

Winona State University

OpenRiver

Education Doctorate Faculty Works

Education Doctorate

6-1-2017

Developing Teachers Who Stay the Course: A Handbook for School Leaders to Leverage Insights of Veteran Educators

DeJuanna Parker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/educationeddfacultyworks>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Parker, DeJuanna, "Developing Teachers Who Stay the Course: A Handbook for School Leaders to Leverage Insights of Veteran Educators" (2017). *Education Doctorate Faculty Works*. 6.
<https://openriver.winona.edu/educationeddfacultyworks/6>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Education Doctorate at OpenRiver. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Doctorate Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of OpenRiver. For more information, please contact klarson@winona.edu.

Developing
Teachers Who
Stay the Course

*A Handbook for
School Leaders to Leverage
Insights of Veteran
Educators*

Copyright © 2017 DeJuanna Parker

All rights reserved.

ISBN:
ISBN-13:

DEDICATION

To those who made me believe that I could do the work
of a scholar

Preface

I never wanted to be a teacher. During my high school years, I (and most of my classmates) thought I would be on Broadway – the stage would be my career. In my college years, when my English major classmates assumed I was going to teach, I fired back at them with great offense, and told them how I was going to New York and write for *Harper's Bazaar*. But my need to get out of the city where I had grown up, and live on my own, led me to fill out applications for jobs. I didn't really care what kind of job. My plan was to work for a year, save a little money, and then move to New York and get a job doing what I *really* wanted to do. I had no idea that a school division in a little town I had never heard of would review my application, invite me to interview, and actually offer me a teaching position! I didn't have student teaching experience (because I didn't want to be a teacher, right?), and had not taken any tests to qualify me to teach; all I had was my B.A. in English – and they offered me a job anyway!

This series of events let me know that God has a sense of humor.

Long story short, I taught in that school division for almost 25 years. I came to understand that, at my core, I am a teacher. What allowed me to come to this revelation was the fact that I came back year after year. I was allowed to hone my craft. I was

encouraged to grow. I made friends. I became a part of the community. I fell in love. No, I didn't get to Broadway or work for *Harper's*, but I used the skills that I would have used in those contexts every day in my classroom.

I share this story because in our modern educational system, many teachers don't stay in the profession for 25 years. Educational researchers are trying to figure out why so many teachers leave the profession, when the more important issue, in my opinion, is why and how teachers stay in the profession.

I wrote this book so that school administrators, school board members, district executives, and other school leaders could begin to understand how teachers find the fortitude to remain in the profession. Armed with this understanding, educational leaders can devise ways to support and encourage new teachers to stay the course and become career teachers. And what better way to approach the issue than to "pick the brain" of those who have lived it? This book is borne out of my dissertation study, where I conducted qualitative research on the lived experiences of a group of expert, dedicated, committed, and purpose-driven veteran teachers. Lessons from this book may help school leaders find ways to keep those new teachers in a profession that so desperately needs them.

Those who can, teach.

The Changing Tide

There was a time when people landed a job, they stayed in their job for decades. They retired after 30-40 years, and got the party and the gold watch. Long-term employment relationships were some of the most important features of the labor market in the United States through the late 1980s. But something happened. The groundswell of corporate downsizing in light of increased global competition in the 1990s raised concerns that long-term employment relationships in the United States were disappearing (Farber, 2008). Employees started “job-hopping”. This was seen abnormal. Employers frowned upon the temporary nature of the new labor market. This was not happening only in private

sector industries, but in the public sector as well.

Education underwent a similar trend. Teacher attrition became more commonplace than teacher retention. Ingersoll (2001) coined the phrase, “revolving door”, to describe the phenomenon where teachers enter the profession, and leave after 1-3 years, only to be replaced by another cadre of instructors who would repeat the same pattern. In many instances, the teachers who were leaving outnumbered the ones coming in, creating shortages characteristic of employment trends of the late 1990s.

During this time, however, an interesting turn of events was taking place. The teaching profession was experiencing a unique bubble: small pockets of teachers, especially veteran teachers, from districts across the nation were deciding to remain in the profession.

Consider a few of the institutional and policy changes indicative of the time: 1) content and performance standards instituted to meet state and district benchmarks, 2) statewide accountability systems initiated to

hold school systems responsible for student outcomes, 3) issuance of institutional report cards, and 4) school finance reform aimed at creating adequacy in funding, but resulting in a number of unintended consequences found detrimental to school and student performance. These changes initiated a nationwide exodus of teaching professionals (what Ingersoll calls a “revolving door”), but these changes did not sway the resolve of a percentage of teachers to remain – in the face of sweeping reforms. In a time when it made sense to leave teaching, these stalwarts remained. Why? How?

The beginning of that wisdom is resident in this volume.

DeJuanna Parker, Ph.D.

Why Schools Need Career Teachers

The Importance of Career Teachers

Experienced teachers are vital to the education industry. Ladd (2013) asserted experienced teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than do inexperienced teachers. Additionally, Ladd (2013) determined experienced teachers with 20 years of classroom experience are more pedagogically effective than are those with fewer years in the profession. Veteran teachers also contribute to the growth and development of novice teachers, and add value to the school community (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2010; Glazer, 2013; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2013).

Prior to the advent of No Child Left Behind, retention efforts focused on experienced teachers, as schools wanted to ensure veteran instructors would remain (Dee & Jacob, 2010). However, as the teacher role changed from curriculum designer to curriculum implementer because of the NCLB legislation, administrative attention turned toward inducting and retaining new teachers (Craig, 2012). New

curriculum and evaluation processes, along with inadequate administrator support created a paradigm that helped to introduce a cycle of teacher attrition on a national scale (Ingersoll, 2003).

National, state, and local educational executives are concerned about teacher attrition, as inquiry regarding the subject is abundant (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). Data from educational agencies inform school leaders about the national status of teacher attrition and retention. One annual report from the National Center for Educational Information noted a rise in the quantity of teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience from 18% to 26% between 2005 and 2011 (Feistritzer, 2011). This account revealed a trend toward more inexperienced teachers in the nation's classrooms. Furthermore, a similar study from the Center for Educational Statistics (CES) reported 12% of teachers who left the profession between 2008 and 2009 had fewer than five years of experience (Keigher, 2011).

According to one national report, the group with the lowest percentage (5%) of its members leaving the profession was teachers with 10-19 years of experience (Keigher, 2010). Even with high attrition rates of novice teachers sometimes as high as 40% in some regions, experienced educators are leaving the profession in lesser proportions (Teacher trends, 2013). Meister (2010) concluded that much of the current research on teacher retention disregards veteran teachers. Anthony (2014) added that the more recent research that targets veteran teachers focuses on those with an average of 10 years of experience.

From a national perspective, veteran teachers are recognized as valuable to their communities and schools. One area of impact attributed to the effectiveness of experienced teachers is student achievement (Allen, 2005). A body of evidence, though limited, supports the idea that teachers with expert knowledge of the subject matter they teach are less likely to leave the profession. This may indicate that veteran teachers are more effective with delivery of content, and thus may influence positive student

outcomes (Allen, 2005). Veteran teachers tend to be attracted to programs and initiatives that help them advance in leadership, but allow them to remain in the classroom. The Teacher Leadership Initiative (TLI), created by the National Education Association, boasts a significant number of veteran teachers participating in the program. The goal of the TLI is to target accomplished practitioners who will take responsibility for defining and governing teaching standards and practices. Stakeholders recognize that teachers are seeking new opportunities to advance their careers and the profession by taking on new leadership roles (TLI, 2014).

When veteran teachers are the focal point of educational research, the central issue is usually external variables, such as salary or working conditions. Studies rarely highlight intrinsic qualities of this group. **Berkowitz and Myers (2014) asserted that understanding personal qualities that influence long teaching careers is a missing key to effective retention.** Consequently, this book's purpose is to address the assertion made by Berkowitz &

Myers. When school leaders recognize retention factors resident in the career teachers in their schools, they can make deliberate efforts to develop new teachers so that they can become veteran teachers.

Getting to Know Career Teachers

The Teaching Gene

I teach; therefore, I am.

