it getting that first job...and then you walk in and this is your classroom, these are your kids, this is your class list and go, but fortunately there are enough good teachers around you that if you have a question you can go to them and ask...I guess the idea was you've been to college, you are a college graduate, you ought to know what to do.

Harry Wong Induction

Two of the three systems chosen to participate in the research study use Harry Wong's *The First 100 Days of School* as an induction process to which new teachers were exposed. Both systems used it a little differently with one system using it in 2 hour, 4-day sessions over the two weeks before school started. The other system did a full day of training prior to the beginning of school and short, scheduled meetings 3 or 4 times throughout the year. All 6 of the new teachers from the two systems mentioned the training. Although how much it impacted their teaching styles varied, they all admitted that on some level it did influence a lot of the decisions that they made through those first-years. Mark Austin, one of the new teachers in County System A who was involved in the Harry Wong induction program, had this to say,

With the Harry Wong (material) it helps you be ready from the first day and the basic concept of your first day of school and throughout the rest of the school year and that was helpful to know, like seating arrangements, classroom procedures vs. classroom rules, that if there is a procedure to do anything it is not just by the rules but there is a reason behind it.

Melinda Ramsey also noted,

I don't know that I could pinpoint certain things, (except) that it kind of formed my foundation for the way I kind of do things.

Another new teacher who went through the Harry Wong program, including books and videos, August Peters added, "The Harry Wong Induction Program, I pull that book out probably for all kinds of stuff."

Role of the Principal

Although the mentoring and induction programs had an impact on the ease of transition for new teachers, it was not the only factor. The other major theme that developed concerning stress levels was regarding the role of the principal. The leadership style of the principal tends to have an impact on the culture of the entire school; therefore, it is not surprising that so many new teachers (7 of 9) commented about the role of the principal in their early years, but even the veteran teachers (7 of 9) mentioned the impact on stress levels a principal can have. For those veteran teachers who had worked under several principals, they could name differences in the principals' leadership styles and noted differences in the level of stress they felt due to the leadership style of the person in charge.

Overall, the commentary regarding the leadership styles of the principals was very positive, and only after they answered the initial question regarding leadership

styles did some of the veteran teachers discuss some of their previous leaders almost as an afterthought. Melinda Ramsey summed it up well when she stated,

Their leadership style sets the tone and if they are stressed, then, you know as far as someone is, the state is putting pressure about test scores, that filters down through Central Office that filters to the principal and then that comes to us, you know it is just the domino effect. So if there is a certain level of stress, it's going to come down. And I think that if the principal feels pressured to do lots of extra activities outside of school, then that is obviously going to come to the teachers, and the teachers are going to end up with that responsibility....So in that way, I think the principal does play a role (in stress levels).

When asked what the principal could do to relieve stress, she had to think a few minutes, but then came up with this response:

I think assigning a mentor is probably one of the most important thing. Coming to a new teacher and asking, how are you doing? And continuing to check on the new teacher, because when you are a new teacher, you don't necessarily know what you need anyway.

The participants gave descriptions of the type of principal they liked to work for and described things that they could do to make their jobs less stressful. The responses were similar, and the themes that emerged included being open and supportive and being a strong instructional leader. Providing meaningful professional development was also a key element in their description of principals but will be discussed in the next section.

Supportive Principal

Laiken Moorehouse, who has worked under three different principals as a teacher and as a teacher's assistant, described the role of the principal when she stated

I think it does matter, I think that all the principals that I've had were very supportive, they never were right there over my shoulder but they were there when I needed them and they would also pop in to see if you needed them. Anytime I've ever gone to see them, their door was open, I never felt like I couldn't go and say what do you think about this, or I need an opinion, just kind of letting you be you and letting you know they are there and I feel like that you could just go talk to them at anytime about anything and that just having that sounding board.

Another veteran teacher who supported the same sentiments as Laiken was Patty Shepherd who has worked for many years under many different principals with a variety of leadership styles. She added,

I've had some principals that have been very supportive, they are backing me no matter what happens, they are there to back you....I've been very lucky, they know our curriculum, they know what we need to be doing at this level, so when they come in, they know the children's names, they know what you are doing, they know you well enough to know that you are here doing your job. They trust you to do what you need to do in your classroom, and I think that takes away a lot of the stress right there.

