THE IMPACT OF HOUSE BILL 210 ON TEACHER RETENTION IN GEORGIA

by

VIRIN K. VEDDER

(Under the Direction of C. Thomas Holmes)

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the impact of a bill passed by the Georgia legislature that was intended to recruit and retain retired veteran educators in Georgia’s lowest achieving schools on a full-time basis. The legislation provided retirees with financial incentives not offered before its passage. The study attempted to identify factors that these educators used to evaluate whether or not they would take advantage of the bill.

The data for this study were collected from a survey sent to all educators in the state’s largest public school system who met the eligibility provisions of the legislation. Just over 100 people were sent questionnaires and the response rate was 64%.

The following conclusions were supported by the results of this study:

1. The legislation, as passed, is not attracting many retirees to full-time employment in challenging schools.

2. Those teachers attracted back to full-time work by the legislation are drawn back to the classroom due to the financial rewards offered and the opportunities to work with at-risk students.

3. Most retirees who return to positions in schools do so on a part-time basis at schools of their choosing because they prefer the flexibility this arrangement offers as well as the opportunity it gives them to continue to do something with which they are familiar and enjoy.

4. If the legislation were changed to allow all types of educators (not just classroom teachers) to return to full-time employment at any school with the same financial advantages protected by the current legislation, approximately half of all retirees would have some interest in pursuing full-time employment.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher recruitment, Teacher retention, Recruitment, Retention, Post-retirement employment for teachers, Teacher retirement
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Who will teach our kids? Half of all teachers will retire by 2010,” proclaimed the cover of the October 2, 2000 *Newsweek* magazine. Questions like this have become more common in both the national media and professional educational literature as issues related to teacher recruitment and retention have justifiably been given considerable attention over the past several years.

As the ranks of children in public schools grow and baby boomer educators reach the end of their careers, the demand for teachers will continue to grow in the near future. Total enrollment in public schools in the United States is expected to continue to increase over the next six years and remain above 47 million students past 2010. For the sake of comparison, total student enrollment in American public schools in the fall of 1990 was 41.2 million (NCES, 2000).

Meanwhile, the nation’s teaching force is getting older. In 1975, 53% of all full-time teachers were under the age of 35 and 26% were over the age of 45. In 1993, 23% of the nation’s teachers were younger than 35 while 43% were over the age of 45 (Wirt, 2000). Half of all the nation’s teachers are eligible to retire by 2010 (Kantrowitz & Wright, 2000).

McCreight (2000) stated the following:

The U.S. Education Department estimates that approximately 150,000 new teachers are hired in the U.S. each year to replace those that have retired or left the profession. Enrollment increases over the next 10 years will push the number of new hires needed to staff the Nation’s classrooms from 150,000 to 220,000 a
year. The Nation will need 2.4 million newly hired public school teachers...between now and 2008-2009. (p. 4)

In Georgia, public school systems hired 12,000 teachers for the 2001-02 school year, yet only 3,500 students graduated from Georgia colleges and universities with teaching degrees (Simmons, 2001). The forecast for the future does not look optimistic either. Simmons predicted that public school systems in the state will need to annually hire 18,500 new teachers by 2010.

Teacher attrition is the number one factor driving the demand for additional educators in America today (McCright, 2000). The problem of finding qualified teachers to fill the nation’s classrooms is the result of numerous factors including the following: increased birth rates and an influx of immigrants, the retirements of many veteran teachers, reform efforts geared at reducing class sizes, distribution problems associated with teachers’ fields of specialization, work locations (suburban, urban, or rural), and even race and gender (Fox & Certo, 1999; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 2000; Texas Education Agency, 1999).

Marantz-Cohen (2002) stated that schools in this era are “faced with two very different challenges.” (p. 534). She said schools must find a way to recruit excellent educators to the field and, then, identify ways to keep them interested in their positions. Peske, Liu, Moore-Johnson, Kauffman, and Kardos (2001) stated that retaining teachers entering the profession today may prove to be much more difficult than retaining those who entered a generation ago since today’s candidates have both different career options and views about job security and mobility.

A recent study in Texas showed that teacher attrition costs school systems at least $8,000 for each recruit who leaves in the first few years of teaching. It is estimated that
the high attrition of beginning teachers in Texas, who increasingly enter without 
preparation and often receive few supports in learning to teach, costs the state more than 
$200 million per year. This and other studies of teacher attrition suggest that 
policymakers should consider both teaching effects and retention patterns (Darling-
Hammond, 2001, pp. 16-17).

Therefore, given these facts, it is important for policymakers and educators in 
leadership positions to recognize strategies that can be utilized to recruit and retain those 
individuals who express a strong desire and commitment to teach.

Georgia recently attempted to ameliorate the teacher shortage problem by creating 
financial incentives for retired educators to return to the state’s troubled classrooms. The 
2002 state legislature passed House Bill 210 and the Governor signed it into law on May 
10, 2002. The law provides substantial financial rewards to those individuals who 
previously were not eligible to receive them if they continued full-time teaching after 
retiring. Prior to House Bill 210, retired educators were not permitted to work in school 
systems for more than half time.

As enacted, the legislation allows educators who are members of the Teachers 
Retirement System (TRS) with 
either 30 years of service or age 60 to return to a classroom teaching position in a 
‘qualified’ school. A ‘qualified school’ is one rated as D or F by the Office of 
Education Accountability (OEA), listed as Title I, or having 50% or more of the 
students failing to meet OEA standards. About 700 schools (30% of the state’s 
total) would be eligible to provide this opportunity to retirees. The following are 
some provisions of the bill:

1) TRS members must have retired on or before December 31, 2001;
2) Retirees could return to a classroom teaching position for up to five years 
without loss of retirement benefits;
3) TRS members would not contribute to TRS, would not accrue additional TRS 
credit, but would receive their normal rate of pay;
4) Administrators, counselors, librarians, and other education specialists could be re-employed as classroom teachers only;
5) School systems are limited to hiring up to 1% of the total number of teachers in the district or 10 (whichever is greater) from those who have retired;
6) Returning teachers must be re-employed annually and do not retain tenure rights; and
7) Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) are also permitted to employ retired TRS members as school improvement specialists. (Georgia Association of Educators, 2002, p. 2)

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to assess to what extent House Bill 210 has influenced teacher retention in Gwinnett County Public Schools, the state’s largest school system as measured by both student enrollment and number of teachers. Furthermore, the study was designed to determine what factors contribute to educators’ decisions to remain in or leave the profession in the state’s largest system.

Justification for the Study

Convincing teachers, who would otherwise likely leave the profession in the absence of incentives, to work in high-need schools, has the potential to make a considerable impact on the problem of staffing schools with qualified classroom educators. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, and Maislin (1998) concluded that 88% of teachers who left the profession for retirement “planned never to return to teaching” (p. 18). Incentives such as the ones provided by House Bill 210 have the potential to decrease that trend. Marantz-Cohen (2002) suggested that policy makers should “figure out ways to help large numbers of older teachers stay invested in and committed to their work.” (p. 534).

Claycomb and Hawley (2002) stressed the necessity of finding and keeping effective teachers in classrooms:
The most important challenge facing public education today is to provide high quality teachers for every student. The difficulties that many districts are now having in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers will become increasingly acute unless dramatic steps are taken to address the problem. The nation will not meet the challenge of ensuring that every student, especially students placed at risk of failure in school, has a highly qualified and caring teacher by ad hoc, piece-meal strategies. (2001, p. 1)

Keeping knowledgeable educators in classrooms is an essential component to reducing the qualified teacher shortage problem. “High teacher turnover leads to less stable and less effective learning environments for students; places greater demands on teachers and other school staff members; and increases the amount of money and time that must be spent recruiting, hiring, and training replacements” (Brewster & Railsback, 2001, p. 4).

Providing incentives to retain veteran classroom teachers in the profession as long as possible is certainly one attempt to help the teacher shortage problem. “Retaining teachers, the second part of the equation to increase teacher supply, is just as important as recruiting in alleviating teacher shortages” (Texas Education Agency, 1999, p. 3). Fetler (1997) substantiated this contention: “a significant part of the demand for teachers can be met by rehiring individuals who have previously taught” (p. 3).

Georgia’s landmark legislation, detailed above, attempted to make strides toward retaining veteran educators, thereby aiding efforts to find qualified teachers to place in the state’s classrooms. Moreover, by qualifying the reward incentive the state will provide, Georgia has provided an opportunity to direct retention efforts towards some of the state’s neediest classrooms. “For policy makers to be able to influence supply and demand balances and for schools to attract and retain the most qualified teachers, a better understanding of the factors that influence individuals’ decisions to enter, leave and
return to the teaching profession is needed” (Broughman & Rollefson, 2000, p. 18).

Shake, Slaton, Atwood, and Hales (1995) stated that “little research has been
disseminated on the impact of large-scale reform on teachers’ decisions to retire” (p.
144). Therefore, the value of this study is to ascertain whether or not the legislation can
achieve its desired effect of retaining veteran educators in the state’s neediest classrooms.
The information gleaned from this study will provide insight into the effectiveness of
such political reform efforts intended to retain teachers.

Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines an introduction of the
study, a statement of the problem, the justification of the study, and the organization of
the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature that is relevant to teacher
recruitment and retention. Chapter 3 profiles the research methodology used in the study.
Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and
recommendations arising from the study’s findings.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF SELECTED, RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of selected literature related to this study. The review focuses on teacher attrition, what factors influence it, and what strategies have been adopted by school systems to reduce it.

The information highlighted in this chapter is organized under the following topics:

1. Attrition: Its definition and impact
2. Factors related to leaving teaching
3. Compensation
4. Job demands and workplace environment
5. Opportunities for career advancement and professional improvement
6. Personal life changes
7. Personnel decisions
8. Options to alleviate/reduce attrition factors
9. Mentoring and induction programs
10. Pre-service training
11. Targeted recruiting
12. Summary

Attrition: Its Definition and Impact

Workforce attrition is often referred to as turnover and is generally viewed as a reduction in number of employees. As it applies to teaching, Boe, Barkanic, and Leow
(1999) listed four components to educator attrition: teachers who voluntarily relocate to a
different school, teachers who relocate to a different school involuntarily (usually through
reassignment/transfer), teachers who leave the profession voluntarily, and those who
involuntarily leave teaching (usually through termination). For the purpose of this study,
the attrition focus is on those educators who willingly exit the teaching ranks entirely.
These individuals’ decisions directly contribute to the problem of finding qualified and
competent teachers to fill the nation’s classrooms.

Shin (1997) summarized that “the teacher attrition pattern follows a U-shaped
curve over a life cycle. The attrition rate is high for young teachers during their early
stage of professional life, low for middle-aged teachers, and high again for older
teachers” nearing retirement (p. 82).

