

Factors Affecting Teacher Satisfaction in an  
Urban School District

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to distinguish factors that influence the satisfaction levels of teachers in urban school districts. This work also distinguished factors that directly impacted teachers' level of satisfaction towards their work and their attitude towards the administration of their schools.

Forty-one teachers from two kindergarten through eighth grade schools in the southwest region of the United States were given a modified version of the 2007/08 Schools and Staffing Survey, a federally recognized survey on the satisfaction levels of teachers in America, combined with a select number of questions created by the researcher in this study to address the research questions of this study. Data were collected and analyzed through Survey Monkey, an online data portal, and imported into SPSS for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were compiled to provide answers to the research questions established for this study.

Results from this study indicated that although a majority of teachers sampled were satisfied with their teaching positions (78%), kindergarten through fourth grade teachers were more satisfied than teachers in the older grades. For the whole group, salary was the most influential factor; however, the teachers with 11 to 15 years of experience were the only ones who chose salary as their primary choice to increase their satisfaction. This study found that the levels of satisfaction per subgroup (teachers' years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, and grade level) were different than the group

needs as a whole. This study revealed that the needs of the whole group and the needs of the subgroups can differ, consequently individual differences of the staff need to be taken into consideration. To view the staff as a whole may discredit the needs of the individual. Even though data indicated that a significant number of teachers felt supported by their administration, this study revealed the need for administrative staff to address specific issues of subgroups in their schools.

To my family, friends, and colleagues  
Who helped me reach my goal in completing this dissertation  
And begin the next chapter of my life.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“As a result of high turnover, high-need urban and rural schools are frequently staffed with inequitable concentrations of under-prepared, inexperienced teachers who are left to labor on their own to meet the needs of their students” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2009, p. 9). This research is focused on identifying factors that have led to high rates of teacher turnover resulting in significant staffing deficits in the teaching force and teachers’ levels of satisfaction towards their profession. As research by Edey and Huston (2004) indicated, teachers who had lower levels of satisfaction were more likely to leave their school in the first three years, as opposed to teachers who had higher levels of satisfaction and were more likely to remain in the school in the following three years. Understanding the needs of teachers while they are still in the classroom prevents another generation of teachers from leaving our nation’s schools, a loss so very difficult to reverse.

Teachers at the beginning of their careers and teachers in urban schools leave teaching at a higher rate than more experienced teachers. The consequences of teachers leaving the field inevitably follows with teachers who lack the experience of the teachers they are replacing. Consequences are also inevitable in the loss of revenue based on hiring, training, and retaining of new teachers. Schools must continue to rebuild their staff without experienced and effective veteran teachers who are the ones most needed in lower performing schools. As Futernick (2007, p. 53) stated, “It has now become increasingly apparent that

teachers with no pedagogical training and scant subject knowledge cannot accomplish what a fully credentialed, 10-year veteran teacher can accomplish.”

Teachers enter the profession for a variety of reasons. Reasons can range from having a teacher who contributed to their development, to a person having an affinity for the content, to enjoying the satisfaction of working with children.

Spencer (1997) wrote,

The single most powerful recruiter of teachers are schools themselves.

People who have had positive experiences in school can prolong that experience by becoming teachers. Observing teachers for many years from a student perspective serve as a basis for making a career decision to teach. (p. 814)

Recruiting teachers into the field is one component of a strong teacher workforce, but what occurs upon entry is another component.

The high rate of teacher attrition and lack of retention has and continues to hurt the educational system. Schools and districts, especially those in urban and poverty areas, recruit, train, and lose teachers as quickly as they enter the field. This constant counterproductive cycle is not only costing more than money to retrain teachers, it is also impacting the achievement of students. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2009) has estimated that the national cost of public school teacher turnover could be over \$7.3 billion a year. These data indicate that recruiting is one aspect of a positive workforce, but retaining staff is another aspect just as vital. Teachers are leaving for specific reasons and to retain

these teachers, there needs to be a body of knowledge that seeks to understand their exodus. There is a responsibility on behalf of the field of education to discover why teachers are leaving and to learn what can be done to address their needs.

Richard Ingersoll, when asked about his interest and the reason he dedicated much of his research to teacher job satisfaction, referred to addressing the challenge of teacher attrition: “I had a thousand questions in my head”—spawned a body of research focused on teacher turnover, particularly what is behind it and how to get ahead of it (Dillon, 2009, p. 1). The high attrition rate is a symptom of other issues in the field of education. To understand teacher attrition, the causes of the problem have to be understood. Past research has indicated a connection between the satisfaction level of teachers and their tenure in the field. As a result of teachers staying in the classroom, the level of skill teachers acquire as they gain more experience will develop; student achievement will rise; and the resources lost to recruitment, materials, and other expenditures will be saved and can be reallocated to other areas that can directly impact student achievement.

Embedded in the educational system are many influences that impact teachers. Some of these influences are the result of state and federal policy, some are dependent on the school administration, and some are dependent on individuals and how they interact within their school environment. Many of the factors that teachers encounter, such as educational funding, political views on education, district level influence, and administrative impact, are out of their control, having minimal ability to change these factors.

In contrast to factors that cannot be controlled for teachers, there are those factors that can be controlled. Those factors include the educational environment, the ways teachers are treated in their work, and how their needs are met by the school and district administration. School administrators are in positions to establish work environments that increase teacher satisfaction towards their jobs (Rinehart & Short, 1993). These areas are where research needs to be focused.. When the focus is centered on the issues that lead teachers to become dissatisfied and leave the school or field, there will be clear direction to address their needs. Dr. Ken Futernick wrote in his work, *A Possible Dream: Retaining California Teachers so all Students Can Learn* (2007), “The very process of asking teachers about their schools and soliciting their help in making these schools better places to work is not just a step toward solving the problem, it is an important part of the solution” (p. xii).

The needs of teachers vary and what will increase one teacher’s level of satisfaction may not be the same for another. To truly understand the needs of teachers, they have to be asked. Futernick (2007) wrote that teachers need to be asked what they need and to express their opinions before they decide to leave. Relying on exit interviews to determine the needs of teachers is already past the point of being able to meet their needs.

Wanting to be heard is a need teachers have expressed throughout the history of teaching. In the most recent work done in *The American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success* by MetLife (2010), 30% of the teachers surveyed responded positively to the statement: “Thinking about the current

debate on education, teachers' voices in general have been adequately heard.” Researchers in the MetLife study also indicated that relatively there has been no change in the way teachers respond to being heard since a previous study they conducted in 1984. The MetLife survey also indicated that 59% of the teachers surveyed were very satisfied with their work but 20% of the teachers surveyed were fairly likely to move to another career in the next five years. Not feeling as though they are being heard may result in a lower level of satisfaction teachers feel towards their jobs and may lead them to look for work in other fields.

### **Growing to Become an Effective Teacher**

Developing into an effective teacher is something which takes time. One's skills develop from reflection, coaching, and professional development. For growth to occur, the individual teacher has to be dedicated to staying with their work over a period of time. Teachers need assistance in developing and applying their (a) talents and skills in their roles and norms of a school, (b) in-depth knowledge and skills in instruction, and (c) continual reflection on their interactions with their students. Teachers who are satisfied with their school and environment stay in their positions and become more and more successful each year they teach. Increased job satisfaction may enhance teacher performance, quality of work life, organizational effectiveness, and student performance (Rinehart & Short, 1993). When this happens consistently, student learning will greatly increase. When teachers are leaving within their first five years of teaching, the time needed to develop into an effective teacher cannot develop. Finding common patterns that generalize to other schools or educational

institutions, the teaching workforce as a whole will benefit. The consequences of finding the common patterns that increase a teacher's level of satisfaction could lead to a longer tenure in a school or district.

In the contemporary system of education there is a great reliance on funding, which goes toward capital, maintenance, and operations as well as teacher salaries. There is also a great deal of money that is spent not only trying to retain current teachers, but also recruiting teachers to replace retired teachers, or teachers who decide to no longer be a part of the educational system. As funding in the educational setting decreases, there will be less room to rely on salary and other factors that past research has indicated as influential on teachers' level of satisfaction. Education could do great things with funds that are used to replace dissatisfied teachers.

### **Teacher Satisfaction and Leadership**

As funding decreases greater attention will need to be placed on meeting intrinsic needs of staff members to maintain an effective teacher workforce. Because administrators have the ability to influence the situations and experiences teachers have in their classrooms, their leadership has been found to be an effective factor influencing the level of satisfaction that teachers hold towards their jobs..

### **Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that distinguish the satisfaction levels of teachers in urban school districts. This work distinguished



factors that directly impacted teachers' level of satisfaction towards their work and their attitude towards the administration of their schools.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What is the current level of satisfaction of the participants in this study?

Research Question 2: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing levels of satisfaction than members of other subgroups?

Research Question 3: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching?

Research Question 4: How do teachers in this study view their administration?

Research Question 5: Do satisfied teachers indicate the same needs as dissatisfied teachers?

### **Research Methods**

Teachers in two kindergarten through eighth grade schools in the southwest region of the United States participated in the study by answering survey questions on an online data portal (Survey Monkey). The survey questions were selected from the 2007/08 School and Staffing Survey and combined with a select number of questions created by the researcher in this study to address the

research questions of this study. The data collected through Survey Monkey and imported into SPSS were analyzed. Descriptive and inferential statistics were completed to provide answers to the research questions established for this study.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Teacher satisfaction:* The overall collective belief of teachers based on the culmination of all previous experiences in the educational setting, positive and negative, toward their position as a teacher.

*Subgroup:* A group of teachers who are a part of a smaller cohort by specific characteristics they hold. For this study, the subgroups were teachers' years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, and grade level (kindergarten through the 8th grade).

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study**

The underlying assumptions of this study were that all teachers are different and subsequently have different experiences and opinions. No general understanding of a group of people can replace the knowledge and information that can be gained through more in-depth, specific questioning of the individuals within the group. Consistent with previous research, the predictors that lead to either a greater sense of satisfaction or a decrease in dissatisfaction for one group of teachers does not necessarily generalize to others. Although the concept of satisfaction can be quite subjective, the perception of the specific teacher responding to the survey was the vital information for this study. This study did not seek to determine the differences in responses from one point in the year to

another, but is representative of a snapshot of the teachers' level of satisfaction at the time they were surveyed.

Previous research had to be filtered through the contemporary world occurring at the time of the study. In the case of this particular research, participants' responses were collected at a time of fiscal abundance compared to the state education was experiencing during the analysis portion of this research. Not more than six months after data were collected for this study, an economic recession occurred in the United States as well as globally. As a result of major cutbacks in the educational system federally and locally, many teachers faced RIFS, significant cutbacks, and a change in presidential administration. Many teachers have become "locked" in their schools as there are not an abundant number of jobs to seek in other industries. Being locked equates to a closed job market and ineffective teachers or teachers who are not satisfied with their work, not having the ability to seek alternate jobs in other industries.