Bruce Roark added his thoughts about stress levels and the role a principal plays when he commented:

I realize when we were talking about stress, they have a tremendous amount of stress, but administrators' stress, their stress is multiplied by how many teachers they have. About programs, maybe just understanding that there are going to be days when you are not in a very good mood, and you are going to be stressed, and how they should be there...If I can just say something and get it off my mind and clear the air a little bit, then I feel a whole lot better, so I guess the best thing a principal can do would be a good listener and let people vent their frustrations, and then, whatever they say, don't hold it against them, and actually pay attention to what you are saying and let you say whatever you need to say and then go from there.

The new teachers who were interviewed didn't have many principals to compare their principals to, but many still had very basic ideas about what they could do to help make their first years easier, and many of their ideas were very similar to those responses from the veteran teachers. Seven of the new teachers continued to talk about support and an "open door" policy. When Roberta Brown described her principal, she used many examples of ways he supported his teachers:

He stands behind us, he supports his faculty and staff 100% on anything, and he is very open. If we have a problem or if there is something he is in question about, he will come to you and I think that really helps. I think my stress level would be much higher if I was concerned that someone was going to come and question me about this or that, but he is very good to talk to.

Instructional Leader

Another key theme in the interviews was that if the principal acted as a true instructional leader, the teachers felt that their stress levels were reduced. As a result of the principal being actively involved in curriculum development and having an understanding of what the teachers needed in the classroom, they served as a positive support system for both new and veteran teachers although it was mentioned more directly by the veteran teachers. Patty Shepherd had this to say about her principal's support by being an instructional leader:

I've been very lucky, they know our curriculum, they know what we need to be doing at this level, so when they come in, the principals I've had, they know the children's names, they know what you are doing, they know you well enough to know that you are here doing your job, they trust you do what you need to do in your classroom, and I think that takes away a lot of stress right there.

Samantha Cole also discussed having a principal who spends time in the classrooms and who knows what the teachers are doing when she stated,

He knows what our strengths are and he knows what we can do and he appreciates what we can do...He'll come into the classroom and if you are doing some kind of game or something or whatever you are doing, he will participate in whatever is going on and he makes himself a very welcome part of the classroom.

Bruce Roark talked about the different principals he has had through the years and mentioned the one principal who seemed to have the biggest impact on his career as being the one who helped him become a better teacher. He said,

(She) taught me I guess to be a decent teacher because she was constantly nudging and correcting and pulling and tugging and getting me to actually go and be what I needed to be.

Diana Byrd also mentioned how her current principal had decreased some stress because she has a "good background in curriculum which has made my job easier."

The role of the principal is very important not just for the development of new teachers but also for the creation of a positive work environment for veteran teachers. According to the participants in this study, when a principal is supportive of the faculty and staff and offers strong leadership in curriculum and instruction, teachers feel less stress.

Professional Development

The final theme that emerged from the study is related to the role of the principal as well. Many of the participants mentioned that one of the activities that principals could take part in included providing meaningful professional development for all teachers. When asked

about professional development, 10 of the 18 participants mentioned that although there had been some good professional development, there had been many professional development activities that seemed to have nothing to do with anything. Only one of the teachers interviewed had taken advantage of the few professional development opportunities that had been offered dealing with stress relief. Basically, when it comes to professional development, 10 of 18 stated that there needs to be choices offered so that they can take advantage of opportunities that are relevant to them, and that there have been very few opportunities that deal with stress management.

Offer Choices in Programs

When asked about professional development opportunities Laiken Morehouse noted,

Professional development, probably here in the last few years they've really honed down what we really want to have professional development on, for instance, what do you want us to bring people in for, what do you want to talk about? So I feel like yes, in the last few years definitely because we've actually had a voice of what we've gotten to do and I feel like then it makes more sense and everything, your time and everything is a whole lot better.

Diana Byrd also mentioned having choices and how she felt there were better choices now than had been in the past,

(Professional Development opportunities) have met my needs. There are lots of things out there, but I don't think teachers always take advantage of them like they should...That's the kind of thing that keeps you from getting in a rut.

Although Melinda Ramsey is a new teacher, her response was very similar to that of Laiken when she said,

I was able to go to a lot of different conferences in the first two years. I was able to go to a differentiated instruction conference in Savannah it was very helpful and I brought back some wonderful things.

Echoing Melinda's comments, Shelia Myers talked about the role her principal has played in her development by offering her opportunities to participate in a variety of professional development activities:

My principal is very good about (helping me grow as a new teacher)...sending me to different programs and in-service and professional development opportunities that deal with instruction and classroom management and that has been very helpful.