To what extent are teachers leaving the profession? Boe et al. (1998) examined
this question using a national perspective among eight broadly defined cognate areas that
encompass most certification fields. Their research resulted in the following conclusion:
“Exit attrition of public school teachers from one year to the next has been fairly stable
averaging about 6% of total teachers annually during the six year period from 1987-88 to
1993-94” (Boe et al., 1998, p. 13). More recent estimates suggested the national average
attrition rate for all teachers is closer to 7% (Toth & Stephens, 2000).

Greater focus has been given recently to the rate at which new teachers seem to be
leaving the profession. Henske, Zahn, and Carroll (2001) concluded that recent college
graduates who take jobs as elementary or secondary teachers are not much different from
their peers who enter other white collar professions when it comes to attrition.

Specifically, approximately four-fifths of graduates who taught in April 1994
were also teaching in April 1997, and similar proportions of graduates who
worked in health occupations; as engineers, scientists, lab/research assistants; in legal occupations; in law enforcement or the military; or as business support/financial services workers worked in their respective occupation categories in both April 1994 and April 1997. (pp. ix-x)

Yet, the authors conceded that their research did not consider those who left their professions for studying or child rearing—a sizable number among teachers. In addition, their research did not look at all new teachers in 1994--only those who had recently completed a bachelor’s degree program. Henske et al. (2001) cautioned the following:

Although K-12 teachers among recent college graduates have relatively low attrition rates, they may have relatively high turnover rates compared with their classmates in other occupations. High turnover rates would also have policy implications for schools and districts, particularly if some schools were more likely than others to have high turnover rates among new teachers. (p. 31)

Other researchers have shed additional light on the teaching profession’s situation with attrition. “More than half the new teachers in Los Angeles, California, give up their profession within 3 years, at a cost of $15 million a year. A 1996 study in North Carolina found that 17 percent of the state's teachers leave the profession after the first year in the classroom, 30 percent by the end of 3 years and 36 percent by 5 years. Nationally, 22 percent of all new teachers leave the profession in the first 3 years” (DePaul, 2000, p. 2).

Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) also re-stated the situation at the national level: “To date, over 40% of incoming teachers do not see their fifth year of teaching, with more than half of these leaving the profession within three years” (p. 3). More evidence exists of an emerging retention problem especially among new recruits to the profession. Perez, Swain, and Hartsough (1997) suggested that close to 30% of the nation’s beginning teachers exit the profession within the first two years. “The teacher shortage in the United States is not due to too few people entering the field, but to new
teachers’ dropping out because of early dissatisfaction (Mills, Moore, & Keane, 2001, p. 124).

The situation in Georgia appears to mirror the national trend related to new teachers leaving the profession. From fiscal year (FY) 1989 to FY 1997, “the average three-year attrition rate for new teachers with no experience was 25.55%. During FY89-FY 95, the average five-year attrition rate was 33.43%” (Toth & Stephens, 2000, p. 9).

Factors Related to Leaving Teaching

Numerous researchers have examined the issues involved when educators decide to exit the profession. Different studies have produced assorted clues about which variables contribute to exit attrition. The literature discussed below addressed attrition factors on both a national and state level.

While the researchers’ focus was sometimes more narrowly defined, the following general areas were most often addressed in the literature as factors relating to educator attrition: compensation, job demands and workplace environment, opportunities for career advancement and professional improvement, personal life changes, and personnel decisions. These factors are examined in greater detail below.

Compensation

School systems have become quite creative in terms of the strategies they have adopted as they compete for qualified applicants to fill teaching positions. Many districts have adopted a philosophy of compensating in ways that have not traditionally been necessary. In addition to making annual salaries as competitive as possible, many compensation programs focus on financial incentives during the recruitment phase of
staffing since “new teachers, more than veteran teachers, are significantly affected by monetary benefits” (Toth & Stephens, 2000, p. 15).

Kantrowitz and Winger (2000) reported that school systems in the costly San Francisco Bay area are building affordable housing for teachers who commit to work in their systems. They reported the city’s school system in Houston offers signing bonuses and stipends for those holding certification in high-demand fields. For example, bilingual teachers receive an additional $3,000 when they agree to work for the system.

The Texas Education Agency (1999) reported that a study of all Texas systems showed that the average hiring bonus was just over $1,400 for the 1998-1999 school year. The group’s research indicated that one district offered $7,500 to new recruits while another offered a “bounty” to educators who successfully recruit other teachers to the district (p. 21).

Kantrowitz and Winger (2000) described a plan that the Houston school system has structured for all their teachers and that more systems nationwide are adopting. Houston teachers are eligible for discounts that have been arranged with the system at local businesses which teachers are likely to frequent such as dry cleaners, and automobile repair shops.

Other systems have adopted formerly unconventional methods to attract and retain qualified teachers as competition for them increases. Teachers who agree to work in the Baltimore school system are eligible to receive $5,000 towards closing costs of a home in the city as well as money for relocation expenses (Toth & Stephens, 2000). Blair (2000) reported that states that have recently been losing graduates of education
programs to other states with higher paying teaching jobs have responded by increasing salaries.

The increased attention to compensation with respect to teacher recruitment has come with some debate. Blair (2000) offered the following:

Bidding wars like those raging in the south-central United States have become common around the nation...as the pool of teachers and administrators shrinks and demand for them grows...District leaders say such practices are a reasonable reaction to a competitive marketplace” and that “the competition is healthy for a white-collar profession that has often been paid blue-collar wages….Others, though, complain that bidding wars are further stratifying rich and poor communities and states. (p. 1)

Many systems have avoided spending additional cash to recruit. Instead, Blair’s (2000) research detected that a lot of school systems have adopted fast-track hiring processes. By offering on the spot contracts to new teachers, these systems have attempted to fill vacancies with qualified applicants before rival systems can offer them contracts.

Once teachers have been employed by school systems, compensation remains a hot topic with respect to teacher retention. The issues of teachers’ salaries and benefits have received a lot of attention in the professional literature with varying degrees of agreement about the roles these items play in maintaining the teaching force.

Benham-Tye and O’Brien (2002) interviewed California educators who had been teaching for six to ten years. They discovered that, of those teachers still remaining in the profession, salary considerations were ranked as the number one concern among those still teaching.

Some teachers leave the profession because they are dissatisfied with their salaries....While money is not the primary factor in deciding to choose teaching as a career, it is a major factor in the decision to leave teaching....School districts
with higher rates of wage growth have lower attrition….Moreover, teachers leave for higher paying jobs in other professions. (Toth & Stephens, 2000, pp. 15-16)

Although teachers’ salaries have been increasing, they remain low when compared to individuals with similar educational backgrounds and training. Between 1995-1999, Kantrowitz and Winger (2000) discovered that total teacher salaries for the nation have increased 11%—substantially less than these professions: business administration, computer science, math/statistics, accounting, engineering, sales/marketing, and chemistry.

McCreight (2000) concluded that “approximately one-third of the 105,000 college students graduating certified to teach don’t go into teaching due to poor pay” and that teachers earning more remain in the profession longer than their colleagues earning less (p. 7). On account of large salary differentials between states and even districts within states, her research suggested that those systems that “have a lighter salary scale are going to end up probably getting people who aren’t mobile or aren’t the strongest candidates in the pool” (p. 7). Citing Montana as an example, she noted that perhaps 20% of education graduates from one of that state’s largest universities will take their first jobs out of state where the same jobs pay considerably more.

This example does not necessarily lead to increased exit attrition. At the same time, it highlights a problem of teacher distribution which ultimately impacts recruitment and, later, retention. Fox and Certo (1999) predicted that distribution problems will be most prevalent in the southern and western parts of the country and inner city schools.

Other researchers concluded that dissatisfaction with salary and/or benefits may not be among the primary reasons that teachers leave the profession. Using data derived
from the nationally administered Schools and Staffing Survey from 1993-1994, Perie, Baker, and Whitener (1997) concluded the following:

Overall, compensation shows little relation to satisfaction with teaching as a career. Looking first at public schools, we find that salary shows no strong association with teacher satisfaction at either the elementary or secondary level. Moreover, benefits, originally considered to be an important component of teacher satisfaction, also showed only a weak association with satisfaction. (p. 23)

Findings by Boe et al. (1999) bolstered this contention. In an analysis of national survey data, they found that “contrary to what might be thought, only 18.5% of leavers did so for other work or better salary” in 1993-94 (p. 13).

Connolly’s (2000) findings supported the conclusion reached by the NCES. She stated that most teachers enter the profession because they want to work with children, share knowledge, continue their own personal educations, and aid and serve others. While close to two-thirds of teachers who left the profession agreed that salaries or benefits are poor, “of the teachers who cited ‘dissatisfaction with teaching as a career’ as one of their main reasons for leaving the profession” only 7.3% cited “poor salary” as the primary source of their dissatisfaction which caused them to exit the profession (p. 56).

Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, and Stottlemyer (2000) suggested that those individuals who elect to become teachers do so knowing that salaries are not as competitive with other jobs. Therefore, low pay may not cause those teachers who otherwise have obtained job satisfaction to leave the profession. “Salary as an issue about whether or not to continue teaching practically disappears by the eighth year of teaching” (p. 25).
Job Demands and Workplace Environment

“It is the low status of teaching, exemplified by a lack of respect for the complexity and importance of the job, that has resulted in what the data tell us: that teaching is plagued by problems of recruitment and retention” (Ingersoll, 1998, p. 4). Increasingly more literature has been written about the changing nature of a typical teacher’s job description and workplace environment and how these changes may increase exit attrition among educators. Benham-Tye and O’Brien (2002) offered the following:

To some extent it is true that conscientious teachers have always put in more than an average 40-hour week. And they have done so willingly. What’s different now is that the nature of the work has changed. It’s not hard to spend extra time preparing lessons that you know will benefit your students, that will capture their interest and increase their enthusiasm for learning; it’s quite another matter to put in endless extra hours on tasks that actually detract from the students’ learning experience. (p. 29)

McCreight (2000) stated that “teachers leave the field because they can’t cope with teaching problems. Discipline, difficulties with parents, and lack of sufficient or appropriate teaching materials” are problems beginning teachers face (p.8). Furthermore, she suggested that new teachers’ problems are compounded because they often are assigned the more difficult assignments without the necessary support.

Focused attention has especially been given to new recruits to the profession and how their challenges may contribute to retention problems. Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) stated that “novice teachers are usually assigned less desirable campuses which leads to discipline issues and defeats usefulness, bad conference times which leads to exclusions and defeats belonging, remedial classes which are hard to teach
and defeats competence, and informal mentors who may or may not actually mentor” (p. 10).

Fox and Certo (1999) stated that not just new teachers but also veteran teachers believe that student discipline is “a major concern” and may cause teachers to leave “if they believe student motivation and discipline are problems in their schools” (p. 26). Moreover, they held that the large numbers of students who have myriad educational needs lead to increased stress levels among teachers (and, thus attrition) because teachers have little preparation time within contract hours to adequately plan for, assess, and communicate their students’ achievements to the necessary people. Additionally, they maintained that “student needs often demand that teachers also assume the roles of counselor, nurse, parole officer, and caregiver” before they can impart knowledge (p. 6).

