

2007

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RUNNING HEAD: The First Five Years

The First Five Years: Providing Adequate Support and Resources for New Teachers

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Abstract

“46 percent of newly hired teachers in public schools are first-time teachers” and within the first five years of teaching, “...more than 30 percent of new teachers leave the classroom by the end of their fifth year” (Bolich, 2001, p.4). With these high numbers, what is contributing to the high turnover rate of new teachers? The question for this project is what can be done to reduce the high turnover rate of teachers with less than five years of experience at the elementary school level? Based on the research conducted and the data collected, I created a letter lobbying for support and resources for new teachers to reduce the turnover rate and improve the retention rate among teachers with less than five years of experience.

The First Five Years: Providing Adequate Support and Resources for New Teachers

It is a bright and sunny morning in August. The sky is a clear blue with a few clouds and the sun is a bright and warm yellow; the air is cool and crisp. Students are running around, yelling and screaming down the halls. Backpacks are scattered around the playground. Excited children are climbing the play structures. Teachers are leaving the front office with stacks of papers, attendance sheets and a smile on their face. Kindergarteners are sad about leaving their parents for the first time; the fifth graders are excited to finally be the “big dogs on campus.” And, the fourth graders are glad they are not in third grade anymore. All of these sights, smells, sounds and feelings remind us of the feelings of excitement and nervousness of returning to school each fall.

Then there is me; a nervous, scared and anxious first-year teacher. Today is my first day teaching, ever. I just graduated from a credential program and was hired at Sunnyside Elementary School¹ in Lettuce City teaching a fourth grade classroom. I have some teaching experience, but most of my knowledge is from reading about teaching. I know how to create a lesson plan, and I know the best techniques for teaching a lesson plan, and I even know effective classroom management skills. However, I do not have experience leading a classroom all day by myself. I am not too sure of myself. I do not know any teachers at this school either. My peers from my credential program have taken jobs in other districts and cities. I do not know anybody and am completely lost about what to do.

Sunnyside Elementary School is a kindergarten through fifth grade school located in the heart of the Lettuce Valley. The Lettuce Valley is known for its agricultural crops and produce. Much of the world depends and receives its produce from the Lettuce Valley. The people who primarily harvest these crops are Hispanic and Latino, and according to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000, make up about 64 percent of the total population in Lettuce City.

Nestled in Lettuce City, Sunnyside Elementary is part of the Lettuce City Elementary School District (LCESD) and has about 550 students enrolled. About 87 percent of the students are Hispanic or Latino. On average, 80 percent of all students enrolled in the LCESD are Hispanic or Latino as well (California Department of Education, DataQuest). Here at Sunnyside Elementary, there are 27 teachers. One teacher is a university intern where he/she is teaching

¹ All proper names are pseudonyms.

full-time and taking college-level course work at the same time. Four of my other colleagues are in their second-year of teaching and one other colleague is a first-year teacher like me. The remaining 20 teachers have been teaching for three or more years and are experienced teachers.

At the end of my first day teaching, I realize I am not as prepared and ready to teach as I, my professors, or even the State of California had thought. Yes, the credential program I attended gave me the training, both book and hands-on-training. However, I do not think the credential program taught or gave me the resources for mental and daily support needed to get through the day. On top of that, I feel lost and I lack the skills on how to ask the faculty here for moral support and encouragement. My coworkers have yet to become friends; it is only my first day. How am I going to survive in this world where I feel so alone and isolated in my classroom all day?

Problem

When I first began to brainstorm my capstone ideas, I was alarmed and intrigued when a peer informed me about the high turnover rate among new teachers. Before I began my research and literature review, I thought the highest turnover of teachers was in the first two years of teaching. However, after conducting extensive research, I found out the highest turnover rate is among teachers who have been teaching for less than five years (Bolich, 2001, p. 4). After conducting and finding research, I then changed my definition of new teachers. For the purposes of this study, new teachers are teachers who have been teaching for five years or fewer. Therefore, my question for this study is what can be done to reduce the high turnover rate of teachers with less than five years of experience (referred to as new teachers) at the elementary school level?