Because of the diversity of the teachers in this specific southwest region of the United States, the results of this study may or may not be able to be compared to other studies of the same nature. The state in which this study took place is one which is synonymous for individuals who transplant their lives from many other parts of the country. Because of the large number of transplants, there is a high level of diversity among the individuals who live within the state. Many of these individuals travel great lengths to find teaching positions, and as a result the teachers bring with them varying backgrounds and different sets of beliefs. These sets of beliefs transfer into the classroom and make up its own subculture. This

diverse population of teachers bring with them varying sets of needs into their teaching positions.

### **Significance of the Study**

Past research indicates there are common characteristics and needs of satisfied teachers. Finding descriptors of those who are satisfied is one approach to addressing the needs of the teachers in the schools and can be used to increase the level of satisfaction so they do not leave the field. Research can be accomplished that not only looks for descriptors and factors that are influential to teachers, but also to act as a direct method to increase satisfaction levels. In addition, this work distinguished the influence the administration or leadership of the school has on the teachers' level of satisfaction.

Research has also indicated that many of the factors are dependent on the socioeconomic level of the school, personal characteristics of the teachers being studied, and a multitude of other variables. If this research is able to distinguish variables that are more influential than others, district level and building level administrators can focus their attention on specific factors that affect teachers' level of satisfaction and yield greater results. The attention and support can be differentiated according to the needs of the teachers in a specific school, rather than universal knowledge based on research of other teachers under different circumstances.

Research has indicated that the administration of a school has a direct impact on the level of satisfaction of those in their schools. Administrators have the ability to create, delete, and modify components of the environment teachers

encounter in their daily interactions. Administrators control the professional development, the structure for collegial interactions, and the support teachers need to accomplish the jobs they are responsible for achieving. Past research has also indicated that administrative leadership can have more influence on a teacher's level of satisfaction than other variables occurring in the educational setting. If this study is able to show that leadership is more influential than other factors, more can be done to meet the needs of the teachers in the classroom.

### **Summary of the Chapters**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on teacher satisfaction as to historical, societal, external, and intrinsic influences. High attrition, low retention rates, and student achievement are also discussed. The contents of chapter 3 define the methods used in this study to collect the data. Teachers accessed via Survey Monkey, an internet-based collection website. the survey developed through the use of Schools and Staffing Survey. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were developed, including the use of SPSS. Chapter 4 reports the results as a whole and by subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, and grade level). Within chapter 5 is a summary of the findings per research question and a summary of the conclusions, comparing the descriptive and inferential statistics between the whole group and subgroups.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This comprehensive review of the literature is organized to demonstrate the historical, societal, and individual influences, which have and continue to shape the satisfaction levels of teachers and the state of the teaching workforce. The first section, titled “Historical and Societal Influences on Teacher Satisfaction,” of this literature review provides a general framework concerning the historical and societal impact on teaching as a workforce. The second section, titled “External Influences on Teacher Satisfaction,” explores the direct external factors teachers experience in the field of education. The third section of this review, titled “Intrinsic Factors on Teacher Satisfaction,” addresses the individual characteristics of teachers and their responses from external influences. The final section, titled “Future Possibilities Based on Research,” addresses the consequences of teacher dissatisfaction such as high attrition and low retention rates, as well as, and most importantly, student achievement. In general the following sums up much of what is behind the issue of teacher satisfaction and its impact on retention and attrition levels. “The problem isn’t that too few are coming in, but too many are leaving” (Dillon, 2009).

#### **Historical and Societal Influences on Teacher Satisfaction**

The present state of teaching as a workforce has been shaped through factors such as purpose of education, the advancement of technology, gender roles, and the success of the students in the classrooms of the American schools. In fact, many of the issues past educators have faced are similar, if not the same,

as the challenges present educators are facing in their work. Low professional prestige, low salaries, and subpar ratings on satisfaction with their profession are challenges the teaching workforce has faced since the inception of public schooling and still face in contemporary education. In her work on “Teachers’ Work in Historical and Social Context,” Dr. Dee Spencer (2001, p. 20) wrote of the female gender dominance in the field of education as a result of historical influences. Although periods of time have indicated males were prominent figures as educators, their time was limited as education became a requisite for all children and a greater need for a larger teacher workforce grew. Moving away from past societal beliefs such as a woman’s place is in the home and males were the more highly educated, the role females played in the home and as part of the workforce changed as well.

Since the 17th and 18th centuries, the family dynamics and advancement of technology has by necessity provided the workforce for American schools. The Preindustrial Period of American history was characterized by a family unit all working in accord to meet their individual needs. Spencer indicated that as the role of females entailed supplemental income for the household teaching was a way to provide these funds while maintaining the role they played within their homes. Females became ideally suited to address the needs of their contemporary schools. Teaching was a way for women to work outside the home, but still stay within the overall goal of taking care of their own family.

The advancement of technology was a prime force that impacted the dynamic of the American family and the roles of the people within the American

family. “The center of the labor moved out of the household and into the factory setting. The transition of society from an agricultural to an industrial base also created changes in the educational system” (Spencer, 1997, p. 805). Because men typically took positions in factories and other jobs that were better paying to support their families, women again were primed to be the perfect gender to be in the classrooms. Again, the educational system reflected the changes in history and societal factors.

At the same time the impact of advanced technology occurred, schools were decentralized and a mass expansion took place. With this expansion came a greater need for teachers. To meet these needs, which were based on historical and societal influences, women were again asked to do the work within the schools. Women, because men typically chose occupations which were more lucrative, became vital to the teacher workforce. Although women were the perfect fit for teaching positions, the cycle of low salaries and teacher shortages perpetuated the gender dominance of females in the workforce. Women being ideal for teaching and earning supplemental income for their families perpetuated the low salaries that have always plagued educators. Teacher salaries were low as the prestige of the field was low, thus salaries reflected the societal beliefs.

The population boom in the early 20th century led to another shortage of teachers. It was at this time the National Education Association established a special commission to address the challenges educators were facing. The thread of low salaries has been seen throughout the history of education. The commission indicated that low teacher salaries were not attracting the people who could work



with students in the American schools. As the National Education Association established a commission to understand the issues education was facing, other bodies were also seeking answers the field of education was facing at this time.

In the late 20th century student learning in all levels of education had been believed to be decreasing at an alarming rate. It was also believed that American education was lagging behind other countries in math and science content areas. In 1981, President Reagan commissioned the Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell, to look into the problems that were occurring in the field of education. The comprehensive report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*, was the result. The report from the Secretary of Education indicated five main concerns, which if addressed, would change the state of education (National Center for Education Evaluation [NCEE], 1983). The following are the five recommendations from Bell (StateUniversity.Com, n.d.).

1. Four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies for all high school students.
2. More rigorous and measurable standards must be adopted.
3. The school year should be extended.
4. Teaching needed to be improved with enhanced teacher preparation and professionalism.
5. Accountability should be added to education.

*A Nation at Risk* was a significant set of reports that again attempted to address the crisis which was occurring at the time (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983). This study reported that about 13% of all 17-year-olds in the United States were

considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy rates among minority youth ran as high as 40% . Between 1975 and 1980, remedial mathematics courses in public four-year colleges increased by 72% and constituted one-quarter of all mathematics courses taught in those institutions. Over half the population of gifted students did not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school. Many 17-year-olds did not possess the “higher order” intellectual skills needed for entrance into the workforce. The findings of the report led to the need for further investigation as well as a plan of action to help make the necessary changes. Also noted was the lack of teachers who were highly qualified and had the ability to lead students to greater levels of achievement.

It was at this time that American Education was facing a perception issue that the work commissioned by President Reagan was attempting to address. Americans were believed to be behind significantly compared to other countries in the areas of math and science. In opposition to the work of the commission, David Berliner and Bruce Biddle’s work, *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995), demonstrated much of the panic in education was based on false claims and unsubstantiated claims on American education. They addressed the educational myths of low student achievement and a lack of achievement compared to counterparts in other nations. Even in the face of this work, the attention was still on a shortage of qualified teachers. The American teaching workforce remained lacking qualified teachers. Finding qualified teachers is still an issue in contemporary education.

## **External Influences on Teacher Satisfaction**

The historical and societal influences have consistently impacted the state of the teaching workforce. These influences have and will always have an impact on the teachers in the school. In addition to historical and societal influences, additional external factors, which directly impact teachers, also have a significant influence on the teaching workforce. External factors such as the political canvass, educational funding, the district the teacher works within, as well as the administration or leadership of the school also play large roles in the satisfaction levels of teachers.

Thomas McItyre (1982) surveyed 469 special education teachers to understand where their high rates of burnout originated. Within the framework of locus of control, the determination of where experiences are perceived to occur, McIntyre found teachers who perceived events through an external orientation, as opposed to internal, that is, they are able to control events, are more likely to experience burnout. No statistically significant correlations were found between burnout with teaching positions with grade level taught, type of child taught, level of education, student load, size of district, and marital status. External factors are influential towards the experiences teachers have in the classroom.

Because external events are so powerful in the perceptions of teachers in their work, the factors that are within control of people around the school are vital to maintaining or increasing the satisfaction levels of teachers. Anderman, Smith, and Belzer (1991) evaluated the relationship between teachers' perception of school leadership, school culture, and teachers' satisfaction and commitment. The

researchers were looking for different principal behaviors that foster different cultures or “environments” within the school. They were also looking for leadership behaviors that increased teachers’ satisfaction and commitment. Anderman et al. found a relationship between how teachers perceived their school culture and their perceived satisfaction and commitment. Recognition was the strongest predictor of satisfaction. When the environment in the school is one that stresses integrity and growth, teachers are more likely to be satisfied.

Ronit Bogler (2001) conducted a study to examine the influence of two different types of leadership styles and their influence on teacher job satisfaction. In addition, Bogler also looked at the decision-making process of principals and its effect on teacher job satisfaction and personal beliefs about their occupation. Bogler examined two leadership styles and their influence on teacher satisfaction. The first was transformational leadership, which is characterized by support of teachers, as well as creativity and initiative in their job duties. Leaders who are said to be transformational are said to be charismatic, take personal consideration in understanding their followers, and have the intellectual ability to stimulate followers. The other form of leadership, transactional leadership, is characterized by stability and situational management of organizational issues. Each style of leadership dictates a certain climate and response from teachers. Bogler sought to examine if a specific style would lead to greater levels of job satisfaction for a teacher. Bogler also looked to determine if the method a principal utilized in situations where decisions had to be made yielded a difference on the levels of

satisfaction for teachers. Finally, Bogler looked at teachers' personal beliefs about their career as a determinant of their level of satisfaction.