Terry (1997) offered six reasons he attributes to teacher burnout and, subsequently, exit attrition. While one of those six variables was low levels of compensation, he listed five other components that can be grouped together under the current heading of job demands and workplace environment. These included: improper or insufficient training “leading to unrealistic expectations…, unclear methods of evaluation for an individual’s performance” combined with “lack or absence of feedback and clear objective standards”, a “demanding” and “continuously expanding scope of the teacher’s responsibilities…, the multifaceted nature of the teacher’s role” including “attending committees, meetings regarding curriculum, fund raising, new technology and program planning”, and lastly “an unsafe work environment” (pp. 6-8).

Similar to Terry’s (1997) findings, Eberhard et al. (2000) found nine variables that cause teacher dissatisfaction and indications of exit attrition. While one of the
variables related to compensation, all the others specifically reflect the duties and workplace environment that are associated with public school teaching positions. Listed in order of concern these are: “student behavior, administrative recognition, duties other than teaching, salary, administrative support, teaching assignment, paperwork, special education requirements, and class size” (p. 2).

Further evidence exists in the literature stating that teachers’ responsibilities and workplace conditions contribute heavily to their decision of whether or not to remain in the profession. Gonzalez (1995) reviewed attrition research and concluded that lack of administrative, collegial, and parent support combined with “insufficient involvement in decision making” cause teachers to leave the profession (p. 6).

Benham-Tye and O’Brien (2002) found that California educators who had already left the profession “ranked the pressures of increased accountability (high-stakes testing, test preparation, and standards) as their number-one reason for leaving, followed closely by increased paperwork, changing student characteristics, negativity and pressure from parents and the community, and tension between teachers and administration” (p. 27). Concerns with the status of the profession and pay considerations were rated last.

Strengthening administrative support of teachers is something that is very important in terms of keeping teachers in classrooms according to the findings of Perie et al. (1997). In that study, the researchers found high teacher satisfaction to be very much linked to support received from school administrators. “Administrative support and leadership, student behavior and school atmosphere…are working conditions associated with teacher satisfaction…Teachers with greater autonomy show higher levels of
satisfaction than teachers who feel they have less autonomy.” (p. ix). All of these variables are areas over which local school administrators presumably have some control.

Connolly (2000) summed up the numerous variables related to teachers’ job responsibilities and workplace environment that cause exit attrition. She provided the following commentary on the topic:

The question ‘why?’ teachers leave has been posed by a multitude of researchers and the answer has universally been ‘stress.’ The research population identified the lack of public and parental support, time demands, discipline and attendance problems, lack of texts and equipment, student apathy and negative attitudes, large class size, society’s negative attitude toward education…low budgets, poor administration and little administrative support, negative colleagues and incompetent co-workers, and a lack of security and fear for personal safety. (pp. 56-57)

Opportunities for Career Advancement and Professional Improvement

Another reason frequently mentioned in the literature concerning what motivates teachers to leave the classroom is the notion that teachers do not have frequent chances to grow professionally. Shen (1997) stated that “teaching is often characterized as ‘having a flat ladder’ or ‘careerless’” (p. 87). Ingersoll (1997) reported that “the high rates of teacher turnover that plague schools…are far more often a result of two related causes: teachers seeking to better their careers and/or teachers dissatisfied with teaching as a career” (p. 44).

The job descriptions for the novice and veteran teachers are not much different in many schools in this country. Georgia, like most states, does not provide support (financial or otherwise) to districts to differentiate between the different stages of a teacher’s career with respect to pay and/or responsibilities. The monotony of working year after year without major deviations from the same goal of imparting knowledge to children does not always come without a price.
McCreight (2000) noted that the teaching profession “does not offer career advancement as other professions offer. Teachers exhibiting expertise and advanced skills are not rewarded…The only advancement to which teachers can aspire is educational administration” which does not usually involve direct teaching and/or a majority of the time spent solely working with students (p. 9).

Terry’s (1997) findings supported McCreight’s contention that lack of variety over the course of a typical teacher’s career contributes to burnout and, thus, attrition. He strongly urged educational leaders to create a workplace environment that encourages teachers to grow professionally. “Principals should promote professional growth opportunities” through staff development offerings that will lead to the following: “networking, acquiring new skills, involving teachers in educational change and to increase the teacher’s self-esteem” (p. 21).

Benham-Tye and O’Brien (2002) concluded that “the lack of anything resembling a genuine career ladder contributes to the feeling of many teachers that they are trapped in a career that has become not only joyless but futureless” (p. 29).

Personal Life Changes

Teaching is like other professions in the sense that events in people’s lives often change their employment situations. In many instances, certain life changes will cause people to exit their positions.

In 1996, 74% of the nation’s public school teachers were female (NCES, 2002). This fact has implications when teachers elect to leave their classrooms in order to care for children at home. Boe et al. (1999) studied the reasons teachers leave their positions. In analyzing what predictive power certain variables had to explain why classroom
educators voluntarily left their assignments, they discovered that the teachers who left their positions “were more than four times as likely” as teachers who stayed “to have changed from a condition of no dependents to at least one dependent” (p. 8). Boe and Bobbit’s (1997) analysis of the 1987-88 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 1989 Teacher Followup Survey (TFS) found that 25% of those individuals who left education did so for homemaking and child rearing.

Marriage, divorce, health problems, and spousal moves are other personal variables that influence a teacher’s decision to remain employed. “Marital status is related more strongly to attrition from teaching than is any other variable on which data are available” (Toth & Stephens, 2000, p. 12). McCreight (2000) stated that “the variable of marital status is strongly correlated with teacher attrition. Ninety percent of the unmarried teachers but only 45.8% of the married teachers” were still teaching in an analysis gleaned from the 1989 TFS (p. 9). Furthermore, the NCES (1995) reported that just over 30% of public school teachers left the profession during or after the 1991-92 school year due to health problems, pregnancy/child rearing, or a personal family move.

The Rohr and Lynch (1995) study revealed that retirement was the leading single cause teachers listed for leaving the profession. Of the public school teachers who left the ranks after the 1991-92 school year, 30.4% left the profession to retire.

Shake et al. (1995) completed a study involving Kentucky teachers who retired the year after sweeping reform efforts were put in place by that state’s legislature. The authors’ intent was to determine what, if any, impact the legislation had on teachers’ decisions to retire in light of the fact the legislation required considerable changes that teachers were expected to implement. Their study revealed that most teachers who
responded to their survey cited more than one reason as the cause for their retirement. Changes mandated by the legislation were mentioned by close to 80% of the respondents as a reason that contributed to their decision to retire. However, two other reasons were listed by over 50% of the retirees as reasons why they decided to leave their classrooms: fatigue/burnout and the decision to retire at that time were parts of their long-term employment plan. “Of no influence on the decisions of many teacher retirees were other professional opportunities in education” (p. 145, emphasis in original).

The country can expect to see more teachers eligible to retire from the ranks in the next few years. Snyder and Hoffman (2002, p. 81) revealed the median age of all teachers was 33 in 1976. At that time, 8 years was the median for total years of teaching experience for the nation’s teaching force. In 1996, the median age of all teachers jumped to 44 with 15 as the median for total number of years in the classroom.

The timing of this graying of the nation’s force has already resulted in increased recruitment efforts that are likely to continue in the foreseeable future. It has also highlighted the importance of retaining those new recruits as will be discussed later.

Large numbers of teachers are approaching retirement at a time when America’s school-age population is increasing. Over the next 10 years, about 700,000 teachers are expected to retire, accounting for about 28% of the hiring needs during that period. (McCreight, 2000, p. 10)

Personnel Decisions

A final method by which certain educators leave their positions is due to administrative action directed toward them. These personnel decisions are often reached mutually between the employee and school system while they less frequently involve a school system’s terminating the employee.
There are many teachers who decide to leave the classroom for other positions within education. However, their choice to remain within the profession does little to eliminate the problem of classroom teacher retention as someone else must fill their positions.

Close to 18,000 individuals who left their classrooms across the nation from 1987-88 took positions in school administration or as specialists/supervisors according to the analysis done by Boe and Bobbitt (1997). This figure accounted for just over 12% of the total attrition of teachers who left their classrooms during that time period.

Fewer teachers are unable to remain employed because of issues related to competency or certification. McCreight (2000) stated that “large numbers of education majors are failing the teaching licensing exams…in recent years” (pp. 8-9). In most states, teachers who are hired on an emergency or probationary basis and, then, cannot pass the relevant certification test must be terminated.

Still other teachers are terminated from employment because of their actions (or inactions). In Georgia, the following categories are ethical standards defining appropriate behaviors as defined by the state’s code of ethics for educators: criminal acts, abuse of students, alcohol or drugs, misrepresentation or falsification, public funds and property, improper remunerative conduct, sharing of confidential information, abandonment of contract, failure to make a required report, and proper professional conduct (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2001). Violations of the standards can result in action being taken against the educator’s certificate including revocation. From July, 1998 until June 30, 2001, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission revoked 147
educators’ certificates for violating one or more of the standards from the code of ethics discussed above (L. Hartzler, personal communication, June 10, 2002).

Finally, McCreight (2000) alleged that school system decisions as they apply to personnel contribute to the problem of teacher attrition. Their “haphazard hiring and retention practices” promote exit attrition. “Unorganized hiring practices and inadequate processes to retain and reward good instructors” cause individuals to leave the profession (p. 10).

**Options to Alleviate/Reduce Attrition Factors**

Given the myriad reasons discussed above that cause teachers to leave the profession, what strategies can educational leaders enact to minimize teacher attrition and/or attract new recruits to the profession? It is arguably pointless to focus on those circumstances beyond the control of educational leaders that cause teachers to leave (e.g., health or relocation of spouse). Therefore, efforts must focus on those internal factors causing teachers to exit the profession over which school system leaders have some control. The following sections detail what strategies and suggestions have been mentioned in the relevant literature to address those variables of teacher attrition that were just highlighted.

**Restructuring Compensation Systems**

With respect to compensation, different strategies can be implemented to retain teachers according to researchers. With subject shortages most prevalent in the fields of math, science, and special education, some school districts offer additional money to educators who hold certification and teach in those fields. Such practice has become
more common, prompting speculation that previous practices governing teacher compensation may have to change.

Pipho (1998) claimed that simply raising teacher salaries to spark greater attraction to the profession is not that simple:

Union-negotiated salary schedules and state mandated beginning salaries can’t be changed easily without bumping up everyone else’s salary or creating a labor crisis. Schools have taken a page from the sports teams’ book by using signing bonuses, but long-term relief will probably mean that the single salary schedule, with its stepwise increases for all grade levels and subjects, will need to change. (p. 1)

Shanker (1996) claimed that teacher shortages produce conditions that encourage lowered standards and requirements to enter the profession, thereby, increasing problems with unqualified individuals in charge of classrooms. With respect to the role compensation could play in ameliorating the situation, he offered the following:

The remedy that teachers usually offer is to pay all teachers higher salaries. Then, the argument goes, we can be sure to attract a sufficient number of teachers in areas of shortage. This hasn’t worked in the past, because salaries have never been raised high enough. And if we are looking for across-the-board raises, they probably never will be…(W)e need to do what it takes to attract enough teachers who do meet the standards. One way might be to pay extra for qualified teachers in shortage areas. Another approach might be to allow qualified teachers to work a longer day for more pay. It is not a good idea to ask a teacher to teach an extra load, but the choice is between having students taught by teachers who have met high standards in the field or by those who have not. We might also think about reorganizing the school year into trimesters or quarters and then ask teachers in shortage areas whether they are willing to teach an extra load. (pp. 3-4)

Also, as was previously mentioned, dangling money for transportation costs incurred in moving, housing stipends, or signing bonuses to sign a contract with a particular system are also ways some school systems try to attract and retain educators.