My goal was to use my research to improve support, resources and/or materials available for new teachers. It is my hope that by improving the support, resources and/or materials available to new teachers, we will enable some to continue in the profession. I also hope that by improving support for new teachers, not only will the retention rates increase, but the effectiveness of teaching and execution of lesson plans increase for new teachers as well.

After surveying teachers with less than five years of experience, experienced teachers (teachers who have taught for more than five years) and administrators, I will use the data I have gathered to improve support, resources and/or materials for beginning teachers. This may include writing letters to local school boards, local school districts and/or the State of California addressing the issues and concerns new teachers discussed in the data collected.

The survey I developed is meant to determine what support and resources are already available to new teachers and in what areas improvements can be made. Questions that were addressed included support they wished were available and what is currently available. New teachers will also be asked to address the current challenges he/she faces, what support he/she has received thus far, and obstacles preventing new teachers from receiving support needed.

As a future parent and member of the Lettuce Valley community, I have a heavy investment in the local school system. I want new teachers to receive the support needed to blossom into the experienced educators that my children and the children in the community will need and deserve. I also want to make sure that not only are teachers receiving the support to continue in the profession after five years, but also to become an effective teacher with a passion for teaching and educating the children in the community in which he/she lives and teaches. I want to make sure the teachers in the local schools do not view teaching just as a job, rather an opportunity to foster the development of the children that will one day be leading the current generation.

At Sunnyside Elementary, there are six new teachers employed ranging from nine months to five years. If other schools in the Lettuce City Elementary School District also have a high rate of new teachers with a limited amount of teaching experience, many students will not and are not receiving the proper educational opportunities. Students that do not receive a quality education in elementary school may face difficulties later in his/her educational career. This will also negatively impact the school, district, county and even state test scores

Sunnyside Elementary is located in the neighborhood in which I lived for several years and that my brother attended for one school year. Neither my parents nor my brother was happy with the teachers and the school and he was transferred to another school located within Lettuce City. If students and parents are continually unhappy with Sunnyside Elementary, something must be done to enhance the school and teacher quality.

Literature Review

Why do many teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching? According to Bolich (2001), “46 percent of newly hired teachers in public schools are first-time teachers” (p. 5) and within the first five years of teaching, “...more than 30 percent of new teachers leave the classroom by the end of their fifth year” (p. 4). It has become increasingly

difficult to hire and retain high quality teachers with the high demands from federal, state and district levels to meet educational standards (Kritsonis & Patton, 2006). Many stressors have been identified by teachers who left the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching including lack of support from principals and colleagues, overwhelming workload and time management, teaching outside of degree of specialty or training, classroom management, identity as a teacher, difficulty teaching assignments effectively, and extensive responsibilities with large time commitments interfering with one's personal life (Bolich, 2001; Clift & Wilkins, 2001; Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Kritsonis & Patton, 2006). With many factors contributing to the high turnover rate of teachers with less than five years experience, resources and support needs to be accessible to new teachers to retain and ensure high quality teaching within our educational system. With many stressors new teachers face, the most prevalent and stressful for new teachers to handle is classroom management and control.

Classroom management and control. A study done in Florida revealed, "43 percent of first-year teachers felt that they were 'minimally prepared' or 'not prepared' to manage their classrooms" (Bolich, 2001, p.6). Universities and schools should work together to provide graduating credentialed teachers the opportunity to try and test several methods for classroom control. Beginning teachers must feel as though they are adequately or over prepared for classroom control. Without classroom control, many new teachers might be forced to spend more time gaining control over a class rather than on content and educational purposes. Not only does lack of classroom control take time away from content, it also creates excess stress on a new teacher including feelings of inadequacy. In their article, "Why do new teachers cry?" Johannessen and McCann (2004) state, "...it is difficult to enter the classroom every day feeling that the students are unmanageable and that nothing is effective in governing the unruly" (p. 4). Therefore, schools and universities should work together to provide and prepare new teachers for the challenges of classroom management. Schools and universities should provide new teachers with the opportunities to test and create effective methods of classroom management and discipline so new teachers are prepared the first few years of teaching solo. In addition to classroom management and control, new teachers struggle with an increased and demanding workload and questions surrounding the most effective lesson planning and teaching methods.