Stress Management

Another new teacher in the City System, Roberta Brown, discussed the lack of opportunities to learn to handle stress. She noted,

There have been some ideas that they have presented on how to make your classroom run a little smoother or things that would help the children with different strategies but not as far as personal stress-No. The only way I think teachers might take advantage of stress in-services would be if it was in the form of something unrelated to education, then they might be more willing to do that, like, you know, stress

therapy, massage therapy, that sort of thing, but I think a lot of teachers are more concerned with making sure they had as many new strategies in their classroom as they can, dealing with stress might not weigh as heavily as those would.

Her response was typical of what was said by other participants as well. Although 6 of the participants stated they had not been offered any stress management in-service opportunities, those who had the opportunity to attend professional development opportunities relating to stress management did not take advantage of those opportunities. Apparently stress management tools would be helpful to most teachers, but many may not be willing to seek out those tools by taking advantage of opportunities that exist.

Summary

Once the transcripts from the interviews were coded, themes began emerging that identified some of the various stress factors that both new and veteran teachers face and some of the actions that principals and supervisors can take to try and relieve those stress factors to make veteran teachers more productive and new teachers less likely to leave the profession. The themes were presented in this chapter using descriptive narrative from the perspectives of the 18 teachers who participated in this

study. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the findings and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Like many other service professions, teachers face a very high number of stress factors on a daily basis. The purpose of this study was to identify some of the key stressors novice and veteran teachers are facing and to determine if there are any particular steps that the administrators of the school systems can take to ensure the success of all teachers. The research process included interviewing 9 new teachers (1-3 years experience) and 9 veteran teachers (7+ years of experience) to determine what they say the biggest stress factors they face and what could be done to make their day-to-day job less stressful. Through the use of personal interviews and a structured interview guide, I explored their perceptions about stress and the many factors that play a role in their development as teachers including the preparation program they went through, the leadership style of the principal and professional development opportunities.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the group of teachers who participated in this research study spoke positively about their experiences in education. The responses to many questions

were similar regardless of the number of years the teachers had been teaching, and everyone interviewed answered "yes" to two questions: 1) Is teaching more stressful than you expected? 2) Will you remain in the field of teaching? Although everyone discussed the many stress factors they faced, no matter how stressful they felt the field of education was they were all quite certain they would continue teaching. However, due to the number of similar responses, there were several themes that emerged providing the basis for considerations that there are some things that can be done to better prepare novice teachers for their new careers and help veteran teachers experience less stress and deal more effectively with the stress factors that they will continue to face.

This project was framed by research questions that were presented in Chapter 1. Based on the data analysis presented in Chapter 4, the findings are offered here in summary form.

Research Question 1: What are perceived to be the major causes of stress for new and veteran teachers?

Participants were asked what they perceived to be the biggest stress factors that they face. According to Russell et al. (1987), some of the most frequently listed problems that teachers encounter are: overcrowded

classrooms, involuntary transfers, excessive paperwork, inadequate teacher salaries, unsupportive parents, and lack of administrative support. Although new teachers experience some of the same problems, they may feel they are minute compared to the stressors they are already facing trying to adapt to a new environment. However, the teachers who participated in this study gave many of the same factors that cause stress in their career regardless of the number of years they have been teaching. The most frequent responses are listed below.

1. Paperwork: This response was the most common from all teachers regardless of the number of years of experience they had. New and veteran teachers alike mentioned the amount of paperwork as one of the biggest stress factors they face. The veteran teachers also mentioned that the amount of paperwork has increased drastically in recent years.
2. NCLB: Standardized Testing: The second most mentioned stress factor was the emphasis on standardized testing and the impact No Child Left Behind has had on teaching. Although none of the veteran teachers mentioned trying to become highly qualified, most mentioned how the emphasis on standardized testing has changed the way they teach and the relationships with their students.
3. Outside Factors: The final theme that emerged regarding stress was the influence of outside factors on the classroom. Both veteran and new teachers mentioned the added stress from outside sources including the lack of support from parents and society in general as well as the increased demands from the central office and the State Department.

Research Question 2: What role did undergraduate teacher preparation play in preparing new and veteran teachers for their teaching experience?

Both new and veteran teachers were asked to think about their teacher preparation programs and discuss aspects that could have better prepared them for their transition from student to teacher. The research indicates that the participants in this study gave responses that are similar to those given by many other teachers in the profession. The majority of the curriculum in teacher preparation programs focuses on theory as opposed to practical "hands-on" experiences (Rubin, 2002). Many of the participants responded with similar answers including the need for more classroom experiences, changes to the student teaching format, and more emphasis on classroom management and parental contacts in the coursework. These responses reflect the ideas behind the Carnegie Corporation's push for a more "clinical" training for all teachers (Rubin). The themes that emerged are listed below.