In Baltimore, for example, new teachers can receive $5,000 from the school system to be used toward a new home purchase while Boston Public Schools provide a $20,000
signing bonus to educators in high demand teaching fields (Grant, 2001). A California system offers a $2,500 hiring bonus for teachers in special education, world languages, math, and science if they are fully certified (Rodda, 2000).

Veteran teachers can also benefit from appropriately targeted financial incentives. Affording access to tax-shelter annuities and mutual fund investment opportunities is one way that school system leaders may retain those educators who have been in the district. Creating customized statements that detail the school system’s contribution to an employee’s benefits package (health, vision, retirement, etc.) is another way school systems can make veteran teachers aware of the financial commitment the district has made to the employee (Grant, 2001).

Wise (2001) added another viewpoint to the options that school systems have to retain teachers. He argued that the teaching profession, as it currently exists, does not accurately distinguish among the myriad different qualifications that classroom educators possess. He advocated a “truth-in-labeling law” where those educators who meet the state licensing requirements for the subject they teach could be given a certificate of “teacher” while those who teach courses in areas where they have no experience “could be known by a lesser title—perhaps para-teacher, instructor, maybe even babysitter!” (p. 34).

Wise (2001) believed that creating pay structures commensurate with these differentiated qualification levels would ultimately raise and maintain teacher quality. Shen (1997) remarked that “it is important not only to raise teachers’ salaries across the board but also to build a more differential salary schedule” (p. 87) Odden (2000) concurred that it is time to look at compensation from an angle other than the single
salary schedule solely based on years of experience and post-secondary education obtained. He stated that “research has found no consistent link between education credits or degrees and student performance and only modest links between teaching experience (at least, for the first three years) and student performance.” (p. 362).

Odden (2000) proposed that a pay-for-performance system could be constructed in such a way so that teachers would receive pay increases “only for higher levels of relevant knowledge, skill, and professional expertise.” (p. 356). To enact such a system, Odden suggested that states and school systems would need to describe the appropriate knowledge and skills desired of their teachers. In addition, policy makers would need to define the process for evaluating individual teachers according to the standards outlined within those descriptions. He proposed that different standards could be adopted for beginning, mid-career, and veteran teachers. He also suggested that the evaluation of teachers on these standards could be done by peers, supervisors, or a combination of both.

Presumably, adopting a differentiated system based on training and qualification like Wise (2001), Shen (1997), and Odden (2000) proposed would ultimately result in a lower attrition rate for teachers especially in those teaching fields (i.e., math and science) that offer more lucrative opportunities outside the field of education. In addition, tying educators’ compensation package to their reaching professional stepping stones based on skills and knowledge needed for the job may increase productivity, professionalism, and reduce the element of burnout.

Not all researchers would agree with this conclusion, however. Holt (2001) cautioned that creating compensation systems of merit pay based on performance has not
been successful in the business world. He warned that such a system detracts from the collegial nature that exists in successful schools where educators “share ownership of the curriculum with other stakeholders….Of all the consequences of the standards movement, pay-by-performance will be the most destructive: of education, of teachers’ careers, of students’ opportunities.” (p. 316).

In the areas of job demands/workplace environment and opportunities of advancement and professional improvement, several recommendations were offered in the literature as ways exit attrition can be reduced as it pertains to both new and veteran teachers.

A school’s principal is the single most important educational leader with the power to influence teacher retention (Grant, 2001). He/She can refrain from giving new recruits the most challenging student populations or schedules. Administrators who make sure beginning teachers’ time is not weighed down with extracurricular activities and committee assignments can also help to focus their attention on their primary responsibility: teaching (Stansbury, 2001).

Educational leaders who create environments that give all teachers a sense of shared leadership are less likely to face problems with retention. Connolly (2000) offered the idea that “satisfaction begins to diminish sometime during the third year as the teachers realize that they have little autonomy and are not really decision-makers” (p. 56). Shen (1997) stated that “to empower teachers is one of the ways to improve teacher retention” (p. 87). Thus, school leaders should create policies and procedures that encourage an appropriate level of teacher involvement in decision-making.
Marantz-Cohen (2002) offered the following:

schools don’t need large ranks of exceptional teachers, and it is unrealistic to expect they will ever attract so many. What they do need is a critical mass of impassioned, intellectual individuals—enough to influence the tone and character of the institution. (p. 537)

Marantz-Cohen (2002) outlined several steps educational leaders and policy makers could take to improve teacher morale and, thus, increase student achievement (pp. 535-537):

1. Offer periodic sabbaticals for which educators could compete. These leave periods could be built into a compensation package and educators could use them to pursue scholarly endeavors.

2. Redesign instructional budgets so that more money is available for books and give teachers the ability to choose what resources from which they will teach within defined boundaries to allow for creativity.

3. Use teachers for evaluation—both for new hires and for ongoing assessment of acceptable teaching.

4. Be more aggressive in the way hiring is conducted since recruitment is the most important work of any school leader. “Administrators need to pound the pavement in search of top candidates; they need to visit college campuses, forge contacts with teacher education personnel in the best schools, track and follow potential teachers who have not yet graduated.” (p. 536).

5. Re-define tenure systems to remove ineffective or incompetent teachers. Extend the probationary period to more than the current three year period and involve a team of teachers and/or administrators in the supervision process.
6. Protect teachers’ time. Allow them to decide how to structure their day. Give teachers in the same departments the same free periods and/or schedule longer common lunch times that are free from duties so that teachers can talk with each other.

7. Make administrators teach. “Even one class a day is enough to retain the flavor of the work and to maintain credibility with teachers.” (p. 537). Administrators who teach learn to recognize their teachers’ best practices and can acknowledge it to them. “When administrators teach, they remember to think about teaching; they remember how hard it is; they remember to value it.” (p. 537, emphasis in the original).

The career of teaching has changed considerably over the years and those people entering the profession today are doing so for different reasons than the individuals who began their careers a generation ago according to Peske, Liu, Moore-Johnson, Kauffman, and Kardos (2001). In interviews with 50 first or second year teachers, they found that many new teachers—both those who entered the profession from traditional and alternative channels—view their commitments to the profession “tentatively or conditionally” and few planned to make teaching a life-long career (p. 305).

Peske, et al. (2001) noted that there will be a lot of people who may be attracted to the profession for just a few years but who can make a significant impact during their tenure. They contended that, instead of trying to focus on getting these short-term educators to make longer commitments, leaders should ensure that they offer the proper support to make the time they spend in the profession as productive as possible.

For those individuals who professed a long-term interest in education, Peske, et al. (2001) found that even these people had difficulty envisioning a career of performing the same duties and responsibilities for decades. Therefore, they concluded that “a
uniform, horizontal career with few opportunities for variety and challenge will not be sufficient.” (p. 309). Therefore, they proposed, that in time, these accomplished and talented teachers should become “mentors, peer reviewers, professional developers, team leaders, and curriculum writers.” (p. 310). They suggested these educators could also assist with new teacher induction for both types of teachers—those who plan to teach for a short time and those who intend to make it a life-long commitment presumably offering differentiated, yet appropriate guidance to these two groups.

**Mentoring and Induction Programs**

Many first year teachers experience overwhelming isolation as they leave the support of their student teaching cohort, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors to work with children behind the closed door of a classroom. Leaving the support to which they were accustomed in their training may shatter the goals...and destroy the self confidence of first year teachers. (Fox & Certo, p. 28)

Creating support structures for new teachers is increasingly more important as first-time teachers are being recruited to the profession in relatively large numbers. Broughman and Rollefson (2000, p. v) found that “between 1987-88 and 1993-94 a shift in sources of newly hired teachers occurred as public school districts and private schools hired relatively more first-time teachers and relatively fewer reentrants”. Their research showed that, for the 1993-94 school year, a little over 45% of newly hired public and private school teachers were first time teachers—a 15% increase from just six years earlier.

DePaul (2000) categorized the traditional practice of a typical teacher’s induction to his/her new assignment as “sink or swim” and the reason so many new teachers leave the profession so quickly (p. 1). Shanker (1996) agreed stating “new teachers get their teaching assignments—often including classes or students that more experienced teachers
are glad to avoid—and they are told, ‘You’re on your own.’ To guarantee quality in the teacher work force, a serious, high-quality induction process for beginning teachers must be instituted in America (p. 4).

Educational leaders can assist new teachers by building support networks between the new recruits and other colleagues with more experience. Peer coaching or mentoring are popular terms that have been used to define this concept and numerous researchers have written about the tremendous amount of value this support structure can provide new teachers. At the same time, many of these ideas depend on veteran teachers. Through most mentoring situations, veteran teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate, model, and be rewarded for their expertise. Incorporating the knowledge and skills of veterans in a capacity beyond their own classroom has the potential to reduce the feeling that the profession lacks career advancement or opportunities for professional growth.

The importance of giving new teachers a level of support makes sense when one considers the high rate of attrition previously mentioned for individuals with less than five years of experience. “For teachers to reach an impact, or mastery state, it is critical to prevent the loss of teachers in the early years of their development” Eberhard et al. (2000, p. 9). “The first years of a teacher’s career are a critical retention factor, and programs that make these years rewarding and successful should be promoted and implemented” (Texas Education Agency, p. 3).

Considerable literature exists on how mentoring programs can benefit new teachers and what elements should be considered in an effective program (Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999; David, 2000; Ganser, 1999, 2001; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1999; Mills et al., 2001;). An example of the peer
coaching concept was profiled by Van Zant, Razska, and Kutzner (2001). These authors profiled a program from a suburban San Diego school system that is designed to support beginning teachers. In this program, teachers who must be tenured and possess a minimum of five years’ experience are chosen to serve as consultants to beginning teachers. The consultant teacher provides frequent classroom visitations, reflective feedback, curriculum support, model lessons, and classroom management strategies among other things. Each consultant works with a maximum of 15 new teachers and provides more than 40 hours of contact time with each new teacher throughout his/her first year. Consultant teachers are responsible for the formal evaluations of the beginners that are based on a minimum of six formal written observations. During the second year of a new teacher’s career in this system, the consultant continues to assist his/her teachers but the formal evaluation becomes the responsibility of the building principal.