Decreased Workload and Lesson Planning. Many teachers are faced with an overwhelming workload and lesson planning. Further, new teachers find it difficult to teach

lessons and curriculum effectively and creatively. Because of the pressures to meet educational standards and provide substantial and educational lessons, many teachers find it difficult to perform to these standards ultimately affecting their satisfaction with teaching (Johnson, 2006).

In the article, “Why do new teachers cry?” Johannessen and McCann (2004) discuss a novice teacher in his first year of teaching. The novice teacher reported, “...the workload was the most stressful part of the job” and he usually worked between eleven and fourteen hours a day to complete all the, “planning, grading and anything like that” (Johannessen & McCann, 2004, p. 4). Johannessen and McCann went on to say, “...novice teacher reported a variety of frustrations. The examples here emphasize difficulties teachers face with managing students, planning engaging lessons, and contending with an overwhelming workload” (p. 5). To help teachers within the first five years of teaching create effective lesson plans and reduce an overwhelming workload, one must have support from the administration and/or a mentor. The administration needs to decrease the amount of workload and extracurricular time new teachers spend to allow ample time for creating effective lesson plans. The decreased workload will also decrease the amount of stress new teachers face within the first five years (Johnson, 2006). The mentor must know how to effectively teach and how to help new teachers with lesson planning and strategies to result in high student achievement (Watkins, 2005).

Induction and Mentoring Programs. An induction program is “...a structured training process for new teachers” (Scherer, 1999, p. 34). It is a program that provides instructional and psychological support and recognizes that beginning teachers are affected by all of the stressors first mentioned in the introduction (Clift & Wilkins, 2007). Induction programs include a mentor who coaches and provides support for a beginning teacher. The most effective induction and mentoring programs provide mentors in the same field of expertise and must recognize effective instruction and guide the teacher to provide high student achievement (Watkins, 2005). The mentor assists the new teachers with understanding the curriculum, lesson planning, attending seminars, building relationships with colleagues, communication with administration, and providing emotional and psychological support (Clift & Wilkins, 2007; Johnson, 2006; Kritsonis & Patton, 2006).

Many studies and research reveal that induction and mentoring programs reduce the rate of turnover and increase the retention rate among new teachers. Bolich (2001) states, “...teachers with less than five years of experience who have not participated in induction programs are

nearly twice as likely to leave teaching” (p. 8). Likewise, teacher retention is higher when support networks are provided for new teachers (Clift & Wilkins, 2007). In the article, “The workplace matters,” Johnson (2006) discusses positive ramifications for induction and mentoring programs with mentoring programs having a positive effect on new teacher retention. Not only does mentoring provide new teachers with support, but the most effective mentoring was when the mentor and new teacher were able to collaborate and share common planning time (Johnson, 2006).

Encouragement from Principal. Anderson and Olsen (2007) cite Ingersoll (2003) in their report, *Courses of Action: A qualitative investigation into urban teacher retention and career development*, as stating, “...poor administrative support accounts for almost half of teacher workplace dissatisfaction” (p. 22). According to Watkins (2005), it is the principal’s priority to retain and develop quality teachers. School organization and supportive working conditions can enhance teacher quality and retain teachers past the first five years (Johnson, 2006). Supportive working conditions allow teachers to assume leadership positions, create a culture of learning, and involve teachers in important decisions. According to Kritsonis and Patton (2006), “When teacher feel invested in any project or effort, their satisfaction with the job increases, therefore, increasing the possibility of them returning to the campus” (p. 8). In sum, this helps new teachers feel more supported by their fellow colleagues and principal.