After surveying 745 teachers, Bogler (2001) reported that the more teachers perceived their occupation as a profession, the more they perceived their principals to be transformational leaders. The more the principal was participatory, and the less they exhibited transactional leadership, the greater the job satisfaction. A teacher's job satisfaction increased when they perceived their principal's leadership to be transformational as opposed to transactional. Most importantly, Bogler referred to the high rates of satisfied teachers who hold a high value on teaching as a profession. Teachers' occupation perceptions strongly affected their level of job satisfaction. This finding indicates that there are variables that increase a teacher's job satisfaction to a greater degree; and there are those variables, to some degree, that cannot be controlled that influence a teacher's level of job satisfaction.

### **Intrinsic Factors on Teacher Satisfaction**

Although a multitude of studies starting with the report from the NEA has indicated salary as the prime factor that would increase the satisfaction levels of teachers in the field of education, additional research has indicated salary as being one component of an overall effort to transition the field of teaching to a higher level of prestige and satisfaction levels. Taking into consideration the intrinsic and extrinsic variables associated with teacher job satisfaction, Kim and Loadman (1994) investigated the factors of job satisfaction, but as predictors rather than characteristics. Looking at the National Database for Pre-service Teachers survey

data from the base year 1988 and followups from 1988 through 1992, researchers have indicated several predictors that were related to teacher job satisfaction.

Whether intrinsic or extrinsic, the following predictors were found significant for the researchers: salary, opportunities for career advancement, professional development, professional challenge, professional autonomy, interactions with colleagues, and interactions with students. These findings were meant to be used to enhance the knowledge base and insight to keep teachers satisfied in their careers and to stay in the field of education.

The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) conducted a report to assess the working condition of teachers and further the knowledge base from the work of Choy et al. (1993) who investigated the factors related to teacher dissatisfaction and teacher turnover. Using the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), the researchers gathered information they hoped to use for the creation of policy in the school setting, consequently increasing the level of satisfaction teachers experienced in U.S. schools. Factors examined included school and workplace characteristics, the teacher's background, salary, and other benefits.

The researchers approached the topic in two directions: to find the characteristics that influence levels of teacher satisfaction and, secondly, distinguish the descriptors of teachers with low, medium, or high levels of satisfaction in their job. The team grouped the variables into one of four clusters; school characteristics, teacher background, workplace conditions, and teacher compensation. Results indicated several factors that had a direct influence on

teacher satisfaction. More administrative support and leadership, good student behavior, a positive school atmosphere, and teacher autonomy were all associated with higher levels of teacher satisfaction. The report also indicated salary was slightly related to teacher satisfaction. Background variables, although related to teacher satisfaction, were not nearly as significant as the workplace conditions such as administrative support, parental involvement, and teacher control over classroom procedures.

When the team investigated the descriptors of teachers' current levels of satisfaction, they divided the sample into one of three categories (low, medium, or high satisfaction). They found that 34% of teachers interviewed indicated they were not sure if they would return to teaching if they had the chance. Thirty-two percent indicated they would certainly become a teacher again if they had to do it all over again, and the remaining 35% surveyed indicated they were moderately satisfied with their career choice.

Research has indicated that to understand the state of the teaching workforce the teachers have to be asked their opinions. In a later administration of the 2007/08 Schools and Staffing Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), in which 9,800 public schools, 180 Bureau of Indian Education funded schools, 2,940 private schools, and 5,250 public school districts, researchers were able to establish a current state of the educational workforce and their perceptions of their work.

Klecker and Loadman (1997) conducted research from findings of previous work in which years of experience was found to be a factor influencing

teacher satisfaction. Research was conducted to find the influence of years of teaching experience across seven factors of job satisfaction including salary and fringe benefits, opportunities for professional development, level of personal/professional development, level of professional autonomy/decision-making authority, general work conditions, interactions with colleagues, and interactions with students. The years of teaching ranged from zero years of experience to 26 years and were divided into six categories: 5 or fewer, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, 16 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years, and 26 years or more.

To answer their research question, Klecker and Loadman (1997) used the National Follow-up Survey of Teacher Education Graduates Job Satisfaction Subscale. The authors surveyed 4,076 teachers, attempting to provide insight into the variables that are most influential to classroom satisfaction by the number of years a teacher had been in the classroom. Results indicated that teacher satisfaction was rated highest for their interactions with their students and working conditions were rated as the lowest category of job satisfaction. When looking at the years of experience, they found no statistical difference on teachers rating job satisfaction in relation to salary and fringe benefits, working conditions, or interactions with their students. There were no differences found in teacher satisfaction after the first five years of teaching.

Sylvia Robinson (1998) conducted a review of the historical literature of clinical supervision and teacher job satisfaction to address some of the issues that lead teachers to leave the field or stay and be dissatisfied with their students. She compared the interactions of the role and effect of clinical supervision and its



influence on teacher job satisfaction through four clinical models as well as the research on teacher job satisfaction. Robinson's goal was to evaluate models improving teaching practices and indirectly improving teachers' job satisfaction, resulting in greater instructional practices and more effective student learning.

What is the relationship between supervisor and teacher job satisfaction and what benefits can be obtained? Robinson (1998) extrapolated several findings: "Administrators who are responsible for supervising teachers have the ability to enhance job satisfaction in the intrinsic reward areas of professional challenge, professional autonomy, and interaction with colleagues through their actions during clinical supervisory practices" (p. 9). Feedback, rewards, and support can also be provided by administrators as a part of clinical supervision. The author found a link between clinical supervision and teacher empowerment that would positively influence teachers' job satisfaction.

Craig Mertler (2001) also studied teacher satisfaction. From a sample of 996 elementary, middle, and high school teachers, Mertler examined teachers' current level of satisfaction in their career as well as assessed their level of motivation for their work. The results of his work led to several pieces of information concerning the levels of the teachers who were surveyed. Seventy-seven teachers indicated they were satisfied with their jobs as teachers. No significant differences were found in satisfaction between males and females, nor by the ethnicity of the teachers. In addition, no significance was found in the areas of school levels or different school settings. Potentially the most significant results of the survey were the relation of teacher satisfaction to the age of the

participants. Teachers ranging from 26 to 30 years of age as well as 56 years of age and older reported the highest levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Teachers who fell into the 31 to 35 age category reported the lowest satisfaction.

Researchers reported teachers in their 20s and 30s indicated a desire to enter the teaching profession again if given the opportunity.

Determining that teachers in the early part of their careers, as well as the later portion of their careers, were more satisfied than the “middle aged” teachers, the researchers looked to the consequences of the dissatisfied teachers. Twenty-three percent of the teachers reported they were dissatisfied with their careers. And although this indicates that 77% of teachers are satisfied, they pointed to the number of students the dissatisfied teachers interacted with on a daily basis.

With a different tool for analysis than his previous research, Craig Mertler (2002) evaluated the levels of teacher satisfaction among middle and high school teachers. Using the Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey, Mertler surveyed 710 middle and high school teachers. Survey questions included teachers’ overall level of job satisfaction, the extent to which teachers were motivated, and the effects of various school and non-school based factors and performance incentives. Slightly more than 75% of the teachers reported being satisfied with their career. Gender, not ethnicity, was shown to be significantly related to job satisfaction. Males reported a higher level of satisfaction than females, and teachers earlier in their careers indicated a higher level of satisfaction than teachers who were in the middle of their careers. Teachers in the 26 to 30 year old category as well as teachers 36 to 40 years old reported being

more satisfied than teachers of other subgroups. Teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, 21 to 25 years of experience, and 31 to 35 years of experience reported more satisfaction than other subgroups. Teachers who had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience reported the lowest levels of satisfaction. The participants surveyed reported, in general, they were motivated in the schools.

Jan Richards (2003) also looked specifically at characteristics of satisfied teachers. Richards' research design included three varying levels of teachers classified by their years of experience in the classroom. From the results of her previous work, she felt she could make more of a contribution to the topic if she included teachers with various levels of experience in the classroom. The question Richards attempted to answer was to determine the most highly valued behaviors principals exhibit in their work with teachers on their campus.

Richards designated years of experience into three divisions: 1 to 5, 2 to 10, and 11-plus years of experience. Richards attempted to capture the voices of the teachers in their respected categories. Her questions included topics on the perception of teachers at different stages of their careers, change in their beliefs as they stayed in the field, and change throughout their career as the result of the impact of the principal. Throughout her interviews, Richards distinguished themes from the teachers: the power of caring, the power of respect, and the power of praise and acknowledgement.

The data also provided the themes that were the most significant to all categories of teachers. Ranked highest to lowest the teachers indicated that they valued the importance of (a) supportive teachers and parents in matters of student

discipline, (b) respect for teachers as professionals, and (c) an open-door policy. In addition, teachers also indicated they valued fair, honest, and trustworthy behavior on the part of their principals. The need for support with parents in matters of discipline increased with the number of years of experience.

Various factors within the schools affect different groups of teachers in different ways. “

As beginning teachers continue to leave the profession within the first several years of entering, educators must identify factors which cause teachers to remain in the profession, as well as factors related to attrition if the current teacher shortage is to be remedied. (Inman & Marlow, 2004, p. 1)

These researchers set out to determine the factors which contribute to teachers' high levels of attrition in the field. To determine these factors they categorized their sample of teachers into two groups. Group one consisted of new teachers who had been in the field no longer than three years. Group two consisted of teachers who had been in the field for four to nine years. Inman and Marlow reported beginning teachers leave within the first three years.

The purpose of the data was to provide the researchers with more information to deal with the high rates of young professionals leaving the field. The data indicated that salary was the only external factor for beginning teachers to stay in the profession. The teachers with four to nine years of experience indicated salary as the most significant factor in staying in the profession. Teachers perceived job security as the highest ranked employment factor. The

results of this study seem to draw a distinction between the different needs of teachers at various levels of their careers.

For her dissertation, Laila Marie Papin (2005) chose to examine the elements that promote teacher satisfaction in inner-city public school in Phoenix, Arizona. The goals of this study were to increase teacher satisfaction and decrease teacher turnover. Using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, there were 385 teachers in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, including specials areas, who were questioned about satisfaction with their careers. In addition to understanding the topic of teacher satisfaction, Papin also wanted to use the information to determine special areas of concern for the district the teachers were employed. There was no correlation between teacher satisfaction and gender or grade level. A negative correlation was found between teacher satisfaction and age, salary, and teaching experience. Satisfaction was apparent with intrinsic aspects of their jobs. Teachers were dissatisfied with extrinsic issues although salary did not correlate with teacher satisfaction. Gender nor grade level of the teacher did not influence teacher satisfaction. Teachers earning a higher salary were not more satisfied than those earning less. Those with more experience were less satisfied than those with less experience.

Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005) also looked at the factors affecting teacher satisfaction, but focused her attention on beginning teachers. Beginning teachers were more likely to suffer from dissatisfaction with teaching than experienced teachers. The authors investigated a low-income school in California to better understand the differences between high-income schools and

those characteristics of low-income schools. Using the California survey data, the authors used a multiple regression and a *t*-test to analyze the school characteristics. In total, the most significant piece of data found by the authors was that school conditions were the greatest predictor of teacher turnover. In addition, 22% of the teachers surveyed indicated they believed there was a serious issue with teacher turnover. Teachers who taught in schools with higher populations of African American and Latino students, as well as schools with greater populations of ELL students, reported more difficulty filling vacant teaching positions.

Perrachione, Rosser, and Peterson (2008) conducted a study to understand the internal and external needs of teachers. The results from their study suggested that three intrinsic factors (personal teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction) were perceived to significantly influence satisfaction and retention, while two extrinsic motivators (low salary and role overload) did not have any effect. Researchers from this study also indicated that teachers' level of satisfaction was tied to the profession of education as opposed to work-related duties.

Teacher satisfaction is a subjective concept. To address the subjectivity researchers have developed instrumentation to better understand this complex topic. Clarke and Keating (1995) created a 10-question survey to study the factors influencing individuals as well as perceptions of their work setting. Their results of the study indicated that for a sample of 114 teachers pay was not an indicator of teacher satisfaction, but did find that teacher-student interaction was the

greatest indicator of teacher satisfaction. The data indicated that administrative support was also a key indicator of teacher satisfaction in their work.

Because teachers are among many who experience high rates of burnout, the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools (1998) sponsored a study to investigate the state of mental health of classroom teachers. Many teachers were experiencing burnout from their work resulting in greater numbers of teachers leaving the field. In UCLA's attempts to find more effective methods for teachers to deal with their stress, they suggested more effective ways to deal with teacher burnout, which would improve student achievement in the classroom, as well as enhancing teachers' ability to stay in the field longer. "If schools bring a mental health perspective they will be more able to deal with issues of burnout, which may lead to frustration, later leading to issues with moral and mental health" (p. 43). The authors wrote that there were ways to minimize burnout such as reducing environmental stressors, increasing personal capabilities, and enhancing job supports to achieve a better state of teachers' mental health. The researchers concluded that, although there are many successful strategies to help teachers become more conscious of their mental health, there is no one better coping skill or method to deal with their stress than another.

In their work, *Modeling Teachers Satisfaction: Findings from 892 Teaching Staff at 71 Schools*, Dinham and Scott (1997) expanded on previous research conducted in the area of teacher satisfaction and found similar results as many previous researchers. The purpose of this study was to develop an

instrument suitable for identifying and quantifying the sources and factors contributing to teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Intrinsic factors such as student achievement, positive relationships with students, self-growth, and mastery of professional skills were factors that influenced the level of teacher satisfaction positively. Extrinsic factors such as rapid pace and nature of educational change, increased expectations, and lack of support for implementation of change policies were found to be negative influences on the teachers' level of satisfaction. The researchers felt they were able to expand on the previous body of knowledge by identifying what they called a third "band" of factors. The researchers indicated that these factors were neither intrinsic nor extrinsic sources of satisfaction, but were school-based factors. The factors included school leadership, climate, decision-making, school reputation, and school infrastructure. These factors were said to be factors that had the most potential for change.

The researchers (Dinham & Scott, 1997) surveyed exiting teachers to find what were the influences that pushed them to resign. Respondents indicated that it was the increase in the strength of their dissatisfiers that had "tipped the balance" and precipitated the "resignation decision" (p. 2). More specifically, the researchers found that relative dissatisfaction of teachers increased over time due to social and educational change. Fifty percent of the respondents rated themselves as satisfied, including 4% who rated themselves as highly satisfied. Forty-two percent of the respondents rated themselves as dissatisfied, including 7% who rated themselves as highly dissatisfied. Major dissatisfiers were those



seen to detract from the facilitation of student achievement and teacher effectiveness. The status of teachers and increased administrative workloads were indicated as the most dissatisfying factor.

Farber (1982) conducted a study to identify factors leading to teacher burnout in suburban New York and New Jersey. Utilizing the Teacher Attitudes Survey, Farber found that the major factor influencing teacher satisfaction were experiences with students. Teachers felt sensitive to and involved with their students as well as competent at their job. Minor factors influencing teacher satisfaction were collegial relationships, families, and friends. Data suggested that student discipline problems were not the prime concern of suburban teachers in New York and New Jersey. Eighty-six percent of the teachers reported a lack of administrative support in the schools in which they worked, excessive paperwork, unsuccessful meetings, and a lack of advancement opportunities. There were few subgroup differences with regard to satisfaction (sex, marital status, number of years teaching, and number of years at present school). Subgroups that were significant were age, grade level taught, and school-wide student population with age being the most significant factor.

Ingersoll and Alsalam (1997) conducted a review using 1990-1991 data from the Schools and Staffing Survey to address concerns of inadequacies present in the educational system. Researchers set out to determine the relationship between characteristics of professionalism and its relationship to levels of teacher commitment. The authors looked at the profession of teaching through the sociological context of professionalization to answer various questions of the

impact of training, professionalization, and working conditions, including what characteristics would influence the level and success of teachers in the educational system. The researchers attempted to use this approach in the hope to find characteristics/professional traits that, if increased, would result in improvements in the motivation and commitment of teachers, which, in turn would lead to improvements in teachers' performance. The increase in motivation and commitment would ultimately lead to improvements in student learning.

The researchers reported several findings from their work. Males were found to be less committed than females, teachers with graduate degrees reported less commitment than teachers without, and teachers with more teaching experience indicated less commitment than those with less. Distinct differences were found in teacher commitment from teacher-to-teacher and school-to-school variables. No effect was found on continuing education and staff participation in seminars sponsored by professional organizations. Teacher autonomy, faculty policy making, assistance for teachers, and end-of-career salaries had a relationship to teacher commitment. Some aspects of professionalization were related to teacher commitment and some were not. Research also indicated schools with higher levels of the characteristics of professionalization had higher levels of teacher commitment. Finally, the research indicated that only if teaching staffs reported that new teachers were effectively assisted in matters of discipline, instruction, and adjustment to the school environment, their commitment appeared to improve.

### **Future Possibilities Based on Research**

Edey and Huston (2004) conducted a study to analyze the high rates of attrition and retention problems in the San Diego schools. Their belief was that teacher satisfaction was a direct cause of the high rates of teachers leaving their schools and the field of teaching. While conducting their research, with the help of 272 teachers, they found that years of experience in the classroom made a difference on the level of satisfaction for teachers. The researchers also indicated new teachers were more likely to leave within the first three years of their teaching. Satisfaction levels result in teachers staying in the schools and staying in their field.

Although the topic of the research by Ingersoll and Smith (2003) was teacher retention and attrition, they pointed to the significance of teacher satisfaction as a key component to decreasing the attrition and retention levels of teachers in the classroom. The study initially examined the current state of teacher needs, teacher shortages, but also addressed the commitment level of teachers to stay in the field of education. They also implemented programs such as alternative certification programs, financial incentives, loan forgiveness, and housing assistance.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) also surveyed teachers who left after their first year of teaching to determine the reasons for their exodus. Their results indicated there were many different reasons why teachers leave the field, but they found four significant major areas. The factors which Ingersoll and Smith were able to single out were administrative support, poor discipline for students, poor student

motivation, and a lack of participation in school decision-making. These findings were not out of the ordinary in the context to other studies, but they did add to the support of the main reasons why teachers leave.

Arends and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) sought to determine the best practices for state and local policy development and the development and implementation of teacher induction programs to increase the retention rates of beginning teachers. In addition, the researchers attempted to summarize the current trends concerning the future of teacher induction. Suggestions by the researchers indicated several individual possibilities for schools to increase the level of retention of their teachers and what schools need to do to obtain the results. The larger purpose of this study was set to find ways to increase the level of satisfaction for teachers, resulting in greater retention rates for the teachers in the specific districts.

To help teachers start off their careers on the right foot, programs have been implemented to help teachers deal with the stress and the unknowns of teaching. Dana Selzer (2000) conducted a study of 553 teachers who were in their first year of teaching. The author wrote of the limitations of the typical plans and programs which are meant to help new teachers acclimate into their new career as traditional programs do not take into consideration individual needs as beginners who were less likely to be involved in activities that supported their professional development. By looking into the experiences of the new teachers, the author was able to demonstrate that there are specific behaviors that increase the level of satisfaction beginning teachers experience in their first years as well as to

demonstrate what increases the satisfaction they experience. Although the teachers did have issues with the lack of individual attention given to them by their administration, there was still a high level of teacher satisfaction among the beginning teachers. When surveyed, the teachers indicated that they considered assistance from fellow educators and protection from difficult teaching situations as the most helpful support they could have to persevere through their first year of teaching. They considered lack of administrative support, lack of orientation to policies and procedures, and their working conditions as the most detrimental to their satisfaction. Selzer attempted to gain insight into the worlds of beginning teachers to help them become acclimated and to do more than endure their new career.

Bivona (2002) investigated the influences of teachers' attitudes toward their perceptions of teaching. Using a sample of 20 teachers, Bivona found teacher morale to be positive. More than half of the teachers planned to remain in teaching. Teachers with more than 10 years of experience had much more positive attitudes towards teaching than did less experienced teachers.

The research on teacher satisfaction points to the need to understand the individuals and their needs while in the classroom and at the beginning as well as throughout their career. Many factors have been found to be influential factors affecting the satisfaction levels of teachers, some more influential than others. Research indicates teachers need to be asked and asked continually as to what will satisfy their needs as teachers to keep them in the classrooms with their students.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

This study examined the current level of satisfaction teachers hold towards their jobs, as well as the factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction. In addition, this study included the opinions of participants towards the administration of their school. To accomplish this task, the data were analyzed from two perspectives: a collective sample of all teachers who participated in this study, as well as disaggregated by subgroups based on the characteristics the individual teachers indicated through their participation.

This work sought to determine if specific factors that previous research has indicated as more influential than others would increase a teacher's level of satisfaction more than others. Data are also presented concerning the participants' beliefs towards their administration.

#### **Restatement of the Problem**

Past research has shown there are differing needs of teachers. Past research has also indicated salary as a prime factor to increase teachers' level of satisfaction towards their work. Although salary may be influential, research has shown there are a multitude of other factors that are also influential. Many of the factors impacting teachers' level of satisfaction come from external factors such as historical and societal influences, as well as federal and political sources. Although many of the factors that impact teacher satisfaction there are many factors that can be controlled at the local level. This study sought to find the factors most influential to the participants in this study.

