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Teacher Attrition in Arkansas Public Schools: Perceptions of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Career Choices

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Teacher Attrition in Arkansas Public Schools:
Perceptions of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Career Choices

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on teacher attrition in Arkansas, with many educators facing unprecedented challenges and stressors in their work. However, public data does not give context to why teachers chose to leave. This study aimed to investigate teacher perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on attrition in Arkansas through a survey. To do this, the study set out to determine what factors influenced Arkansas teachers to leave or consider leaving, their positions and the impact that the pandemic had on those choices, and what factors influenced, or could influence, teachers to stay in their position. A survey was distributed to teachers on social media and via email. The survey asked demographic questions, whether the participant left or considered leaving their position, asked participants to select the reasons they did so, then asked them to rate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each reason. Finally, participants were invited to give an open response about what could have influenced them to stay in their role. Overall, 19.6% of teachers moved from their role in some capacity. Additionally, 66.5% of teachers considered leaving their position. The top reasons cited were challenges in class support (hybrid instruction, remote instruction, in-person instruction, resources), school bureaucracy, pay, and leadership. COVID-19 affected reasons related to instruction, safety, health concerns, and resources. Teachers said they would most likely stay with support from their administration, higher pay, and lower demands and stress. Lowering stress through supportive classrooms and positive leadership could mitigate teacher attrition in Arkansas in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Dedication

To every teacher that shaped my academic journey.

Because I knew you, I have been changed for good.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

On March 13, 2020, Arkansas schools shut down for what was supposed to be one week of “Alternative Methods of Instruction” and one week of spring break (Stromquist, 2020) with a goal of “flattening the curve” of COVID-19 infection rates in the state. However, this morphed into a shutdown that lasted until the summer break. Arkansas decided that schools would reopen in the fall of 2021 despite rising numbers of COVID-19 infections (Cushman, 2020). The state offered 50 surgical masks, 50 gloves, and one thermometer per 50 teachers in each district (AR Dept of Education [@ArkansasEd], 2020). With no vaccines available and limited resources to stop the spread, Arkansas teachers had to find a way to make it work. Sanitizing, temperature recording, and balancing virtual and in-person learning were on the plate of every teacher statewide. The 2021-2022 school year proved to bring similar challenges as teachers were tasked with contact tracing, juggling in-person and virtual learning, sanitizing, and addressing the social-emotional impact of the instructional and social time lost to the pandemic. Although a vaccine exists for all school-aged students and teachers, the vaccination rates remained low across the state (Carlsen, et al., 2022). As the pandemic loomed over education for yet another school year, educational stakeholders were faced with the crisis of a significant increase in teacher attrition. The Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) releases data yearly on teacher attrition in the state. There was a significant jump between the average of the three school years prior to the pandemic and the years impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, DESE addressed the teacher shortage with waivers for hiring undergraduate capstone interns who had not yet completed their bachelor's degrees (Jacks, 2021). For the 2022-2023 school year, DESE declared a teacher shortage and requested emergency licensure rules to

go into effect for critical shortage areas - a request that was denied by the state legislature due to what Secretary Key states was a lag in district data reporting (Earley, 2022).

Problem Statement

Teacher attrition in Arkansas increased significantly during the ongoing pandemic (ADE Data Center, 2023). There is limited but emerging peer-reviewed research on the impact of the pandemic on teachers. Existing research is focused on the impact of the pandemic on student learning, student well-being, and societal inequities highlighted by the crisis. While that is also important, this study seeks to focus on the teacher workforce as influenced by the pandemic. Whether caused by pre-existing issues or spurred by the pandemic, teachers are leaving the field in Arkansas in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Focus on Instructional/Systemic Issue

Schools must have teachers to function. No matter how many excellent educational staff are in a school, the instruction and primary supervision are done by teachers. Without schools, parents cannot go to work. And without schools, a host of vital services are not available to students. The urgency to return to in-person school was evident during the public push for a return to in-person learning in the fall of 2020 (Key et al., 2020). A task force was dedicated to determining how to best prevent school closures. Schools serve a vital role in keeping society running.

When teacher turnover is high, meaningful instruction time is lost. The students of Arkansas should receive a quality education. Schools need veteran teachers to mentor new teachers to ensure success, accountability, and support. The movement of teachers, the leaving of teachers, and the mid-year resignations of teachers – all of which are forms of teacher attrition documented by DESE – impact student learning in quantity and quality. When there are not

enough teachers, class sizes are larger. Larger class sizes are linked to less individualized time with an instructor. Teacher attrition starts a ripple effect that reaches into learning and has lingering societal impacts.

The traditional causes of teacher attrition have been widely studied (Latterman & Steffes, 2017; Kini, 2020; Lambert et al, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). It is vital to understand the root of this attrition, see how it compares to what we know regarding teacher attrition, and identify gaps in what we know and what we need to know. In the same way, we scaffold the skill sets of students in our curriculum, we should scaffold our understanding of teacher attrition to move teaching forward as a profession. It is what Arkansas students deserve.

Is Directly Observable

The rate at which Arkansas lost teachers is directly observable through public data provided by the Arkansas Department of Education. During the three school years leading up to the pandemic (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019) teacher attrition in Arkansas averaged 16%. During the first school year impacted by COVID-19 (2019-2020), that number jumps to 21%. To better understand the significance of this jump, the building attrition means were put into a spreadsheet and the means were compared with a t-test. When tested for significance (defined by a t-test wherein significance is determined by a p-value < 0.05), the p-value was $< .001$, determining this is a significant difference in averages. The data correlate with the rise of COVID-19 in Arkansas. As additional observable data: the Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in Arkansas have been tasked with pre-service teacher support by promoting free Praxis exam tutoring through DESE to access a larger pool of qualified teachers from which to hire. Arkansas is pouring funding into the teaching candidate pool as a means to address the need for more teachers. In 2022, school districts were given the option to hire final-semester

undergraduate teaching candidates for full-time positions to serve as their teaching internships. This is unprecedented in Arkansas and is a direct result of the lack of candidates available to teach (Jacks, 2021). Arkansas public schools still had open postings for jobs in September when the school year started in August (Hayes, 2021). The state posted critical shortage areas with data for the 2021-2022 school year (Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). The top three areas included Special Education, Math, and Art. The state reported that 174 of these roles were currently filled by non-licensed long-term subs with an additional 465 of these roles being filled by teachers who are licensed in another subject area (2020). Teach for America places teachers in the Arkansas Delta. The University of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions works in partnership with state and local education officials to run the Arkansas Teacher Core: a program designed for professionals to transition into teaching. Students can gain provisional licensure in qualifying Master of Arts in Teaching programs after only six hours of credits (Jacks, 2021). The state additionally sponsors Arkansas Professional Pathway to Educator Licensure as a pathway to licensure. Despite these efforts from the state, there is a present and ongoing need for teachers. This is evidenced further by the DESE-declared teacher shortage for the 2022-2023 school year (Earley, 2022). Current licensure paths and state efforts do not appear to solve the lack of teachers in Arkansas classrooms.

Is Actionable

Teaching will continue to be an in-demand profession. Thus, there must always be teachers. A breaking point may come when there is more demand for teachers than educator preparation programs and licensure pathways can produce. Action must be taken before the situation becomes more dire. Existing improvement theory suggests that the cost (financially and in terms of student success) of teacher attrition is high (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond,

2019). Action could take a variety of forms depending on the needs of the teacher workforce. Mitigation strategies will likely have a cost (in the form of professional development, salary increases, salaries for teacher aides, funding for classroom supplies, etc...). However, Arkansas was presented with a budget surplus at the end of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Excess money exists in the state budget. Leveraging it to improve the state of the profession is within the scope of reality for Arkansas.

Connects to a Broader Strategy

Schools provide social programs for students, extra-curricular activities, food, medical care, occupational therapy, speech therapy, social worker support, and a safe space for children during the day. As a result, parents are able to work outside the home knowing their child is cared for and being taught to read, write, and ultimately become a productive member of society.

Education is a vital part of societal growth. Arkansas is currently ranked 41st in education (US News, 2021). If Arkansas wants to be able to continue to support students in their education, the state will continually need teachers. Teacher turnover negatively impacts student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ronfelt et al., 2013). Additionally, there are costs associated with recruiting, training, and hiring new teachers (Barnes et al., 2007). To provide Arkansas students with quality education and maintain cost-effective retention, the state must address the reasons teachers choose to leave their positions.

Is High-Leverage

Teachers are highly trained professionals that are the powerhouse of student life at a school (Kirabo Jackson, 2018). Public schools provide health screenings, assist in the early detection of developmental challenges, ensure that kids have food, provide mental health support, and serve as a medium for a host of social services that enrich the lives of students and

families. Schools are mandated to screen for vision, hearing, scoliosis, and body mass index (Arkansas Department of Education Health Screening Mandates, n.d.). In the 2020-2021 school year, 274,858 students received free lunch, and 35,215 students received reduced lunch. Overall, 65.55% of students are fed for free or at a reduced cost in Arkansas schools (ADE Data Center, 2023). In the 2021-2022 school year, 10,622 students experiencing homelessness were taught in Arkansas schools. At least one out of every thirteen students receives mental health therapy on campus (Walkenhorst, 2020). It is a cultural hub within each community. It should be run by professionals who are experts in their fields. Not only does this benefit society, but it gives measurable outcomes to the idea that a profession has a moral calling (Pijanowski, 2017; Pijanowski, 2007). Children need to learn to read, write, and progress in their social and emotional learning. This is all facilitated by a team of highly qualified educators. Without these educators, there is no reliable medium to provide these basic societal needs to students. The school provides a safe and productive space for kids to be during the typical adult workday.

Addressing the problem of teacher attrition can positively impact education in terms of both financial savings and student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). There are nearly 200 teachers who are on emergency long term substitute waivers with no formal teacher training; this is going to be impactful for years to come (ADE Data Center, 2023). Not only are students losing instruction for one year, but they are feeling the impact of the sudden end of the 2019-2020 year and the shortage of teachers in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. Students with a highly qualified teacher (HQT) are more likely to graduate high school, more likely to attend college, and have an average of \$250,000 higher lifetime earnings than students who have a teacher who is not an HQT (Chetty et al, 2014; Kirabo Jackson, 2018).

Over half a million teachers have left the profession since the start of 2020 (Greenblatt, 2022) with an average cost of 30% of the employee's salary to find and onboard a replacement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005), Arkansas schools lose money in the process to recruit and hire new teachers. Assuming an average salary of \$49,822, that is an estimated cost of \$14,950 to recruit and onboard a new teacher (Herzog & Wickline, 2021).

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors influence Arkansas teachers to leave their position?
2. What effect did the COVID-19 pandemic have on teacher attrition in Arkansas?
3. What factors influence the choice of Arkansas teachers to stay in their position?

Rationale

The demand for classroom teachers has risen with the global health crisis impacting Arkansas (ADE Data Center, 2023). It is essential to determine what caused teachers to leave during this time to mitigate that loss. A USA Today Poll (Page, 2020) found that 20% of educators were preparing to leave the field amid the pandemic. If it was solely because of the pandemic, we might be able to expect teachers to return to the field. Discovering what caused teachers to leave the field will determine how Arkansas can retain highly qualified teachers.

Mitigation strategies should rely on the nuances of the rationale teachers have for leaving. The study examined the phenomenon across the Arkansas population of teacher leavers. To do that, the survey incorporated pandemic influence on the reasons chosen. For example, a teacher may have said they chose to leave for safety reasons. To know how to mitigate that, it was necessary to understand the influence of the pandemic on that decision. The research was

conducted in a way that allowed the impact of the pandemic to be factored into each reason a teacher might choose to leave.

Overview of Methodology

Modeled after existing teacher exit surveys (Florida, 2005; Kansas, 2022; Ohio, n.d.) the study used an author-created survey to assess the reasons that teachers have left the classroom or are considering leaving.

After gaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Arkansas, the research began with finding teachers who left the classroom in any capacity after March 2020 (school years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, or 2021-2022). A “teacher leaver” includes those who have left the field, moved buildings, moved out of teaching positions, or considered leaving teaching. They were recruited via social media platforms and direct email contact. The goal of not contacting teachers through their administration was to provide a sense of anonymity to the fullest extent allowed so participants could give honest feedback. They were asked to fill out a survey regarding their reasons for leaving the classroom and the impact that the pandemic had on their career choices. Both pre-existing reasons for leaving and pandemic-specific reasons were in the survey. From there, the participants determined on a 5 point Likert scale how much the pandemic influenced each reason.

The survey had overlapping questions to provide validity and reliability. Additionally, it included questions regarding school type, teacher demographic, years of experience, and traditional versus nontraditional licenses. The goal was to determine whether the reasons for leaving were the same as before COVID-19 (pay, lack of support, leadership, etc...), reasons that were the same but amplified due to the pandemic (pay, lack of support, leadership, etc...), or reasons that were solely based on the pandemic (mask mandates, vaccine mandates, safety

protocols, etc...). This provided a solid foundation for recommendations for improvement. Traditional causes of attrition could be met with traditionally successful mitigation strategies. Amplified causes would require amplified mitigation, and reasons that were solely based on the pandemic would require new mitigation strategies altogether.

Positionality

Ravitch and Carl (2021) define positionality as, “the researcher’s role and social location/identity in relationship to the context and setting of the research” (p. 6). In alignment with this definition, this section shares information about the researcher’s role (including potential biases) and assumptions of the study.

The Researcher

From 2013 to 2020, I was a classroom teacher in Arkansas. As a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, I left the classroom due to the lack of protection and support for teachers. During my first six years, I thought I would teach until retirement. After the first pandemic shut down Arkansas schools, I recognized the signs of being burned out and I did everything I could to keep my students afloat while we were not in school. Then, we returned and had no protection from the virus. I additionally drove a bus during the 2019-2020 school year and was contracted to do so again in the 2020-2021 school year. Since leaving the teaching field, I have felt extreme guilt for leaving the field as I taught a subject with a teacher shortage (Spanish) and all area districts struggled to find bus drivers. I have witnessed countless peers and former colleagues who have expressed the same feelings of guilt and fear. While my experience demonstrates my passion for the field and the struggle many teachers are facing, I recognize that my story is not necessarily that of all Arkansas teachers who are or were in the same position. I hope to capture the real reason teachers left during this time. I acknowledge my own bias in that I was a teacher

who left the classroom. The data published by DESE demonstrated a higher-than-average rate of attrition for educators in the years impacted by the pandemic. It is important to know what happened so teacher attrition can be resolved strategically.

As a researcher, I recognize that it is critical to remove my bias from the narrative as much as possible. However, it is impossible to divorce my experiences from the way I see the world. While my experience drives my curiosity for the data, personal experience is not a holistic approach to creating an actionable plan to retain teachers. Instead, the themes gathered from a broader audience must be considered. My reasons for leaving were a mix of amplified normal reasons (pay, burnout, support) and pandemic reasons (lack of safety protocols, lack of funds for safety measures). If the same is true for other teachers, educational stakeholders must reevaluate how to retain the teacher workforce.

Assumptions

The first major assumption is that the data reported by DESE and public media outlets are accurate. The study based an increase in teacher attrition as reported by the public database annually. The study relied on the collected data to draw conclusions about why Arkansas teachers are leaving. To determine our next steps as a state, it is crucial to determine what caused teachers to leave. It is assumed here that reasons for attrition can be divided into two overlapping categories: “normal” reasons, “pandemic” reasons, and those that overlap (which will be labeled “amplified by the pandemic” reasons). To determine a course of action, the reason for attrition must align with the mitigation strategy. Any causes of attrition that were highly impacted by the pandemic should be examined through new strategies for teacher retention. Those that were already studied which fall into typical themes of attrition and amplified reasons should be met with attrition mitigation strategies that best align with current best practices. It also assumed that

the 1% retirement increase and 3% attrition increase demonstrate that teachers did not all retire early but have instead changed careers (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022).

When considering why any individual chooses a job, one may assume that they want to be happy in their chosen position. This happiness may come from a sense of purpose or from a fulfillment of needs (typically monetary: a satisfactory salary). In the case of teaching, there is a high sense of purpose: educating students, empowering them, and “making a difference.”

However, that comes with a lower salary than other professions. It is common to hear “outcome, not income” in reference to teachers. There is some balance to be expected. With that “sense of purpose” also comes a sense of respect in the community. This research assumes that teachers accept lower salaries and higher stress because they find joy and purpose in the work. However, the pandemic in many situations took away the joy of seeing students and added more work, responsibilities, and thus took away the sense of purpose. When that happened, teachers began to see their salary as no longer worth the workload they had.

To have an attrition mitigation strategy, it is necessary to know what caused teachers to leave. If teachers cited traditionally known reasons, policymakers and stakeholders could ramp up attrition mitigation strategies that have been successful in the past. However, if the reasons were something new as a result of COVID-19, mitigation strategies must be re-evaluated so that Arkansas schools can retain teachers so students can receive a high-quality education.

Policy and Culture: Finding Balance.

Each theme of teacher attrition must be approached with a different mitigation strategy to improve retention. These strategies would need to be implemented at a state level, a district level, or both.

The data are aligned in some places and disjointed in others. In general, teachers leave the field for the same general reasons. However, those do not overlap with COVID-19 related reasons in all cases. To connect these two ideas – the established causes of attrition and pandemic-related causes of attrition – the impact of the pandemic of each reason teachers had for leaving the field should be examined. Looking at the details of each reason would provide valuable insight into what made teachers leave in years impacted by the pandemic. Once stakeholders know the extent to which the pandemic impacted teachers' choices, they can begin to assess what can be done to mitigate the loss of teaching talent in Arkansas schools. Traditional mitigation strategies may work if the reasons are aligned with traditional reasons for leaving the field. However, there may be new strategies needed to fight against the impact of a worldwide pandemic in the state. What schools, states, and the nation decide to do to address teacher attrition will determine the rate at which teachers leave in the coming years.

Conceptual Framework

Teachers choose to leave based on a host of factors. These factors and the impact of the pandemic lead to the choice to stay (retention) or leave (attrition). The decision to leave can be mitigated by teacher retention strategies if and only if they align with the factors that influenced them to leave: life events and demographics, level of training, school support, and classroom support. While historic reasons for leaving the classroom are known (the four major themes), it is unknown what effect the pandemic has had on those factors. By determining the main influences on the decision to leave, educational stakeholders can align their retention strategies to mitigate the decision to leave. However, if the mitigation strategy is not aligned with the reasons teachers choose to leave, the result will still be teacher attrition.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

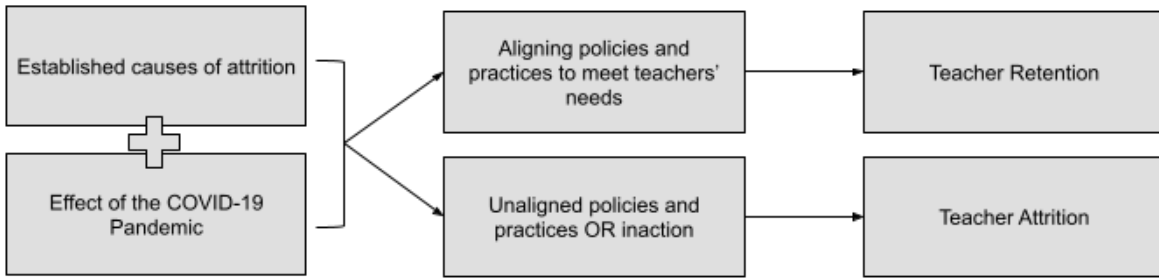
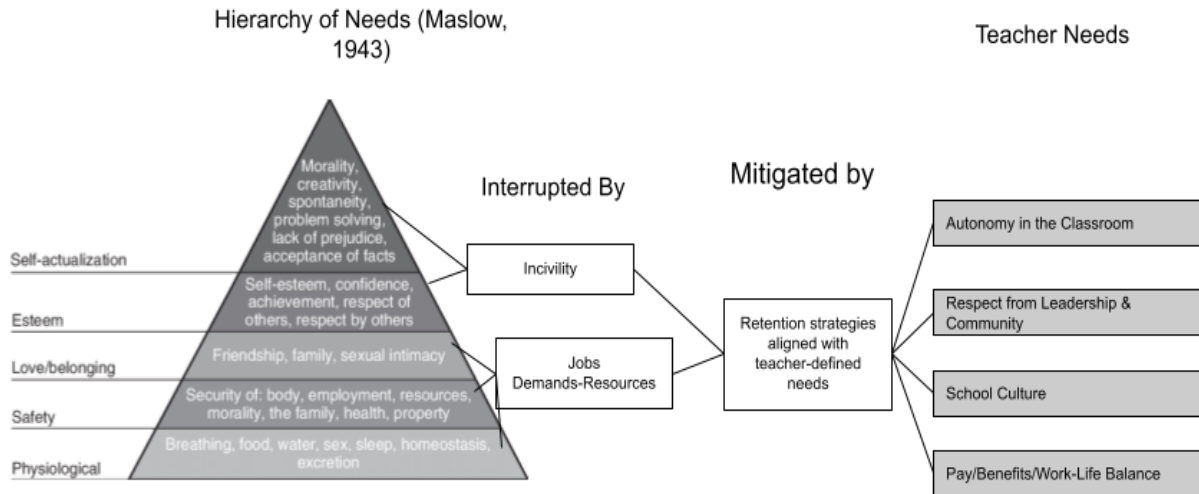


Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework



Context in K-12 Education in Arkansas

In Arkansas, the principal evaluation system cites that personnel management is not directly taught as part of the standards for entry-level administration (ADE Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). There is no formal mandate to ensure school culture and enforce management training for educational leaders. These are done solely at the discretion of the district. It could be argued that this could be covered in the annual professional

development for principals under “instructional leadership.” However, the LEADS 2.0 standards differentiate between an instructional leader and a culture/personnel leader.

Education/Professional Development Requirements

To maintain a teaching license in Arkansas, educators must complete 36 hours of ongoing learning per year (Arkansas Department of Education, 2016). Within those hours of training, the state mandates certain required courses each year: ethics, mandated reporting for child abuse, parental involvement, and a rotating subject (Johnson, n.d.). The Science of Reading is the latest subject rotation. Outside of the mandated training, schools can determine what professional development to require of their teachers. This can include professional learning community training, hosting educational speakers, reviewing school rules and policies, or subject-specific courses. In some cases, teachers get to determine how to use a portion of their professional development time. One of the reasons cited for leaving the field is that these training sessions are not related to professional needs. For example, veteran teachers may have needed training on virtual instruction and did not receive it. Thus, they were left to seek it on their own time. In addition to the stress of using a new form of instruction, they may have needed to learn how to access it. This highlights the importance of leaders engaging in the professional development selection process in consultation with teachers to identify how to best meet their needs (Koonce et al., 2019).

Arkansas teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree at the very minimum. The state Bureau of Labor cites a median salary of \$62,330 for workers with a bachelor's degree (Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, 2019). In contrast, the median salary of a teacher with a bachelor's degree is \$44,980. Additionally, a master's degree typically pays \$70,656 annual salary. However, the median salary of a teacher with a master's degree is \$49,733. An

Arkansas with a doctoral degree can expect a median salary of \$98,910. In contrast, the median Arkansas teacher salary is \$55,384 for a doctorate. Teacher salaries are publicly available on the school websites. However, it is often not specified what degree a teacher has. Additionally, the state only publishes the minimum, 15-year, and top salary for bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. Therefore, these averages are based on an average across reported district salaries (Arkansas Department of Education Division of Fiscal and Administrative Services, 2023). Another consideration is that each district sets its own pay scale, and they are not mandated to increase pay beyond a master's degree. As of the 2022-2023 school year, the state only reports the top of the pay scale as "top degree" at the highest years of experience (which varies across districts).

Other related fields pay more for the same skill set or degree. Content-area teachers are required to have a degree in their field as well as classroom teacher training. However, those same degrees pay higher outside the classroom. In the top ten in-demand professions, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (2019) cites degree areas that are also high-demand in schools: Postsecondary biology instructors (median wage \$160,330), Computer and Information Systems Managers (\$103,396), and Software Developers/Analysts (\$84,774). School salary schedules do not change based on the content-area of the teacher. It is reasonable to conclude that they may seek employment in the private sector where they could be paid more for the same degree concentration. This provides another potential rationale for teachers leaving the education field in Arkansas.