In addition to assuming responsibilities regarding decision making on campuses, Johnson (2006) states that teachers today place more value on the opportunity to work together with their colleagues. Most teacher satisfaction comes from the organization of support for new teachers to become successful with students (Anderson & Olsen, 2007). New teachers should be encouraged to work and collaborate with other teachers at the school because it could lead the new teachers to ask critical questions about their current teaching practices and help them discover effective teaching practices that could be more effective with student learning (Watkins, 2005). This interaction and collaboration between the new teachers and other colleagues would allow them to find resources and the importance of teaching promoting teacher retention and quality (Johannessen & McCann, 2004).

Many new teachers face pressures and stressors that result in a high turnover rate of new teachers within the first five years of teaching. The first five years of teaching are a critical time to enhance and support new teachers. Such resources should include an induction program,

mentoring, curriculum development with effective implantation of lessons, encouragement from administration and principals, a decreased workload and support with classroom management and control.

Methodology

School. I was able to find statistics that indicated which schools had the largest number of new teachers in their faculty in the Lettuce City Elementary School District. Sunnyside Elementary School was approached because it had a large number of first and second year teachers according to the California Department of Education website and an initial conversation with the school secretary. The secretary informed me of the number of first and second year teachers including an intern teacher who is still taking courses to attain his/her full teaching credential.

Participants. All teachers at Sunnyside Elementary were encouraged to participate. Seven new teacher surveys were distributed, 20 experienced teacher surveys were distributed and two administrative surveys were distributed. Of the 29 total surveys distributed, I received 13 completed surveys; seven new teacher surveys, six experienced teacher surveys and no administrative surveys.

Surveys. For all surveys, participants were given the following instructions: *Please provide written responses to the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers. Your thoughts, insights and opinions are greatly appreciated! You may attach additional sheets if necessary.*

The questions for the **Administrator Survey** were as follows:

How long have you been an administrator at this school? _____

How big of a problem is the high turnover rate of first and second year teachers at this school and on a district level? Why?

Please list the three biggest factors that you see contributing to the high turnover rate among first and second year teachers and give a brief explanation.

Please describe what has been done on a school and district level to address this problem.

What do you think should be done?

What are some obstacles to improving the retention rate of first and second year teachers?

Would you be interested in allowing us to return with any programs or resources developed from this survey? **Y / N**

Suggestions/Comments:

The questions for the *Experienced Teacher Survey* were as follows:

Please indicate the number of years you have been a teacher: _____

Please indicate the number of years you have been teaching at this school: _____

How big of a problem is the high turnover rate of first and second year teachers at this school? Why?

What were the biggest challenges you faced when you began as a teacher?

Do you think teachers entering the profession now are facing the same problems? **Y / N**

If no, what are some of the problems new teachers are facing?

Please list the three biggest factors that you see contributing to the high turnover rate among first and second year teachers and give a brief explanation.

What support or help did you receive as a first and second year teacher that enabled you to continue in the teaching profession?

What are some obstacles to improving the retention rate of first and second year teachers?

What ideas do you have to help first and second year teachers who are struggling continue in the teaching profession?

Have you taken any steps to act upon your ideas? **Y / N**

If yes, please describe the response you received from your peers, new teachers, the administration and the district.

Would you be interested in helping develop or take part in any services and/or materials developed from this survey? **Y / N**

If so, please include contact information here:

Suggestions/Comments:

The questions for the *New Teacher Survey* were as follows:

Please indicate the number of years you have been teaching at this school: _____

How satisfied are you satisfied with your job?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Not Very Not at all

1 2 3 4

Why?

Do you feel that you were adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession? **Y / N**

Why or why not?

Have your expectations of what it would be like to teach been met? **Y / N**

Why or why not?

What are your three biggest challenges in teaching right now?

What support have you received around these struggles?

What support would you most benefit from that you are currently not receiving?

In your opinion, what are some of the obstacles preventing the support from happening?