Many scholars and laypersons alike offer personal ideas about how and why teachers stay in the profession for so long – and they would be correct in whatever they come up with. There may be as many reasons as there are teachers, but one key factor continues to be on just about everyone’s list: Teachers have *passion* for what they do.

Consider the words of one career teacher, who said,

*I am more attached to this school and these students than I have been to any- except at my first one. I am still dedicated to teaching, not just because this is all I've done for 30 years, but because it's what I should have been doing for the past 30 years. **I am the job. It's in my DNA.***

Crosswell (2006) asserted that passion is a disposition tightly connected to teachers' personal attributes. This disposition is also tied to other personal factors such as identity, values, and beliefs that teachers bring with them into the profession. These factors tend to be influential in terms of commitment and career longevity. Earlier research literature asserted that external factors such as salary and condition of the physical school building were the major factors related to teacher commitment. We now know that commitment is more often an outward expression of the inward passion for teaching.

In many cases, teachers' passion toward the profession is a by-product of self-identification. Many career teachers see themselves as teachers, and have had that identity since their youth. One career educator shared,

When I was growing up, I used make my room a classroom. I put all of my dolls in chairs...the little ones in the

front. I had a chalkboard and different colored chalk. And I had a stack of books for the class library. I would teach letters, or colors or something, and then stop for lunch. Then we'd come back and have story time, and I would put the "bad kids" in the corner [laughter]. Yeah, I have always seen myself as a teacher.

When the teacher identity and passion are paired together, the combination can be referred to as the "teaching gene"... and not every person facilitating instruction in a classroom has it. For some instructors, teaching is a chore – a burden. But those who have the teaching gene facilitate instruction with ease, even panache! They develop a "signature" teaching style.

Fortunately, there are ways to identify this teaching gene, and school leaders should always be on the lookout for it. In fact, evidence of the following factors can be strong indicators of the teaching gene, which veteran teachers have been found to

possess. Remember Berkowitz and Myers posited that when school leaders know more about the qualities of those who teach, they may be able to identify factors that keep them in the profession, and turn that knowledge into strategies to keep teachers in the classroom, and the profession. Leaders may be able to identify the teaching gene when they see the teacher showing:

- Deep knowledge of, and emotional connection to subject matter
- Love of learning
- Intrinsic motivation
- Attitudes and beliefs toward the importance of teaching and learning

Teaching Gene Indicators

Connection to Subject Matter

Impassioned teachers demonstrate active involvement in the act of teaching. Some of these educators have a quietly intense demeanor. They may not be extremely demonstrative, but they are totally engaged

in the teaching and learning process. They may look a bit nonchalant at times, as they stroll around the classroom, but they are laser focused on how the students experience the lesson, and are ready to add insight, ask deep questions, and encourage critical thinking. In contrast, there are the instructors who are animated in their pedagogical deliveries. They walk around the classroom; they make eye contact with their students, and may even invade students' personal spaces on occasion. They may make grand gestures; they may be loud. Usually their blackboards (or whiteboards) are filled with writing, and arrows showing how ideas are connected. And when you see them in their element, they are smiling.

The lesson here is that an observer cannot make assumptions about how a teacher with the teaching gene should conduct a lesson. This is why administrators and other school leaders who evaluate teachers should have training through exposure to effective, passionate teachers with various pedagogical

delivery styles.

Some of the passion of educators with the “teaching gene” comes from a place of knowing their subject matter intimately. They not only know it, they are deeply interested in it, and they continue to study it. Why? Because they love it! One career instructor shared a memory of one of her high school teachers this way:

I remember Mr. Jax, my high school world history teacher. We knew he loved world history because he could point to almost any place on a map and tell us something about the history of the place...not just about its founders or its government, but he knew stories about the personal histories of the people from there. He loved maps because he said it showed us how politics, and war and the environment had had an impact on the map. His students would give him maps as gifts at the end of the year. It seemed like nothing made him happier. This man lived and breathed world history.

Cohen (2009) and Meister (2011) posited veteran teachers' love of subject matter is a sustaining force in the decision to remain in teaching. In a study of urban veteran teachers, love for course content was a comfort in difficult times (Cohen, 2009). One method that experienced instructors use to deepen love of subject is to create *teacher-centered* classrooms, where they surround themselves with representations of the subjects they love to share with students. They design lessons with a specific objective in mind, in order elicit deep thought about various facets of the content being considered in class. They understand how to scaffold the content so that students not only understand the concepts being taught, but are able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the content.

This practice came under fire as the newer, *student-centered* classroom paradigm gained popularity during the accountability era that emerged from federal No Child Left Behind legislation (Crosswell, 2006). While

the student-centered framework has been successful in some elementary settings, its effectiveness wanes at the middle and high school levels, as students tend to attain better academic outcomes through guided, teacher-centered learning. When effective teachers are allowed to have instructional freedom within agreeable guidelines, and are supported by school administrators, their students are more successful (Cohen, 2009; Meister, 2011).

Love of Learning

Similarly, passion for learning also emerged as a characteristic of teachers who have sustained teaching careers. Lopez (2009) conducted a study with the objective of determining teacher perceptions about the importance of learning. Participants shared a sense of excitement for learning, and the notion of renewal through continuous learning. The Lopez study (2009) noted the following two critical dispositions found in career teachers who love learning: engagement and caring.

Engagement is described as the act of binding oneself intellectually or emotionally to a course of action. The teacher who engages students in the learning process does so because he or she is fully invested in the learning process, and is bound to see the outcomes of the learning.

Caring encompasses the idea of love of learning, and being protective of the process. This kind of caring is not as a form of coddling the learner, but as an "armed love," This is demonstrated when the instructor exhibits courage to protect and defend the process. This teacher goes above and beyond to ensure that learners learn. This teacher is often described as a progressive educator; one who is humble, loving, courageous, tolerant, decisive, secure, and patient.

Robert, who is a veteran English teacher, shared his thoughts about pedagogical approaches that help him to encourage learning in the classroom:

I see the value of lecturing even though it's a big no-no in this new way. I really think that the people who have told us that lecturing is a bad thing may not have ever had a teacher who knew how to conduct a lecture. In lecturing, you have to listen. It's not like having a conversation where you're just waiting to say what you want. It's active listening and responding to the situation in real time. And also it's having the teacher in the class; that teacher does know more on the content than the students...at least I would hope that that is the expectation. But in this new student-centered philosophy, students are expected to drive their own learning. You can't expect students to just come up with the right answer if they haven't been exposed to enough of the material. You find the teachable moments and take advantage of them.

For example, in one class, I knew that the kids didn't know how to take notes, and all I would do is complain about it. So you know, I went to this thing [professional development], and it was about showing the kids how to take notes: numbering the pages, using only one side of the page, so on and so forth - and this was a valuable lesson I got from a workshop, and I have used it ever since. That was about 25 years ago.

Elizabeth, a 25-year veteran history teacher discussed ways she has maintained an effective learning environment when covering course content, even while still challenging students to learn even when it falls outside of their comfort zones:

You know, I try to break up lessons and let them do something that's a little bit different, like discussing for a minute, but I just, I'm not gonna change everything to accommodate them, just because they can't pay

attention. I think it would do them a disservice. We have to demand more from them, not less.

I've become more cross-curricular. I am fortunate to teach literature where so many other disciplines intersect. Literature encompasses the human experience. So when we read Poe, I interject psychology. When we read Shakespeare, I interject politics (especially when we cover Julius Caesar). When we read Twain, I interject American history. Sometimes my students remark, "I thought this was supposed to be an English class." I have a handle on this thing because I've been doing it for 25 years, you know what I mean? Because they keep changing everything, and I am determined to stay ahead of the curve. So yeah, I'm still stressed out! So I keep looking for new things, but they still have to listen to lectures sometimes.

Kathy, a 20-year English teacher, shared

I've had to scramble to come up with ways to help my students pass them [standardized tests] with finding all kinds of bells and whistles, and tricks that I pick up at workshops and conferences.

I had never been an American Lit teacher, and now I'm teaching American Literature. So it's like I'm constantly ... something is forcing me all the time to work with something new and learn something different. And I think that helps, and when I find that something works, I do it again. And if it doesn't work, then I find something else. For example, Anticipation Guides ... that's a new thing I'm doing. I don't introduce a book until I give them an anticipation guide where it brings up opinion questions about major themes in the book. A thematic question might be, "If you forgive, does that mean you

forget?” And then they write about that. And so there are a lot of those kinds of things that I do now that I didn’t do before.