Classroom Support Context

Arkansas does not mandate that a general classroom teacher has a budget. The school district will often cover curriculum costs including technology, but it does not cover additional

costs of creating a nurturing environment for teachers and their learners. Often excluded from budgets are: decorations, extra workbooks, pens for grading, a mouse pad, a wrist rest, a webcam, dry erase markers, dry erasers, window coverings, instructional ‘extras’ such as field trips, and a host of other supplies that are considered an essential part of the school day. Some schools and some programs have a classroom budget (i.e., a district with \$200/teacher for class supplies, a district with a monitored closet of supplies, or a district with set budgets for art supplies or gym supplies for physical education classes). These vary across districts and departments.

The maximum class size in Arkansas depends on the grade level. The table below shows the limits per classroom:

Table 1.1 *Classroom Size Limits*

Grade Level	Class Size Limit	Class Size Average
Kindergarten	20	<i>Not specified</i>
Grades 1-3	25	23
Grade 4	28	25
Grades 5-6	28	25
Grades 7-12	30	<i>Not specified</i>

Note: The class size average is lower than the class size limit to prevent all classes from being at capacity;

Note: In grades 7-12, the maximum student load is 150

Note: Based on Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Class Size and Teaching Load, 2018

Arkansas classrooms do not typically have teacher aids unless it is legally necessary for a self-contained or resource classroom. The number of adults in a room is determined by the state limits of class size. On some campuses, parents will volunteer in the classroom to assist the

teacher, provide enrichment through career talks, or bring snacks or activities. During the pandemic, many schools did not allow volunteers to visit their campus. While done in the name of slowing the spread of a virus, it took away any extra adult supervision that was provided.

The funding of curriculum and materials is a basic tenet of Arkansas code per the Free Textbook Act of 1975. However, not all school districts nor subjects are alike in their practices. One school might have a classroom set of books for a traveling teacher to move from classroom to classroom throughout the day. Another might have five levels of a subject text all available online with student access via school issued laptops. Some teachers have a school laptop. Others have a desktop. These limitations and unclear guidelines were compounded during COVID-19 school closures. Since teachers were not mandated to have digital instructional materials before the closures, they were put in a position of being without access to resources both from a financial standpoint (there was no existing budget for this type of purchase) and from an availability standpoint (a backorder of technology supplies due to high demand in a sudden remote workforce across the state). The state and districts scrambled to get these resources to teachers and students during a global supply chain crisis (Goodman & Chokshi, 2021).

Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms will be used throughout the dissertation. They are provided here for context and clarity for readers.

Attrition - reduction in workforce; specifically, the phenomenon of teachers leaving their position or the field of K-12 education

BLR - Arkansas Bureau of Labor Research

Burnout - Special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2021)

DESE – Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

EPP – Educator Preparation Program

ESSER - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief - Funds distributed to schools to provide relief in the pandemic

HQT - Highly Qualified Teacher -those that have a degree, the appropriate license, and demonstrate content knowledge in the area(s) they teach (Arkansas Highly Qualified Teachers FAQs, 2013)

NEA – Northeast Arkansas

NWA - Northwest Arkansas

Pandemic – COVID-19 Pandemic period starting from March 13, 2020, and continuing through the time of this study

Retention - Keeping teachers in their positions; can refer to retention in a school building, school district, or the profession as a whole

Shortage - Lack of qualified candidates who are interested in the positions/stay in the positions in Arkansas schools

Turnover - The movement of teachers from their current position

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured to contain an abstract prior to this introduction chapter. Chapter Two is an empirical paper which details the research project of the dissertation. Chapter Three is the practitioner paper. Chapter Four provides a conclusion and is followed by references and appendices.

Chapter 2 – First Paper

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Arkansas in March of 2020, schools were closed and pivoted to virtual learning. However, schools returned to in-person learning in the fall of 2020 with limited protection for teachers (e.g., limited availability of masks and disinfectant, unclear sick leave, etc.). State data indicated that teacher attrition rates jumped significantly from school years prior, and reports of substitute teacher shortages were widespread. Something was happening with the Arkansas teacher workforce and the effects of the pandemic lingered into the new normal that followed. The dissonance between messages of support (e.g., stay safe, take care of yourself, etc.) and increasing workloads to accommodate a strained workforce combined with new duties that emerged out of the pandemic created more opportunities for stress.

This study explored the role that COVID-19 played on why teachers considered leaving the educational field. For school leaders and policymakers this is an important phenomenon to understand. If the dissonance between work expectations and work experiences was caused by factors unrelated to the pandemic, mitigation strategies must align with those root motivations if they are to be successful. The evolving nature of the job combined with the pandemic have emphasized a focus towards understanding teacher stress. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that people who do not have their basic needs met cannot function at higher levels to achieve their goals (Maslow, 1943). This impacts teacher self-efficacy: a person's belief in their capacity to successfully engage in the necessary behaviors to accomplish their goals (Bandura, 1977). A common thread throughout is the role of school leaders to build relationships, positive culture, develop teacher efficacy, and manage resources in ways that ameliorate overburdening workloads.

To gather data directly from teachers about why they left, a survey was designed around four historically prominent categories of attrition – life events and demographics, level of training, school environment, and classroom support – and the effect COVID-19 had on each category (Borman & Dowling, 2008). The survey mirrored those previously conducted at the state level in states other than Arkansas for attrition-mitigation purposes and includes both Likert scale questions and open responses.

Three research questions guided our analysis:

1. What factors influence Arkansas teachers to leave their position?
2. What effect did the COVID-19 pandemic have on teacher attrition in Arkansas?
3. What factors influence the choice of Arkansas teachers to stay in their position?

Why do teachers traditionally leave?

A meta-analysis of the existing research on teacher attrition revealed four overarching themes for why teachers leave: life events and demographics, level of training, school support/leadership, and classroom support (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Life Events & Demographics

Life choices impact career trajectories and play an important role in interpreting teacher attrition data. This includes things like partnership choices, having children, moving, children starting school, and retirement (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). These milestones and decisions are unique to each person and their family. Teachers may choose to leave the classroom because they decided to stay home with their children or to care for a family member. Since teaching is a female-dominant field, and women are often the parent that stays home with children, some attrition can likely be attributed to staying at home with new children. However, most women with a bachelor's degree or higher that give birth remain employed (Knop, 2019). This raises

questions about the nature of the work that teachers do and the experiences of those that choose to do it.

In the same manner that family and partnership choices will impact the choice to leave a job, retirement is also a major life event that results in leaving the classroom. DESE tracks teacher retirement numbers, and in recent years, the average increased 1% (Jacks, 2021). While that could explain some of the 3% increase in attrition, it does not account for most of it.

Marriage and moving are other life events that cause attrition. Many couples chose to postpone wedding celebrations due to pandemic restrictions, and travel was severely restricted. Despite travel being restricted and housing prices soaring, teachers may have chosen to leave their districts in favor of higher-paying districts within driving distance. This could play a role in the jump in attrition in Arkansas. The data refer to teacher movement of all sorts: within school buildings, between school campuses, between school districts, retirement, and leaving the field entirely. Some of the attrition could be explained by educators accepting higher-paying roles.

The final area of attrition linked to life events is furthering education. While this may be common in other areas, most graduate programs for educators are now online and require their students to be employed by a public school to participate in the program. While education does not typically cause attrition because the teachers are leaving the classroom in favor of returning to school, it could be linked to leaving the classroom for a leadership role within the school.

Level of Training and Experience

Teachers are not leaving their own classrooms to attend graduate classes on a regular basis. However, their level of training and experience can impact their decision to leave. The more training and expertise in the field, the less stressful teaching should be. Additionally, the more experience in the field (and the higher degree level earned), the higher a teacher's salary

will be. These two combined put some teachers in a position where their experience is finely tuned to the classroom, and their pay is above the starting salary for another field. Conversely, a teacher with less experience earning less pay is more likely to leave the classroom. Nearly half of all new teachers leave the field within the first five years (Carroll & Foster, 2010).

The relationship between years of experience and attrition is not linear. As teachers move closer to the middle of their careers, they are less likely to leave. However, novice teachers and those closer to retirement are more likely to leave the profession (Graham et al., 2014). This could be explained by the pay increase with years of experience or by the advanced years of classroom management experience. Teachers who report having extensive classroom management training and experience are less likely to leave their classroom (Ramos & Hughes, 2020).

School Support/Leadership

Administrative support is crucial to teacher success, and a lack of support can lead to feelings of frustration and burnout. Building a positive school culture is a critical and often challenging task for school leaders (Decker, 2019). At the core of culture building efforts is the importance of developing systems that are fair and processes that are just (Pijanowski & Brady, 2021). Supporting teachers through the general bureaucracy of a school is fraught with difficult to navigate dilemmas and those challenges can create their own ripple effect of stressors that is felt by teachers, counselors, and leaders (Hewitt, 2012; Jones & Pijanowski, 2023; Ray et al., 2020). How leaders approach setbacks in building positive relationships and systems with an open mind and intellectual humility sets an important tone for others in the building (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). While these are difficult variables to measure, studies have shown that poor

school culture, negative perceptions of leadership, and general lack of support will impact teachers leaving the classroom (Pearson, 2020; Boyd et. al, 2011).

Shuls and Flores (2020) conducted a study on three districts with low teacher turnover in Missouri – a neighboring state to Arkansas with similar demographics and teacher attrition challenges. Through interviewing the human resource departments at those districts, they determined that teachers are less likely to leave if they believed in the culture and leadership of their school, were supported by meaningful and effective mentoring programs, and if they had leadership programs for those who wish to pursue careers in school administration. The study mentioned that these elements were often organic means of giving teachers what they requested. These were not programs implemented or forced on a school: they were natural responses to maintaining school culture. That consideration implies that the school is responsive to the needs of its faculty and thus already has an advantage when it comes to teacher retention. Mentoring is a particularly important response to the aftermath of the pandemic (Lasater et al., 2021).

Classroom Support

Teacher satisfaction with their working conditions is not only related to the school's overall culture. Teachers are more likely to leave their job when they do not have access to high-quality resources and materials. Within the classroom, there are essential tools necessary to succeed. Often, only the bare minimum supports are provided for a teacher: chairs, desks, and a whiteboard. However, a sufficient classroom budget, manageable class sizes, additional adult supervision, and curriculum supplies are all proven factors in teacher retention and student success according to a meta-analysis of teacher retention research by Borman and Dowling (2008).

When teachers have access to adequate classroom resources, they are better equipped to create engaging and effective lessons, which can lead to a greater sense of accomplishment in the classroom.

The pandemic also introduced new demands for teachers. Teachers who had never used video conferencing were suddenly expected to teach using a virtual platform such as Zoom or Google Meet. This demand combined with the lack of resources died down when schools reopened for in-person learning. However, isolation procedures and contact tracing started on campus at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. While teachers balanced their normal high-stress jobs, they also took on the responsibility of hybrid teaching, absent students and classes of students due to contact tracing, mask mandates, sanitizing surfaces when the shelves at the supermarket were void of cleaning products, and the uncertainty of what policies would change or what schools would close. In the wake of COVID-19 as a pandemic, schools are now shifting to life with the novel coronavirus becoming endemic. Without classroom support, educational institutions are faced with continuing challenges of how to support teachers and students as it navigates the “new normal” (Pijanowski, 2021).