1. **Increased Classroom Experiences:** A unanimous answer to this question was that the amount of time students need to spend in the classroom is tremendous. The only way for students to be better prepared for teaching is for them to spend as much time as possible in the classroom prior to and including the student teaching experience.

2. Student Teaching: Although student teaching is an integral part of the teacher preparation program, there was an overall consensus that the process could be adjusted. Some teachers mentioned not having any support from the classroom teachers, but most were more likely to state that although their experience was good, the mentor teacher was always there for them, and when they entered the classroom as a professional they did not have the same support.

3. Classroom Management and Parental Contact: Many teachers stated that the course work could have better prepared them if they had learned more about classroom management and dealing with parents. Although no one had an answer as to the best way to teach those skills without more time in the classroom, it was discussed by both new teachers and veteran teachers who had supervised student teachers recently.

Research Question 3: If the new and veteran teachers are/have been involved in planned programs or activities to assist in their development as a new teacher, did they reduce stress or help them deal with stressful situations? What role did it play in their success, and what are some of the specific characteristics that would classify these experiences as positive or negative?

Both new and veteran teachers were asked about planned programs that were used in their schools or systems that had been of assistance to them. The answers to this question varied by the systems in which they taught and the number of years they had been teaching. The responses

resembled the research in the literature review, which stated that induction programs should provide support for beginning teachers that will allow them to become better teachers over time (Stansbury, 2001). The research also states that mentoring programs are essential because every new teacher deserves the best support and experience available (Blank & Kershaw, 2002). The teachers who were exposed to formal mentoring and induction programs were the most positive about their experiences as new teachers. Mentoring not only benefits the new teachers, it can have positive impact on the careers of veteran teachers as well (Blank & Kershaw). The following themes were developed based on the responses of the participants.

1. Formal Mentoring Programs: New teachers in one of the three systems had a formal mentoring program established in their school system. The responses of those new teachers were very positive about the mentoring program while new teachers in the other two systems did not build the same relationship with the mentor teachers they had been assigned. The veteran teachers who had been trained to be mentors were very enthusiastic about the program and could see a difference in the help they were able to offer the new teachers because of the program.
2. Harry Wong Induction Program: Two of the systems in this study offered a formal induction program including Harry Wong materials for new teachers either before school began or throughout their first-year of teaching. New teachers in both systems stated that the induction program had provided them a base to build their new careers on that the new teachers in the third system did not

have. According to the participants, the induction program was very beneficial.

Research Question 4: What are the perceptions of the new and veteran teachers concerning the role of the principal in orienting and supporting new teachers and relieving or eliminating stress?

The teachers in the study were asked about their perceptions regarding the impact of the leadership style of their principals on stress levels and the development of new teachers in their profession. According to the research, without the support and affirmation of the administrator, a beginning teacher may lack the resources necessary to become successful veteran teachers (Brock, 1999). Not only did the new teachers express their need for a supportive principal, the veteran teachers definitely recognized the role that administration had played in the development of their careers. The following themes emerged:

1. **Supportive Principal:** Teachers from all three systems regardless of their years of experience expressed the opinion that a supportive principal is crucial to the success of new teachers and to the well-being of veteran teachers. New teachers were just as likely to mention the positive aspects of having a supportive principal as the veteran teachers were.
2. **Principal as Instructional Leader:** The second most prevalent response was the importance of

having a principal who was involved in the curriculum and the day-to-day activities in the classrooms rather than just someone who is in the office and aloof. According to the participants in this study, having a strong instructional leader helps new teachers develop into stronger teachers and helps eliminate stress for veteran teachers.

Research Question 5: Have professional development opportunities met the needs of new and veteran classroom teachers including relieving stress?

The final research question dealt with the role of professional development opportunities and if they met the needs of the teachers and if they played any role in stress and stress management. The participants again answered similarly to the research that stated teachers need to be given opportunities to determine and understand their own needs and then be given the opportunity to have a voice in planning how to meet those needs (Yost, 2002). The final two themes are addressed below.