Would you be interested in taking part in services and/or receiving materials developed from this survey? **Y / N**

If so, please include contact information here:

Suggestions/Comments:

Procedure. The principal's secretary distributed the appropriate surveys to the teachers by placing them in the teachers' boxes. I left the surveys at the school for one week for the teachers to complete on his/her own time and return to the secretary. At the end of the week, I picked up the completed surveys in a sealed white envelope from the school secretary.

Data Analysis. Upon receiving the completed surveys, I read through all questions. After reading the collected data, I composed a table with themes and answers for each question. I then looked for major themes throughout the data and once the major themes were identified, I compared the data for both new and experienced teachers and found common themes. I compared the collected data to the research literature to see if the research supported or rebuked the data I collected.

Results

Many of the anonymous responses from both new and experienced teachers aligned and supported my review of the research literature. Both new and experienced teachers recognized different avenues of support and encouragement new teachers are currently receiving and are lacking. In addition, both new and experienced teachers realized and stated that new teachers need support, a reduced workload, and fewer challenging students and classes.

New Teachers. When reading and analyzing the survey questions, I found many surprising statistics. The initial question on the new teacher survey asked teachers to rank his/her

satisfaction level with the teaching profession. Fifty-seven percent of the new teachers from Sunnyside Elementary reported that they were very satisfied with teaching while the remaining 43 percent reported that they were merely satisfied. One teacher who was very satisfied with teaching noted, “I love [working] with children and watching them grow...”. Another teacher who was satisfied with teaching noted, “This is a nice school, but I know there are ‘better ones’ out there.” The finding that new teachers were satisfied with teaching in general did not surprise me. I believe that most new teachers have past experience working with children and have a passion for teaching and working with children on a daily basis. I believe past experience working with children increases the satisfaction level of a first time teacher.

New teachers who participated in the study were asked if they felt they were adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession. Of the seven responses, 71 percent felt he/she was not adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession. In general, new teachers felt they were taught *what to* teach students, rather than practical ways of *how to* teach students. The 43 percent of new teachers that felt they were adequately prepared to teach reported having a good credential program and family history of teachers. I believe teachers who have a family background of teaching and graduated from an effective credential program feel more adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession.

Eighty-five percent of the new teachers surveyed reported that his/her expectation of teaching had been met while 14 percent of the new teachers surveyed reported that his/her expectation of teaching had not been met. Of the teachers with expectations met, they generally expected to work hard with little pay and appreciation, in addition to watching students grow and learn. New teachers reported teaching was a lot harder than student teaching, but they were ultimately happy with the teaching profession. The 14 percent of the new teachers surveyed reported that his/her expectations had not been met because he/she did not have enough time to create lesson plans. The decreased workload will decrease the amount of stress new teacher’s face within the first five years (Johnson, 2006).

The following charts represent the challenges identified by the new teachers surveyed and the obstacles viewed as preventing the support for new teachers at Sunnyside Elementary School. This data is based on responses to open-ended questions.

What are your three biggest challenges in teaching right now?

Support	Time	Help
Parental	Adequate preparation	Teaching strategies
Administrative	Lesson planning	Teaching ideas
Grade level	Grading	Collaboration with others
Same grade level teachers	Collaboration with others	

In your opinion, what are some of the obstacles preventing the support from happening?

1	2	3
Lack of money and funding	State requirements too strict and time consuming	Lack of sharing between teachers

The following charts show what new teachers surveyed reported when asked about the three areas of support they are currently receiving and what areas of support they are not receiving that could benefit the new teachers. This data is based on responses to open-ended questions.

What three areas of support have you received?

1	2	3
Reading coach	Some teacher collaboration	None

What support would you most benefit from that you are currently not receiving?

Time	Help	Support
Preparation period	Same grade partner teacher	Teacher collaboration
Grading time	Aide in classroom	Fewer students
	Useful staff development time	Lesson planning and ideas
	State requirements, cums, teaching lessons	

Experienced Teachers. Of the twenty distributed experienced teacher surveys, six were completed. The initial questions asked experienced teachers to address the turnover rate of new teachers at Sunnyside Elementary School. Eighty-three percent reported it being a problem, while 14 percent reported it not a problem. Of the 83 percent of experienced teachers reporting a problem with the turnover rate of new teachers, responses were varied. One teacher noted the turnover rate is a problem; however it is not as big of a problem as in other schools in the Lettuce

City Elementary School District. Other teachers reported the problem was due to new teachers not being certified and not having as much experience as teachers who have been teaching for more than five years.