## **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What is the current level of satisfaction of participants in this study?

Research Question 2: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing levels of satisfaction than members of other subgroups?

Research Question 3: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching?

Research Question 4: How do teachers in this study view their administration?

Research Question 5: Do satisfied teachers indicate the same needs as dissatisfied teachers?

## **Research Design**

### **Research Methodology**

The data for this study were obtained through the administration of a combination of self-created survey questions and questions from the Schools and Staffing Survey (NCES, 2010), a federally recognized survey given by the federal government to address the current state of teachers in the United States (see Appendix A). The Schools and Staffing Survey was originally created by the National Center for Education Statistics in the early 1980s and revised in 1985 to

bring additional focus to elementary and secondary school systems. Topics addressed on the Schools and Staffing Survey, as well as in this study, were as follows:

1. Teacher demand and shortage
2. Administrator characteristics
3. School programs
4. General school conditions
5. Principal and teacher perceptions of school climate and problems in their schools
6. Teacher compensation

The schools and staffing surveys comprise of four core components: the School Questionnaire, the Teacher Questionnaire, the Principal Questionnaire, and the School District Questionnaire. Survey questions from The Teacher Questionnaire, in addition to self-created survey questions (part of Appendix A), which were used for this study. Data collected from participants were evaluated as a whole, meaning data indicated by all participants, as well as separated by the subgroup the teachers indicated on the survey.

Based on questions from the Schools and Staffing survey, teachers were asked to answer questions of their general level of satisfaction as well as to provide personal demographic data and factors that would directly influence their personal level of satisfaction towards being a teacher. Surveys were distributed to teachers via Survey Monkey, an internet-based data collection website. Data



obtained from this survey were analyzed through the statistics package SPSS to answer specified research questions.

### **Sample**

Appendix B displays the email sent to prospective participants on June 8, 2008. Those who participated accessed the website via Survey Monkey and marked their responses. The respondents consisted of 41 teachers in the southwest region of the United States participated in this study in the 2007/08 school year. All teachers in this study worked in two urban school districts which shared similar demographic information, including student ethnicity, gender, ELL population, and race. In addition, the schools in this study were of similar socioeconomic status and close in proximity to one another. Both school districts were structured as kindergarten through eighth grade schools, not unified with the high schools in the area. Both districts were comprised of greater than 85% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch from the federal government.

Out of the 41 teachers who participated in this study, 10% taught kindergarten. Fifteen percent of the sample taught first through third grade, 13% of the sample were fourth grade teachers, 18% of the teachers were fifth grade teachers, 13% of the population was comprised of sixth grade teachers, 5% of the sample were seventh grade teachers, and 26% of the teachers were eighth grade teachers (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Percentage of Teachers by Grades*

Grade	Proportion of Teachers (N = 41)
Kindergarten	10%
First through third grade	15%
Fourth grade	13%
Fifth grade	18%
Sixth grade	13%
Seventh grade	5%
Eighth grade	26%

Twenty-seven percent of the teachers in this study entered through an alternative certification path whereas 73% of the teachers surveyed entered into education through a traditional path. Of the participants surveyed, 28% of the teachers were male and 72% of the teachers were female. Ninety-five percent of the teachers were Caucasian, which included 5% of the teachers being Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Five percent were Hispanic.

The number of years the participants had been in the classroom ranged from one year to 25 years. Sixty percent of the teachers were in their first five years of teaching. Eighteen percent of the teachers in this study had been in the classroom from 6 to 10 years, 13% of the teachers had been teaching for 11 to 15 years, 5% had been in the classroom for 16 to 20 years, and 5% of the teachers had been in the classroom for 21 to 25 years.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to distinguish the factors influencing teachers' level of satisfaction towards their job. The survey used in this study consisted of questions from the Schools and Staffing survey and researcher created questions based on the core topics of the Schools and Staffing Survey. Surveys were distributed through an online data collection program and then analyzed through the SPSS data package. The responses of 41 teachers were analyzed and then further disaggregated through subgroups that participants indicated through demographic data. The results are reported in chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND RESEARCH

This chapter presents the results obtained through this study on the factors affecting teachers' level of satisfaction towards their work. Sections are organized by research questions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data derived from this study. Based on data collected from the participants, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the current level of satisfaction of participants in this study?

Research Question 2: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing levels of satisfaction than members of other subgroups?

Research Question 3: Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching?

Research Question 4: How do teachers in this study view their administration?

Research Question 5: Do satisfied teachers indicate the same needs as dissatisfied teachers?

The survey results of this study were analyzed as whole group responses as well as by subgroup responses. Subgroup data were then compared to the whole group data for any differences. The focus of the research was to determine (a) the needs of the respondents that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching position, (b) the differences in the ways satisfied teachers responded about their beliefs towards their administration as compared to teachers who were dissatisfied, and (c) finally the future expectations they have towards staying in the field of teaching. In addition, to determine possible methods to increase the satisfaction levels of the teachers within the schools, this research attempted to gather information concerning the role the administration plays in the school.

## **Findings**

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked, “*What is the current state of satisfaction of participants in this study?*” Two questions in the survey sought to find the current state of satisfaction of participants at the time of this study. The first question, “As a whole, are you satisfied as a teacher?” was asked of participants to give an overall answer as to whether they were satisfied as teachers. Seventy-eight percent of the teachers in this study were satisfied as teachers, with a mean score of 1.78 and a standard deviation of .423.

Participants were asked to respond to the second satisfaction question, “I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school,” from choices that

reflected an ordinal direction. Participants had the choice of answering with *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The histogram in Figure 1 reflects the data relating to the responses of teachers for this particular study. With a mean score of 3.03 and a standard deviation of one, 78% of the teachers indicated they *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* with the question.

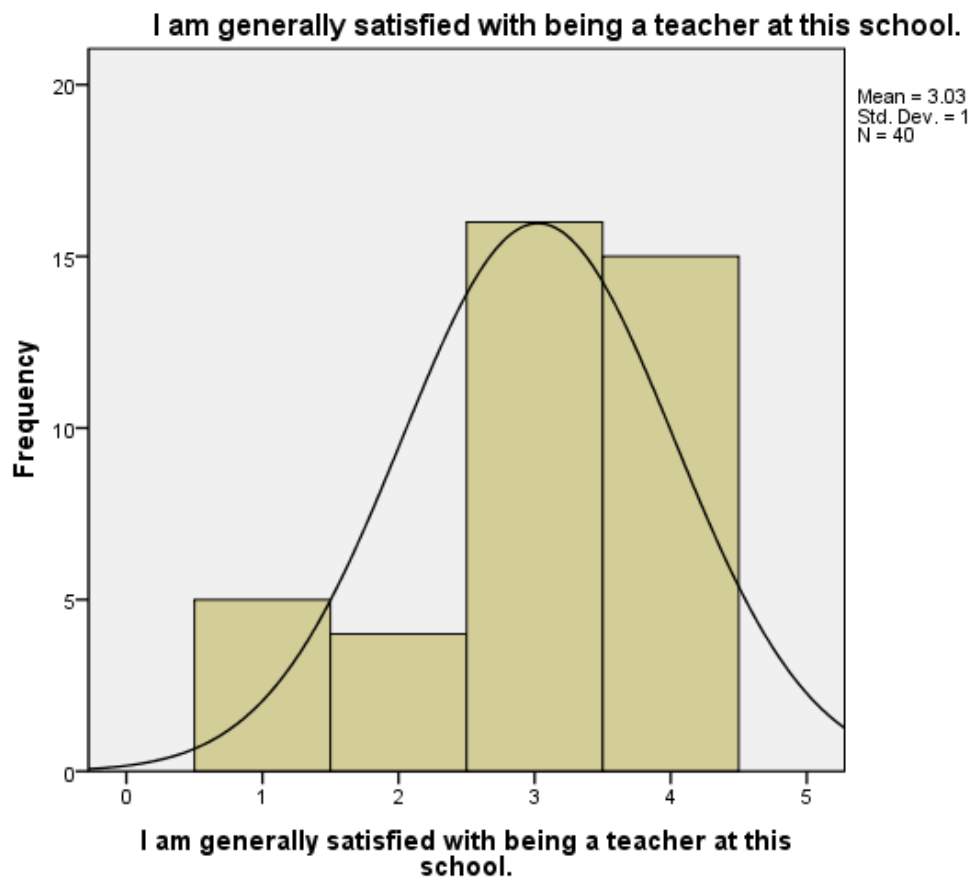


Figure 1. Satisfaction with being a teacher

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked, “*Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing levels of satisfaction than members of other subgroups? When data were viewed by subgroups, the results were as follows (see Table 2).*”

Table 2

*Percentage of Teachers Satisfied by Subgroups*

Years of Experience		Gender		Path to Cert		Grade Level		State teacher was born	
1-5	83%	Male	16%	Traditional	79%	k-4	90%	from state	100%
6-10	71%	Female	84%	Alternative	73%	5-6	23%	not from state	70%
11-15	60%					7-8	17%		
16-20	100%								
21-25	50%								

*Note.* whole group = 78%



**Number of years in the classroom.** Satisfaction levels were viewed according to the number of years the teachers had been in the classroom. Compared to 78% of all the teachers across the grade levels, participants who had been in the classroom between 1 and 5 years indicated different results. Eighty-three percent of the teachers in the first through fifth grade indicated they were satisfied as teachers. Teachers who had taught between 6 and 10 years indicated a level of satisfaction of 71%. Teachers with 11 to 15 years of experience stated a level of satisfaction of 60%, and teachers with 16 to 20 years of experience indicated a level of satisfaction of 100%. Fifty percent of the teachers who had been in the classroom for 21 to 25 years indicated a level of satisfaction towards their work.

**Gender.** Data were also analyzed by gender. Data indicated that 90% of the females were satisfied, whereas 45% of the male teachers reported being satisfied with their field. When these numbers are compared to 78% percent of the teachers who were satisfied when viewed as a whole group, these data revealed important differences by gender, females being far more satisfied than males.

**Grade level.** Data showed that 93% of the teachers who taught kindergarten through fourth grade were satisfied, whereas fifth and sixth grade teachers' results indicated 23% of the teachers were satisfied. Of the seventh and eighth grade teachers, only 17% of the teachers indicated they were satisfied. The satisfaction levels when viewed by grade level taught were markedly different than the results of the whole group. Data demonstrated a significant drop in satisfaction in higher grades as compared to lower grades.

**Path to teaching.** Minimal differences were found between teachers based on the path they took to get into the field of education. Teachers who entered the field through an alternative track indicated a level of 73% satisfaction. Traditionally certified teachers indicated a 79% level of satisfaction towards their field.