1. **Offer Choices in Professional Development:** When asked about professional development opportunities, the primary response was that overall they met the needs of the teachers. The one idea that several teachers mentioned was that in recent years more and more options were being offered, and they mentioned that central office staff and principals were actually listening to their opinions and offering pertinent choices.
2. **Stress Management:** Although teachers noted education is a very stressful profession, there has been very little done to offer support for

stress management. It was not offered as part of the teacher preparation program for most teachers and the systems continue to do very little to help once they become professionals. However, many noted that even though there had been a small attempt to provide stress management opportunities, many teachers have failed to take advantage of those opportunities.

Conclusions

The National Center for Education Statistics projects that schools in the United States will enroll 54.6 million children by 2006. They estimate that the schools will need to recruit 325,000-600,000 new teachers in order to handle the increased numbers of students (Goodson-Rochelle, 1998). Teaching is a stressful profession and administrators must focus on ways to recruit and maintain quality teachers in the classrooms. Realizing what the major stress factors are is the first step in helping them deal with stress. Knowing what new teachers need is also a key to helping them develop.

Although some changes may need to be made to the teacher preparation programs, there are several positive changes that have apparently taken place over the past several years. Administrators and college professors need to be made aware of the gaps within the preparation programs so it will be much easier to plan and develop new programs that will provide the best teachers available.

Every child deserves the best teacher and if school systems and colleges work together, they can provide teachers who are better prepared to deal with the stresses they will face. However, if the high turnover rate of teachers is going to decrease, teacher preparation programs must continue to change to meet the needs of future teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Formal mentoring and induction programs may keep the stress factors that new teachers face from becoming too overwhelming and keep the beginning teacher in the profession of education when they might not have remained without the support. Participating in mentoring programs can also help veteran teachers rejuvenate their careers and decrease the likelihood of experiencing burnout and leaving the profession as well. Unfortunately, not every veteran teacher may be ready to be a mentor because it is not a natural process for teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Training mentor teachers is key to helping new teachers and the mentor teachers grow and develop their career.

Teaching can be a very stressful career choice, but we need to continue to recruit and maintain the best candidates for the future of our children. With continued research, professionals can determine the best possible training program for new teachers and continue to offer

support to veteran teachers. None of the experiences that a student faces can completely prepare novice teachers for the first days of controlling their very own classroom. However, if college preparation programs continue to improve to meet the needs of the students, and local school systems begin providing better services for their new teachers, then our new teachers will be better prepared to face the challenges in their transition from student to professional and everyone will win-especially the children.

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

This study provided some insight into the thoughts and perceptions of both new and veteran teachers about stress factors and what can be done to help teachers deal with stress or decrease the amount of stress they face.

However, this study could be strengthened if some additional research was completed. Following are some recommendations for future research.

1. Provide additional training for mentors in other systems and further research to determine if new teachers are more likely to remain in the profession if they are involved in a formal mentoring program.

2. A longitudinal study could be performed to determine stress factors in a larger population over a longer period of time to determine if certain stress factors are more likely to cause teachers to leave the profession than others.
3. Research needs to be done to determine what types of stress management opportunities teachers would be willing to participate in to get the help they need. If systems are offering opportunities to attend forms of stress management in-services, and teachers aren't taking advantage of it, studies need to be done to determine what would attract teachers to participate.
4. A study needs to be done to determine if teachers who enter the profession as a second career choice are different from teachers who enter the profession upon completing a teacher preparation program right after high school graduation. Are their needs different from other new teachers, and are they better prepared to be classroom teachers because of the experiences they bring with them to the classroom?
5. A follow-up project that needs to be done is to interview principals and supervisors of the

teachers who participated in this study to determine if perceptions are the same. Do the perceptions of the teachers and administrators match? Do the administrators feel they are doing things to decrease stress or help new teachers develop, and do the teachers perceive their actions the same way?

Implications for Future Practice

1. Implement a training program for teachers who supervise student teachers so that they will have the most positive experience possible. A joint effort between colleges and local school systems could provide a better preparation for new teachers.
2. Provide training for principals to help them become more aware of the needs of new teachers. It is ultimately their responsibility to ensure they have the tools they need to grow as professionals.
3. A formal mentoring program may need to be mandated by the State Department of Education to ensure every system begins participating. An excellent teacher may be terrific in the

classroom, but not be aware of the needs of new teachers and how to help them. It is unfair to both the new teacher and the mentor teacher if the mentor is not trained.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
Interview Guide

- Please state your "name" and describe your background as an educator. (How many years, what subjects, how many different schools or systems).
- What prompted you to enter the field of education?
- What expectations did you have when you entered the teaching profession? Has being a teacher been what you expected?
- In what ways did your undergraduate studies prepare you for your duties as a classroom teacher?
- In retrospect, are there aspects of teacher preparation that you would change in an effort to better prepare future teachers for the realities of the job?
- How did the student teaching experience change your expectations or prepare you for the actual classroom setting?
- Do you have recommendations for improving the student teaching experience to better prepare future teachers?
- Tell me about your transition from student to professional? Was it as you expected? What surprises were there?
- How did you learn your way around your first school?
- Tell me about any planned programs or activities provided to assist you.
- If a mentoring or induction program was in place, what are some of the positive and negative aspects of the programs? Were there aspects you would have changed?
- In your opinion, have these professional development activities met your needs? Why or why not?