When asked what were the biggest challenges that experienced teachers faced when he/she first entered into the teaching profession, teachers noted having difficult classes, poor time management skills, lack of classroom management skills, and no support from principals or colleagues. An additional question asked if experienced teachers feel or believe new teachers today are facing the same problems and/or challenges? Eighty-three percent of experienced teachers surveyed believed new teachers are facing the same problems and/or challenges while 33 percent believe new teachers are not facing the same problems. The teachers that believed new teachers today are facing the same problems generally believe there is still a lack of support for new teachers from principals and colleagues. The teachers that believed new teachers are not facing the same problems today, noted that political changes in the classroom are greater than there have been in the past.

The following charts show what experienced teachers believe the three biggest factors contributing to the high turnover rate and obstacles preventing the support to happen. This data is based on responses to open-ended questions.

What are the three biggest factors that contribute to the high turnover rate of teachers?

Lack of support	Hard Teaching Situations	Overwhelming Workload
Parents	Given combination classes	Too much paperwork
Colleagues	Given the “problem” kids	BTSA requirements
Administration		State and district requirements

What are some obstacles to improving the retention rate of new teachers?

1	2	3
Too high of expectations; must perform like experienced teachers	Lack of respect from parents, administration, and colleagues	Lack of support from administration and colleagues

As an ending question, experienced teachers were asked to give ideas and opinions about what should be done to help new teachers succeed in the classroom and improve the retention rate among new teachers. The following chart represents the ideas and themes that emerged.

What ideas do you have to help new teachers who are struggling continue in the teaching profession?

Support	Organization	Help	Workload
Useful mentor	Classroom setup	Discipline support	Reduced workload
Support from administration	Parent Communication	Classroom management	Less problem students
Productive collaboration time		Lesson Planning	Reduced paperwork
Grade level planning time		Lesson Ideas	Reduced extracurricular responsibilities

Administration. Two surveys were distributed to both the principal and the vice principal at Sunnyside Elementary. I did not receive either survey from the administration. This response alarms me because it shows a lack of support and care for all the teachers employed at Sunnyside Elementary. A failure to respond to a survey about the support new teachers need communicates a lack of support from the administration. Research states, “It is the principal’s priority to retain and develop quality teachers...school organization and supportive working conditions can enhance teacher quality and retain teachers past the first five years” (Johnson, 2006; Watkins, 2005). In addition to research, both new and experienced teachers at Sunnyside Elementary school stated the need for support from the principal. A teacher who has been teaching for over 30 years with nine years at Sunnyside Elementary stated, “Many administrators are more threatening than supportive. A principal should visit a new teachers’ [classroom] regularly and ask what he/she can do, but our principal does not, and most principals are too overworked to have that kind of time.” This shows how influential a principal is. It also demonstrates how there is a desire and need for the principal’s interaction with teachers to provide encouragement and support. This might, in turn, improve the retention rate among new teachers.

Action

Based on a review of the literature and analysis of my data, programs and policies need to be addressed and/or created that enable new teachers to receive the support they need. Hopefully, this will improve the retention rate among new teachers. Many new teachers attribute the pressures and difficulty with teaching to a lack of support, under-preparedness and lack of time for effective lesson planning. According to a teacher surveyed at Sunnyside Elementary when

asked if he/she felt prepared entering into the classroom, he/she stated, “My training was an overview of [what] you need to teach, but not how to teach the materials.” Local school districts and state programs need to ensure that new teachers entering into the classroom are adequately prepared with not just theories, but practicalities. Another teacher surveyed noted, “I learned a lot of terminology, went over studies, lesson plans, but when I started my first job, I had no idea how to do cums, how to actually teach a lesson.”