**Teachers' birth state.** One hundred percent of teachers from the state of Arizona were satisfied with their teaching positions, whereas 70% of teachers from states other than Arizona were satisfied with their jobs.

### **Research Question 3**

The third research question asked, *“Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching?”* The third research question was designed to find specifically what teachers themselves indicated as variables directly increasing their current level of satisfaction. The most influential factors that increased teachers' level of satisfaction are outlined in Table 3.

Whole group data indicated that 36% of the participants in this study believed a 10% increase in salary would be the most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction. Although 33% of the whole group responded that salary would increase their level of satisfaction the most, 25% of the sample indicated that class size would increase their level of satisfaction. Close behind salary and class size, 23% of the respondents indicated a supportive administration would

Table 3

*Variables That Would Increase Participants' Level of Satisfaction*

Years of Experience		Gender		Path to certification		Grade level		State teacher was born	
1-5	adminis- trative support	Male	supportive admin- istration and salary equally	Traditional	10% increase in salary	k-4	reduction in class size	from state	10% increase in salary
6-10	discipline	Female	10% increase in salary	Alternative	adminis- trative support	5-6	10% increase in salary	not from state	adminis- trative support
11-15	10% increase in salary					7-8	10% increase in salary		
16-20	class size and salary								
21-25	class size and administrative support equally								

*Note.* whole group = 10% increase in salary

increase their level of satisfaction. Student discipline was reported by 18% of participants as the variable that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Higher quality of professional development was indicated by 3% of the group, whereas school conditions and resources were variables no one in the group indicated as increasing their level of satisfaction.

**Number of years in the classroom.** When data were broken down by various subgroups, differences in responses were found when compared to the whole group. Although the whole-group indicated salary and class size as their top two variables that would increase their level of satisfaction, when data were broken down by the number of years in the classroom, there was a variety of factors teachers indicated as the most influential to increase their levels of satisfaction (see Table 4). Teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience indicated administrative support as their number one factor to increase their level of satisfaction. Teachers who had been in the classroom for 6 to 10 years indicated discipline issues as their most influential, salary as their second most influential, and class size equally as their third factor that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Participants who had been in the classroom for 11 to 15 years indicated salary as the most influential, discipline issues as their second most influential, and class size as their third most influential factor. Teachers who had been in the classroom for 16 to 20 years indicated class size and salary as the only factors that would increase their level of satisfaction. Teachers who had been in the classroom for 21 to 25 years indicated class size and administrative support as the only factors that would increase their level of satisfaction (see Table 4).

Table 4

*First-Choice Factors That Would Increase Satisfaction Levels the Most According to the Number of Years in the Classroom*

Years of experience	First Choice
1-5	administrative support
6-10	discipline issues
11-15	Salary
16-20	class size and salary equally
21-25	class size and administrative support equally

**Gender.** Males reported that a supportive administration and salary were equally the most influential factors that would increase their level of satisfaction. Males indicated discipline and class size as their third and fourth choices that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Females reported differently than males. Females reported salary and class size as the most influential factors that would increase their level of satisfaction. Discipline and administrative support equally were the third and fourth most influential factors to increase their level of satisfaction.

**Grade level.** Kindergarten through fourth grade teachers responded differently than fifth and sixth grade teachers, and seventh and eighth grade teachers as well. Kindergarten through eighth grade teachers reported class size as

the factor that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Salary was reported as their second most influential factor, and administrative support as their third most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction. Fifth and sixth grade teachers reported salary as their most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction, and a reduction in class size as their second most influential factor. The third factor that fifth and sixth grade teachers reported as their most influential was a supportive administration. Seventh and eighth grade teachers indicated administrative support as their number one factor that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. The second factor that would increase their level of satisfaction was discipline. The third factor that seventh and eighth grade teachers indicated as influential on their level of satisfaction was a 10% increase in salary.

**Path to teaching.** When reviewing the subgroup of pathway to teacher certification, there were differences in the way teachers who entered the profession through a traditional track responded than teachers who were alternatively certified. Alternatively certified teachers indicated administrative support as the most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction, discipline as their second most influential factor, and class size as their third most influential factor. Traditionally certified teachers indicated similar, but different, results than teachers who were alternatively certified. Traditionally certified teachers indicated a 10% increase in salary as their most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction while class size was their second most influential factor, and discipline and administrative support equally were their

third most influential factors. When the question was broken down by the grade level the participants taught, there were also different results indicated.

**Teachers' birth state.** The subgroup "teaching in the state you're from" was also compared against the whole group data. Teachers who were teaching in the state they were from indicated salary as their number one factor that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. The second factor that teachers who were teaching in the state they were from indicated as the most influential was a reduction in class size, whereas they indicated student discipline as the third factor that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Teachers who were not from the state they were currently teaching in reported different results than their counterparts. Teachers not from the state they were currently teaching in reported administrative support as their most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction and salary as the second most influential factor. The third factor that teachers from another state than the one they were currently teaching in reported a reduction in class size as their third most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction.

There were differences in reporting from the participants in this study. When viewed as a whole group, salary, a reduction in class size, and a supportive administration were the most influential factors to increase their levels of satisfaction. When data reported by the participants were broken down into subgroups and analyzed, different results were found.

#### **Research Question 4**

Data were analyzed as a whole group as well as subgroups for the fourth research question, “How do teachers in this study view their administration?” Whole group data indicated that 75% of the participants did *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* that their administration was supportive and encouraging. When asked if their principal enforced school rules for student conduct and backed them up when they needed it, 70% of the participants responded to either *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* with the statement. When asked if the principal knew what kind of school he or she wanted and if they had communicated that view, 70% of the respondents indicated either *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* with the statement. When teachers were asked to respond to the statement, “In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done,” 55% of the teachers responded to either *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* with the statement. Results indicated differences in beliefs when data were disaggregated by subgroup.

**Number of years in the classroom.** When the data were analyzed per subgroup, “Years in the Classroom” strongly indicated that teachers who had been in the classroom the longest felt the least amount of support from their leadership compared to teachers new to the profession, as seen in Table 5.



Table 5

*Administrative Support and Number of Years Teaching*

	Whole Group	Years 1-5	Years 6-10	Years 11-15	Years 16-20	Years 21-25
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	75%	43%	15%	10%	5%	3%
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	70%	40%	15%	8%	5%	3%
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	72%	38%	15%	10%	5%	3%
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	55%	28%	13%	8%	5%	3%

**Gender.** When the data were analyzed between the whole group and the subgroup “gender,” there were differences in the responses as displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Administrative Support and Gender*

	Whole Group	Male	Female
The school administration’s behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	75%	82%	73%
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	70%	54%	76%
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	72%	45%	82%
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	55%	36%	62%

Depending on the specific leadership question, differences were found between gender, although females indicated they felt more support from their administration.

**Grade level.** Responses from participants when viewed by grade level indicated a decrease in positive attitudes towards their administration in higher grade levels as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Administrative Support and Grade Taught*

	Whole Group	K-4	5-6	7-8
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	75%	87%	67%	67%
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	70%	87%	75%	42%
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	72%	93%	75%	42%
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	55%	80%	50%	25%

**Path to teaching.** Data were also disaggregated by the subgroup “path to teaching certification.” Little differences were indicated in this particular subgroup as revealed in Table 8.

Table 8

*Administrative Support and Path to Certification*

	Whole Group	Alternative path to certification	Traditional path to certification
The school administration’s behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	75%	73%	76%
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	70%	55%	76%
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	72%	64%	76%
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	55%	45%	59%

**Teachers' birth state.** Data disaggregated by the subgroup "Are you from the state you are working in?" indicated less of a positive attitude towards their administration compared to teachers who were from a different state as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

*Administrative Support and Teacher's Birth State*

	Whole Group	Yes	No
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	75%	25%	50%
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	70%	28%	43%
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	72%	28%	44%
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	55%	23%	28%

**Satisfied teachers versus dissatisfied teachers.** Data were also disaggregated by the level of satisfaction indicated by the participants in this study. Seventy-eight percent of the teachers indicated they were satisfied as a whole in the field of education, 22% were not. When teachers were asked the question, "The school administration's behavior towards staff is supportive and encouraging," 81% of the satisfied teachers indicated either *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* that they were supported by the administration of the school. Fifty-

six percent of the dissatisfied teachers felt supported and encouraged by the administration of their school. When asked the question, “My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it,” 81% of the satisfied teachers felt school rules were enforced by their principal. When dissatisfied teachers were asked if they felt their principal enforced school rules, 33% indicated they felt school rules were enforced. Participants were also asked questions regarding school leadership as to the school mission and vision.

When teachers were asked the question, “The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to staff,” 77% of the satisfied teachers indicated they felt the communication from the principal was present. When dissatisfied teachers were asked, 50% of the dissatisfied teachers felt the message was present. When participants were asked the question, “In this school staff members are recognized for a job well done,” 61% of satisfied teachers indicated the principal had recognized teacher accomplishments. Thirty-three percent of the dissatisfied teachers indicated they were recognized for a job well done.

**Other analysis conducted.** Multiple linear regressions were conducted in this study to assess the impact of leadership on satisfaction levels.

Table 10

*Mean, Standard Deviation and Sample Sizes*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.	3.08	.957	39
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	2.95	1.025	39
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	3.05	1.025	39

Table 10 shows descriptive data for this multiple regression analysis. The regression equation was significantly related to the injury index,  $R^2 = 0.629$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.608$ ,  $F(2, 36) = 30.530$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.793, indicating that approximately 63% of the variance in teacher satisfaction in the sample could be accounted for by the linear combination of the two administrator factors. In other words, the two independent variables, "The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff" and "The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging" account for 63% of the variance in teacher satisfaction as defined by the dependent variable "I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school." This suggests that teachers' perceptions of administrator behavior and communication strongly influence teachers' level of general satisfaction with being a teacher at their current school.

### **Research Question 5**

The data were used to answer the fifth research question, “*Do satisfied teachers indicate the same needs as dissatisfied teachers?*” Satisfied teachers indicated a reduction in class size would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Satisfied teachers indicated salary and administrative support as the second and third variable that would increase their level of satisfaction after a reduction in class size. When dissatisfied teachers were asked what would increase their level of satisfaction the most, they responded an impact on student discipline and administrative support would be equally their first choice to increase their level of satisfaction the most. Dissatisfied teachers indicated salary as their third choice. Although both satisfied teachers and dissatisfied teachers indicated different first, second, and third choices, both groups had the same variables in their top three choices. As a whole group, participants indicated salary as the most influential on their level of satisfaction, a reduction in class size as the second most influential variable, and administrative support as their third most influential factor. This also does fit with the responses of the participants when viewed as a whole group. Although there are similarities in the top choices of participants when viewed as a whole group and satisfaction levels, differences can be found when actual percentages of the choices are viewed. See Table 11 for more descriptive factors that would increase teachers satisfaction levels the most.