There is evidence that veteran teachers make efforts to be resilient to curriculum change, and to adapt to new thinking and instructional components. They take courses; they learn new skills; they teach new courses; they include new strategies, all of which help them to become more effective as classroom teachers, and allows them to retain their love of learning.

Intrinsic Motivation and Rewards

Studies have found that teachers with the teaching gene use internal motivation to attain rewards. The rewards, which are often moral and even spiritual, can influence teachers to remain in the profession. A popular opinion is that teachers don’t teach because of the money. In fact, any worker in a service profession understands at the outset that he or she will be underpaid. And

while every worker needs to earn money, somehow teachers tend to find rewards through things other than money. This does not come easily however. Rooney (2015) alluded to the context of teaching in a climate of high-stakes testing which can significantly constrain teachers' access to intrinsic rewards. Although limited investigations demonstrated this to be true, other research exists that supports a different context.

In a qualitative study, Edwards (2003) sought to identify the unique needs of veteran teachers and to examine how schools as organizations met the personal and professional needs of these veterans. Within the study, however, the researcher made some discoveries related to needs of veteran teachers that are not connected to external school factors. The need for challenge was one of the primary intrinsic needs mentioned by the participants in the Edwards' (2003) study. Many of the participants had advanced degrees, but

received no opportunities to fulfill desires to advance or to be recognized for accomplishments. Socialization and collaboration were also believed to bring intrinsic rewards. Having the ability to share teaching expertise with colleagues was thought to be an engaging activity that would bring personal satisfaction.

Though the needs of these veteran teachers were not always met, rewards were found in watching children learn, creating learning cultures in the classroom, and promoting learning in the community. The findings of this study show that the needs of midcareer teachers, which should be addressed in the work environment are growth, recognition, variety, and interaction with colleagues. These sources also imply that school leaders are instrumental to teacher revitalization. However, in cases where these needs are not met because of external challenges, veteran teachers tend to find internal approaches to attain desired rewards (Edwards, 2003).

Taylor et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study seeking to find the rewards that teachers say keep them in the profession. The researchers determined from an open-ended online questionnaire that intrinsic motivators are the primary rewards for teachers, and these motivators had most influence on their intention to stay in the profession.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Veteran teachers tend to be more aware than novice teachers of the power they wield. Mirza (2011) contended that veteran teachers believe that students can be influenced, not only academically, but also morally, by an effective teacher. Showing empathy, and expressing high expectations for students are skills demonstrated with alacrity by veteran teachers. These abilities often tend to be determinants of veteran teachers remaining in the profession (Mirza, 2011).

Ball (2010) conducted a quantitative case

study to examine the variables attributed to teacher self-efficacy, trust, and teacher collective efficacy, as these variables have been found to influence longevity decisions. The study findings showed that self-efficacy scores of teachers were generally similar across all of the campuses of the school district, which suggested self-efficacy had no influence on teacher retention in the district. However, research suggests that efficacy as a collective attribute does have influence on retention.

Trust was another variable measured in the Ball (2010) study. The study found that levels of trust of principals, colleagues, and clients varied at each of the schools in the division. Several school campuses had lower mean differences in trust in principal compared to other campuses. Also, several schools showed lower mean differences in both trust of colleagues and trust of clients. Ball (2010) suggested that this can have a profound effect on not only teacher morale and retention, but also on student

achievement. Collective efficacy was the final component measured in the study. It was found that confidence in collective efficacy promoted a dedication to the profession and collaborative relationships with colleagues and parents.

Beasley (2013) directed a research study purposed to identify personal beliefs, behaviors, and environmental influences that encourage experienced teachers to choose longevity. The qualitative collective case study was conducted with teachers in an inner-ring suburban district located in very close proximity to an inner-city urban area. The teachers in the study had 10 years of teaching experience. The study found that teachers' personal values based on a sense of obligation to make a difference in the community influenced the career choice to become and remain teachers. Family values were also indicated as a professional motivator, as some of the participants had parents or other relatives who were teachers (Beasley, 2013).

Beasley (2013) also found that study participants believed strongly that all students can learn, and teachers are willing to make adjustments in content delivery to ensure that all students are positioned to learn concepts being taught. The concept of shared beliefs was found to be influential in experienced teachers' decisions to sustain teaching careers.

Stukes (2015) conducted a qualitative study of 12 novice and veteran elementary teachers to explore attitudes toward the teaching profession. Three elements emerged pertaining to attitudes of veteran teachers that contributed to a sustained teaching career. Veteran teachers have positive attitudes toward communication and opportunities to share their stories with others, including students and colleagues. **School cultures that promote sharing of experience were found to be positively influential to veteran teachers.** Furthermore, attitudes toward continued professional growth and development were

also positive. Veteran teachers cited that professional development experiences helped to prepare them for changes. Moreover, veteran teachers had positive attitudes regarding opportunities to create and develop uplifting school culture and climate by participating in school improvement teams and advisory boards.

The teaching gene sometimes lies dormant in the teachers who possess it. Glimpses of the gene may emerge invariably, so this is why administrators, department chairs, and mentors must support novice teachers in nurturing the development of the teaching gene. They must also be willing to admit when the gene is not present, and make decisions accordingly.

Research-Based Retention Factors

A recent study reported four major factors that contributed to teacher longevity: 1) Respect, 2) Recognition, 3) Relationships, and 4) Resilience (Parker, 2016). The themes, which emerged as a result of qualitative data analysis, are discussed here.

Respect

*R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Find out what it means to me. –
Otis Redding/Aretha Franklin*

Respect is an intangible entity. It is seen only through behaviors that can be interpreted as respectful. When a young person answers a teacher's question with "yes, ma'am" or no, sir", we tend to say that the speaker is respectful. So, we look for behaviors to assess the presence of respect. Huysman (2007) and Battitori (2009) advanced the notion that when teachers receive respect from students, colleagues, and administrators, they tend to find deeper

satisfaction in teaching. Taking a look at the sources of respect that have the most influence on teacher longevity, the following factors emerged.

Respect from Students

When an experienced teacher is in a classroom, things change. Experienced teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than do inexperienced instructors. Ladd (2013) determined experienced teachers with 20 years of classroom experience are more pedagogically effective than are those with fewer years in the profession. This pedagogical prowess positively affects student learning. Anecdotal evidence points to the fact that students tend to perform better when they have teachers who demand high classroom performance. Students can perceive when high expectations are sincere and fair; and when students are challenged intellectually, performance output increases. Students may express frustration with the intense demands, but they respect the

teacher placing the demands on them.

When used simply as a catchphrase, the term “high expectations” is meaningless. Expectations are not test scores, but they are related to authentic achievement. Expectations are not standards, but they are related to competence and mastery of content. Expectations are a complex and unobservable construct, comprised of unconscious anticipation of performance (Quintero, 2014). Career teachers tend to express high expectations equitably among all students under their tutelage. Through expert non-standardization of instruction, explicit communication of formative and summative outcomes, and individual support (all of which garner respect among students), experienced teachers facilitate demonstrably higher student achievement (Parker, 2016). Even in current educational contexts where underachievement and behavioral issues threaten success of teaching and learning nationwide, in many instances experienced teachers have been

able to leverage the respect students have for them into improved outcomes.

One quite poignant example referenced the following:

A number of years ago, a large number of students mounted a protest in response to a racially charged incident where a slur was spray-painted in a prominent place in the school. The students who were the ones referred to in the slur held a sit-in in the school cafeteria and refused to go to class until someone listened to them. The administrators were somewhat at a loss. The students did not fully trust the principal and the Aps, but they told the admins who they did trust to listen to them. I saw the administrators go to the doors of the teachers the students had mentioned. Every teacher called upon was a veteran teacher. Later, members of the school board and central office

arrived at the school, but the students only talked to the teachers. They stayed after school with the students until almost dark. They listened to the students, and helped the students to come to a resolution. I really believe that it was because of those teachers that the situation didn't escalate. Everybody was grateful that they stepped in.