Pandemic-Related Attrition - RAND Survey

A RAND Corporation survey of 25,000 teachers conducted in 2020 showed that the leading cause of teacher attrition before and after the pandemic was stress. The researchers, Diliberti, Schwartz, and Grant, analyzed data from the American Teacher Panel and determined that stress levels were the number one cause of teachers quitting their jobs before they reach retirement. The survey concluded that 44% of teachers quit due to reasons related to COVID-19. Linked to the four themes of teacher attrition, the survey concluded that the following factors were the most influential in teachers leaving their position after the 2019-2020 school year:

- 1) Life events and demographics (i.e., Salary versus risk and stress; Health conditions; Family members at high risk for COVID-19; Childcare responsibilities)
- 2) Level of training (i.e., Instructional challenges)
- 3) School support/leadership (i.e., Inadequate support from school or district)
- 4) Classroom support (i.e., Instructional challenges; Inadequate remote instruction materials)

Because of the timing of the initial school shutdowns, most spring 2020 teaching candidates received less than half of a semester of full-time internship experience. This dominoed into the following years of Education Preparation Program (EPP) training for teacher candidates where universities and public K-12 schools did not allow campus visits. While instructors tried to replicate the experiences, only full-time final semester placements were allowed. This proved to be a struggle for teacher candidates who were never exposed to a classroom until their final semester in school. This was compounded by the higher likelihood of leaving within the first five years as a teacher.

Research Sample and Data Sources

Two strategies were used to gather survey responses: a targeted social media solicitation and direct email. To contact teachers who were considering quitting or who had already quit, the survey was published on four major social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The respondent recruitment focused on teachers who left their positions (e.g., left one school building in favor of another, left one school district for another, left the classroom for a different K-12 position, or left the field of K-12 education altogether). Any teachers who had changed school district, school building, career within K-12, or quit K-12 during the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, or 2022-2023 school years were invited to participate. This reflects the

data collected by the Arkansas Department of Education Database. The sampling strategy was convenience and snowball sampling. There was no direct way to track teachers who were part of the state attrition data because the state did not collect that information. Therefore, it was necessary to find out who left by asking in a public forum. The survey was posted on personal pages, teacher advocacy pages, teacher support groups, and to school stakeholder groups. The post used common hashtags for teachers seeking support or considering a career change.

Additionally, a Google Chrome extension for collecting email addresses was used to gather teacher email addresses that are publicly available on Arkansas websites. Emails were culled to remove administrators and support staff by comparing the emails to the state database of administrators. Then, the survey was sent to all remaining addresses through the University of Arkansas email system. Since the email limit is ten thousand per day, these were spread out over the course of a week to go out to all emails in the collected list.

While demographic data were collected, no identifying information such as email or phone number was collected. Additionally, teachers were not asked for their names or district/building name. They were only asked non-identifying questions regarding the purposes of the study (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, age, years of experience, and salary). The data were protected through a password protected Qualtrics database and individual responses were anonymous.

Data Collection Methods

An online survey instrument (Appendix C) was utilized to collect data from participants through Qualtrics. The survey contained four sections and took approximately five minutes to complete. Before distributing the survey via mass email and on four social media platforms:

LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, a pilot group of five participants were used to assess the internal consistency and face validity of the instrument.

The first section introduced the survey and outlines the parameters of the intended audience: classroom teachers in Arkansas who either quit or considered quitting in school years impacted by the pandemic (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022). This section also covered informed consent with language provided by the University of Arkansas - through which Institutional Review Boards (IRB) permissions were obtained. Participants could choose to consent or not consent. Failure to meet the requirements in either section ended the survey.

The second section of the survey asked for demographic information. This was aligned with the existing literature on who “typically” leaves the field. Asking for this information would help determine if those who leave or consider leaving were consistent with the characteristics of those who “normally” leave. While there was no identifying information in this section, it allowed for a broader understanding of the sample group.

The third section of the survey provided four detailed lists of reasons that teachers leave the field. Each set of reasons was connected to one of the four themes of teacher attrition: life events and demographics, level of training, school environment, and classroom support. The participants were asked to select all the reasons for leaving that apply to them. After their selections were made, subjects were presented with a five-point Likert scale to determine the impact of COVID-19 on their reason to leave their position with 1 = strongly not influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, 2 = not influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, 3 = unsure if influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, 4 = influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, 5 = strongly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth and final section of the survey was an open-ended prompt

that asked what could have retained them in their position and any concluding thoughts they would like to share.

Limitations and Delimitations

The attrition data reported to the state only represents the phenomenon at a building-by-building level and does not include key demographic data like teacher ages. While movement can be measured, anyone who left the field entirely could not be specifically targeted. For that reason, the survey was directed to educators who had moved in any way or had considered moving or leaving the profession.

Teachers who were considering leaving may be hesitant to share that information even in an anonymous method of communication. The study asked sensitive questions about job perceptions and leaving a job. Ethically, there may be concerns about asking teachers openly if they are considering leaving. Teachers who are, or were, frustrated with existing systems and the impact of COVID-19 may be more likely to take the survey.

The study was designed to target an audience on social media. While that limits the data collected in some regards, it did manage to hit a substantial portion of the population. Pew Research (2021) reports that 72% of Americans use social media in some capacity. That is higher for younger age groups. In that regard, the study may reach a younger audience. To address that, this study compared the age groups reported in the sample size to the ages of the population of teachers in Arkansas.

Findings

There were 617 surveys completed. Of these 617 surveys, 602 met the criteria to be included and indicated they were teachers in the school years being studied (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022). The descriptive statistics for the study's sample include age, sex, race, years

of experience, school setting, ethnicity, highest education level, marital status, salary, household income, household size (see Appendix A). This baseline information allowed the participants responses to be compared to commonly established factors associate with teachers leaving the field which include the first five years of teaching, a partner with higher income, fewer dependents, stress, pay, and student behavior.

Frequency analysis was applied to each response category to explore patterns in the reasons that teachers cited for leaving or wanting to leave and the impact that COVID-19 had on those (potential) decisions. The responses were then contextualized by coding the open-ended responses of teachers who left the field through an open coding approach. Prominent themes from the open responses were compared to reasons chosen for leaving and the impact the pandemic had on those reasons.

From a gender and race perspective, the participants are representative of the population of Arkansas teachers. The average contracted salary was \$51,800 which is also in line with the state-reported data. Overall, the demographics of the sample are closely aligned with the population of Arkansas teachers. Average household income was highest among those who left K-12 public education entirely.

To get a better idea of the demographic data in the context of teacher attrition, the information was recategorized in Appendix A by attrition type. This was done to give insight into the characteristics of those who moved positions as aligned to DESE measurements of attrition. Additionally, the selected demographic information was reflective of cited indicators of who is most likely to leave a teaching position. In close alignment with data reported by the state, 19.6% of participants in this survey moved from their position in some capacity. Additionally, 66.53% of respondents considered leaving. Of the 602 total responses, 440 went on

to answer questions regarding attrition and the impact of COVID-19 on their decision or consideration to leave their job (meaning 73.1% of teachers have either quit or considered quitting).

Research Question 1: What factors influence Arkansas teachers to leave their position?

The survey results were closely aligned with existing literature regarding why teachers choose to leave their position. Teachers cited that their increased workloads were a factor when they considered leaving their positions with 244 (61.15%) selecting that remote instruction was challenging, 248 (62.16%) citing that hybrid instruction was challenging, and 233 teachers (58.4%) indicating that in-person instruction was challenging. Further, they said they did not have the time and resources for the number of students they were assigned (185; 46.37%). This was evidenced in the “other: please specify” answers with 255 responses mentioning stress or workload caused them to consider leaving their job.

Arkansas teachers in the survey also reported that administration and school culture influenced their decisions. Across the survey-provided responses, 230 (56.51%) said they were unsatisfied with school bureaucracy, 175 (43%) said they did not receive support from their administration, and 171(42.01%) said they were unsatisfied with their principal or school leadership in general. This was also cited organically from teachers within the “other: please specify” with 148 saying they considered leaving due to school administration. This response was described by respondents in different ways. For some it was directed at the dissonance between how their workload was being managed and the message of supporting their personal health: *"We keep being told by administration that they will try to 'take things off our plate,' yet nothing has been taken off, more has been added."*

The final factor with the greatest number of selections involved teacher pay. They cited that the pay was not equivalent to the degree they held (179; 46.13%) and that the pay was not sufficient (166; 38.52%). This did not come up on its own as much in the other: please specify the category (with 51 citing this directly), but this could be due to “pay” being presented on the first screen under the Life Events tab. This could also potentially be explained by the way the “other” responses were categorized (wherein “pay” was only tallied when it was a standalone category and not tied to anything else such as workload). It could be considered part of the workload, but the coding strategy did not define it in that way. Table 1 shows the top 10 reasons for leaving across class support, systems, pay, and leadership.

Table 1

Top 10 Reasons for Leaving

Categories	<i>n</i>
CLASS SUPPORT	
Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging	248
Remote instruction was challenging	244
In-person attendance was challenging	233
I did not have enough resources for the number of students	185
SYSTEMS	
I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy	230
PAY	
I did not get paid enough for my degree level	179
The pay was not sufficient	166

Categories	<i>n</i>
LEADERSHIP	
I did not receive support from my school leadership	175
I was unsatisfied with my school leadership in general	171
Communication from school leadership was inadequate	123

Research Question 2 What effect did the COVID-19 pandemic have on teacher attrition in Arkansas?

The three most frequently selected categories were all pandemic related: remote instruction (244), hybrid instruction (238), and in-person balance (233). When asked directly about the impact of the pandemic, teachers ranked remote as the most impacted by the pandemic with approximately 92% of the 668 total selections being rated “moderate” or “major” effect. It appears that the pandemic influenced the three primary reasons teachers reported that they were considering leaving or did leave.

Additionally, COVID-19 may have caused teachers to examine and reconsider their pay. Under life events, the reason with the most selections by respondents was “I did not get paid enough for my degree level” with 179 responses. When examining the impact of COVID-19, approximately 55% of respondents said that the pandemic had a moderate or major effect on this decision. When considering pay versus degree level, approximately 54% said that the pandemic had a moderate or major impact on this reason to leave their position. While this theme revealed itself as a highly chosen reason to leave, it was not nearly as affected by the pandemic as the workload.

The most frequently selected options under school support included report support from school administration and satisfaction with school bureaucracy dissatisfaction with the principal in general. The most highly impacted category appears to be inadequate safety plans, though only 112. When considering school support over 65% of respondents who chose this category cited that the pandemic had a moderate or major effect on their selection. That response is almost identical in school administration, communication dissatisfaction with skilled school bureaucracy, and dissatisfaction with the principal.

Based on resources having the most selections and workload being the most frequently cited reason teachers would stay, it is reasonable to conclude that the pandemic may have highlighted pre-existing reasons to leave the field (high demands/large workload). The health-related categories were rated as most impacted by the pandemic, but they were not frequently chosen. The pandemic alone was not one of the top themes from “other: please specify,” nor was it one of the most frequently mentioned factors which would have influenced teachers to stay. Although the pandemic alone did not cause higher levels of attrition, it is impossible to ignore the relation it had to increased workload and stress. Participants ranked the effect of the pandemic with a maximum score of five. The means for the top ten choices are found below.

Table 2 - *Top Ten Affected by COVID-19 Responses*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging	4.66	0.74	0.55	248
Remote instruction was challenging	4.54	0.87	0.76	244
In-person attendance was challenging	4.50	0.84	0.71	233
Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic)	4.46	0.85	0.73	112

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
A health condition	4.21	1.18	1.39	39
Lack of technology training	4.08	1.29	1.66	24
A loved one has a health condition	3.90	1.49	2.23	29
Not enough resources/time for number of students	3.86	1.28	1.64	185
I did not have adequate supplies in the classroom	3.71	1.29	1.67	78
Not have enough adults to support students	3.71	1.38	1.89	84

Classroom support issues were reported as being the most influenced by the pandemic as demonstrated by the highest selection frequency and high Likert scale response averages. This is aligned with pre-pandemic reasons for attrition if they are categorized as “stress,” but resources were not specifically found in the themes of what teachers said would have retained them in their positions. This could suggest that COVID-19 highlighted the lack of resources available, but this would have been an indirect cause of teacher attrition.

Other highly selected themes were related to school leadership, pay, and high demands. If we consider the lack of resources and high job demands to be subthemes of “stress,” these cited reasons for leaving or considering it are well aligned with the “other” responses and the open-ended response question.

Research Question 3: What factors influence the choice of Arkansas teachers to stay in their position?

To identify themes within the open-ended responses, a thematic analysis, the “process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” was employed (Maguire & Delahunt,

2017). The coded responses are in table 3. Teachers cited that they would be likely to stay with better school leadership, higher pay, less stress, and more respect. When asked what could have retained them in their position, the highest responses were support from administration (120 responses), higher pay (112), fewer demands (81), less stress (73), better student behavior (73), respect and societal appreciation (73).