A similar peer mentoring program in place in the Los Angeles area was detailed by Griffin, Wohlstetter, and Bharadwaja (2001). The DELTA (Designing for Excellence: Linking Teaching and Achievement) model pairs just one new teacher with each veteran coach. This model emphasizes support, not evaluation. Psychosocial support and curriculum and classroom management strategies are major goals of the model and the authors believe that limiting the evaluative aspect of the coaching relationship leads to an improved relationship between the coach and beginning teacher. This situation allows real professional growth to occur according to the authors. Like in most mentoring arrangements, the DELTA model can offer benefits to the coaches as well as the new teachers. Veteran teachers are given an opportunity to “sharpen their own practices and
expand their career responsibilities without moving into administration” (Griffin, et al., 2001, p.38).

For mentoring programs to be successful, however, experts agreed that they must be effectively structured. Stansbury (2001) suggested that creating a support system where a more veteran teacher coaches a new one is not likely to succeed unless the educational leaders provide opportunities for this to happen. He said that principals must support an observation system that permits the new teacher to learn from the veteran. Stansbury believed that principals should do whatever necessary to allow the relationship to be cultivated even if it means arranging for substitute teachers to cover the classrooms so that the support provider and new teacher can meet.

This situation where veteran teachers try to support new teachers in addition to performing their own teaching responsibilities is the most basic form of peer coaching or mentoring. Wong (2001) strongly attacked this type of arrangement. He cited a position held by the North Carolina Teaching Commission that said “giving a teacher a mentor only is a convenient and unconsciously foolish way for an administrator to divorce himself or herself from the leadership required to bring a beginning teacher up to professional maturity level” (p. 46) Wong (2001) contended that simply providing a new teacher with a mentor in name only and not the leadership to ensure there is proper support being given to that teacher will do nothing in terms of retaining new teachers. He added the following:

What a new teacher needs and deserves is a tutor, a master teacher, or, ultimately, a group of teachers, staff developers, and administrators who will teach that new teacher and get him or her up to speed quickly. New teachers want and need a tutor who will teach them how to teach and show them what to do. (p. 46)
Induction programs for new teachers to a school or system are another popular method districts are using to retain teachers. Ideally, these programs are linked with mentoring programs and provide new recruits with extended opportunities to become acclimated and better equipped to handle their duties and responsibilities. Induction programs using best practices are ongoing in nature and may last for several years until new recruits have mastered the necessary skills to be successful. During this period, local system administrators and staff developers offer training for the new teachers and assigned mentors help the new teachers implement that training (Wong, 2001).

Wong (2001) has defined the purpose and goal of effective induction programs as follows:

*Induction* is the process of systematically training and supporting new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing through the first two or three years of teaching. Its purposes include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) easing the transition into teaching, (2) improving teacher effectiveness through training in classroom management and effective teaching techniques, (3) promoting the district’s culture—its philosophies, missions, policies, procedures, and goals, and (4) increasing the retention rate for highly qualified teachers. (p. 3).

**Pre-service Training**

Those educators who rate their pre-teacher training higher and consider themselves to be more adequately prepared for their position stay in their jobs longer than those who consider themselves less prepared (Fox & Certo, 1999). Therefore, in addition to the support received once on the job, the quality of individuals’ preparation before entering the classroom may contribute to how long they will remain.

Shanker (1996) offered a critical view about how teacher standards and the training they receive make it difficult to attract and keep effective educators:

*If teaching is to become a true profession, we must establish high standards for entry into teacher training programs and deliver high-quality pre-service
education to prospective practitioners...Testing that is now required for entry into most teacher preparation programs (such as the Praxis 1) is often “simply a basic literacy and numeracy test that an average 10th grader should be able to pass. While such tests ensure that illiterates aren’t allowed to teach, they do not ensure quality. Nor do they serve as magnets to attract well-educated individuals into teaching. In fact, low standards of entry are apt to discourage many intellectually serious and well-prepared students from entering teacher education programs. (p. 2)

Once a prospective teacher is admitted to a pre-service training program, Shanker maintained that many of the programs are “fragmented, superficial, lacking in substance, and outdated” producing situations where “concern for depth of knowledge in a discipline is given short shrift by the college of education because the responsibility for exposing students to such knowledge lies in the departments of liberal arts and sciences.” (p.2). This situation, Shanker claimed, hinders the learning potential for pre-service educators because the departments teaching the prospective teachers information in their certified content area “do not usually see the education of education majors as a serious responsibility” (p.2).

Shanker (1996) argued that potential new teachers are often subjected to ineffective educational programs and professors within colleges of education. “And perhaps most ironic of all, expert teachers are not as a rule the ‘teachers of teachers.’ Instead, academics, many of whom fled the classroom from lack of interest or ability, instruct teacher candidates in ‘best practice’” (p. 3).

“Teachers who are more thoroughly prepared to meet the specific needs of schools may persist longer in their jobs. If this is true, higher retention rates of qualified teachers would result in the establishment of a more stable, satisfied, and highly competent workforce, slowing the revolving employment door at school district offices” (Fetler, 1997, p. 9).
Alternative Certification

New college graduates with teacher education training have traditionally been the largest source of new hires to teaching each year in the nation’s schools. In the past two decades, however, as school enrollments increased and fewer college graduates entered teaching, concern about possible shortages in the supply of teachers has increased. In the 1960s, for example, 67 percent of newly hired teachers in public schools were new college graduates, but by the late 1980s this source supplied only 17 percent of new hires. (Broughman & Rollefson, 2000, p. 1)

In an effort to attract more individuals to the profession, increased pressure has been placed on states to re-examine teacher standards and routes to licensure. With the number of traditional education majors in undergraduate institutions not supplying enough teachers to meet the demand in many states, new ways of recruiting people to the profession have developed. One similarity between many of these new routes to certification is that individuals with strong knowledge in a certifiable content area who possess a desire to teach are the targets of the reforms.

Critics of traditional routes to licensure have stressed the importance of new certification opportunities for those who want to teach. These critics have argued that teaching is something that comes with practice and support—not from time spent sitting in courses taken in colleges of education. Walsh (2001) offered the following:

School districts and principals should rely on more productive methods for helping teachers gain the instructional skills and knowledge needed to be effective including comprehensive new teacher induction programs, reduced teaching loads for first-year teachers, ongoing professional development closely associated with the curriculum, including the teaching of reading, and outcomes-based performance evaluation. (p. viii)

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Education (2002) issued a call to states to improve standards for teachers and remove obstacles to certification for those who meet them. Legislation, passed by Congress in 2001 (The No Child Left Behind Act), set
as a goal to have teachers in classrooms by the end of the 2005-06 academic year who
demonstrate subject knowledge and skills in reading, writing, math, and other basic
subject areas. The Department of Education’s report showed that, in general, states must
improve their certification systems to ensure only teachers with the requisite knowledge
and skills are allowed to enter classrooms.

At the same time, the report encouraged states to re-examine what must be done
for individuals who possess the necessary content knowledge to become certified. It
urged states “to revamp their teacher preparation programs and eliminate many of their
rigid certification requirements, such as the massive number of methods
courses…Requiring excessive numbers of pedagogy or education theory courses acts as
an unnecessary barrier for those wishing to pursue a teaching career” (p. 1).

Opposition to radically restructuring traditional teacher preparation programs has
accompanied a lot of the proponents of certification reform.

While it is clear that teacher certification systems are not perfect and there are
many weak teacher education programs…it does not follow that the response to
these problems should be to eliminate expectations for teachers to acquire the
knowledge they need to teach students effectively. The more appropriate policy
response is to improve the quality of teacher education. (Darling-Hammond,
2001, p. 6)

Wise and Leibrand (2000) supported this contention. They argued that teachers
“who are fully licensed are more effective than those who are not….Well-prepared
teachers 1) have a greater impact on student achievement, 2) are more attuned to
students’ needs, and 3) are better able to devise instruction to meet individual needs.”
(pp. 613-621).

At the same time, Peske, et al. (2001) contended that many educators choosing to
enter the profession from channels other than undergraduate institution of education may
have just as strong an interest in teaching and should not be discounted. “Although critics might contend that those who are unwilling to invest in formal, multi-year preparation are not sufficiently serious about teaching, our research strongly suggests that these novices are not fly-by-night teachers but rather individuals with a genuine interest in, and serious commitment to, teaching.” (p. 311).

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) agreed that states must “get serious about standards for both students and teachers” and suggested among other things that states should “close inadequate schools of education and license teachers based on demonstrated performance, including tests of subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skill” (p. 2).

Wise and Leibrand (2000) cautioned policy makers to avoid creating alternative certification channels that lower teacher quality in an attempt to fix a greater problem of demand and supply. “Everyone likes high standards until hiring season, and then states and districts begin to use loopholes in the law or seek legislation…to fill the empty classrooms.” (p. 621).

The U.S. Department of Education report (2002) detailed the success of several alternate certification routes that all had the same common denominator: they targeted recent college graduates or mid-career professionals who have a strong background in a certifiable subject area and an interest in teaching.

Georgia heavily promoted an alternative certification program for the 2001-02 school year. The $500,000 program, Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP), targeted individuals holding college degrees in areas for which certificates are issued. Candidates had to have a bachelor’s degree in a certifiable field with a 2.5 grade
point average, a passing score on PRAXIS I (or high enough SAT, ACT, or GRE tests), a satisfactory criminal background check, a full-time teaching position offer from a participating school system, be willing to attend a summer training workshop, and receive ongoing assistance throughout the first year while pursuing coursework to receive a clear renewable teaching certificate by the state’s Professional Standards Commission. Over 4,000 people applied to the program and approximately 750 were accepted, trained, and took positions in classrooms across the state (Simmons, 2001).

The early response to the program from some veteran educators was somewhat critical. For example, the president of the Georgia Association of Educators said that, while there is an immediate need to recruit individuals into the classroom from non-traditional routes, those coming into the profession from other careers should spend time in an apprentice role to a veteran before assuming total responsibility for their own class (Donsky, 2002). While the new TAPP program has its critics, others are pointing to the initial success stories of those enrolled in it. A survey showed the program has kept most of its recruits in the classroom.

16 districts hired 433 TAPP teachers for the 2001-02 school year. Of those, 29—less than 7 percent—left before the end of the school year, some within the first couple of weeks. The state doesn’t keep comparable statistics on Georgia teachers who’ve gone through regular training programs. But 15 percent of all newly hired teachers in 2000 did not return for a second year in 2001. (Donsky, 2002, p. C4)

**Targeted Recruiting**

Focusing a lot of attention on good recruiting is yet another way schools can retain teachers. At both the state and local levels, efforts can be made to attract people to the profession. Effective recruiting at the state level includes hosting informational meetings, sharing information about participation opportunities, and working with
student and professional organizations to target their memberships (Clewell, Darke, Davis-Googe, Forcier, & Manes, 2000).