Veteran teachers have a history – a reputation- in their respective schools. Oftentimes the reputation that precedes them reaps respect from students whom they have never even met. All of us know the familiar scene at the beginning of every school year when students get their class schedules. The first thing they check is which teachers they have. They meet up with their friends and compare. If a new student is fortunate enough to know an upperclassman or have an older sibling, the question asked right away is “What do you know about Mr. or Mrs. Whoever?” The report can instill fear,

relief, disappointment, or a myriad of other reactions. If the student hears that the teacher is easy, and doesn't give much homework, or the teacher is a pushover and lets students get away with bad behavior and lack of work ethic, a sense of relief comes, and the student makes a decision about the demeanor he or she will adopt in the classroom. But if the student finds out that the teacher is "hard" (meaning giving homework, having students be accountable, maintaining classroom decorum, etc...), he or she may initially be disappointed or upset-maybe even ask to be taken out of the class. But by the same token, the student may also be set on a path to build an attitude of respect for that "hard" teacher, which will likely be passed on to future students the next time schedules are issued. One veteran teacher shared,

During the first week of school, I was going over my expectations for student behavior and participation. Suddenly, two students stopped in the

doorway to my classroom. One was a student from the past semester, and the other was a senior who had been in my class two years prior. I waved to them and smiled. Right after that, they said to my students “Sometimes you’re gonna laugh. Sometimes, you’re gonna cry. Sometimes, you’re gonna want to scream. And sometimes you’re gonna want to walk out, but with all of that...you will respect this woman, and you will respect- the-process” And with that, the room went silent!

Lack of respect toward teachers, and authority in general, can be seen in every popular social media outlet. Many people have seen students standing on cafeteria tables and defying authority, turning over desks in classrooms and daring teachers to do something about it, fighting in hallways, and even being taken away by law enforcement. While this is shocking, it is a phenomenon that many educators face on a

daily basis. These types of incidents can have a devastating effect on teacher morale. On the other hand, there is research to support that these behaviors occur less frequently in classrooms where veteran teachers are in charge (Alber, 2008). In fact, one teacher shared what a veteran teacher told her about discipline at the beginning of her career:

In my first year of teaching, a veteran teacher took me under her wing. We didn't have a mentor program at the time. This "pro" told me that if I wanted to get students to respect me and be able to manage my classroom so that learning could happen, I needed to do three things: 1) be fair, 2) know my stuff, and 3) address behavior issues immediately and individually. I have been teaching now for more than 20 years, and I still use these three principles. When students know that I will treat them equitably (not equally, because

everyone is not the same, and I get to know my students on a personal level); that I am “on my game” as far as the content I am teaching; and that I will not let them get away with bad behavior, we create and develop a great community in my classroom.

Another veteran educator narrated,

Education has a reputation of eating its young, oftentimes by giving the new teachers some of the most challenging students, which is what happened to me during my first year. I’ll never forget it. I was teaching a small class, and I went next door to get a fan because the classroom was really hot, and the students couldn’t concentrate. When I got back to the room, two of my students – young men who were much taller than I – were fighting. One of them had picked up a desk and was getting ready to throw it at the other student. For some reason, I ran and

stepped between them, and I looked into the eyes of the one who was holding the desk over his head. And I said in the sternest tone I could muster, “PUT THAT DESK DOWN!” The other students in the class said, all together, “ooohhh!” I was amazed that he put the desk down. Then I said, “We are going to the office, and you two are going to work this out.” I turned to the rest of the class and said, “And there better not be another fight going on when I get back! In fact, you have an assignment you are supposed to be working on. I suggest you work on it.” I realized later, that I earned the respect of my students that day. And I never had any other problems.

No matter the circumstances that initiate a respectful relationship, there is no doubt that respect from students is critical to persistence in the profession.

As teachers grow in experience in their careers, they understand more and more that sometimes the intangible things matter most. Respect is just like that: it's not something that can be touched in the physical sense, but it can be seen in the behavior and interactions between teachers and their students, colleagues, school leaders, and community members. Research confirms that when teachers experience respect, they are more likely to remain in the profession.

Recognition

*A gentle word, a kind look, a good-natured smile
can work wonders and accomplish miracles. -*

William Hazlitt

Recognition in the school and in the community goes a long way toward teachers' contentment and retention. Rural schools especially find ways to honor teachers as community assets, where they get the respect of internal and external stakeholders alike (Fowler, 2012). But

teachers in urban and suburban areas receive recognition as important members of their communities as well. Additionally, recognition in the school or division context contributes to veteran teachers' decisions to stay in teaching.

Teachers in the Community

Teachers, especially those in suburban and rural areas, live a “fish bowl” life because in close-knit communities, they are recognized in and out of school. This can often be a double-edged sword, as a high level of recognition can filter into their personal lives. For example, when a student sees a teacher in the local grocery store, she is not merely a resident shopping for dinner, but an easily recognized member of the school community... *“Hey there Miss Weaver! I didn't know you actually eat food.”*

Kimberly, a research participant who has taught for almost 30 years, commented that enthusiastic behavior towards teachers by the community is not limited to simple

respect within the school setting, but is also demonstrated through widespread recognition in the community:

When out and about in public, my husband says I should run for public office since I am met and greeted by students, parents, and alumni wherever I go.

The closeness of teachers to the community creates a context whereby teachers walk a fine line of professional and personal identity. In rural settings in particular, schools tie the community together, socially and economically. Rural schools remain a source of community pride (Huysman, 2007). Teachers become essential to the community because they are a part of the school. This connection highlights the importance of teachers creating social ties to the community (Preston, 2012).

One research participant, a history teacher of 40 years in one school division, talked about how he became acclimated to the area and got involved in community

organizations, which made him a community staple:

Not too long after I started teaching in the county, I got involved with the Historical Society because I am a Civil War buff. I started going to their events, and eventually they invited me to do some talks...after that, I did a few tours of historical landmarks in the county. Students would say, "I saw you walking downtown with a group of people behind you. What were you doing?" So I made this stuff part of my classroom content. They seemed to think that was cool that they were getting the same information I was giving to my tour groups..

These sentiments are not voiced only in rural communities, but in suburban school districts as well. Even in many urban districts, teachers with years of service in the school system are recipients of community good will. Teachers can be found at community recreation centers coaching youth league basketball, at community

theatres performing in musicals, and a host of other activities. This happens partly because teachers tend to get involved in the community. They move in, raise families, go to church, shop, join organizations – in other words, they acclimate into the community and become one with it - This connection makes it difficult to leave.

An important point here is that the teachers (who become career teachers) don't wait for the community to come to them, **they go to the community**. There is evidence to support the initiative exhibited by teachers to be bonded to the community. A study conducted by Jaques (2014) yielded a set of core issues referred to as “binding to the community”. The study found that there were certain ways that people who are new to a community find ways to create solid bonds. There are five keys to binding to a community:

- 1) prospecting to seek out a place to call home

- 2) outreaching to make purposeful contact with community members and organizations

- 3) being guided to learn from and interact with community members and organizations to gain knowledge of community norms, traditions, and values
- 4) being accepted into the community through being valued and finding common threads
- 5) exercising community ties to perpetuate norms, rituals, and practices through continued interaction with the other community members.

Those who become veteran teachers go through the process of binding, and because of the educators' embeddedness in the community, they become recognized and respected both in school and out of school.

Subjects from a qualitative study (Parker, 2016) shared their experiences about how they were able to be *binded* to the community:

Maggie said,

*Yes, most definitely at home here.
This happened even before we*

actually moved here when we were searching for a home and talking to people about where to live.

Barbara added,

Having raised my children here, while working in the public school system, being involved in school and community sports programs and in church, after 39 years here, it is "home."

Rick described a decision he made to be connected to the community, saying,

Yes...When I first arrived, I bought a small farm and raised horses and crops. This gave me something in common to talk about with the natives and mitigated the idea I was just another Yankee schoolteacher.

Julia responded,

I do feel connected to the community in many ways. My youngest daughter (a second grade teacher) married a young man whose family has been here since the 1800s. Their home is on the site of the original farm. Our

oldest daughter and her husband recently moved to the county. We shop here, our healthcare providers are here. We attend church services (on occasion) here. When I am out and about, I see people I know. When I need a service, I often ask my students if their parent(s) have a business, or we ask neighbors. We find the people fair and honest.