In addition to adequately preparing new teachers on how to effectively teach a classroom, local school districts and state policies need to reduce the workload of new teachers including difficult teaching situations such as behavioral issues, classroom management, and combination grade classes. When asked to comment on the three biggest factors contributing to the high turnover rate of teachers, a teacher with over 30 years experience stated, “...Fellow staff who load first year teachers’ classes with ‘problems’ or combos without taking into consideration the amount of extra work those two things will incur...”

Coinciding with a reduced workload and adequate teacher preparedness, new teacher recognize the need for support from fellow colleagues and administration. “... [P]oor administrative support accounts for almost half of teacher workplace dissatisfaction” (Anderson & Ingersoll, 2003). If administration does not provide the support and encouragement new teachers need and want, then many schools will face a high turnover rate. In addition, according to Watkins (2005), it is the principal’s priority to retain and develop quality teachers. School organization and supportive working conditions can enhance teacher quality and retain teachers past the first five years (Johnson, 2006).

With the research and data collected, programs need to be developed and implemented that are intended to improve the retention rate among teachers and improve teacher quality. Due to time and financial restraints, I could not implement a program or policy for new teachers. In lieu of implementing a program for new teachers, I composed a letter lobbying for programs to be developed and new programs be installed and sent it to the Lettuce City Elementary Unified School District, the Lettuce City School Board, the Lettuce County of Office of Education, and the California Department of Education. Below is the letter:

To whom it may concern:

My name is Crystal Harvey and I am a forthcoming graduate at California State University Monterey Bay. As a graduating student, I am working on a comprehensive research project, otherwise known as a Capstone Project on campus. Over the course of the Fall 2007 semester, I have looked at the turnover and retention rate of teachers with less than five years teaching experience. Teachers with less than five years experience have the highest turnover rate and leave the teaching profession within the first five years. “46 percent of newly hired teachers in public schools are first-time teachers” and within the first five years of teaching, “...more than 30 percent of new teachers leave the classroom by the end of their fifth year”².

Many stressors have been identified by teachers who left the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching including lack of support from principals and colleagues, overwhelming workload and time management, teaching outside of degree of specialty or training, classroom management, identity as a teacher, difficulty teaching assignments effectively, and extensive responsibilities with large time commitments interfering with one’s personal life³. With many factors contributing to the high turnover rate of teachers with less than five years experience, resources and support needs to be accessible to new teachers to retain and ensure high quality teaching within our educational system.

Both literature and the teachers in my community recognize and request support for new teachers. Some support suggested by both experienced teachers and new teachers include supportive and productive mentors, induction programs, a reduced workload with more time allotted for lesson planning, a same grade partner teacher for collaboration, and support from administration. Research states, “Most teacher satisfaction comes from the organization of support for new teachers to become successful with students”⁴. New teachers should be encouraged to work and collaborate with other teachers at the school

²Bolich, A.M. (2001). Reduce your losses: Help new teachers become veteran teachers. *Southern Regional Education Board*, pp 1-15.

³ Clift, R.T & Wilkins, E.A. (2001). Building a network of support for new teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, pp25-35; Grossman, P. & Thompson, C. (2004). District policy and beginning teachers: a lens on teacher learning. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, pp 281-301; Kritonis, W.A. & Patton, M. (2006). The law of increasing returns: A process for retaining teachers-national recommendations. *National Journal for Publishing and Mentoring Doctoral Student Research*, pp 1-9.

⁴ Anderson, L. & Olsen, B. (2007). Courses of action: a qualitative investigation into urban teacher retention and career development. *Urban Education*, pp 5-28.

because it could lead the new teachers to ask critical questions about their current teaching practices and help them discover effective teaching practices more effective with student learning⁵. This interaction and collaboration between the new teachers and other colleagues would allow them to find resources and the importance of teaching promoting teacher retention and quality⁶.