It was interesting to note that support from administration outranked every other category in the open responses of the survey. The second highest influential factor was higher pay. The average starting teacher salary in Arkansas was \$36,000 in the 2021-2022 school year (DESE, 2022). Table 3 shows the themes that emerged in the open responses and their frequencies.

Table 3

Top Categorized Responses to “What could have or would influence you to stay?”

Categories	<i>n</i>
Support from administration	120
Higher pay	112
Fewer demands	81
Less stress	73
Better student behavior/consequences for actions	73
Respect and societal appreciation	73
Support from parents	41
Better school culture	39
Better COVID-19 safety protocols	32
A well-informed state department	31
Teachers having a voice in decisions	30

Better school culture and support from administration could potentially be considered as one category. However, in this data, school culture was only attributed to “support from administration” when the respondent directly cited a principal, leader, or administrator when saying that a better school culture would have influenced them to stay. In some cases, teachers identified broader issues of respect and care that extended beyond just the building leadership team, “I felt like my administration, parents, and the state did not care at all about me or my safety. It became very apparent that I was not valued for my skills.” These sentiments speak to a larger issue of building positive family school relationships that ameliorate tensions between teachers and parents (Lasater et al., 2021).

The response, “Better COVID-19 safety protocols” included things like sanitizing, masking, and an overall feeling of safety and security on campus. “Better COVID-19 protocols (general)” refers to things, other than personal health and safety, such as consistency in protocols and clarity in quarantine protocols. “Better safety protocols” refers to things that were not pandemic related at all, such as campus security, active shooter training, and general workplace safety hazards.

Conclusion - The role of leadership

COVID-19 highlighted existing issues, but the reasons teachers left did not depend solely on the pandemic. Survey participants said that they did not feel valued by their leaders. The word “support” was in just under one third of the open responses. The word “admin” or “principal” was mentioned in 40% of answers. Others said that the pandemic caused them to reevaluate their pay versus the workload. Administrators, pay versus workload, and respect are the most impactful determining factors in the decision of Arkansas teachers to stay or leave their positions. While some discussed workload in comparison to pay, others simply pushed back at

the increase in responsibilities at a time when they were already feeling overburdened, *“Admin is not helpful because we are continually getting more and more responsibilities put on us when we should be given some grace.”*

Building-level leaders are a driving factor in school culture and teacher retention. This was evident in the survey data and aligns with historical causes of teacher attrition. Within the survey responses, there were clear themes related to a perceived lack of support from their leadership team including wishing school leaders would, *“Have my back”*; *“Hold your promises”*; and *“Have a clear agenda as a principal: care about teachers and students, not just test scores and state standards.”*

Educators make a lot happen with little resources across the board, and administrators want to help their teachers. Each stakeholder should strive for authenticity and transparency as a means to build trust and community. The problems and possible solutions to teachers feeling supported by their leaders cannot be discussed without acknowledging the role of each stakeholder in the school. This study focused on teachers’ perceptions. They are in the classroom with students, answering parents, enforcing mandates, and communicating learning needs and professional needs to their building leadership. Leaders are working with the community, balancing the school dynamic, disciplining students, observing teachers, managing budgets, and taking directives from central administration. Building leadership makes choices or shares information that is often conflated with mandates from central administration. All of these lived experiences cannot be left out of the narrative of how to support teachers.

Due to the dynamic and diverse nature of managing a school building, there is no single “cookie-cutter” way to manage a school. There is an unmeasurable element of community understanding that every principal needs. However, there are several ways that building-level

leaders can empower their staff and advocate for teachers. The following recommendations are flexible to the needs of each building. These are pillars of employee support that can be adjusted to the needs of a school.

Based on the responses of this study, teachers do not feel supported. As one teacher put it, *"I want to be appreciated and treated like a professional."* That support starts with feeling understood, is followed by respect, and follows all the way up Maslow's Hierarchy of needs to feeling inspired. While the advice seems broad, there are practical ways to build respect for teachers and demonstrate respect. This should reflect the needs within the building, but it can look like being responsive to emails and in meetings. It can be establishing language that promotes the teacher as the expert in their classroom.

People need to be seen, heard, and understood. As one teacher reported, *"I felt like they did not care about us as people."* Seeing and hearing the needs of employees is vital to understanding how they function as individuals and as part of the school. This will look different for every school. This can be a word of encouragement or a smile in the hallway. It could take the form of sharing something positive that was said about the teacher's class that week. It can be showing flexibility and grace when life events happen or congratulating each other when they hit milestones. In the same way that teachers get to know the unique needs of their students, principals should know the unique needs of their staff.

Respect their time. If it can be an email, put it in an email. If it needs to be a group conversation, reserve that time in advance whenever possible and provide an agenda. Get the right people in the right room for the right purpose. Do not ask teachers for unpaid labor. Find out who is staying late at the school building and see what supports they need to get their tasks accomplished within the time they have. Set the expectation that work happens during work

hours. Help teachers set boundaries. Encourage them to log out of their school email after a certain time. Advocate for teachers at the district level to get the resources they need and then follow through in ways that match the message. The dissonance between what teachers heard and what they were asked to do was evident in survey responses like this comment, "*Their actions did not match what they said.*" Schools are not perfectly controlled environments.

Transparency and humility in communications can provide a way to share how things may fall outside the leader's control despite their best efforts to follow through.

Leaders can be intentional about what they are doing to support teachers. Teachers can be specific in describing their needs to leaders. Being explicit about what actions are being taken or should be taken is a great step in building trust and supporting educators.

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Chapter 3 – Second Paper

When teachers leave a school, the choice often hinges on whether their needs are being met. Teachers need adequate pay to meet their physiological needs. They need resources to support their work at school, a guarantee and belief that they are safe, and adequate healthcare to ensure their need for safety is being met. Teachers deserve a sense of connection amongst their peers and with their manager/principal. From that point, teachers can gain a sense of respect and recognition for their work. And finally, if all these conditions are met, teachers can reach a point of self-actualization. The pandemic magnified the need for a sustainable wage, safe work environment, and societal respect in the teacher workforce.

If the data are examined through these lenses, it is easier to understand why teacher attrition was significantly different in the school years impacted by the pandemic. Happy workers with good companies do not leave unless outside factors cause them to do so. Teachers who have their needs met (financially and emotionally) are less likely to be impacted by typical and pandemic-related attrition reasons. However, this is not done by any one stakeholder. For attrition mitigation strategies to end in successful teacher retention, they must be aligned with the reasons teachers cite for leaving and supported by the entire system of public education.

Teacher attrition has been extensively studied over several decades, with common causes summarized into themes such as Life Events and Demographics, Level of Training, School Support/Leadership, and Classroom Support (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Although retention strategies have been developed in alignment with those themes, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' perceptions of their role and compensation creates uncertainty about the effectiveness of these strategies. Based on the assumption that Arkansas does align its mitigation

strategies with the known causes of teacher attrition, this study theorizes that current policies need to be realigned to consider the factor of the impact of the pandemic on educators.

The disruptions on the hierarchy of needs can be examined through the lenses of incivility theory wherein incivility in the workplace can trigger a spiral of conflict (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), jobs demands-resource theory (which suggests that working conditions can be categorized into demands [i.e., the tasks primarily related to burnout] and resources [i.e., disengagement], (Demerouti, et. al., 2001), and an elusive to define factor of “joy” in the profession.

Successful Teacher Retention Strategies

Teacher retention strategies must be closely aligned to the reason teachers are leaving. Studies have been done on teacher attrition and what leads to such high attrition rates (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Taylor & West, 2019; Vagi et al., 2019). Zamarro et al. (2021) captured data regarding whether teachers quit, or consider quitting, because of the pandemic. Publicly accessible data published yearly by DESE demonstrates the increased percentage of teacher attrition. However, these data cannot explain *why* attrition is so high. It can only show that there has been a measurable difference as compared to previous years.

It is vital to differentiate between “attrition” and “shortage.” Attrition suggests that teachers are leaving. Shortage suggests that there are positions that lack qualified teachers in the candidate pool. The publicly claimed “teacher shortage” creates an urgency for candidates to apply for positions, but it does not explain the phenomenon of the pandemic on the teacher workforce (and thus long-term instructional impact). For a shortage study considering the impact of COVID-19, enrollment information of educator preparation programs (including alternative paths to licensure), graduation rates, and career tracking would need to be examined. This would

provide a holistic look into whether or not students are studying education and if they are choosing to teach after graduation (which would also need to consider those who teach out of state to teach). While the state will need teachers to fill the role of those who leave the profession, the strategy to keep current teachers varies from the strategy to attract new professionals to the field.

Life Events and Demographics

Higher Salaries. Arkansas schools experience attrition and shortage in different ways. A wealthier school district may receive dozens of applications (no shortage), but it loses teachers (attrition). When a wealthy suburban school loses a teacher, it is much easier to attract a new candidate with their resources and salary schedule. However, lower-paying districts often lose candidates to higher-paying districts nearby (attrition). When examined county by county, pay disparity between districts can range from \$0-\$13,275 (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022). Schools struggle to recruit applicants because their salary offerings are not competitive with neighboring schools (shortage). When a rural school loses a teacher, they may have to function without a teacher to fill that role. This can be ameliorated through distance learning, obtaining waivers for larger class sizes, or simply removing the course if it is not state-mandated.

The subject of teacher pay has been an ongoing topic in teacher retention. The minimum starting salary for a teacher in Arkansas is \$34,900. Arkansas Act 170 raises the minimum salary to \$36,000 starting in the 2022-2023 school year (2019). A study done by Allegretto (2022) showed that teachers are paid, on average, 23.5% less than their peers with the same education and experience level. While the starting salary is still low, other financial incentives exist in Arkansas for teachers. These include loan forgiveness (e.g., public service forgiveness), grants for higher education (e.g., TEACH grants), specialty-specific pay stipends or commitment

bonuses (e.g., bilingual pay increases, science teacher stipends, low-income district commitment bonuses), and even vaccine and COVID-19 retention bonuses (paid at a daily rate in some schools, not mandated statewide) (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022; ADE Data Center, 2023). Despite these incentives, the national average pay gap as adjusted for benefits is still at 14.2%.

There was a public call to use the 2022 state budget surplus on teacher raises. However, that call was largely unheard by Arkansas legislators. The issue was handed back to individual school districts to fund a one-time bonus from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds that were not previously allocated to be used for teacher pay increases. In a few schools, this set off an “us-versus-them” narrative and teachers were asked to vote whether to accept a one-time bonus or continue with the previous plans for the funds (Savage, 2022).

Higher Job Satisfaction. Societal expectations of educators are that they are “in it for the outcome, not the income.” This cultural norm has tied a sense of purpose to a position that is historically underpaid. While there must be a balance in joy and pay in the workforce, there comes a breaking point in pay wherein no amount of happiness will suffice and vice versa. Employees who are satisfied with their job are less likely to leave.

Level of Training

Better Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Training. Entering the field with adequate preparation is vital to success in any profession. Likewise, continuing education is key to maintaining up-to-date practices within the field. Teachers who are prepared for the school environment are more likely to succeed in their careers (Ronfeldt, 2021). As a professional advances with higher certifications and degrees, it is reasonable to assume they become more invested in their career and more knowledgeable in their field. Teaching is no different. The

more prepared a teacher candidate is, the more likely they are to thrive in a classroom. This is closely aligned with licensure program standards and field experience requirements in traditional license pathways (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2022). There are eight different pathways leading to teacher licensure in Arkansas (Adequacy Report, 2022, pp. 67-68). The efficacy of each path has not yet been studied, but it is generally accepted that teachers are more likely to stay based on thorough training (Ronfeldt, 2021).