Strong relationships are frequently established through the workplace. Consequent efforts to integrate into the community include activities directly related to community cohesion, such as attending neighborhood events, and joining local organizations (Jaques, 2014).

The process of binding is not a one-size-fits-all issue. It can be a protracted process for those entering the community; for others, it happens quickly. The lesson to be learned here is that when teachers develop bonds, and gain respect in their schools and communities, they tend to feel more satisfied in their working environments, and

as a result, extend their careers. Ultimately, when teachers are recognized by the community, school administrators, and peers as contributors to the growth and development of themselves and others, they tend to remain in the profession.

Relationships

What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other? - George Eliot

Principles of collegial ethics hold that professionals provide support of other colleagues under ordinary circumstances, and in troubled times (Kuhar, 2011). Supporting colleagues in everyday professional life can be relatively easy, but supporting colleagues who find themselves in stressful circumstances can be more complicated (Kuhar, 2011). Research supports the idea that when professionals experience collegial support, one of the benefits of those relationships is continued longevity in the profession.

For many veteran teachers, healthy relationships with colleagues students, administrators, and support staff influence their decisions to stay. Read how career teachers responded when asked this question:

Is there something about your school that has had an influence over your coming back year after year?

The veteran education participants mused about relationships with colleagues, students, and their individual schools.

Nora shared her thoughts about building relationships with colleagues and students:

We've been through a lot of things. Unfortunately, at my school there aren't that many veteran teachers but... Yeah, the people who have been through these things [organizational changes] can pretty much shrug it off and not take it to heart because we truly care about each other. We know that what goes on in the classroom is the most

important, and when I think on that, I feel like I've done something right, that I have done right by my students, you know. Plus, teaching gives us ties to the community, so we gotta come back.

Rick, a high school history teacher with 40 years' experience, added thoughts about his relationships with students:

I enjoy them...I think I stuck around because of the kids. Basically it is, it's refreshing to talk to them. I mean, I'm pretty cynical myself, and these kids, they really are engaged. You know in 4 years they're gonna be \$400,000 in debt, and they're not gonna have a job, and they're gonna have to look at their parents and say 'Can I have my room back?' Of course, none of them believe it, and they all are very convinced that, you know, life is a bowl of cherries and I try to give them a dose of reality, but with some up sides too, while still teaching them some history... The kids make quite a difference, and I also wonder if I

*could, and you say why do you stay with the job, I say **could I do anything else?** Uhh, is it that I'm emotionally retarded because I related only to 17 and 18 year olds for the last 40 years?*

Cora, a veteran English teacher, talked about relationships with her colleagues and students:

Some of my best friends work at my school. It's my core group of friends I've had for years...The thing about continuity... continuity is important ... and the kids do come to know you and they tell other kids, you know, you need to take so-and-so's class... I have kids coming back from years ago...and they say... 'oh your class was the best,' or 'oh...I love history because I took your class' ...and I know they feel that way about many of my veteran colleagues because they remember all the stories they tell, and how they felt so connected to us.

Kim added:

What you're saying there is ... I mean, I've had plenty of kids whose parents I had, and that's something. And that's the good thing about Facebook too, is that I see a student that the last time I saw him, he was 17 years old, and now they're 50-something now (laughter) and ask if I am still teaching; and when I say "yes", they say "good". But the kids again ... the kids are wonderful.

On the subject of administrator and departmental relationships, Kathleen shared this:

We never felt like they [administrators] micromanaged us...I don't think anyone came to observe me for years...I mean, I've been observed more in the last 2 years than I have, perhaps, over my entire career....but there was sort of a ...climate that communicated "We trust our teachers to do the right thing".

it's a very caring faculty and when something is going on with somebody, we'll know about it. One of our teachers right now, her daughter is pregnant, was pregnant, and she started feeling really poorly, and we found out that she had some kind of cancer. And so here is this poor woman struggling and we found out that the baby's ok, but the daughter has been in the hospital for a length of time, and so, you know. And when things like that happen, we have people bringing food, and we make arrangements for you know, just the moral support, you know. We're Facebook friends, and that kind of stuff, and I just really find that we truly care for each other in a way that really I-I haven't had for a while on a personal level.

The principal spends time building relationships with faculty, students, and staff. He goes to everything! The man must be exhausted. He goes to all the games. He goes to the away games, he goes to all the home games.

He has these tailgate parties for the faculty, like one day he'll cook for you, and yeah, really, and because we don't or a lot of our parents can't be there for our students, or aren't there in that way for students, he fills the gap. So the kids come to school because they can eat, because a lot of them are hurting. They can eat two times a day, and he cares if they show up. They know he cares, and we know that too.

From this discussion, one can see how relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators can help teachers to make retention decisions. This focus group interview provided insight about how participants' experiences in the school environment influenced their career longevity. Cora's comment sums it up this way:

And I keep coming back every day, you know. And it's like, am I ready to retire? Soon, soon I am, but am I

*ready to retire? No, not yet
because I still like what I do, where
I do it, and the people around me
who are doing the same thing --
I'm a little more tired at the end of
the year, but-I still look forward to
the first day of school every year.*

In addition to school-related relationships, veteran teachers' connections tend to extend beyond the school environment. Veteran rural teachers, specifically, seem to have distinction in the community, which gives this population credence both in and out of school. The community trusts veteran teachers, knowing that their successful classroom outcomes, including, but not limited to, student performance on mandated tests, confirm sound professional practice. Consequently, trust extends to the community-at-large (Haar, 2007). One participant in the Parker (2016) study wrote,

*My husband thinks I should run for
public office based on the way I get*

treated in the community”.

A majority of respondents shared that even mundane experiences such as conversing with a parent in the grocery store, or attending a football game supports community relationships, and thereby, supports the themes of teacher respect, recognition, and involvement in the community.

Resilience

No matter how much falls on us, we keep plowing ahead. That's the only way to keep the roads clear.”

— *Greg Kincaid*

Resiliency in demonstration is confirmed in theory. Ungar’ Resiliency Theory (2008) defined resilience in three ways, each related to acquisition and distribution of resources that contribute to thriving in a challenging environment. First, the ability to be aware of and move toward resources that sustain well-being is indicative of resilience.

Resilience is also the capacity of individuals' to develop foundations for growth and development. Finally, as Ungar (2008) attested, resilience is the capacity of individuals and communities to devise culturally meaningful ways to portion resources in order to thrive in the environment.

This broad definition of resilience emphasizes the need for individuals to use intrinsic motivation to engage behaviors required to meet changing needs (Masten, 2001). Possibly the most relevant aspect of resilience is that it applies a disposition that can influence action. Resilient people shift their focus from elements that create a stressful environment, to behaviors that encourage a more positive outcome (Masten, 2001).

Resilience is also referred to as the ability to shake off difficulties and keep going. Hardiness, in addition, needs challenge and opportunities to learn and grow. This situational definition is rooted in resilience theory, which offers predictive and explanatory constructs relevant to healthy

development in the face of adversity (Smith-Osborne, 2007). Social workers and educators have used its constructs and models flexibly.

When teachers possess hardiness, the working environment reaps the benefits. Meister (2010) purported teacher effectiveness surfaces in influential stages. One stage is the enthusiastic and growing stage, wherein instructors exhibit excitement about the job. Another stage is the expert and master stage. This is the place in the teacher's career where growth is continuous, and the teacher gains control of professional image and class management skills. Finally, teachers engaging in improvement of their skills even further through coursework and conference attendance define the renewal stage (Meister, 2010). These stages may occur at various points in a teacher's career; however, these are all evidence of growth. Growth also carries with it contentions and difficulties, but this is where resilience is triggered in teacher's personal and professional lives (Gu & Day, 2007).

Researchers have found educators'

ability to activate these characteristics when necessary contributes to career longevity (Meister, 2010). Thus, resilience is conceptualized as relative resistance to environmental stressors or adversity. Researchers and theorists who have tested diverse frameworks of resiliency agree on salience of the construct in the context of stress and adversity. Investigators concede that resilience is not operative in the absence of environmental stressors (Gu & Day, 2007; Rutter, 1999, but it very well may assist teachers in avoiding career plateau (Meister, 2011).