As an elected official in our community, I believe it is your responsibility to address the needs of new teachers. A more meaningful and supportive program needs to be created to provide support for beginning teachers to improve the turnover rate. A new and more meaningful program will also ensure new teachers become effective teachers providing a quality education to the children in our community. If a program is not installed for new teachers, the turnover rate of new teachers in our community will continue to rise and our students will fail to receive a quality education. I do not want my child to receive a poor education because his/her teacher does not have proper resources or time to prepare effective lesson plans and is continually overworked. I hope my elected officials will take a stand and help the new teachers become effective and quality teachers and increase the retention rate of new teachers in schools.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to seeing changes made in my community for new teachers.

⁵ Watkins, P. (2005). The principal's role in attracting, retaining, and developing new teachers: three strategies for collaboration and support. *The Clearing House*, pp 1-8.

⁶ Johannessen, L.R. & McCann, T.M. (2004). Why do new teachers cry? *The Clearing House*, pp 1-13.

Critical Reflection

On Action Taken. There are many strengths and weaknesses on the letter I created and sent to many influential parties in our local city, county and state. Steps can be taken by our elected officials to ensure that teachers receive the support needed and create programs to support teachers within the first five years of teaching. In addition, officials in the county and state might recognize the need for new teachers, but are waiting for people in the community to take a stand and voice an opinion. However, due to time and financial restraints, the letter sent to the elected officials in our local community and state might be disregarded. The letter might be overlooked and actions might not be taken.

If I could do my action project over again, I would allow more time to attend a local school board meeting and ask to address the issue at hand. In addition, I might also ask the elected school board officials to assist the principals in providing all teachers with an encouraging and productive workplace to foster effective teachers. I would also make follow up calls to people who received my letter and push for more attention to be focused on new teacher support and resources, rather than standardized testing.

From here, the next steps taken should be by the Lettuce City Elementary School District, the Lettuce City School Board, the Lettuce County Office of Education, and the California Department of Education to create and ensure effective programs for new teacher support and retention. These elected officials need to address the problem of the high turnover rate and create or revise current programs in place.

On Lessons Learned. From this project, I learned that I really do not want to become a teacher. However, I have much empathy and praise for the teachers in my local community. I learned I want to ensure new teachers have the resources needed so the children in my local community receive the education they deserve.

In addition, I learned that it takes a lot of time, research and energy to create a change. One person cannot be open to a change, rather, many individuals need to work together to create a change. Not only do many people have to work together to create a change, one must push and lobby for a change to occur. Many steps need to be taken by several individuals to gain the attention from the elected officials in the community and state.

Teaching and Learning. I learned that I do not want to become a teacher. From surveying teachers, I realized teaching is a lot harder than it looks and many do not receive the support or

recognition deserved. From this lack of support, many teachers thus leave the teaching profession for more rewarding jobs and careers. I learned that beginning teachers need much support because they are learning just as much as their students on a daily basis. Without ongoing support and training, many new teachers will fail and not provide adequate teaching that students expect.

I realized that learning is a reciprocal phenomenon. Students learn from teachers and adults in the society in which one lives every day. Beginning teachers learn in the same fashion; they learn from colleagues and administrators around them about performance expectations and ways of teaching. If a teacher does not receive a good model or example from professionals with experience and training, where should he/she be expected to learn from? Thus, I learned that everyone everyday is learning and are teaching others on a continual basis.

The three MLOs I covered while doing this research project were knowledge and lifelong learning, ethical reflection and social responsibility, and focus of study. I learned while doing this project that teaching is a continual and lifelong process. A person may or may not be ready to teach when one first graduates from a credential program. Teachers learn on a daily basis from students, colleagues and the administration at the school. During this study, I also realized teaching is a social responsibility. A new teacher cannot be expected to learn everything needed to teach on his or her own. It takes a community of scholars, friends and colleagues to help teach and mold a new teacher into an effective and quality teacher. It is also an ethical reflection because it is partly the community's responsibility to mold and teach a beginning teacher to ensure a quality education for the students in the community. The focus of study was on teacher retention, adequate preparation from credential programs and school, and adequate support and resources for new teachers.

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