Table 11

*Factors That Influence Satisfaction Levels and Satisfaction Level of Teachers*

	Whole Group	Satisfied Teachers	Dissatisfied Teachers
Student discipline	18%	13%	33%
Reduction in class size	25%	29%	11%
Supportive administration	23%	19%	33%
A 10% salary increase	33%	28%	22%
School conditions/resources	0%	0%	0%
Higher quality in professional development	3%	3%	0%

Data were analyzed to determine the projected length of time teachers would stay in their classroom or in the field of education. Fifty-two percent of satisfied teachers indicated they would stay in the field as long as they were able to, whereas zero percent of the dissatisfied teachers indicated they would stay as long as they could. Sixteen percent of the satisfied teachers indicated they planned on staying in the field until they were eligible for benefits from the job. Eleven percent of the dissatisfied teachers responded they would stay in the field until they were eligible for benefits. Six percent of the teachers indicated they would stay until a more desirable job came along, whereas 22% of the dissatisfied teachers indicated they would stay in the field until a more desirable job came along. Nineteen percent of the satisfied teachers indicated they were undecided as to whether they would remain in teaching, whereas 33% of the dissatisfied

teachers indicated they were undecided at the time of the study. Overall, 23% of the participants were undecided as to whether they would remain in the field of teaching. None of the satisfied teachers planned on definitely leaving the field, whereas 22% of the dissatisfied teachers definitely planned on leaving the field.

Fifty-two percent of the satisfied teachers indicated they would stay as long as possible. Sixteen percent of the satisfied teachers indicated they would stay as long as it would take to receive retirement benefits. Nineteen percent of the teachers indicated they were undecided as to whether they would stay in the classroom or field of education. None of the satisfied teachers definitively planned on leaving education. Dissatisfied teachers indicated different results when surveyed.

None of the dissatisfied teachers planned on remaining in the field of education, although 11% of the dissatisfied teachers planned on remaining in the field until they could receive retirement or social security benefits. Twenty-two percent of the dissatisfied teachers would leave if a more desirable job came along. Twenty-two percent of the dissatisfied teachers definitively planned on leaving the classroom. Thirty-three percent of the dissatisfied teachers were undecided as to whether they would stay in the classroom or in the field of education.

### **Summary**

Tables 1 through 11 and Figure 1 give the reader concise, descriptive summaries to the narratives on the findings to the research questions set forth in this study. Seventy-eight percent of the 41 respondents to the Schools and

Staffing survey indicated *strongly agree* or *somewhat agree* to the question, “I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.” However, when looking at first-choice factors that would increase satisfaction levels according to the number of years in the classroom, the findings reveal differences among the subgroups. The findings and conclusions to overall agreement to satisfaction, but differences among the subgroups are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a brief review of what the literature indicates about teacher satisfaction, a description of the participants, a brief review of the methodology and analysis that were conducted, and finishes with conclusions that can be drawn from the results of this study.

Although contemporary education is facing significant budget issues and teacher cutbacks, the field of education continually explores the best options to keep quality, effective teachers in the classroom. There is a large group of teachers who continue to exit the field because of dissatisfaction towards their jobs. Keeping satisfied, effective teachers in the classrooms has and will continue to be a priority in the field of education.

Dissatisfied teachers are leaving for many reasons. Past research has found there are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the state of satisfaction teachers feel toward their careers. Research indicates there are more than salary issues, more than collegiality with staff, more than administrative support, and more than being recognized for valued work. There are issues differing for so many of our teachers that a continuous check is necessary with the ones who have the most needs to be satisfied (Futernick, 2007). Research has also shown there are effective methods to retain teachers. Induction and mentoring programs are among those that have been found to be effective, but these programs are typically meant to address beginning teachers. Other groups within the school are begin

ignored and need a voice to bring issues to the forefront to obtain the satisfaction levels required to achieve the results all schools are looking to accomplish.

There is a push to support administrators to exit teachers who have not been found to be effective in raising student achievement; however, whether a teacher is able to stay in the schools should be left to administrative discretion. Through evaluation and other methods, administrators have a significant impact on keeping teachers in the schools. Bogler (2001) addressed the impact administrators have on teachers in their schools, “The more the principal was participatory in schools activities and development, the greater the job satisfaction.” The principal is only one piece that can be truly influential in the level of teacher satisfaction, but it is a significant influence.

On the federal platform teachers are being asked to indicate their challenges and needs. The Schools and Staffing Survey is one survey that is distributed at designated intervals to better understand the conditions and factors that are influential to teachers in their profession. This study established the questionnaire for the study based on a federally recognized survey and then acclimated the questions to meet the needs of specific research questions. Although this work can be used to further the understanding as a whole in the area of teacher satisfaction, the real use can be found by giving back the data to the administrators and district level administrators who make decisions for these specific teachers.

Research has shown there are many variables that impact satisfaction levels, but this study acted to intentionally ask what would change satisfaction

levels as opposed to replicating characteristics in a school with teachers who exemplify a satisfied culture of educators. At the local level, school districts are establishing teacher mentoring programs to help teachers acclimate to their new worlds as well as new teacher programs to assist teachers in acclimating to their new surroundings. These programs have been shown through research to be helpful, but they do not address other niches of teachers who are dissatisfied with their work. More is still needed to address the other teachers who are finding dissatisfaction in their careers.

This research topic was chosen to address specific issues that have the potential to be the most influential components to the low retention and high attrition level that has been occurring in the educational system in the United States. One of the main reasons why teachers leave the field is job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). There are many facets of the retention and attrition problem, teacher satisfaction as one of the most significant. Based on a comprehensive literature review this research focuses on whole-group responses compared to subgroup responses, as well as administrative influence, as main factors that influence teacher satisfaction levels.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to collect data that would lead to a better understanding of the factors affecting the satisfaction levels of teachers. Specifically, this study set out to find the factors that are most influential in the eyes of the participants to increase their level of satisfaction as well as to understand the relationship between teacher satisfaction and school leadership.

Increased job satisfaction leads to teacher retention, keeping quality teachers in the classroom (Protheroe, Lewis, & Paik, 2002).

Forty-one teachers from two school districts in the greater Phoenix, Arizona region completed an online survey based on the Schools and Staffing Survey to determine their current state of satisfaction towards their jobs and to determine factors they indicated as being factors that would directly impact their level of satisfaction towards their job as a teacher in the field of education.

Teachers worked within two kindergarten through eighth grade school districts that have greater than 85% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch from the federal government. Responses from participants were analyzed as whole group responses and disaggregated by the characteristics indicated by the participants in the survey.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first research question looked at the current state of satisfaction of participants in this study? To determine the overall level of satisfaction of the participants in this study, descriptive statistics were completed. Data indicated 78% of all the participants were satisfied with their jobs, consistent with previous research data.

The second research question, “*Do teachers of different subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) indicate differing levels of satisfaction when compared to one another or to the group of participants as a whole?*” was analyzed through the SPSS data package.

Data indicated that different perspectives could be taken when viewing data from a whole group perspective to a subgroup perspective.

Whole group satisfaction levels were compared to subgroup satisfaction levels. Satisfaction levels seemed to significantly decline in the upper grades. Teachers in younger grades indicated greater satisfaction levels than teachers in the older grades. Consistent with previous research, satisfaction levels seemed to decline as teachers continued with their careers. The data reflected research completed by Doan and Peters (2009). Beginning teachers may be leaving early in their careers, but there are other subgroups that have needs to be met. Teachers with six or more years of classroom experience faced frustrations, questioned their career choices, and looked for growth opportunities outside of the profession. A greater percentage of females seemed more satisfied than males. Little difference in satisfaction was reported between teachers who followed different paths to teaching certification. Satisfaction levels seemed to decline the more years a teacher had been in the classroom, declines that are inconsistent with previous research done by Craig Mertler (2001) who found 26 to 30 year old teachers and 56 years of age and older to report the highest levels of satisfaction. Teachers who teach in the same state they are from report higher levels (100%) to teachers who are teaching in a state they are not from (70%).

Data can be deceiving if not thoroughly examined. Simply looking at the total satisfaction levels of participants does not necessarily draw the same picture. Conclusions from this study seem to indicate there were different issues occurring



in the schools surveyed. By looking at subgroups, it is possible to focus specifically on groups who are more dissatisfied than others.

The third research question, “*Do teachers of specific subgroups (years of experience, level of education, gender, age, type of certification, grade level) report the same or differing factors that would directly increase their level of satisfaction towards their teaching?*” was also analyzed through the SPSS statistical package. Whole group responses indicated salary, class size, and administrative support being the most influential. Salary as the main factor to increase satisfaction levels was inconsistent with various past studies. Klecker and Loadman (1997) reported from their study that salary alone was not enough to alter the satisfaction level of participants. Researchers found no statistical difference between job satisfaction levels in relation to salary, fringe benefits, working conditions, and interactions with students. Data were found consistent with the other research. Inman and Marlow (2004) reported from their work that salary was the only external factor indicated as a reason to stay in the profession for the beginning teachers. Although when data were viewed by subgroup, there were similarities in the needs of all participants, as each subgroup indicated different factors that would increase their level of satisfaction the most. Results follow the previous research that an increase in salary will not solely raise a teacher’s level of satisfaction towards their job.

Results of this study may also indicate that needs change depending on the characteristics the teachers hold. For example, teachers in their first five years of teaching indicate administrative support, salary, and class size as the factors

which would most influence their level of satisfaction, whereas teachers who have been in the classroom for 21 to 15 years indicate a reduction in class size and administrative support being the sole factors that would increase their level of satisfaction towards their position.

Males and females also reported different needs and factors that would increase their level of satisfaction towards their jobs. Salary was the first factor that females indicated as the most influential, whereas males reported administrative support as their most influential factor. Differences were also found when data was broken down by grade level. Class size was the most important factor for kindergarten through fourth grade teachers, whereas seventh and eighth grade teachers indicated administrative support as their number one factor to increase their level of satisfaction. The differences in needs according to the age of the teacher and years of experience seemed to indicate there are different needs dependent on the teachers being surveyed.

The pathway to certification was also compared to the whole group responses. Teachers who were teaching in the state they were from reported salary as the most influential factor to increase their level of satisfaction, whereas teachers not from the state they were teaching reported administrative support as their most important factor to increase their level of satisfaction towards their job.

The fourth research question asked, *How do teachers view their administration?* To answer this research question, participants were asked to respond to questions that related to the principal or leadership of the school and their belief towards their leadership. Again, whole group responses were

compared to the reporting of the teachers when viewed through the various subgroups they were a part of. The four survey questions that related to school leadership were as follows.