The moral dimension of teaching can be a motivating factor in teacher retention, but inability to access moral rewards of teaching can be a condition for experienced teachers to engage the power of resiliency. Santoro (2011) conducted an empirical case study using philosophical inquiry to explore resilience when the moral rewards of teaching are difficult to access. The single subject of this case study was a teacher in an underserved community. Changes to pedagogical practices due to education reform were factors that contributed to

demoralization and loss of access to intrinsic teaching rewards; thus requiring a high degree of resilience. The subject was able to exercise professional judgment and engage in good teaching in a well-organized school that had supportive leadership, which provided numerous opportunities to teach and learn. With all of these positive attributes, the subject, a 14-year veteran teacher employed in the most ethnically diverse elementary school in Virginia, perceived the profession as becoming unrecognizable and undesirable because of federal, state, and local policy mandates influencing the authenticity of good teaching. Though the subject finally left the teaching profession, Santoro (2011) reported that resilience was one of the attributes that kept the subject in the profession for 14 years. As stated previously, **one cannot access resilience in the absence of difficulty**. In total, the development of resilience, or hardiness to confront stressful conditions may assist teachers' attitudes concerning effectiveness and satisfaction, which in turn, may contribute to decisions regarding the choice to remain in teaching or leave the profession.

Another theory that contributes to the understanding of resilience is Pretorius' Theory of Fortigenesis (2004). The theory holds that through personal interactions with the world, people develop evaluative appraisals of the self, the family, and support from others. These evaluative appraisals, when taken in total, comprise the essence of **fortitude** (Pretorius, 2004). Pretorius theorized **that the ability to manage stress is born out of fortitude** (2004).

Research has documented that teaching is one of the most stressful professions one can undertake (Bohrnstecht, 2002; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Harrison, 2011). The Fortigenesis Theory provides insight into how teachers who become veterans in the profession use self-evaluation to develop fortitude that aids in sustaining a career that lasts 10, 20, 30 years or more.

Education, as an industry, undergoes change on a regular basis - from personnel, to curriculum, to evaluation, to grading, the list goes on perpetually. People who work in

education, from instruction to executive administration and leadership, must bear the brunt of organizational and theoretical change, especially when capacity must be built to sustain new initiatives and processes. Since many changes trickle down to the classroom, teachers must prepare. However, because change is relatively constant, it is often seen as something to be resisted. In cases where change seems unwelcomed - but is coming nevertheless - professional resilience must be developed. Seasoned teachers do this well!

Changes also figure into teachers' personal well-being. Teachers are "bombaraded" with multiple changes; and because their students are their priority, their approach to personal effectiveness and resilience may take a back seat. However, some of the research participants in the Parker (2016) study mentioned ways they ensure personal effectiveness.

Rick talked about summer vacation...and other things related to well-being:

On the personal side, I find that summer breaks help me to regain my sanity, and give me energy so that I can go back to school refreshed. I think that if we had to teach all year, many more teachers would burn out because teaching is such mental work. I also stay out of office politics. It's amazing how calm and unencumbered I feel not knowing some of the things that go on internally in the main office, or in other departments, or in my own department for that matter. I stick to the kids and what works for them.

Cora shared some of her tips for personal effectiveness and resilience:

One little thing I do for myself is that I don't check email or Blackboard on holidays or snow days. I know they want us to always stay connected, and even give assignments during those times, but I have students who are out helping their parents when we have

snow days, or they are working their part-time jobs because they have to pay for their own gas, or make their own car payment, or help their family put food on the table. I'm not going to give them work then. I sit back and spend time with my family, which does me so much good.

The first step in addressing any issue is to acknowledge that it exists. Education leaders have acknowledged the fact that, in many sectors of the schooling industry, teachers are leaving the profession before they become veteran or career teachers. Ingersoll (2003, 2004), coined the phrase, *revolving door*, to define the phenomenon whereby teachers leave within five years of entering the profession, and are replaced with other inexperienced teachers who repeat the pattern. Perhaps, if leaders at the building level recognize the characteristics that career teachers tend to possess, they will be able to recognize those characteristics in the novice teachers in their buildings, and build

capacity for them to become veteran teachers. As a review, here are the characteristics outlined in this section. Research supports the context that career teachers...

- Have passion about their profession (the teaching gene)
- Command respect, and gain recognition
- Value relationships with colleagues and students
- Exhibit effectiveness
- Develop resilience

If administrators and other school leaders can find these teachers in their buildings, they will have these instructional professionals for many years to come by initiating intentional retention strategies. The goal in recognizing and understanding these factors is for school leaders to apply the concepts learned from veteran teachers to strategies that will help to minimize new teacher attrition.

KNOWING HOW TO KEEP
NEW TEACHERS SO THEY BECOME
CAREER TEACHERS

What Leaders Can Do to Turn Novice Teachers into Career Teachers

A synthesis of the previous section of this book allows the reader to understand veteran teachers, to a degree, through their shared reflections on factors that have influenced them to persist in teaching. Taking the wisdom to heart would work to the advantage of school divisions across the nation, especially in areas that experience high teacher turnover, such as rural and urban locales. Considering the lived experiences of the professionals who have first-hand knowledge of what it takes to keep going, there are actions school leaders can take to support this group of professionals, as well as build capacity for newer teachers to continue in the profession.

Oftentimes, the relationships between the veteran educator, the school, and the community is generational, as the instructor may teach siblings, children, and sometimes,

grandchildren of former students. If a veteran teacher were to leave the school, the organization would not be the only entity to experience the loss, but the community would experience it as well. Thus, community ties are developed and strengthened during the course of a veteran teacher's career. Developing connections is one of the ways to show how veteran teachers stay in the profession. **The strength of connection, coupled with development of a professional sense of a teacher identity** is foundational to understanding how seasoned instructors find the wherewithal to remain in their districts for an extended time. School leaders should strive to establish and develop these same kinds of connections, as there is support showing that strong professional relationships contribute to teacher retention. Other important persistence factors are outlined below, along with research-based recommendations for administrative support.

Recognizing Persistence Factors and Supporting Teacher Development

Every school division shares some foundational elements: administrative structure, school board governance, accreditation requirements, and the like. Conversely, every school division and school within the division is unique, with its own idiosyncrasies, quirks, and cultures. That being said, the strategies that follow are not designed as a one-size-fits-all playbook. These recommendations are simply a springboard to begin the important conversations about what school leaders can do (and school leaders are not limited to the main office) to turn the wave of attrition to a tide of retention, where students have the critically important opportunity to have a knowledgeable, committed, resilient effective, and experienced teacher.

Persistence Factor #1: Respect

To support teachers, school leaders can:

- **Include teachers in discussions on school changes, especially those that affect the classroom.** Being part of the conversation regarding impending changes communicates to teachers that they are vital to the decision-making process. For example, when a new state-mandated teacher evaluation instrument was going to be implemented, one school division held a retreat where department chairs were able to see how the new program would work, and were able to offer recommendations as to how make the implementation easier for teachers. Many of the recommendations were accepted, and capacity was built for the teachers to understand the new system of evaluation, so that resistance was minimized.
- **Support teachers in disciplinary recommendations concerning**

disruptive student behavior in class.

When teachers experience behavior problems in their classes, and reach the point where a student needs to be removed from the class, it is disheartening to have the student return even before class is over.

Teachers see that as a lack of support, and a lack of respect from administration. If this type of situation cannot be avoided, providing the teacher an explanation of the administrative action is helpful. It helps the administrator to build professional capital with the teacher, which in turn, fosters trust in the teacher-administrator relationship.

- **Learn more about pedagogical strategies, so that classroom observations can be more effective.** Observing a teacher for evaluation purposes is not the same as observing a painting at a museum. There is more to it than just the superficial, “That was a good lesson.” A good number

of administrators do not know about pedagogy and delivery of content. Teachers appreciate when those who observe them know something about what is happening instructionally. When that happens, the observer can discuss the classroom experience with a degree of expertise. It may be a good practice for administrators to stay abreast of current pedagogical strategies by: subscribing to, and reading current research journal articles on teaching strategies; visiting classrooms more regularly in non-evaluative contexts, and engaging teachers in conversation about pedagogical practices

- **Seek input from veteran teachers when developing strategic plans.** Again, when teachers have a place at the table, they feel respected. School divisions periodically undertake revisions to strategic plans, but not all school divisions include teachers on strategic planning teams. When they

are included, they often become champions for the plan, and often encourage others to make deliberate decisions to make the plan a “living” document rather one that gathers dust in the main office.