Arkansas has the State Teacher Education Program which pays \$3,000 of federal student loans for three years (a total of \$9,000) for teachers who are in a critical shortage subject area or geographic location (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2021). Additionally, the state reimburses any public teacher or administrator for six hours of college credit – not to exceed \$3,000 – at any accredited in-state institution through the Arkansas Teacher Opportunity Program (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2021). While these programs may provide some incentive to teachers, it has not been studied whether they retain teachers in Arkansas schools. However, a financial incentive has proven to be successful in other contexts. Additionally, it is tied to remaining at the school. At a federal level, the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grant provides funds for educators for university classes in exchange for four years of service in a Title 1 school. Financial incentives for teachers in the form of educational stipends, repayments, and grants exist in Arkansas. Their impact on teacher attrition has not yet been studied, but these programs are mentioned in the 2022 House and Senate Committee on Education Adequacy Report (p. 67).

There is no mandated mentorship at the state level for novice teachers (those who are in their first three years of teaching). However, districts must use the Teacher Excellence Support

System (TESS) to analyze teacher performance on a rotating basis as they see fit (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022).

School Support/Leadership

Positive Relationships with School Leadership; School Culture. How teachers can be kept in a school with a good leader. Arkansas has very little in the way of mandated school leadership training. Instead, this is done on a district-by-district basis. The efforts are disjointed at best as the leadership styles vary widely across the state. Each school building chooses how they will manage teachers, students, and culture. Some state support was put behind Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for student school culture, but there is nothing formal at a state level that facilitates positive school culture. In the principalship and school culture section of the Adequacy Reports (2022), the only mention of principal training is that 46 Arkansas principals completed a Master Principal Program (MPP) and were given a \$25,000 yearly bonus over the course of five years (p. 68).

Leaders in a school must have at least some graduate credit hours as well as a leadership certification exam to be eligible for an administration license. However, it is up to each individual campus to determine how they will boost morale, support teachers, observe teachers, manage schedules, and divide administrative duties. Principals should be keenly aware of teachers' workload, emotions, and sense of belonging within a school as it plays a key part in higher job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Classroom Support

Lower Job-Demands. A school with great culture can only exist if it is supported by state and local policies. Class sizes, teacher-to-student ratios, money for classroom materials, and teacher salaries all impact teacher attrition (García & Weiss, 2019).

Arkansas mandates that class sizes are capped by grade level and subject (Arkansas Department of Education, 2018). However, these class sizes can be modified with waivers and additional teacher stipends (ADE Data Center, 2023). According to the ADE Data Center, these waivers are higher than average in years impacted by the pandemic (2023). Additionally, some of the emergency waivers do not provide extra pay for the extra work and fewer preparatory hours (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022).

Diliberti, Schwartz, and Grant (2021) concluded that COVID-19 related attrition could be addressed by involving teachers in the development of plans to reduce stress, giving teachers more flexibility in their roles, and partnering with third parties to regularly test students and teachers for the virus. In the time since the publication, a vaccine has been released. The conclusions of the RAND study (2020) point directly to teacher involvement in school policies regarding lowering stress, increasing flexibility, and providing protection from illness amid the ongoing crisis. The Adequacy Report also supports teacher voice-and-choice in their classroom and work environment (2022, p. 19).

Even before the pandemic teaching was considered a high-stress job. Most common stressors among teachers include conflict or lack of support from principal leadership, poor school climate, high demands (e.g., testing, students' behavior, and challenging relationships with parents), limited resources, and limited time outside the classroom to mitigate stress (Greenberg, et al., 2016). It is not enough to tell teachers to practice self-care without providing the time, resources, support, and systemic change needed to lower their stress in the workplace (Berryhill, et al., 2009). A 2022 RAND Corporation study found that addressing workplace stressors could improve teacher retention. Their main takeaway echoes that of the

recommendations found throughout the teacher retention literature: lower stress, respect and support teachers, and train principals to be better people managers (Steiner, et. al, 2022).

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Chapter 4 – Conclusion

The data collected for this study are somewhat different from the results of the state survey in 2021. There are a variety of reasons this could be. Perhaps the one year between the surveys has changed teacher perceptions of their leaders, pay, and respect. However, the state data were collected for official business. It is reasonable to assume that if the government body that funds your salary asks if you are happy with your job, you might be more inclined to say yes. On the other hand, if someone unaffiliated with the state asks if you are happy with your job, it may generate a more honest response. The same could be expected of a teacher response to administrators. If teachers know their supervisors might have access to their responses, they may be more likely to respond in a positive manner regarding their happiness with their manager.

Leaders

Districts are currently in control of how a principal should lead their building. This allocates a lot of power to districts in terms of teacher retention. As proven in existing literature and in this survey, a principal can make or break a school. Districts can set leadership requirements and goals. In the same way teachers are measured by student testing, leaders could potentially be measured by the retention rates on their campus. This is considered good practice in human resources (Chin, et. al, 2020) and could certainly be implemented by districts with proper leadership training support.

Having a good leader retains teachers (H.R. & S. Committee on Education, 2022). A good leader is one who is highly skilled in people management (Azad, et al., 2017). People management skills cannot be left to chance. It is not enough to mention building culture and move on without an actionable plan of improvement. To make any profession a sustainable career, it must sustain the well-being of the professionals within. Drawing from successful

practices in other fields, this can look like one-on-one meetings, culture surveys (and actionable items as a result of those survey results), and ongoing discussions about what it means to thrive in the workplace. Domain 4 of the LEADS 2.0 principal assessment standards addresses Human Capital Management. Within that rubric, the state addresses that “the program of study for leadership did not give direction for this work.” If leaders are empowered with good management skills, the entire school benefits (Shuls & Flores, 2020). There are two places to target principal understanding of personnel management: in leadership preparation programs and in the field.

The state mandates that a principal complete a course of study to qualify for an administrator license. Those programs are evaluated by the state and by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and are aligned with the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards. For emerging educational leaders, the program requirements for licensure should be examined. The current NELP standards imply that being a good manager is part of being a principal, but none are as robust as the needs of teachers in this survey’s data demand. This is not to say that the NELP standards are not robust measurements of what a principal is expected to do. Rather, it is an indicator that while principals are a driving factor in teacher retention, their skills in human capital management are left to chance. There is a wide disparity between the standards and the applications of building-level leadership. Allowing principals to be program completers without this skillset will directly impact the success of their schools as measured by teacher retention and professional culture.

In the same way that the state mandates continued education for teachers in vital subjects, the state should mandate and provide funding for principals to stay up to date on personnel management and culture-building practices. Survey participants said, *"I felt like they did not care*

about us as people" and *"Have a clear agenda as a principal: care about teachers and students, not just test scores and state standards"* and similar things about administrators over 100 times when asked what would influence them to stay. The state currently funds a Master Principal Program, but it is not a mandatory program for leadership across the state. In partnership with The Urban Schools Human Capital Academy (USHCA), Arkansas DESE published a Human Capital Playbook for the 2020-2021 school year. Its intentions are to create a guide for principals and districts to better understand teachers, their needs, and how to retain them. However, the playbook itself is not mentioned in the 2022 Adequacy Reports, nor do they appear to have any sort of state support for implementation. Additionally, it is unclear how this artifact has been shared to schools. While this could be a key player in reforming principal leadership in terms of personnel management, it is absent in the state evaluation of principal leadership.

To support practicing principals in their journeys to become great leaders, the state can fund and implement robust mentorship programs for educational leaders. The teacher retention playbook issued by the state recognizes that mentorship is key to culture, and principals can and should receive mentorship from recognized building leaders. This poses the need for school culture evaluations. Principals who are leading successful cultures (as measured by a culture survey and high retention) can work with principals who are not yet masters in school culture. This does come at a price: principals, like teachers, should not bear more work than they are capable of managing well and that includes not neglecting their own self-care (Pijanowski & Ray, 2018). Mandating professional learning via mentorship for principals will create the need for distributing leadership duties to other school leaders. This could mean more hires in leadership or a more well-staffed human resources team that manages culture (as supported in

the Principals Human Resources Bill of Rights made available on the state website). The state matrix that designates school budget allotments should reflect this need.

Current Arkansas standards for principalship degrees, state assessments of current principals, nor the state laws mandate any sort of robust people management skills for the leaders of public schools. The state can and should act upon this by modifying AR Code § 6-17-302 (2020) and thus leveraging the power of a good manager.

The role of the federal government in principal training could include funding for teacher retention studies based on building leadership. The What Works Clearinghouse provided by the Institute of Education Sciences does not have a supported study that gives measurable results. However, if this were to become available, Arkansas schools could use Title II funding to support administrator training (Green, 2018). Congress can and should consider taking actions that support principal training as a specific tool for school culture as it pertains to teacher retention.

Pay

Whether or not teachers are paid fairly is an ongoing national debate. On average, teachers make 23.5% less than other college graduates (Allegretto, 2022). Though there are opponents of this figure who cite shortened annual contracts and school breaks, the Economic Policy Institute measures these benefits to give an offset of 9.3%, leaving the overall compensation gap at 14.2%. While it is an individual's choice to balance benefits and wages, when the total compensation package is considered, teachers are still underpaid compared to their peers.

Due to the funding matrix for Arkansas schools, districts are limited with how they use their budget for teacher pay. A large school district will receive more funding to cover the

number of students on their campuses. Additionally, the larger school has the flexibility to maximize their student-to-teacher ratios within classrooms. They are also collecting property tax revenue from wealthier real estate within their district. A smaller school cannot maximize their budget in the same way, nor can they increase the property value within the district on their own. One action that is possible at a district level is for the school board to petition to their community to vote on a long-term millage increase dedicated to raising teacher salaries.

The state government sets the minimum teacher salary in Arkansas. As an action, the state can increase this minimum salary and implement support to fund that increase. A salary increase cannot happen from the state without the support to maintain it. This could look like using the state budget surplus to increase foundation funding per student. Or it could take from an existing state budget. A recent problem included demanding schools fund teacher bonuses out of money that was allocated for other needs determined by the district. This did not end favorably for districts nor for the state. The quick fix came with repercussions and ultimately solved little in the way of sustainable salary increases. The survey data from this study as well as the Adequacy Report (2022) support increasing salary. This is primarily a state-level issue that requires action and support from state congressional meetings. As it stands, teacher salaries are set to be re-evaluated by the state every biennium with the most recent code written in 2020. It is time to reevaluate teacher salaries.

While funding for schools is primarily a states' issue, there are federal mandates and funds that impact district budgets. Current proposed legislation was presented to the senate in the spring of 2022 entitled "Respect, Advancement, and Increasing Support for Educators Act of 2022" or the "RAISE Act of 2022." This was read in the senate and passed to the finance committee. If passed, it would provide billions of dollars to supplement state efforts to increase

teacher pay, support continued teacher education, create and support teacher leadership programs, promote the strength of the profession, attract, retrain, and diversify the educator workforce, and advance the skills and efficacy of the educator workforce.

Stress and respect

Pew Research Center (2016) reported that job satisfaction varies by household income, level of education, and characteristics about the job itself. Those with higher income, at least a bachelor's degree, and a salaried position are more likely to be satisfied in their jobs. The data surrounding the minimum salary needed to be happy (defined broadly to include job satisfaction and overall joy in life) is inconclusive. A 2010 study by Princeton University cited \$75,000 as a threshold. However, a more recent study that looked at a larger dataset concluded that that is not a defining pay point for happiness (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). It did find that there was an increase of perceived well-being tied to increased income above and below the \$75,000 mark. That is to say, perhaps money can buy happiness to some degree. Data suggest that higher salaries can decrease stress in that they raise happiness.

Future Research

To continue this research, another round of surveys could be conducted to follow-up with any district, state, or national actions taken. This would provide longitudinal data on teacher attrition in the wake of the pandemic. It would measure actions taken and the perceptions of those actions to see if they were successful and what gaps might still exist between theory and practice of teacher retention.

Additional research could include the impact of improved principal training, higher salaries, and higher societal respect on retention rates in Arkansas. While the perceptions are important and provide context to the data, it is vital to define measurable metrics by which we

can determine success of implemented policies (for example, prior to the salary increase, 25% of teachers were considering leaving the field; after the salary increase, that number is down to 15% of teachers). This will help measure the success of any policies and procedures that go into effect as a result of this study or that of state, district, or national legislation. Research on teacher retention should be ongoing to match the needs of the population of students. Future research could also include an examination of the relationship between stress/burnout and leadership. If management and personnel strategies work outside the K-12 environment, it is likely possible to leverage and measure the impact of leadership on teachers' perception of stress and burnout in their jobs. This would give clarity to the body of research surrounding culture and school bureaucracy, further guiding best practices and retention strategies.