1. The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
2. My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.
3. The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.
4. In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.

When evaluating the responses concerning leadership questions by years of experience, teachers in the first five years of teaching indicated significantly higher ratings than all other teachers. For the subgroup "gender," females reported positive ratings compared to the males in the study for all leadership questions except the first question, "The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging."

Data from this study indicated that responses of teachers in the kindergarten through fourth grades were stronger to statements related to the principal or leadership of the school than the other two subgroups containing the fifth through eighth grade teachers. For the administrative question number one, "The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging," participants when viewed as a whole group reported a 75% belief rating. When broken down further, kindergarten through fourth grade teachers had

the highest approval rating when compared to the fifth, sixth, and seventh, and eighth grade teachers. Data indicated teachers in the earlier grades were more satisfied than teacher in the older grades. For all four of the leadership questions, teachers who were from a different state than the one in which they were teaching indicated more positive feedback concerning the leadership in their schools.

The fifth research question asked, *Do satisfied teachers indicate the same needs as dissatisfied teachers?* To accomplish this task, the needs of each group has to be known. Satisfied teachers indicate a reduction in class size as the factors which would increase their level of satisfaction the most whereas dissatisfied teachers indicate discipline and administrative support are the most influential factors which would increase their level of satisfaction the most. This finding was also evident when a regression was conducted on administration and teachers' beliefs about involvement. Results from the linear regression indicated that the more teachers felt their administration were supportive and involved, the greater the level of satisfaction they reported.

From investigating the differences between satisfied and dissatisfied teachers one would assume dissatisfied teachers are looking to leave the classroom. Over half of the teachers who indicated they were satisfied as teachers would stay in the classroom as long as they can, zero percent of dissatisfied teachers indicated they would stay as long as possible. Five percent of dissatisfied teachers definitely plan to leave the classroom. Nineteen percent of satisfied indicated they are undecided as to whether they would stay in the classroom. Similarly, 23% of dissatisfied teachers (roughly the same percentage as satisfied

teachers) indicated they are undecided if they would stay in the classroom. For the purposes of this study, 78% of the teachers in this study were satisfied, meaning there are actually more satisfied teachers, 6 at risk of leaving the field than there are dissatisfied teachers, two. In total, 20% of the teachers in this study are at risk of being lost to another field or job.

### **Conclusions**

Conclusions from this study can be drawn for all research questions. The initial purpose of this study was to discern the total level of satisfaction of the participants in this study. Seventy-eight percent of teachers are satisfied with their jobs, leaving 22% of teachers dissatisfied. In the case of this study, 22% or 9 teachers are dissatisfied.

Concerning subgroups, data indicates group responses are slightly or even significantly different when viewed as subgroups. It appears that looking specifically at subgroups can reveal other perspectives to assess and make changes in policy and procedures to enhance the level of satisfaction of teachers. Administrators who have more on their plate than can be handled at times can utilize research to address hidden groups who may be experiencing high levels of dissatisfaction than others in the school. Specifically, for all survey questions in this study, teachers of kindergarten through the fourth grade are more satisfied than teachers in the older grades. From a professional developmental standpoint, an administrator might see they are more confident in content and style of teachers of younger students, but may need to develop greater levels of skills to address the needs of older teachers. School leaders may also see there is a need to

contribute more time and energy to address the needs of the other teachers in the school.

Research Question 3 looked to find answers to what would directly increase the level of satisfaction of the teachers in this study. Data indicated salary as the most influential factor for the whole group, yet when viewed as subgroups, differences were found. The teachers with 11 to 15 years of experience were the only ones who chose salary as their only primary choice to increase their satisfaction. This was consistent and inconsistent with previous research. This seems to point to the need that the answer for one school may not be the answer for the rest. Individual school leaders and school districts need to work with their staff to find their needs.

Research Question 4 addressed the beliefs of teachers towards their administration. Whole group data indicated that 75% of the participants did *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* that their administration was supportive and encouraging. Positive responses were found from certain subgroups compared to others. Interestingly, dissatisfied teachers indicated student discipline and administrative support as their greatest needs, whereas satisfied teachers seemed to have different needs than their counterparts. This leads the researchers to believe that the impetus for satisfied teachers is to have a certain level of skills in classroom management.

This study provides an in-depth perspective on the needs of teachers and what role their administrators play concerning their level of satisfaction. This study also shows that the needs of the group are not necessarily the needs of the

individuals. For teacher attrition rates to be effected, teachers need to be kept in contact and continually asked what they need to stay motivated and effective. It is vital we understand these needs in order to continually gather information that will increase the level of satisfaction of the teachers in our schools. There are significant effects that occur as a result of job satisfaction. In their work on teacher satisfaction, Protheroes, Lewis, and Paik (2002) state that increased satisfaction levels equate to higher retention levels and better quality teachers in the classroom.

### **Recommendations**

From this research, there was a certain level of understanding of the teachers who participated in this study. This study accomplished its goal of asking teachers to find their voice as to what their needs are as teachers and being a part of the educational system. Previous research indicated many needs and many of those needs were different than what other research has indicated. There was much learned from this study, but the lesson which stood out the most was the need to ask all teachers what is important to them.

- Each school in each district is unique and should be treated as such.  
School leadership should ask and ask consistently what the needs of their teachers are and what can be done to address their needs.
- Utilize data as parameters for hiring of new teachers.
- Focus in on specific subgroups as to change the satisfaction of the teachers in their schools.

- Work individually with school and district leaders to investigate the needs of their teachers.

The purpose of this research was to show that data viewed from a whole group perspective does not equate to the same findings as when they are viewed from a subgroup perspective. To truly understand the staff of a school, the individual differences of the staff need to be taken into consideration. To view the staff as a whole may discredit the needs of the individual. In addition, there are many advantages to learning and coming to understand staff needs by subgroups as opposed to viewing them as a whole.

Some of the advantages to studying teachers as part of groups can indicate to the administrative staff how to address specific issues in the school. In addition, learning the needs of teachers by subgroups can be used for information during the hiring process. To know teachers who have taught for a specific numbers of years and are more likely to stay in the school can provide insight when one is considering a position between two candidates, as to who will be a more positive candidate for the staff of the school.

Finally, this research addresses the need to blend research and common practices. Research is vital, but research is only a piece of the puzzle to truly address the needs of teachers. To truly use the information past researchers have discovered, the individuals who are using the work, has to use the information in accordance with the staff being addressed. By asking the individuals who are in need of assistance, there is knowledge being acquired that cannot be found by asking others.



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APPENDIX A  
SCHOOLS AND STAFFING SURVEY

**1. Which grade level do you currently teach? If you teach a split class of more than one grade level, please check the oldest grade level.**

- |                                       |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Kindergarten    | <input type="radio"/> 5 <sup>th</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 <sup>st</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 6 <sup>th</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 7 <sup>th</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 8 <sup>th</sup> |  |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> | <input type="radio"/> 9 <sup>th</sup> |  |

**2. During your most recent FULL WEEK of teaching at your school, what is the total number of students enrolled in your class?**

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-10  | <input type="radio"/> 41-80   |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-20 | <input type="radio"/> 81-120  |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-30 | <input type="radio"/> 121-160 |
| <input type="radio"/> 31-40 |                               |

**3. Did you enter teaching through an alternative certification program? (An alternative program is a program that was designed to expedite the transition of non-teachers to a teaching career, for example, a state, district, or university alternative certification program.)**

- YES  
 NO

**4. This school year, are you a Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) according to your state's requirements? (Generally, to be Highly Qualified, teachers must requirements related to 1) a bachelor's degree, (2) full state certification, and 3) demonstrated competency in the subject area(s) taught. The HQT requirement is a provision under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).**

- YES  
 NO

**5. In the past 12 months, have you participated in any professional developmental activities specific to and concentrating on the content of the subject(s) you teach?**

- YES  
 NO

6. Overall, how useful were these activities to you?

- Not useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useful
- Very useful
- not applicable

7. In the past 12 months, have you participated in any professional development activities that focused on student discipline and management in the classroom?

- YES
- NO

8. Overall, how useful were these activities to you?

- Not useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useful
- Very useful
- not applicable

9. In the past 12 months, have you participated in any professional development on how to teach students with disabilities?

- YES
- NO

10. Overall, how useful were these activities to you?

- Not useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useful
- Very useful
- not applicable

11. Excluding contract hours, during the average work week, how many hours did you put into school related work.

- |                             |                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1-10  | <input type="radio"/> 16-20 | <input type="radio"/> 36-40           |
| <input type="radio"/> 0-5   | <input type="radio"/> 21-25 | <input type="radio"/> 41-45           |
| <input type="radio"/> 6-10  | <input type="radio"/> 26-30 | <input type="radio"/> greater than 45 |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-15 | <input type="radio"/> 31-35 |                                       |

12. How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at your school over the following areas of your planning and teaching?

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selecting teaching techniques	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluating and grading students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disciplining students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Determining the amount of homework to be assigned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my teaching salary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The level of student misbehavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students on state and/or local tests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State or district content standards have a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of student tardiness and class cutting in this school interferes with my teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the way things are run at this school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Think about transferring to another school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. How long do you plan to remain in teaching?

- As long as I am able
- Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job
- Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job
- Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits
- Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)
- Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along
- Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can
- Undecided at this time

16. Has a student ever threatened to injure you?

- YES
- NO

17. DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR, do you, or will you, earn additional compensation from working in any job OUTSIDE this school system?

- YES
- NO

18. As a whole, are you satisfied as a teacher?

- YES
- NO

19. Which variable would increase your current level of satisfaction the most?

- Student Discipline
- Reduction of the number of students in your classes
- Supportive Administration
- A 10% salary increase
- School conditions/resources
- Higher quality of professional development

20. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

21. What is your race/nationality?

- White
- Black or African-American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hispanic

22. Are you from the state you are currently working in?

- YES
- NO

23. How many years have you taught?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25

APPENDIX B  
EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

## 1. Teacher Satisfaction in an Urban School District

Date: June 2, 2008

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dee Spencer in the College of Education at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to investigate teacher satisfaction in an urban school district. I am inviting your participation, which will involve filling out an online survey and should take about 10 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, such as sharing your responses with your school or your district.

By participating in this study you will be contributing to research which can positively influence the level of satisfaction teachers feel towards their jobs. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

This study is an online survey via SurveyMonkey. All measures have been taken for complete confidentiality. Your responses will be anonymous. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Professor Dee Spencer, the Principal Investigator of this study at [dspencer@asu.edu](mailto:dspencer@asu.edu) or (480)965-2864. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Research Compliance Office, at (480) 965-6788.

Return of the questionnaire will be considered your consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Halpert M.A. in Ed.