- What role has/did your principal played/play in your development as a new teacher?
- What do you perceive to be the role of the principal in orienting and supporting new teachers?
- What have been the biggest triggers of stress that you have experienced as a teacher?
- Tell me your thoughts on Standards Based Education as a (new or veteran) teacher.
- Do you feel prepared to meet the challenges of the requirements? If no, what is missing? What is needed?

APPENDIX B
Letter of Request to Participate

188 Shane St.
Greeneville, TN 37743
March 1, 2004

Name
Street Address
City, ST zip

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research on the subject of orienting classroom teachers. As a current teacher who is interested in becoming an administrator, I am thankful for your willingness to participate in this study, which I hope will provide information to administrators about how to help teachers be more successful. I have the approval and support of your director of schools and principal for your participation in this study.

During the focus group interviews, each participant will be assigned a pseudonym, and every response will be maintained in strict confidence. The school systems will remain anonymous and the names of all of the participants will remain confidential throughout the research process.

I look forward to meeting with you on _____, 2004 at your school.

Sincerely,

Kristi Christopher
ETSU Doctoral Student

APPENDIX C
Participants in the Study

NAME	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION BACKGROUND	# YEARS AS AN EDUCATOR	SCHOOL SYSTEM
Cathy Smith	Female	43	MAT	8, SECOND CAREER	County A
Alison Jones	Female	21	BA, WORKING ON MA	2	County A
Samantha Cole	Female	54	MA	27	County A
Nell Chandler	Female	49	MA	27	County A
August Peters	Female	23	BA	2	County A
Chandler Jacobs	Female	22	BA, WORKING ON MA	1	County B
Jordan Rose	Female	30	MED	3, SECOND CAREER	County B
Sallie May Whitehead	Female	24	BA	2	County B
Bruce Roark	Male	47	BA	26	County B
Lisa Johnson	Female	41	BA	20	County B
Roberta Jones	Female	30	BA, WORKING ON MA	3, SECOND CAREER	City A
Shelia Myers	Female	33	MED	2, SECOND CAREER	City A
Laiken Moorehouse	Female	40	MA	10	City A
Melinda Ramsey	Female	24	BA	3	City A
Patty Shepherd	Female	48	MAT	26	City A
Carl Hinkle	Male	43	ED.S	10, SECOND CAREER	City A
Diana Byrd	Female	53	MA	30	County B
Mark Austin	Male	22	BA	1	County A

APPENDIX D
Auditor Certification

I, Lori Wilhoit, served as the auditor for Kristi Christopher's meetings with new and veteran teachers from three East Tennessee school systems. I have read and reviewed Chapter 4 and have found everything to be accurately represented and the process for determining how to present the results to be in compliance with the data collected.

Lori Wilhoit, Teacher
(Date)

APPENDIX E
Debriefers Certification

I, Cheryl Bueck, served as the debriefer for this study, A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEW AND VETERAN TEACHERS REGARDING THE STRESS FACTORS THAT IMPACT THEIR CAREER. I met with Kristi Christopher throughout the research process to discuss the impressions and observations that emerged during the research study. We discussed her concerns about the interviews as well as any potential biases she noted.

Cheryl Bueck, Teacher
(Date)

VITA

KRISTI L. CHRISTOPHER

Personal Data: Date of Birth: May 16, 1969
Place of Birth: Greeneville, Tennessee
Marital Status: Married

Education: East Tennessee State University, Johnson City,
Tennessee;
Educational Leadership, Ed.D., 2004
University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona;
Organizational Management, M.A., 1998
Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City,
Tennessee;
History, B.A., 1991
Public Schools, Mosheim, Tennessee

Professional

Experience: Teacher, Science Hill High School; Johnson
City, Tennessee, 1991 - 1992
Teacher, Mosheim School; Mosheim,
Tennessee, 1997-2004

Honors and

Awards: Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year 2003
Mosheim School, Teacher of the Year 2002