Conclusion

Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) International's 54th annual poll cited that public trust in schools is at a 48-year high (2022). However, the perception of the job itself presents a different narrative of the career. Over two-thirds of parents say they would not like their child to become a teacher in their community citing poor pay and benefits, high stress, lack of respect and value, and a variety of unspecified shortcomings in the field. While it is great that the public trusts schools, it is alarming that parents would not want that career for their children. Teachers in this study said that they are disrespected, that parents and students treat them poorly, and that they do not have adequate resources to teach. This aligns with the public perception cited by parents in the PDK International survey.

Teaching is considered a high-stress job. Stressors among teachers are poor principal leadership, poor school climate, high demands (testing, students' behavior, and difficult parents), limited resources, and limited time outside the classroom to mitigate stress (Greenberg, et al.,

2016). It is not enough to tell teachers to practice self-care without providing the time, resources, support, and systemic change needed to lower their stress in the workplace (Berryhill, et al., 2009). A 2022 RAND Corporation study found that addressing workplace stressors could improve teacher retention. Their main takeaway echoes that of the recommendations of this study: lower stress, respect and support teachers, and train principals to be better people managers (Steiner, et. al, 2022).

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Survey

Introduction & Consent

The purpose of this study is to collect data on teacher attrition in Arkansas in school years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey should take approximately five minutes.

This survey is voluntary and no identifying information will be stored. Refusing to participate will not adversely affect any other relationship with the University or the researchers.

For further information or questions, please contact: Kirstyn Salehi, Principal Researcher: kswyatt@uark.edu Dr. John Pijanowski: jpijanow@uark.edu University of Arkansas IRB by email at irb@uark.edu, by phone at 479-575-2208

I have read and understand the explanation above. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. By clicking "I consent," I agree to participate in this survey.

I consent

I do not consent

Demographic information

Are you or were you a teacher in Arkansas during any of the following school years:

2019-2020

2020-2021

2021-2022

Yes

No

Including the 2021-2022 school year, how long have you been a licensed teacher?

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21+ years

How would you describe your district?

Rural

Suburban

Urban

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

Other

What is your age group?

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

60+

What is your race?

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

What is your ethnicity?

Hispanic/Latino

Not Hispanic/Latino

What is your highest education level?

Bachelor's

Master's

Specialist

Doctorate

Marital Status

Married

Domestic Partnership

Widowed

Divorced

Separated
Never Married

Estimated salary from most recent teaching contract

How many people live in your household (including you)

Estimated total annual household income

Block 2

Since March 13, 2020, have you left classroom teaching in any capacity?

- Yes - changed school buildings (same district)
- Yes - changed school districts
- Yes - left classroom for other K-12 job in a school
- Yes - left K-12 education entirely
- No

Have you considered leaving classroom teaching?

- Yes
- No

Please select all of the following reasons that apply to your decision or consideration to leave - Category 1 (Family & Life Events)

To stay home with my children (or other family members)

A loved one has a health condition

The pay was not sufficient

A health condition

My spouse/partner's income was enough to cover our living expenses

I relocated to be closer to my home/closer to family

Other: Please specify

How would you rate the effect of COVID-19 on each of the reasons you selected?

	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» To stay home with my children (or other family members)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» A loved one has a health condition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» The pay was not sufficient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» A health condition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» My spouse/partner's income was enough to cover our living expenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I relocated to be closer to my home/closer to family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select all of the following reasons that apply to your decision or consideration to leave - Category 2 (Level of Training)

- I did not get paid enough for my degree level
- I did not feel sufficiently trained in my Educator Preparation Program
- My speciality area/area of licensure was more lucrative elsewhere
- Lack of technology training
- Lack of useful professional development
- Other: Please specify

How would you rate the effect of COVID-19 on each of the reasons you selected?

	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» I did not get paid enough for my degree level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not feel sufficiently trained in my Educator Preparation Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» My speciality area/area of licensure was more lucrative elsewhere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Lack of technology training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Lack of useful professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Other: Please specify	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select all of the following reasons that apply to your decision or consideration to leave - Category 3 (School Support)

- I wanted a smaller school environment
- I wanted a larger school environment

- I wanted a private school environment
- I did not receive support from my school administration
- I did not receive communication from my school administration
- I did not have opportunities for career advancement
- I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy
- I was unsatisfied with my principal/school leadership in general
- Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic related)
- Other: Please specify

How would you rate the effect of COVID-19 on each of the reasons you selected?

	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» I wanted a smaller school environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I wanted a larger school environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I wanted a private school environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not receive support from my school administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not receive communication from my school administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not have opportunities for career advancement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I was unsatisfied with my principal/school leadership in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic related)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» Other: Please specify					
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select all of the following reasons that apply to your decision or consideration to leave - Category 4 (Classroom Support)

I did not have enough resources/time for the number of students I was assigned

My class budget was not sufficient in general

I did not have adequate supplies in the classroom

I did not have enough adults to support the students in the room

I did not have sufficient funding for new curriculum/materials for my classroom

Remote instruction was challenging (e.g., internet access for students, technology access, training, materials)

Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging (e.g., tracking who is where, live streaming courses)

In-person attendance was challenging (e.g., logistics, safety)

Other: Please specify

How would you rate the effect of COVID-19 on each of the reasons you selected?

	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» I did not have enough resources/time for the number of students I was assigned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» My class budget was not sufficient in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

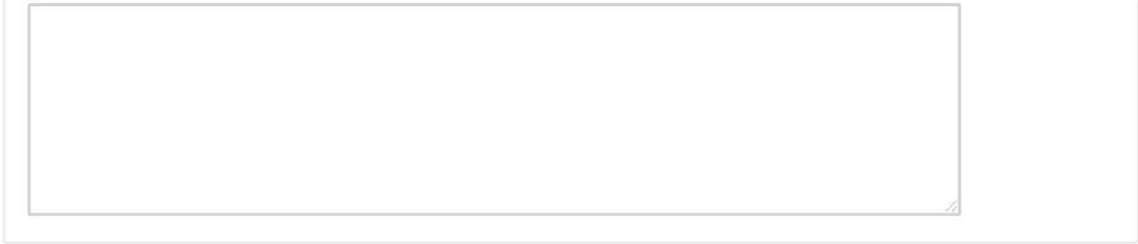
	No effect	Minor effect	Neutral	Moderate effect	Major effect
» I did not have adequate supplies in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not have enough adults to support the students in the room	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» I did not have sufficient funding for new curriculum/materials for my classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Remote instruction was challenging (e.g., internet access for students, technology access, training, materials)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging (e.g., tracking who is where, live streaming courses)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» In-person attendance was challenging (e.g., logistics, safety)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
» Other: Please specify					
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Block 3

If you left, what could have been done to influence you to stay?
 If you have not left, what could influence you to stay?

This information will be vital to understanding what we can do to help make teaching a sustainable career in Arkansas. Please include any additional narrative you'd like to add to your responses.

All information will be kept confidential will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Any statements used in the final research publication will be anonymous (identifying information will be changed or redacted if you include it here).



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Appendix A

Table A1

Description of Sample Population

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	494	82.3
Male	103	17.1
Non-binary/third gender	1	0.2
Prefer not to say	4	0.7
Age group		
21-30	77	12.8
31-40	142	23.6
41-50	183	30.4
51-60	161	26.7
60+	38	6.3
Prefer not to say	1	0.2
Race		
Caucasian	548	91.1
Black or African American	28	4.7
American Indian or Alaskan Native	9	1.5
Asian	4	0.6
Other	13	2.2
Ethnicity		

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Hispanic/Latino	26	4.3
Not Hispanic/Latino	576	95.7
Highest Education Level		
Bachelor's	202	33.6
Master's	333	55.3
Specialist	52	8.6
Doctorate	15	2.5
Years of Teaching		
1-5 years	103	17.1
6-10 years	121	20.1
11-15 years	105	17.4
16-20 years	99	16.5
21+ years	74	12.3
School Setting		
Rural	261	43.4
Suburban	198	32.9
Urban	143	23.8
Marital Status		
Married	436	72.4
Domestic Partnership	10	1.7
Widowed	8	1.3
Divorced	69	11.5

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
Separated	6	1.0
Never Married	73	12.1
Salary on most recent teaching contract		
\$26,600-35,000	18	2.9
\$35,001-45,000	135	22.4
\$45,001-55,000	214	35.6
\$55,001-65,000	145	24.1
\$65,001-75,000	50	8.3
\$75,001-85,000	5	0.8
\$85,001+	8	1.3
Prefer not to disclose	27	4.5
Average	\$51,803	
Median	\$51,000	
Mode	\$50,000	
Annual Household Income		
\$32,000-40,000	19	3.2
\$40,001-50,000	51	8.5
\$50,001-60,000	58	9.6
\$60001-70000	50	8.3
\$70,001-80,000	63	10.5
\$80,001-90,000	58	9.6
\$90,001-100,000	69	11.5

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
\$100,001-110,000	39	6.5
\$110,001-120,000	35	5.8
\$120,001-130,000	26	4.3
\$130,001-140,000	7	1.2
\$140,001-150,000	27	4.5
\$150,001-160,000	11	1.8
\$160,001-170,000	4	0.7
\$170,001-180,000	7	1.2
\$180,001-190,000	3	0.5
\$190,001-200,000	20	3.3
\$200,001-210,000	2	0.3
\$210,001-220,000	0	0.0
\$220,001-230,000	1	0.2
\$230,001-240,000	1	0.2
\$240,001-250,000	6	1.0
\$250,000+	5	0.8
Prefer not to disclose	40	6.6
Average	\$98,785	
Median	\$90,000	
Mode	\$100,000	
Household Size		
1	77	12.8

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
2	179	29.7
3	127	21.1
4	141	23.4
5	49	8.1
6	12	2.0
7	2	0.3
8	1	0.2
9	1	0.2
Prefer not to disclose	13	2.2
Average	2.9	
Mode	2	
Range	8	
Median	3	

Note. N = 602.

Table A2

Effect of COVID-19 on Classroom Support: Distribution of Likert Rankings

	No	Minor	Neutral	Moderate	Major	Total
I did not have enough resources/time for the number of students I was assigned	16	16	22	54	77	185
My class budget was not sufficient in general	14	6	16	26	27	89
I did not have adequate supplies in the	9	4	14	25	26	78

	No	Minor	Neutral	Moderate	Major	Total
classroom						
I did not have enough adults to support the students in the room	12	4	11	26	31	84
I did not have sufficient funding for new curriculum/materials for my classroom	13	6	12	16	19	66
Remote instruction was challenging (e.g., internet access for students, technology access, training, materials)	7	3	11	53	170	244
Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging (e.g., tracking who is where, live streaming courses)	3	4	10	41	190	248
In-person attendance was challenging (e.g., logistics, safety)	5	5	9	63	151	233
Other: Please specify	14	3	6	9	17	49

Table A3

Categorized responses to “What could have or would influence you to stay?”

Categories	<i>n</i>
Support from administration	120
Higher pay	112
Fewer demands	81

Categories	<i>n</i>
Less stress	73
Better student behavior/consequences for actions	73
Respect and societal appreciation	73
Support from parents	41
Better school culture	39
Better COVID-19 safety protocols	32
A well-informed state department	31
Teachers having a voice in decisions	30
Smaller class size	21
Better COVID protocols (general)	21
Support for hybrid learning	15
Better safety protocols (not COVID-related)	14
Less politics (undefined)	14
Better communication	13
Better student attendance/consequences for absences	12
Better benefits/retirement	11
Support for virtual learning	10
More adults in each classroom	9
More opportunities for career advancement	9

Note. Optional question with multiple categories assigned to each response.

Table A4*Effect of COVID-19 on School Support: Distribution of Likert Rankings*

	No	Minor	Neutral	Moderate	Major	Total
I wanted a smaller school environment	3	2	8	13	9	35
I wanted a larger school environment	4	0	1	7	1	13
I wanted a private school environment	1	0	4	1	1	7
I did not receive support from my school administration	29	12	19	53	62	175
I did not receive communication from my school administration	17	9	17	40	40	123
I did not have opportunities for career advancement	31	11	17	15	23	97
I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy	41	13	32	59	85	230
I was unsatisfied with my principal/school leadership in general	27	10	19	49	66	171
Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic related)	2	3	6	31	70	112
Other: Please specify	18	4	9	17	32	80

Table A5*Impact of COVID-19 on Level of Training: Distribution of Likert Rankings*

	No	Minor	Neutral	Moderate	Major	Total
I did not get paid enough for my degree level	32	17	32	55	43	179
I did not feel sufficiently trained in my Educator Preparation Program	1	1	5	9	4	20
My specialty area/area of licensure was more lucrative elsewhere	12	3	14	17	12	58
Lack of technology training	2	2	1	6	13	24
Lack of useful professional development	6	8	11	33	22	80
Other: Please specify	30	10	18	43	76	177

Table A6*Ratings of COVID-19 Impact on Life Events: Distribution of Likert Rankings*

	No	Minor	Neutral	Moderate	Major	Total
To stay home with my children (or other family members)	4	6	8	23	12	53
A loved one has a health condition	5	1	1	7	15	29
The pay was not sufficient	23	13	27	56	47	166
A health condition	3	1	3	10	22	39
My spouse/partner's income was enough to cover our living expenses	7	5	5	15	7	39
I relocated to be closer to my home/closer to family	10	2	12	9	5	38
Other: Please specify	34	15	16	73	99	237

Table A7*Reasons for Attrition: Family and Life Events*

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
To stay home with my children (or other family members)	53	12.3
A loved one has a health condition	29	6.73
The pay was not sufficient	166	38.5
A health condition	39	9.0
My spouse/partner's income was enough to cover our living expenses	39	9.0
I relocated to be closer to my home/closer to family	38	8.82
Other: Please specify	259	60.09

Note. N=431. “Other: Please specify” is analyzed in tables A11 and A12. Multiple response set.

Table A8*Reasons for Attrition: Level of Training*

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
I did not get paid enough for my degree level	179	46.13
I did not feel sufficiently trained in my Educator Preparation Program	20	5.15
My specialty area/area of licensure was more lucrative elsewhere	58	14.95
Lack of technology training	24	6.19
Lack of useful professional development	80	20.62
Other: Please specify	193	49.74

Note. N=388. “Other: Please specify” is analyzed in tables A11 and A12. Multiple response set.

Table A9*Reasons for Attrition: School Environment*

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
I wanted a smaller school environment	35	8.60
I wanted a larger school environment	13	3.19
I wanted a private school environment	7	1.72
I did not receive support from my school administration	175	43.00
I did not receive communication from my school administration	123	30.22
I did not have opportunities for career advancement	97	23.83
I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy	230	56.51
I was unsatisfied with my principal/school leadership in general	171	42.01
Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic-related)	112	27.52
Other: please specify	97	23.83

Note. N=407. “Other: Please specify” is analyzed in tables A11 and A12. Multiple response set.

Table A10*Reasons for Attrition: Classroom Support*

Categories	<i>n</i>	%
I did not have enough resources/time for the number of students I was assigned	185	46.37
My class budget was not sufficient in general	89	22.31
I did not have adequate supplies in the classroom	78	19.55
I did not have enough adults to support the students in the room	84	21.05
I did not have sufficient funding for new curriculum/materials for my classroom	66	16.54
Remote instruction was challenging (e.g., internet access for students, technology access, training, materials)	244	61.15
Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging (e.g., tracking who is where, live streaming courses)	248	62.16
In-person attendance was challenging (e.g., logistics, safety)	233	58.40
Other: please specify	55	13.78

Note. N=399. “Other: Please specify” is analyzed in tables A11 and A12. Multiple response set.

Table A11*Realigned Responses from Other: Please specify*

Categories	<i>n</i>
Life events	192
Level of training	11
School support	214
Classroom support	132
Stress	132
Disrespect	76
COVID-19	37

Note. Other: please specify was optional and presented on each of the four theme question sets.

Each respondent had the option to fill out “Other: please specify” up to four times.

Due to the open-ended nature of the “Other: please specify” question, not all responses fit perfectly into one category or another. The table above shows general alignment with the four themes of attrition as well as three themes that stood out: stress, disrespect, and COVID-19. To better understand the reasons participants cited in “Other: please specify” in a holistic manner, thematic coding was utilized for the responses and can be viewed in more detail in Table 4.8.

Table A12*Thematic Analysis of Responses from Other: Please specify*

Categories	<i>n</i>
Stress/Workload	255
Administration	148
Students	86

Categories	<i>n</i>
Role Change	67
Disrespect (General)	56
COVID-19	53
Pay	51
Retirement	35
Parents (Disrespect/Lack of Support)	25
Lack of Training	23
State-Level Politics	13
Other	23

Note. Other includes 13 categories with fewer than five mentions each. Many responses cited multiple reasons; each reason is represented once per mention per category.

Table A13

Impact of COVID-19 Life Events: Averages

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
To stay home with my children (or other family members)	3.62	1.17	1.37	53
A loved one has a health condition	3.9	1.49	2.23	29
The pay was not sufficient	3.55	1.34	1.8	166
A health condition	4.21	1.18	1.39	39
My spouse/partner's income was enough to cover our living expenses	3.26	1.37	1.88	39
I relocated to be closer to my home/closer to family	2.92	1.36	1.86	38

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
Other: Please specify	3.79	1.41	1.99	237

Note: Maximum score of 5

Table A14

Impact of COVID-19 on Level of Training: Averages of Likert Scale

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
I did not get paid enough for my degree level	3.34	1.4	1.97	179
I did not feel sufficiently trained in my Educator Preparation Program	3.7	1	1.01	20
My specialty area/area of licensure was more lucrative elsewhere	3.24	1.39	1.94	58
Lack of technology training	4.08	1.29	1.66	24
Lack of useful professional development	3.71	1.19	1.4	80
Other: Please specify	3.71	1.48	2.2	177

Note: Maximum score of 5

Table A15

Impact of COVID-19 - School Support: Averages of Likert Scale

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s</i> ²	<i>n</i>
I wanted a smaller school environment	3.66	1.17	1.37	35
I wanted a larger school environment	3.08	1.44	2.07	13
I wanted a private school environment	3.14	1.12	1.27	7

I did not receive support from my school administration	3.61	1.44	2.08	175
I did not receive communication from my school administration	3.63	1.36	1.86	123
I did not have opportunities for career advancement	2.88	1.57	2.48	97
I was unsatisfied with school bureaucracy	3.58	1.47	2.16	230
I was unsatisfied with my principal/school leadership in general	3.68	1.43	2.05	171
Inadequate safety plans (in general or pandemic related)	4.46	0.85	0.73	112
Other: Please specify	3.51	1.58	2.5	80

Note: Maximum score of 5

Table A16

Effect of COVID-19 on Classroom Support: Averages of Likert Scale

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>s²</i>	<i>n</i>
I did not have enough resources/time for the number of students I was assigned	3.86	1.28	1.64	185
My class budget was not sufficient in general	3.52	1.39	1.94	89
I did not have adequate supplies in the classroom	3.71	1.29	1.67	78
I did not have enough adults to support the students in the room	3.71	1.38	1.89	84
I did not have sufficient funding for new curriculum/materials for my classroom	3.33	1.47	2.16	66

Remote instruction was challenging (e.g., internet access for students, technology access, training, materials)	4.54	0.87	0.76	244
Hybrid instruction/attendance was challenging (e.g., tracking who is where, live streaming courses)	4.66	0.74	0.55	248
In-person attendance was challenging (e.g., logistics, safety)	4.5	0.84	0.71	233
Other: Please specify	3.24	1.65	2.72	49

Note: Maximum score of 5

Appendix B

Demographics of Sample Categorized by Attrition Type

		Yes - Changed buildings, same district	Yes - Changed school districts	Yes - Different K12 job	Yes - Left K12 entirely	Considered Leaving	Did Not Consider Leaving
Experience	1-5 years	7 (6.80%)	14 (13.59%)	2 (1.94%)	4 (3.88%)	43 (41.75%)	33 (32.04%)
	6-10	5 (4.13%)	18 (14.88%)	8 (6.61%)	4 (3.31%)	63 (52.07%)	23 (19.01%)
	11-15	0 (0.00%)	6 (5.71%)	4 (3.81%)	4 (3.81%)	65 (61.90%)	26 (24.76%)
	16-20	2 (2.02%)	12 (12.12%)	3 (3.03%)	1 (1.01%)	49 (49.49%)	32 (32.32%)
	21+	4 (2.30%)	8 (4.60%)	4 (2.30%)	8 (4.60%)	101 (58%)	49 (28.16%)
Age	21-30	4 (5.13%)	15 (19.23%)	3 (3.85%)	4 (5.13%)	38 (48.72%)	14 (17.95%)
	31-40	5 (3.52%)	10 (7.04%)	10 (7.04%)	5 (3.52%)	79 (55.63%)	33 (23.24%)
	41-50	3 (1.64%)	18 (9.84%)	5 (2.73%)	5 (2.73%)	94 (51.37%)	58 (31.69%)
	51-60	6 (3.73%)	13 (8.07%)	2 (1.24%)	4 (2.48%)	88 (54.66%)	48 (29.81%)
	60+	0 (0.00%)	2 (5.26%)	1 (2.63%)	3 (7.89%)	22 (57.89%)	10 (26.32%)
Race	White	14 (2.55%)	52 (9.47%)	19 (3.46%)	21 (3.83%)	296 (53.92%)	147 (26.78%)
	Black	2 (7.14%)	3 (10.71%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	14 (50.00%)	9 (32.14%)
	American Indian	1 (11.11%)	1 (11.11%)	2 (22.22%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (33.33%)	2 (22.22%)
	Asian	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (50.00%)	2 (50.00%)
	Other	1 (11.11%)	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (44.44%)	3 (33.33%)
Ethnicity	Hispanic	0 (0.00%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	10 (62.50%)	4 (25.00%)
	Not Hispanic	16 (2.77%)	56 (9.71%)	21 (3.64%)	21 (3.64%)	306 (53.03%)	157 (27.21%)
Education	Bachelors	8 (4.00%)	21 (10.50%)	5 (2.50%)	7 (3.50%)	109 (54.50%)	50 (25.00%)
	Masters	10 (2.99%)	29 (8.68%)	12 (3.59%)	10 (2.99%)	179 (53.59%)	94 (28.14%)
	Specialist	0 (0.00%)	7 (13.46%)	2 (3.85%)	4 (7.69%)	24 (46.15%)	15 (28.85%)
	Doctorate	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.67%)	2 (13.33%)	0 (0.00%)	9 (60.00%)	3 (20.00%)
Marital Status	Married	13 (2.98%)	37 (8.49%)	16 (3.67%)	19 (4.36%)	236 (54.13%)	115 (26.38%)
	Domestic Partnership	0 (0.00%)	1 (9.09%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (54.55%)	4 (36.36%)

	Yes - Changed buildings, same district	Yes - Changed school districts	Yes - Different K12 job	Yes - Left K12 entirely	Considered Leaving	Did Not Consider Leaving
Widowed	1 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (25.00%)	5 (62.50%)
Divorced	2 (2.90%)	10 (14.49%)	2 (2.90%)	0 (0.00%)	36 (52.17%)	19 (27.54%)
Separated	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)
Never Married	1 (1.59%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (3.17%)	2 (3.17%)	39 (61.90%)	19 (30.16%)
Avg Salary	\$53,172.22	\$48,361.02	\$51,556.00	\$53,805.26	\$52,639.45	\$52,246.51
Avg Household Income	\$103,444.44	\$92,303.57	\$100,638.50	\$133,047.62	\$99,250.07	\$91,247.41
Avg Household Size	2.6	2.9	3.2	2.7	3.1	2.9

Appendix C



To: John C Pijanowski
From: Douglas J Adams Justin R Chimka, Chair
IRB Expedited Review
Date: 04/19/2022
Action: **Exemption Granted**
Action Date: 04/19/2022
Protocol #: 2202388645
Study Title: Arkansas Teacher Attrition & COVID-19

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Kirstyn Sara Wyatt Salehi, Investigator