- **Offer relevant professional development.** An effective professional event can have lasting effects on teachers and students. One school division in Virginia organizes its professional development programs thematically. For example, teachers can attend several modules on classroom management, technology use in the classroom, or collaboration. Teachers sign up for a thematic sequence at the beginning of the year and attend all the modules related to the theme. The benefit is that not only do teachers get information relevant to development, but they also have opportunities to work with, and become better

acquainted with other teachers in the school.

Veteran teachers may facilitate these events, which have a twofold benefit: the seasoned instructor's sense of respect is reaffirmed, and the novice teacher has access to expert practitioners who may eventually become informal mentors and advisors.

Persistence Factor #2: Recognition

To support teachers, school leaders can:

- **Enlist the help of local community leaders to engage in outreach efforts to interact with veteran teachers.** Many school divisions are beneficiaries of community goodwill. In one Southeastern school division, curators of museums and directors of historical societies invite veteran teachers to do talks or presentations, or lead tours of area sites. They have found that these kinds of events are well attended and engaging, and gives

the teachers an outlet to share knowledge in a different context.

- **Leverage the expertise of experienced teachers for school-based professional development.** It is typical for schools to hire outside “experts” to facilitate professional development for faculty. Usually those events are a “one-time” or a “short-term” event, covering broad topics. However, research tells us that professional development is most effective when it is ongoing. Teachers understand the hit-it-and-quit-it nature of professional development, and being exposed to the “Next Greatest Thing” in education. As a result, teachers sometimes become jaded. This is not to say that this type of professional development is of no value, but a different tactic may produce an effective supplement to these annual events.

A better way to approach this may be to use the veteran teachers as

professional development facilitators in their schools. These seasoned educators could address timely and prescient topics relevant to the individual school. There are years of wisdom and practical experience that could benefit the entire faculty. If this type of professional development can be offered throughout the year, all teachers would benefit. Of course, the school should not sell the teachers short. Some type of compensation, whether it be an honorarium, CEUs, or something else, should be given. This then reinforces the respect and recognition motivational factors pertaining to veteran teachers.

- **Pair veteran teachers with cohorts of new teachers for guidance in areas of need.** In its formal configuration, this is referred to as a teacher mentoring program...and these are great programs. The challenge is that mentor teacher programs are managed inconsistently

across school systems, and new teachers do not always get what they need. They not only need to know the day-to-day functions of teaching in a school, e.g. taking attendance, recording absences, performing lunch duty, setting up electronic grade books, etc... but also, they need to gain knowledge on managing difficult students, planning effective lessons, communicating with parents, and an entire myriad of situations. This is where being connected to a veteran teacher comes in quite handy. Veteran teachers can share experiences they have had over the years...what has worked...what has failed. Pairing small groups of new teachers with effective veteran teachers, if even informally, can benefit all parties involved in the relationship. Career instructors have the opportunity to share their expertise, and new teachers get to learn from the school's instructional experts.

- **Create school- and community-based awards/rewards programs.** Knowing the motivational effect that respect and recognition have on teachers' decisions to remain in the profession, showing appreciation for their efforts is one way the school and community can work together. Often, individual school divisions perform informal ceremonies (and give mementos) recognizing years of service, but additional efforts can be made to celebrate the good work that teachers do. One school division works with a community board of businesses to help teachers to fund projects or travel to enhance their teaching repertoire. Another school system established a program for teachers to receive discounts on goods and services offered at various community businesses. Teachers get reduced prices on massages, dinners, printing services, dry cleaning, gym memberships, among many other offerings. Any opportunities to

celebrate and honor teachers are appropriate in a school's efforts to place the newest teachers on a path to become veteran teachers

Persistence Factor #3: Collegial Relationships

To support teachers, school leaders can:

- **Provide opportunities for teachers/departments to bond and build collegial relationships.** When a new teacher enters into the profession, he or she usually enters a school with an established culture (unless of course the school has been newly constructed, in which case, all faculty and staff are engaged in establishing school culture). Scaling the wall of administrative and department politics can be challenging, as the new teacher must find a place to fit in. Research cited earlier in this work has found that relationships are essential to teacher's retention decisions. When

administrators are aware of this element, they can take deliberate actions to foster relationship-building. However, there must be an out-of-school component to this undertaking.

In one Virginia school division, the principal hosts holiday gatherings off campus so that faculty and staff can mingle in a stress-free environment. Another school division has a monthly casual get-together at different local restaurants, where faculty and staff can come and grab a bite, chit-chat, and leave when they please. Individual departments can also schedule activities for their members to form bonds of collegiality and friendship. These types of opportunities contribute to the development of collegial relationships, and allow faculty and staff to interact with school administrators and peers in an informal setting, thereby reinforcing the culture of the school.

- **Encourage organic collaboration through inter-and intra-departmental partnerships.**

Teachers generally, are sharers. They value the exchange of ideas. Just walk into the classroom of any effective teacher. Since learning does not happen in a vacuum, teachers should be encouraged to expand learning across the curriculum. This is where collaboration can be quite effective, and could help foster collegiality.

Chemistry and English literature do not seem to be great partners on the surface, but two teachers in Virginia saw a connection. When teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, the English teacher seized the opportunity to expand on the scene where the two main characters poison themselves. The Chemistry teacher then used the scene in class as a foundation to teach about chemical compounds and the range of effects they have on the body. This then spilled over into the Biology teacher's class where the

discussion focused on the respiratory system, and what happens when certain elements are introduced. As a result, the three teachers include a Literature-Science unit in their curriculums. They recently included a Botany component in the unit where they teach about the natural sources of chemicals, and use the plants mentioned in the literary work as the basis of the botanical portion of the unit.

Teachers in a North Carolina school division combine literature, music, and psychology to explore literary characters. In another Virginia school division, math and music teachers collaborate to improve student outcomes by showing foundations in music (which everyone likes) and their connections to math concepts (which many do not like). One northern school division created a class, Bio-Psychology, expressly to allow the Biology teacher and the

Psychology teacher the opportunity to co-teach the elective course.

Of course, collaboration requires planning. Some of the teachers in these partnerships teach the same students, so sharing opportunities is fairly easy; but in many more cases, teachers are on different schedules and collaboration is more challenging. Because research bears out the fact that administrative support is critical to teacher development and retention, teachers appreciate the effort that school administrators make to ensure that authentic collaboration has a chance to develop, both inter- and intra-departmentally.

Persistence Factor #4: Resilience through Increased Effectiveness

To support teachers, school leaders can:

- **Use vertical teaming to encourage curricular awareness.** Vertical teaming occurs when there is open

and consistent communication with teachers of surrounding grades to ensure that students are receiving a step-by-step, year-by-year, scaffolded curriculum. In other words, the third grade teacher is talking to the second and fourth grade teachers, and a sophomore teacher is talking to the freshmen and junior teachers of the same subject. This strategy increases effectiveness because it gives the teacher, novice and experienced alike, the opportunity see where their content fits in to the bigger picture. When an instructor has limited knowledge of the “bigger picture” of the curriculum, it can be challenging and may have a negative effect on lesson planning and content delivery. On the other hand, being involved in the vertical teaming process can help each teacher to be more deliberate in lesson choices, and content foci.

- **Partner with local community colleges/universities for reduced**

tuition for teachers. Recertification is required for teachers to maintain their licensure; however, with the increase in college costs, taking courses for recertification may pose a threat to teacher retention, especially when the investment has no equal return in salary. When school divisions collaborate with community colleges and universities to make tuition affordable, this works toward retention. Some school systems offer to pay for an advanced degree if the teacher remains with the school for a pre-determined number of years. Other systems will pay for a specified number of credit hours toward a degree or toward recertification.