Good recruiting for the 21st century also is critical to attracting a quality applicant pool. All school systems should have a public relations plan to sell their districts via print, video, and internet with an easily accessible home page from which specific information about the system’s schools, benefits, salaries, support programs and opportunities are offered (O’Laughlin, 2001). The employment application process should be streamlined and made available online to encourage internet applications and contact via e-mail is also important and should be made available to candidates (O’Laughlin, 2001).

Other strategies used at the state and local levels to recruit teachers were summarized by Clewell et al. (2000). These included the following: establishing teacher clubs and scholarship opportunities for exceptional middle and high school students that encourage them to become teachers through club activities and mentors, offering financial assistance and social support services for education students, alternative certification and preparation programs for paraprofessionals, creating transferable licensing agreements with other states allowing teachers to move to high demand areas outside the state from which they received licensing or certification, and offering ongoing professional development activities that enhance the skill bases of teachers.

Georgia developed a recruiting initiative with financial incentives for individuals wanting to become teachers. The PROMISE teacher scholarships, awarded to eligible college juniors or seniors who elect to become education majors, provides considerable tuition reimbursement for students who go on to teach in Georgia’s public schools. A
similar scholarship is offered for paraprofessionals who wish to obtain teacher certification (Georgia Student Finance Commission, 2002).

Meanwhile, in an effort to be more competitive with retention and recruitment of teachers, the Gwinnett County Public Schools System created two new positions within the human resources department during the 2001-02 school year. These positions are for teachers on special assignment who assist with recruiting and retention efforts. These positions are year-round and duties include extensive traveling to teacher job fairs around the country and assisting with the new teacher welcoming presentation during the August pre-planning period.

Ingersoll (1998) cautioned that effective recruiting efforts must be matched with appropriate retention strategies. Programs containing such elements as described in the aforementioned mentoring and induction programs for new teachers are critical if schools plan to obtain a stable and competent base of teachers.

Initiatives and programs designed to recruit new candidates into teaching, though worthwhile in many ways, will not solve the problem of underqualified teachers in classrooms if they do not also address the factor that, the data suggest, does lead to severe staffing inadequacies in schools: too little teacher retention. In short, recruiting more teachers will help little if large numbers of teachers continue to leave. (p. 5)

**Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter focused on reasons why teachers exit the profession and what strategies can be adopted to reduce attrition problems by recruiting and retaining classroom teachers. The following factors which have been found to influence teachers’ decision-making to leave were explained in greater detail: compensation, job demands and workplace environment, opportunities for career
advancement and professional improvement, personal life changes, and personnel decisions.

A discussion followed on how educational leaders can respond to the factors which cause teachers to leave. The following ideas and how they have been addressed in the literature were explored: subject shortage compensation incentives, signing bonuses, expanded investment opportunities for teachers, revised pay scales reflective of training, ability, and/or qualifications, revised role/expectations for new teachers, mentoring, coaching, induction, improved pre-service training including alternative licensure options, and more strategically targeted recruiting.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter details the methodology used to conduct the study. It contains a statement of the research question, a description of the population, the data sources, strengths and limitations of the study, research design, and instrumentation.

Research Question

The study was designed to identify how Georgia House Bill 210 has affected teacher retention in Gwinnett County Public Schools. The primary research question being assessed was as follows: What impact has House Bill 210 had on teachers’ decisions to remain in classroom teaching positions in the school system?

Population for the Study

Data for this study were requested from the Gwinnett County Public Schools’ director of research and accountability. The names of those employees who met the criteria necessary to be eligible to take advantages of House Bill 210 were obtained. Therefore, the population for this study includes any educator who retired on or before December 31, 2001, still working in the school system. Typically, many of these individuals are presently employed part-time (at 19 hours per week or less) since they cannot be both full-time employees and collecting full retirement benefits unless they are working under the provisions of the legislation.

A search for population size revealed there were 105 individuals who have retired on or before December 31, 2001 still employed at local schools within the school
system and two individuals working at the district office who fit the criteria necessary to take advantage of House Bill 210.

Sources of Data

A questionnaire was sent to each eligible individual via the school system’s internal courier mail delivery system. Prior to the mailing, each individual who is part of the population was sent an e-mail notifying them about the study and requesting their participation in it. The courier mailing included the questionnaire and a self-addressed return envelope. The sources of data for the study were from the respondents who answered and returned the questionnaire.

Strengths of the Study

The primary and greatest strength of the study is that the information gleaned from it has the potential to provide policy makers and others with information about how House Bill 210 and similar legislation impact teacher recruitment and retention. Increasing teacher retention can greatly assist school systems with their mission to secure and maintain a consistent workforce needed to educate children. This study can help ascertain how this particular piece of legislation has impacted the state’s largest school system.

The questionnaire format which serves as the foundation for the study provides additional strengths. The instrument is easily administered. In addition, the length of time necessary to obtain and analyze the data is not as substantial as it would be in other types of study designs.
Limitations of the Study

The study design contains some limitations. A degree of self-selection among the participants is inevitable since completing and returning the questionnaire is voluntary. Therefore, it cannot be said that non-respondents would have similar answers to those who participated in the study.

The context for the study is the Gwinnett County Public School system. While the system is Georgia’s largest, the implications and conclusions that can be drawn from this study must be considered in that context. It is, therefore, not immediately possible to infer that the conclusions reached from this study can be applied in other geographic regions of the state or beyond.

Although the duration of time needed to complete the study is relatively short and, therefore, one of the study’s strengths, it also is a limitation. Since the information obtained by this study comes from a single snapshot in time, it cannot account for the possibility that there may be individuals eligible to participate in House Bill 210 who have not elected to do so at the time the study was conducted but who may choose to do so at a later date. These individuals’ responses cannot be accounted for in this study.

Research Design

The study’s design is guided by a few different principles. First, the study is primarily descriptive in nature. The questionnaire is written to elicit demographic information as well as factors that may or may not be associated with respondents’ decisions whether or not to take advantage of House Bill 210.
In order to elicit useful information in an efficient manner, the study is based on a questionnaire easily read and understood by the target population. Moreover, the time needed for respondents to receive, complete, and submit the questionnaire is short.

**Instrumentation**

Several studies were analyzed to identify factors considered important in the areas of teacher recruitment and retention. A questionnaire was developed which takes into account these relevant items.

The first five questions on the questionnaire are factual questions. These items ask the respondents to provide the following information: the school level at which they are employed and in what type of position, the total number of years they have been an educator, their gender, and their highest degree earned. Question 6 asks the respondents to specify whether or not House Bill 210 was a factor in their decision to retire from the State Teachers Retirement System. Question 7 asks respondents to provide their age upon retirement, how many years of service they had earned in the retirement system, and at what school they had worked just prior to retirement. Question 8 guides respondents into a particular track of subsequent questions based on whether or not they are presently employed under provisions of House Bill 210. If respondents are taking advantage of the legislation, they proceed to question 9 while all others move to question 10.

Question 9 provides five factors that may have influenced educators to take advantage of House Bill 210. It asks respondents to evaluate whether the factors provided “no influence, some influence, or a strong influence” on their decisions to take advantage of the bill. An opportunity is provided for respondents to write in and rate additional factors that may have caused them to take advantage of the legislation.
Question 10 provides six factors that may have influenced educators not to take advantage of House Bill 210. Respondents are asked to check any factor that contributed to their decision not to seek employment under the provisions of the bill. An opportunity is provided for respondents to write in other reasons why they elected to remain employed in the system but not through House Bill 210.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This study attempted to ascertain what factors influenced educators to continue employment in Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS), despite having retired from the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). More specifically, the study was designed to reveal what educators’ responses were to legislation designed to keep veteran teachers in the state’s most challenging schools.

Results of the Survey

The population of survey recipients was limited to those individuals employed within GCPS who were eligible to take advantage of House Bill 210. Certificated educators who retired on or before January 1, 2002 were the targeted group. The names and work locations of 105 individuals who met these criteria were provided to the researcher by the school system’s director of research and accountability. Of this initial set, four respondents were excluded upon the return of their surveys because they should not have been part of the population since they either retired after January 1, 2002 or were not certificated employees eligible to take advantage of the legislation. Sixty-five surveys were returned out of the set of 101 distributed to eligible respondents yielding a return rate of just over 64%.

The levels at which the survey respondents were working at the time of the survey were reported as follows: (a) 28 (43%) were working in elementary schools; (b) 7 (11%) were employed in middle schools; (c) 30 (46%) were working in high schools; and (d) 1
(2%) was employed at the school district’s central office. The survey respondents’ current level of employment is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Respondents’ Employment level in GCPS at Time of Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Level</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Survey respondents could be employed at more than one level.

Question two asked recipients to identify their present employment position. Teachers represented the majority of the population (55%) followed by administrators and counselors, and then media specialists and others (including 1 each of the following: paraprofessional, local school technology coordinator, parent center coordinator, and athletic director). Table 2 summarizes this information.

Question three revealed the employment status of survey recipients. Respondents were asked to identify their employment situation at the time they received the questionnaire. Sixty-three respondents (97%) were employed part-time with only one respondent (1.5%) employed full-time. One respondent (1.5%) did not answer the question.
Table 2

Respondents’ Employment Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Specialist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question four asked respondents to write in the number of full-time years they had been employed as an educator upon completion of the 2002-03 school year. For ease and consistency of reporting, responses that included fractional numbers of years were rounded down to the nearest whole number. For example, a respondent who listed 30.5 years of full-time work experience was recorded as having worked thirty years. The respondents’ results from question four are summarized in Figure 1.

Question five solicited gender information from the respondents. Forty-five respondents (69%) were female while 20 (31%) were male. Question six provided information about the highest degree level attained by the respondents. Close to 90% of respondents had earned either a Master’s or Specialist degree. The results are summarized in Table 3.
Question seven asked if recipients knew about House Bill 210 when they made their decision to retire. Only 14 (22%) had knowledge of the legislation while 51 (78%) did not know about it when they made their decision to retire.

Question eight asked respondents to reveal information about them when they made the decision to retire from TRS. When they retired from TRS, respondents ranged in age from 50 to 62 with the bulk electing to retire at 52 or 53. Figure 2 summarizes information about the ages at which GCPS employees responding to the survey decided to retire.
Table 3

Respondents’ Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding

Figure 2. Age at Retirement
The number of years of service respondents had registered with TRS at the time of their retirement closely matched the number of full-time years employed as an educator upon completion of the 2002-03 school year (Question four). Discrepancies between the number of years worked and years credited with TRS may be attributed to sick leave credited, years of service purchased, or other reasons not solicited from the survey. In addition, there were 62 respondents who answered question four and 64 who provided information for question 8. For ease and consistency of reporting, responses that included fractional numbers of years were rounded down to the nearest whole number as was done with respondents’ answers to question four and the results are summarized in Figure 3.
Question eight also provided information about where respondents were employed at the time of their retirement from TRS. Table 4 summarizes the levels at which respondents were working when they retired while Table 5 provides information related to the school system in which respondents were working when they retired.

### Table 4

**Level of Employment at Time of Retirement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Level</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding; Not all respondents answered.

### Table 5

**School System Where Working at Time of Retirement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School System</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gwinnett County</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb County (GA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other in-state</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of state</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding; Not all respondents answered.
Question nine was a directional question that led those employees taking advantage of House Bill 210 to one set of questions, while those respondents who were employed but not under the provisions of the legislation were directed to a different set of questions. Out of 65 respondents, one (1.5%) reported that they were employed full-time under the provisions of House Bill 210 while the other 64 (98.5%) were not employed under the auspices of the legislation.

Question 10 was answered only by the individual taking advantage of the employment opportunities provided by HB 210. Respondents were asked to rate variables as having “no influence, some influence, or a strong influence” on their decision to take advantage of the legislation. Of “no influence” on the respondent’s decision to take advantage of the bill were the following: being employed at a “qualified school” during the last working year prior to retirement, having a friend who worked at the school where hired, and proximity of the “qualified school” where employed to the place of residence. The variables listed as having a “strong influence” on the respondent’s decision to take advantage of employment under House Bill 210 were a financial advantage and a desire to work with at risk students.

Question 11 provided information from those respondents not employed under the provisions of House Bill 210. Respondents could select the factors that contributed to their not taking advantage of the legislation. According to the information gleaned from the respondents, an overwhelming majority of retirees preferred working part-time as opposed to full-time. Table 6 summarizes the findings.
Table 6

Reasons Given for Not Being Employed Under House Bill 210

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t know about this bill.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were no openings at a “qualified school” at the grade levels and/or in the subjects for which I am certified and I did not want to seek employment in a “qualified school” outside GCPS.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for a position at a “qualified school” in GCPS but was not offered a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for a position at a “qualified school” outside GCPS but not offered a job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not want to work at a “qualified school” because of pressure to increase test scores.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not want to work full-time.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred to work in a “non-qualified school” because…</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N = 59; Respondents could choose more than one factor.

If respondents selected that they preferred to work in a “non-qualified” school or “other” as factors contributing to them not taking advantage of House Bill 210, they were asked to write an explanation to support their answers. The respondent’s reasons can be grouped into three general categories: preferred job position not covered by House Bill 210, a desire to work less than full-time, and appealing characteristics of the school where employed as opposed to a “qualified school.”
I “want to continue working as a media specialist, not a classroom teacher” wrote one respondent. Another wrote, “I would be interested in full-time counselor opportunities, but not full-time teaching in classroom.” Another counselor added, “I want to continue as a school counselor—not as a classroom teacher.” Yet another counselor replied that she preferred to work in a “non-qualified” school “because counselors are excluded” from House Bill 210. “Please work to allow us to return to work full time at what we do best!” she added. A media specialist wrote that she did not take advantage of the bill because “I don’t qualify to teach in a classroom.” A local school technology coordinator wrote that, in addition to not wanting to work full-time, he “preferred the LSTC position over classroom.” Finally, another respondent wrote that he accepted a position in a “non-qualified” school because he “wanted to work in a leadership role”, presumably as opposed to teaching.

Some respondents wrote about their desire to only work part-time. One teacher wrote that she “only wanted to work part-time right now but that may change.” Another wrote, “I’m a half-time teacher now which is what I wanted to do.” “I would have no problem with working at a “qualified” school if I wanted to work full time,” wrote another. She added, that she’s “currently working under the plan that allows nineteen hours work—I like the position and the flexibility allowed.”

The respondents who marked that they did not want to work in a “non-qualified” school gave reasons supporting the notion that there are positive attributes, real or perceived, associated with employment in a “non-qualified” school. One elementary teacher wrote, “The “qualified” schools were too far from my home.” A high school
employee wrote, “I preferred to work at a school close to my home.” A middle school teacher wrote, “This school is closer to my home.”

Other responses reflected some educators’ desire to remain with the comforts of a familiar school working part-time rather than moving to a different employment center and/or situation. This “is the school I wanted to work in” wrote one elementary teacher. “I have put in 15 years at” this school was the comment from one high school teacher. “A part-time position became available at my present school” was a remark written by an elementary teacher. “I retired from” this school “and was offered a part-time job teaching” at the same school wrote another elementary teacher. “I knew the school, principal, staff, and students” at this school wrote an elementary teacher. My “situation for retirement was sudden and I never really had the opportunity to look at “qualified schools” wrote one high school teacher. “No high schools in GCPS are ‘qualified schools’ wrote another high school teacher who added that she “wanted to work” at the school she selected “because of flexible hours.” Lastly, a high school teacher wrote that “the teaching position I took had conditions that were more conducive to effective teaching—fewer discipline problems. Also, I had previously taught at the school and was offered a position…which appealed to me.”

Question 12 asked respondents not employed under House Bill 210 to indicate their level of interest in full-time employment if the legislation were changed so that any school would be eligible for them to accept employment without the loss of retirement benefits. The results of this question are provided in Table 7.
Table 7

Interest in Full-Time Employment
(If House Bill 210 Were Changed to Permit it Without Loss of Retirement Benefits)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would definitely seek post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably seek post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly/Might seek post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not be interested in any post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=62

As Table 7 illustrates, half of the retired employees who responded to the survey expressed some level of interest in working full-time provided they would not lose their retirement benefits. At the same time, the other half of the respondents expressed no interest in working full-time even if their benefits were not impacted. Among the group of individuals who expressed no desire, whatsoever, to return to full-time positions if the legislation were changed, 30.4 years was the average number of full-time years the members of that group were employed as educators upon completion of the 2002-03 school year. The means of full-time teaching experience for those who “definitely” would be interested and for those who “probably, possibly, or might” be interested in a
return to full-time teaching were 31.5 and 30 respectively. If the groups are combined to just two, those who have some level of interest in full-time employment and those who do not, the averages for the number of full-time years worked in education after the 2002-03 school year are 30.4 and 30.5 respectively. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that there is not much association between the number of years having worked in education among those educators expressing interest in continued full-time post-retirement employment and those educators who do not wish to pursue post-retirement full-time positions.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The state of Georgia is facing a critical problem with respect to staffing its public schools with effective teachers. Large numbers of teachers are nearing retirement age. At the same time, low numbers of students are enrolling in the state’s teacher training programs compared to the number of vacancies available each year. In addition, a situation exists where many new teachers leave the profession after just a few years. As a growing state, Georgia is experiencing rapid increases in student enrollments. Each of these facts when considered independently creates an ongoing need for teachers. When combined, these situations exacerbate the already acute need for recruiting and retaining effective teachers in the state.

A review of literature in Chapter 2 examined several factors that cause teachers to leave the profession as well as strategies that can be used to retain teachers. Some of the practices have been or are presently in place in Georgia. This study examined one piece of the recruitment and retention puzzle as it applies to Georgia. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to reveal the effect of House Bill 210. This legislation was crafted with the intent to retain veteran educators in the state’s most challenging classrooms.

Before the passage of this bill, educators typically were employed for half-time or less in school systems. This bill allowed post-retirement educators to return to work full-time without loss of their retirement benefits. At the same time, they could collect the
normal salary for which they would qualify based on their years of experience and highest degree earned.

Conclusions

A questionnaire was sent to over 100 post-retirement educators who were working in the state’s largest school system as measured by student enrollment. The survey recipients were selected based on their eligibility to take advantage of the bill. Only those individuals who met the provisions of House Bill 210 were mailed surveys. Teachers, administrators, media specialists, counselors, and others working at all levels within the school district responded to the questionnaire. The total response rate to the survey was 64%.

There was only one respondent (1.5% of the total) who reported that she was taking advantage of House Bill 210 and was working full-time in a “qualified” elementary school. The remaining respondents were all employed part-time and were not taking advantage of the provisions provided by the legislation. A little more than 20% of all respondents knew about the bill when they made their decision to retire. Only 7% reported that there were no teacher openings at “qualified” schools in Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) at the grade levels and/or subjects for which they were certified to teach. Not a single respondent attempted to obtain but was not offered a teaching position under the provisions of the bill in GCPS or any other school district in the state.

With such an extremely low participation rate, it appears that House Bill 210 has failed from a recruitment standpoint—at least as found in the state’s largest school system. The legislation provided a maximum cap (1% of the total number of teachers in the district or 10 whichever is greater) of retired veteran educators that could be attracted
to continued full-time employment in challenging schools. With close to 9,000 certified personnel in the school system, GCPS could hire up to 90 teachers under House Bill 210.

The one respondent employed under the provisions of House Bill 210 provided some insightful information about why she decided to take advantage of the legislation. She responded that the financial advantage offered by the bill combined with a desire to work with at-risk students were the strongest factors that led her to accept a full-time post-retirement teaching position in a “qualified” school.

The responses from those post-retirement educators not working under the auspices of House Bill 210 were also insightful. Thirty percent of these individuals did not have knowledge about the bill. Only 7% reported that they did not want to work in a “qualified” school because of pressure to increase test scores. At the same time, 17% responded that they preferred to work in a “non-qualified” school while another 14% wrote in other reasons to justify their part-time employment in non-qualified schools. Many of these latter respondents commented about how they preferred to work in their positions as counselors, administrators, media specialists, etc. instead of returning to a classroom but could not do so if they worked under the provisions of House Bill 210.

One of the most informative findings from this group of educators was that 69% of them responded that they had no interest in full-time post-retirement employment. Even if the legislation were changed to permit full-time post-retirement employment at any school without the loss of Teachers Retirement System benefits, half of the respondents reported that they would not be interested. Eighteen percent reported that they would “definitely” seek post-retirement full-time employment if the bill were changed to allow them to work at any school.
The findings suggest that there is a group of educators who want to work in education after retirement—to a limited degree. A majority of surveyed educators had spent at least 30 full-time years in the profession. On some level, all of the educators included in this study had demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the profession in that they made a choice to remain in it even after retiring.

At the same time, the data from this study suggest that most of these individuals who have decided to return to education only want to on a part-time basis. Although they haven’t exited the profession completely as most educators do after retirement, these educators presumably have had enough of the demands a full-time employee status places upon them. Instead, they like the ability to work in a profession they know well but, rather, on a more limited basis. This scenario gives them added flexibility in their post-retirement days while simultaneously provides an opportunity to continue doing something with which they are familiar and enjoy.

Recommendations

Using information gleaned from this study, a few suggestions can be made for policy makers with respect to the teacher recruitment and retention challenges facing the state of Georgia. These recommendations will first be addressed with respect to the following factors related to leaving teaching that were discussed in Chapter 2: compensation, job demands and workplace environment, opportunities for career advancement and professional improvement, personal life changes, and personnel decisions. A recommendation on the future of House Bill 210 will also be provided.

Appropriate compensation for educators needs to remain as a focal point for policy makers concerned about attracting and retaining effective teachers to work in the
state’s public schools. With opportunities for individuals to receive higher paying positions outside education especially in such fields as math, science, foreign languages, and special education, differential pay based on qualifications may need to be explored in the near future. The single-step pay scale based on years of experience and degrees earned may need to be supplemented, significantly altered, or, perhaps, replaced over a period of time with a compensation system based on an educator’s qualifications, job responsibilities, and/or work location. On account of this being a significant change, policy makers should provide opportunities for the stakeholders to voice input and share in the decision making of how to structure new compensation systems.