This presents a win-win-win context for the school, the teacher, and the students. The school earns the good will and loyalty of the teacher by making an investment in him or her, who in turn will remain in the school and the profession to share new knowledge with students, who in

turn will increase their potential for improved academic outcomes. The community then becomes a beneficiary, as the school is seen as an employer willing to invest in its teachers; teachers (because of longevity) deepen their ties and economic power in the community; and the students become part of the larger, informed and educated citizenry.

Epilogue

Teaching is part of the fiber that gives veteran educators a *raison d'etre*, or a reason to be. These educators use internal fortitude to attain longevity in the teaching profession. Inner strength contributes to the effectiveness, expertise, and staying power of these instructors. Results from research indicate that when veteran teachers are called upon to go beyond what is required, passion for the work answers the call.

Commitment to students and the natural instinct to teach have great influence over decisions to remain in the profession. This becomes important when new initiatives and approaches to pedagogy and curriculum are implemented. Veteran instructors will default to commitment and passion when the resolve to continue teaching is weakened.

Career teachers demonstrate these retentive qualities in different ways. Parker (2016) explained how study participants spend hours after school helping students with classwork, as well as advising clubs, and coaching athletic teams are retention factors. Staying after school outside of contract hours to grade papers and work on lesson plans, or researching information relevant to lessons are commonplace. Some teachers in the contributor group stay extra hours after school not only for students, but for colleagues as well. These instructors lead professional development workshops and work on school and community committees. Commitment feeds passion and vice versa. Because the two exist in tandem, students, colleagues, schools, and the community reap the benefits.

A familiar saying goes, “happy wife, happy life”. The concept here is that if the integral partner in the

relationship is happy (feeling encouraged and supported), then the union will thrive. This same idea can be applied to the school. We can say “Happy teacher, happy school”. If teachers are happy (feeling encouraged and supported), then the educational union will thrive because these valued professionals will remain in the classroom, in the community, and in the profession. What a testament it will be to education when we get to the place where teacher longevity is the rule, and not the exception.

References

- Alber, R. (2008). Classroom management tips for novice teachers. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/classroom-management-tips-novice-teachers-rebecca-alber>
- Allen, M. B. (2005). Eight questions on teacher recruitment and retention: What does the research say? Washington, DC: Education Commission on the States
- Allensworth, E. P. (2009). *The schools that teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago Public Schools*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- Anthony, C. A. (2014). The lived experience of veteran elementary urban school teachers: Why and how they stay. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). West Michigan University. Kalamazoo.
- Battitori, J. R. (2009). *Motivational factors in veteran New Jersey teacher job satisfaction and retention*. Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI 3416592)

- Ball, J. (2010). *An analysis of teacher self-efficacy, teacher trust, and collective efficacy in a Southwest Texas school district* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMO No. 3446644.
- Beasley, T. A. (2013). *Influences contributing to the longevity of experienced teachers in the elementary, middle, and high school settings*, (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA). Retrieved from digilib.gmu.edu
- Berkowitz, J.. & Myers, A. (2014). Improving teacher retention by finding what makes veteran teachers special. *Education Week*. Retrieved from www.edweek.org/leadership
- Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2010). Teacher credentials and student achievement in high school: A cross-subject analysis with student fixed effects. *Journal of Human Resources*. 45(3), 655-681.
- Cohen, R. (2009). What it takes to stick it out: Two veteran inner-city teachers after 25 years. *Teachers & Teaching*, 15(4), 471-491. doi:10.1080/13540600903057252
- Craig, C. J. (2012). Butterfly under a pin: An emergent teacher image amid mandated

curriculum reform. *Journal of Educational Research*. 105(2), 90-101.

DOI:10.1080/00220671.2010.519411

- Crosswell, L. (2006). Understanding teacher commitment in times of change.
- Edwards, E. A. (2003). Retention and motivation of veteran teachers: Implications for schools (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). East Tennessee State University. Johnson City, TN
- Farber, H. S. (2008). Employment insecurity: The decline of worker-firm attachment in the United States. Princeton University [working paper].
- Feistritzer, C. E. (2011). *Profile of teachers in the U.S. 2011*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information .
- Fowler, R. (2012). Rural characteristics and values: A primer for rural teachers from non-rural backgrounds. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 5(4), 75-80. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>
- Glazer, J. (2013, July 11). Classroom contemplations: Overlooking the value of veteran teachers.

State Impact. Retrieved from
<http://stateimpact.npr.org/florida/2013/07/11/classroom-contemplations-overlooking-the-value-of-veteran-teachers/>

Grissom, J. A., Nicholson-Crotty, S., & Harrington, J. R. (2011). *Estimating the effects of no child left behind on teachers and their work environments*. Retrieved from
<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/jasongrissom/files/2012/05/grissom-nicholson-crotty-harrington-nclb-effects-on-teacher-attitudes.pdf>

Gu, Q., & Day, C. (2007). Teachers resilience: A necessary condition for effectiveness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1302-1316. Retrieved from
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X06001028>

Huysman, J. T. (2007). *Rural teacher satisfaction: An analysis of beliefs and attitudes of rural teacher job satisfaction*. (Unpublished dissertation, University of Central Florida, Orlando). Retrieved from
http://etd.fcla.edu/CF/CFE0001656/Huysman_John_T_200705_EdD.pdf

Ingersoll, R. M. (2003, May). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 30-34

- Ingersoll, R. (2004). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, pp. 16-31.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Jaques, D. R. (2014). Binding community: A grounded theory (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (UMI No. 3715944).
- Keigher, A. (2010). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2008-09 teacher follow survey*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Kuhar, M. J. (2011). Collegial ethics: What, why and how. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 119(3), 235. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4427902>
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.
- Meister, D. (2010). Experienced secondary teachers' perceptions of engagement and

effectiveness: A guide to professional development. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(4), 880-898. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss4/7>

- Mirza, H. (2011). You can always make a difference (slideshare). Retrieved from www.slideshare.net/hanadym/positive-teacher-attitudes-positive-class-environment/related=1
- Parker, D. (2016). Sustaining Teaching Careers: Perceptions of Veteran Teachers in a Rural Mid-Atlantic School Division.
- Preston, J. (2012). Rural and urban teaching experiences: Narrative expressions. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 58(1), 41-57. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Pretorius, T. B. (2004). *Fortigenesis or "whence the strength?": An empirically derived theory of fortitude as a proposed answer* [research report]
- Quintero, E. (2014). What setting high expectations for all students really means. *Answer Sheet: Washington Post Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/05/06/what-setting->

high-expectations-for-all-students-really-means/

- Rooney, E. (2015). "I'm just going through the motions": High-stakes accountability and teachers' access to intrinsic rewards. *American Journal of Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/681923>.
- Santoro, D. A. (2011). Good teaching in difficult times: Demoralization in the pursuit of good work. *American Journal of Education*, 118(1), 1-23. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/662010>
- Stukes, M. (2015). A study of the perceptions of novice and veteran elementary teachers' levels of stress and attitudes toward their profession (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2568/>
- Taylor, C., McNaney-Funk, C., Jardine, D., Lehman, G., & Fok-Chan, E., (2014). Teacher rewards: Going beyond the stickers, moving beyond extrinsic motivation (Unpublished report).
- Teacher Leadership Initiative. (2013). National Education Association. Retrieved from www.nea.org

DeJuanna Parker, Ph.D.

About the Author

Dr. DeJuanna Parker is an administrator and instructor at a local community college in the Virginia Community College System. She earned the Ph.D. in Educational Management from Hampton University.

She taught in a rural school division in the Northern Virginia area for almost 25 years. Her passion for the practice of education, especially in teacher development and authentic learning, has become her passion for the research of education. Dr. Parker's doctoral dissertation on rural teacher longevity was the springboard for this work.

Dr. Parker is a frequent presenter at educational conferences, and she continues to conduct research. She is also a consultant with school divisions working on issues of strategic planning and school improvement.

She is also a wife (Mike), mother (Collin, Chip, Samone, and Michael), and proud grandmother (Olivia and London).

***If you would like to have Dr. Parker visit your school to present on this topic, please contact her at dejuanna.parker@gmail.com**

The Best Teachers Keep It REEAL
is Dr. Parker's upcoming work on
authentic learning. You will be able to
purchase it on Amazon.com soon.