The job demands and workplace environments of the profession have constantly been changing over time and the present is no exception. To reduce the attrition of new teachers in the state’s classrooms, policy makers should consider devoting financial resources that would establish a mentoring program for new teachers containing principles of the successful mentoring programs outlined in this study. School leaders at the district and local school level need to receive instruction and guidance concerning what they can do to support new teachers especially concerning classroom teaching assignments/locations, policies and procedures, and classroom management. Reducing the attrition rate of new teachers could help the state reduce the number of annual vacancies that must be filled by school districts. This study showed that many retired veteran educators have an interest in continuing to work within the field of education. Jobs could be established for retirees to serve in the role of mentors to new teachers.

Georgia policy makers have provided educators with some opportunities for career advancement and professional improvement. For example, by offering financial
assistance to those educators who wish to pursue National Board Certification and an increase in pay once they become certified, educators are given incentives to advance their professional careers by remaining in the classroom if they so desire. The current levels of support for this type of advancement need to remain and be increased when fiscally possible.

In the area of professional improvement, policy makers must ensure that requirements put in place for educators to obtain and renew certification are in line with actual skills and knowledge needed for the position. A one size fits all approach is not appropriate for certification standards.

At the same time, alternative certification options such as the one Georgia has in operation should be a potential means to recruit individuals to the profession and should be continued when effective. To determine effectiveness, programs should be continually evaluated to ensure they are attracting individuals who not only are knowledgeable in their subject area but also are able to teach that material to students in the classroom. Ineffective alternative certification channels that do not produce educators whose students perform as well as or better than similar students taught by traditionally certified teachers should be eliminated. Effective programs should be given the necessary resources to expand.

In the area of personal life changes, state policy makers will always have to contend with educators who marry, divorce, have kids, or move and, thus, leave the profession. Offering site-based day care facilities for teachers’ children is a topic receiving recent attention and could be explored as a potential means of retaining some educators who might otherwise leave the profession. Retirement, however, is the
personal life change that was the focus of this study and further discussion of how policy can be addressed to this situation will follow.

In the area of personnel decisions, state policy makers must ensure that standards for excellence in education are always maintained. The state must devote resources to an ongoing recruitment initiative that targets the brightest candidates for Georgia’s schools. Additional resources should be provided, when possible, to assist local school leaders with their recruitment efforts. Programs like HOPE that provide incentives for high school students to become teachers must be continued, if not expanded. Policy makers can initiate programs that encourage, identify and assist talented high school students to become Georgia teachers.

The state’s Code of Ethics for educators and grounds for fair dismissal must be enforced. Ineffective teachers are damaging to students and administrators need to have the ability to make frequent visits to classrooms to identify those teachers in need of help. Effective leaders need to be selected, then given guidance and support, to assist weak teachers. If these teachers do not show growth after having received assistance designed to allow them to improve in targeted areas, administrators need to be able to efficiently terminate those teachers. Reassigning ineffective teachers and/or changing their job descriptions to reduce their influence on students cannot be allowed to be a strategy used by leaders to address this situation.

With respect to House Bill 210, information obtained from this study should allow policy makers to refine the legislation in such a way that may attract more veterans to work in the state’s schools. The data from this study revealed that most retired educators do not want to work full-time—after all, that is why they retired. Therefore,
getting these individuals to return to full-time positions in the state’s toughest schools may be challenging. The following are two recommendations based on the results of this study that may offer solutions for altering the legislation in such a way so as to recruit and retain veteran educators:

1. Allow retired educators to work full-time at any school at their normal rate of pay without loss of retirement benefits. Half of the respondents in this study expressed some level of interest in working full-time if the legislation were changed to reflect this proposal.

2. Allow retired educators to work half-time but at a full-time salary (at their normal rate of pay) without loss of retirement benefits if they work in a “qualified” school. A half-time employment schedule will likely appeal to a vast majority of retirees as revealed by this study. At the same time, the financial incentive this option provides may attract veteran educators to the neediest schools—especially those who wish to work with at-risk students.

If financially necessary, the state could place a cap on the number of retired educators who can take advantage of these provisions. The state could also restrict the types of positions for which retirees are eligible based upon supply and demand. Ideally, however, the state could open up the gates to allow all interested retired educators to compete for available positions. School leaders could develop annual screening processes to identify and select the strongest post-retirement candidates for vacancies, thus ensuring that those filling vacant positions are not solely interested in collecting a paycheck but also in educating the state’s children.
House Bill 210, as presently written, does not appear to serve its intended purpose. By making some adjustments gleaned from this study, policy makers can craft legislation that, perhaps, will have a greater potential to attract veteran teachers back to the classrooms.

At the same time, decision makers should consider additional legislation designed to recruit and retain non-veterans to teaching positions. Clearly, new teachers cost the state less money than those who have climbed many steps on the salary schedule. However, a portion of the savings obtained from staffing schools with individuals with little or no experience must be re-invested into providing mentoring and other support programs for these new recruits. These programs must provide ongoing training and guidance needed for these new educators to be successful in their responsibilities. Such programs for all of Georgia’s teachers are sorely lacking at this time and increase the attrition rate for new teachers.

Given the ongoing need to staff Georgia’s schools with effective educators, policy makers must make it a top priority to seek and refine ways to attract and keep dedicated individuals in the state’s classrooms. Schools function best when they are staffed with intelligent educators who are well trained, equipped, and supported as they confront the challenges and responsibilities presented to them each day. Policy makers should consider this as they expand on initiatives already begun in order to ensure the state will attract and keep the best individuals who can help Georgia’s children learn.
REFERENCES


Eberhard, J., Reinhardt-Mondragon, P., & Stottlemyer, B. (2000). *Strategies for new teacher retention: Creating a climate of authentic professional development for teachers with three or less years of experience.* Corpus Christi, TX: Texas A and M University, South Texas Research and Development Center. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 450116)


APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE
DEAR <<FIRST-NAME>> <<LAST-NAME>>:

The accompanying questionnaire is being used to collect information for a study titled, "The Impact of House Bill 210 on Teacher Retention in Georgia." The study is essential to a dissertation in progress to fulfill requirements for an EdD degree.

House Bill 210 (2002) provides an opportunity for retired educators to remain employed full-time and collect their normal rate of pay provided they work at a low performing school. While future legislation may propose alternatives, here are some current highlights of the law as it presently stands:

1) Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia members must have retired on or before December 31, 2001;
2) Retirees could return to a full-time classroom teaching position for up to five years at a “qualified school” without loss of retirement benefits;
3) TRS members would not contribute to TRS, would not accrue additional TRS credit, but would receive their normal rate of pay;
4) Administrators, counselors, librarians, and other education specialists could be re-employed as classroom teachers only;
5) Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAS) are also permitted to employ retired TRS members as school improvement specialists.

You are one of a limited number of educators selected to participate in the study because of your eligibility to take advantage of the incentives offered by this legislation. Your responses will help us learn about the effectiveness of the bill. Therefore, your timely cooperation will be very beneficial to us and most appreciated.

The questionnaire is short and will only take 10 minutes to complete and return. Please answer the questions with the current law in mind as described above. A self-addressed envelope that can be sent through the school system's courier mail system is enclosed to facilitate the return of the completed questionnaire. Please return your completed survey by May 5, 2003. The inclusion of data representing your answers is extremely important to this study and your participation will be confidential. Your completion of the survey implies consent to participate. We will be glad to send you a brief summary of our findings upon request. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Virin Vedder Teacher
Hull Middle School

C. Thomas Holmes
Professor of Educational Leadership
The University of Georgia

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

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APPENDIX B

SURVEY ON HOUSE BILL 210
Georgia Law (House Bill 210) provides an opportunity for educators to return to service without loss of benefits provided they retired prior to January 1, 2002 with at least 30 years of service or having reached aged 60. These educators may elect to return to a full-time classroom teaching position in a “qualified school” for up to five years without loss of retirement benefits at their normal rate of pay. A “qualified school” is defined by one of the following: 1) A school rated as D or F by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA). (The OEA has not issued grades to any Georgia school to date.) 2) A school that fails for two or more consecutive years to make adequate yearly progress pursuant to Title 1, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. 3) A school having 50% or more of the students failing to meet OEA standards. In Gwinnett County Public Schools the “qualified schools” for the 2002-2003 school year are as follows: Benefield Elementary, Kanoheda Elementary, Lilburn Middle, and Simonton Elementary. These schools did not make adequate yearly progress as defined by Title 1 regulations.

Please answer the following questions by marking an “X” to the appropriate response or by writing in the requested information as appropriate.

1. Current level of employment
   _____ elementary
   _____ middle
   _____ high school
   _____ central office

2. Position
   _____ teacher
   _____ administrator
   _____ media specialist
   _____ counselor

3. Present employment status
   _____ full-time
   _____ part-time

4. Number of full-time years employed as educator upon completion of 2002-2003 school year _______
   Number of those years employed full-time as an educator in Georgia ______

5. Gender
   _____ Female     _____ Male

6. What is your highest degree earned?
   _____ Bachelor’s     _____ Master’s     _____ Specialist     _____ Doctorate

7. Did you know about the bill when you made your decision to retire?
   _____ Yes     _____ No
8. When you retired from the state Teachers Retirement System…

how old were you? ________ years
how many years of service had you earned? ________ years
names of school and school system where you worked just prior to retiring?
________________________    ________________________

9. Are you currently employed under the provisions of this bill?
   _____ Yes (Proceed to question 10).
   _____ No (Proceed to questions 11 and 12).

10. Place an “X” by the factors below that influenced your decision to take advantage of the bill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>Strong Influence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was employed at a “qualified school” during my last year prior to retiring</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Had a friend who worked at the school where I was hired</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial advantage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity of “qualified school” to place of residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desire to work with at-risk students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: (Please identify and rate).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are finished. Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope! **Do not complete questions 11 and 12.**
11. (complete only if you are not employed under the provisions of House Bill 210)

Please mark any factor with an “X” if it contributed to your not taking advantage of the bill.

_____ I didn’t know about this bill
_____ There were no openings at a “qualified school” at the grade levels and or in the subjects for which I am certified and I did not want to seek employment in a “qualified school” outside Gwinnett County Public Schools.
_____ Applied for position at a “qualified school” in GCPS but was not offered a job.
_____ Applied for a position at a “qualified school” outside GCPS but was not offered job.
_____ Did not want to work at a “qualified school” because of the pressure to increase test scores
_____ Did not want to work full-time
_____ Preferred to work in a “non-qualified school” because

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

_____ Other (Please explain).

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

12. If House Bill 210 were changed to permit full-time employment without the loss of retirement benefits at any school, I would (please mark one of the following):

_____ definitely seek post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school.
_____ probably seek post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school.
_____ not be interested in any post-retirement full-time employment in a Georgia public school.

You are finished. Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope!