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ABSTRACT

This study investigated influences on teachers' attitudes toward and perceptions of teaching. A group of 20 diverse teachers completed surveys that examined teaching experience, workplace conditions, and workload. Results indicated that teacher morale was good. Over half of the teachers said that they would become teachers again if they had the chance to start over. More than half said that they planned to remain in teaching. When the results were analyzed in terms of teaching experience, a significant difference in morale was found. Teachers with more than 10 years of experience had much more positive attitudes toward teaching than did less experienced teachers. Experienced teachers also spent less time on school-related activities after school hours. Most of the respondents felt that they were not getting enough support from their students' parents, that necessary materials were not available as needed, and that they were not being evaluated fairly. The paper recommends that less experienced teachers network with veteran teachers in order to raise their morale, lessen their workload, and become more effective teachers. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

Teacher Morale:

The Impact of Teaching Experience, Workplace Conditions, and Workload

Kristy N. Bivona

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to learn more about what influences teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward teaching. Teaching experience, workplace conditions and workload are the main factors considered in this study. Overall, the teacher morale of the school surveyed was at a good level. The majority of the teachers who participated in this survey (i.e. about 60%) report that they would become a teacher if they had the chance to go back to their college days and start over again. Likewise, more than half of the sample said that they plan to remain in teaching. However, when the results were analyzed in terms of teaching experience, a significant difference in morale was found. Teachers with more than 10 years experience had a much more positive attitude toward teaching than those who were less experienced. Recommendations were made for less experienced teachers to network with veteran teachers in order to raise their spirits, lessen their workload and help them become teachers that are more effective. Veterans can help raise inexperienced teachers' morale by team-teaching, joint lesson planning, and sharing classroom management ideas.

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Introduction

Teaching is one of the most challenging and demanding professions. It seems as though teachers are being stretched to the limit. Expectations placed on them seem to be expanding exponentially (Lumsden, 1998). A teacher's role includes not only teaching specific content and mentoring students in the love of learning, but teachers also function as frontline social workers. Teachers live in an environment with a lot of emotions (i.e. children's, parents,' and perhaps their administrators'). Many other pressures plague teachers as well. They must deal with inadequate supplies, disruptive students, public criticism, limited assistance, large classes, and the lowest salaries paid to highly educated personnel in the nation (Lumsden, 1998). Each day competent teachers are expected to motivate their students. This leads us to wonder, who or what is responsible for motivating teachers?

For years, near total focus has been placed on student motivation, and strategies to keep teachers motivated have been seriously neglected (Ellis 1984). In general, most teachers start their career with enthusiasm and energy to spare. They often start a new year with hope for improvement. Teachers often try new practices and join committees intended to make improvements. Yet, as the year wears on, hope usually withers and teachers (in general) look to just get through the year. It is for that reason, this study on teacher morale is being conducted. The purpose of this study is to understand what factors promote positive and negative perceptions or attitudes toward teaching.

According to Linda Lumsden, *morale* is the feeling a worker has about his or her job based on how the worker perceives himself or herself in the organization and the

extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations (1998, p.1). Morale can be thought of as a feeling, a state of mind, a mental attitude, and an emotional state (Farber and Ascher, 1991). When a healthy school environment exists and the teacher morale is high, teachers feel good about each other and feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs. Teacher morale is important because it can have a positive effect on student attitudes and learning. Raising teacher morale does not only make teaching more pleasant for teachers, but also learning more pleasant for the students (Lumsden, 1998). All in all, high teacher morale creates an environment that is more conducive to learning. Conversely, studies have found that low levels of satisfaction and morale can lead to decreased teacher productivity and burnout (Farber and Ascher, 1991).

Teacher burnout is associated with a loss of concern for and detachment from the people with whom one works, decreased quality of teaching, depression, greater use of sick leave, efforts to leave the profession, and a cynical and dehumanized perception of students (Farber and Ascher, 1991). Carter (1994) defines teacher burnout as "physical, emotional, and attitudinal exhaustion" that begins with a feeling of uneasiness and mounts as the joy of teaching begins to gradually slip away. Studies have consistently identified discipline problems, overwhelming paperwork and lack of supportive environments as causes of the stress leading to burnout. Burnout and dissatisfaction is becoming increasingly common among the teaching sect, and it is many times the outcome of poor administrative relationships (Pisciotta, 2001). Teachers have always wanted to be involved in school management and administration. However, the degree of participation in shared decision making depends on the relationship between the

principal and staff and the level of involvement which that relationship allows.

According to Ascher (1991), some teachers leave the profession because they cannot cope with the stress inherent in the job. Others burn out but stay on the job, counting the days until weekends and ultimately, their retirement. Another group of teachers who stay in the profession learn coping skills that enable them to face the stresses involved in their work and to grow with them.

Although teachers can take steps individually to preserve their professional satisfaction and morale, they must also be nurtured, supported, and valued by the broader school community. Teachers have physical needs such as personal safety and intellectual needs such as autonomy in making choices, intellectual stimulation, and creative opportunities (Ellis, 1984). In addition, teachers have emotional needs for financial security, respect and appreciation, and a sense of achievement, as well as social needs for affiliation and acceptance. Finally, teachers have spiritual needs including a sense of personal worth, participation in a cause beyond themselves, and satisfaction with their work and personal life. Creating an environment that meets these needs goes a long way in reducing the chances of teacher burnout. When teachers are provided with what they need to remain inspired and enthusiastic in the classroom, students as well as teachers will be the beneficiaries. In sum, the morale of teachers can have far-reaching implications for student learning, the health of the teacher, and the soundness of the school.

Surveying the Teachers

The survey used in this study was designed to generate information from teachers that will show the level of morale based on their teaching experience, workplace

conditions and workload. Twenty out of thirty-five teachers chose to participate in this study.¹ The majority of the participants were Caucasian and the mean socioeconomic status of the teacher sample was middle class. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 35. All participants were between the ages of 23 and 61. The questionnaires were distributed twice and all teachers were urged to complete this anonymous teacher morale survey. Unfortunately, fifteen teachers refused to participate for reasons unknown. Some teachers may have not had the time to complete the questionnaire because it was distributed during the week bulletin boards were due and the following week reading assessments were due. Others may have refused to participate because some of the questions were too personal.

Results from Part One: Background Information

The sex of the participants were 70% female and 30% male. The marital status of the sample surveyed varied; 42% were married, 32% were single and 26% were divorced. As for ethnicity, 47% of the sample were Caucasian, 21% Hispanic, 16% African-American, and 16% other. The age range of the sample is as follows:

Age Range	Percentage of the Sample
Ages 21-30	15%
Ages 31-40	15%
Ages 41-50	30%
Ages 51-60	25%
Ages 61-70	5%
Age unknown	10%

Fifty-five percent of the sample does not have children who are dependent on them for more than half of their financial support. Twenty-five percent have two children who are dependent on them for more than half of their financial support. Ten percent of the

¹ The teachers were selected from a Chancellor's District Elementary Public School located in Bronx, NY.

sample has one child dependent on them for more than half of their financial support. The remaining ten percent of the sample have three or four children who are dependent.

Results from Part Two: Teaching Experience

About half (i.e. 45%) of the sample has had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience. The other large chunk of the sample (i.e. 40%) has not had many years of teaching experience. Teaching experience was measured by the number of years employed as a teacher in a public and/or private school, including the current school year. See the table below for more precise information about the sample's teaching experience.

Years Employed as a Teacher	Percentage of this Sample
1-5 years	40%
6-10 years	5%
11-15 years	25%
16-20 years	20%
21-25 years	5%
26-30 years	0%
31-35 years	5%

Most of those surveyed reported that their highest level of education completed is a master's degree. Another 25% of the sample claims to have their bachelor's degree and are presently working toward their master's degree. Interestingly, 10% of the sample has a doctorate and another 10% has a 2nd master's degree. Everyone surveyed has completed at least a bachelor's degree; therefore, this sample is relatively well educated. Fifty percent of the sample earned a bachelor's degree in education and fifty percent majored in something other than education. See the table below for more details on the sample's education levels.

Highest Degree Earned	Percentage of the Sample
bachelor's degree	25%
2 nd bachelor's degree	5%
master's degree	45%
2 nd master's degree	10%
education specialist/professional diploma	5%
doctorate	10%

Results from Part Three: Teacher Workload

When asked for the best estimate of the number of hours the participant spent on school-related activities *after* school hours for the most recent full week, the results indicate that 40% of the sample spend between five and ten hours. In addition, 30% of the teachers surveyed spend between one and four hours. It is incredible that 25% of the teachers surveyed spend over eleven hours of their own time working on school-related activities such as preparation, grading, conferences and meetings. Only five percent of the participants claim not to spend a full hour on these activities after school hours. The concrete data is listed below:

Number of After-School Hours	Percentage of the Sample
0 hours	5%
1-2 hours	15%
3-4 hours	15%
5-6 hours	15%
7-8 hours	10%
9-10 hours	15%
11 or more hours	25%

As for the hours spent working on the weekends, 70% of the participants reported to dedicate a significant amount of weekend time to lesson planning and/or grading. While 30% claim *not* to dedicate a remarkable amount of hours to lesson planning or grading on the weekends. These results suggest that most teachers in this sample are devoted to their job and sacrifice their own time for the sake of teaching. Moreover, 75% of the participants have taught for the after-school program and 45% has worked for the summer school program. Interestingly, only 5% of the sample claim to provide tutoring services outside of the school. It seems fair to assume that the teachers surveyed prefer to work for the school rather than providing outside services on their own. Furthermore, the data reveals that the participants tend to work beyond their duty. The reason for this heavy workload may be that they enjoy their profession. On the other hand, these teachers may work more than required simply because they need extra money to support themselves and their families.

Results from Part Four: Perceptions and Attitudes toward Teaching

The Teachers' Responses

1. Teachers in this school are evaluated fairly.

In response to this question, 10% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed with this statement, 40% somewhat agreed, 25% somewhat disagreed and the remaining 25% strongly disagreed. This question elicited a 50/50 response, which means that half of the teachers are satisfied with their evaluations and half are not.

2. I am satisfied with my teaching salary.

None of the participants strongly agreed that they are satisfied with their teaching salary. However, 5% somewhat agreed to this statement. 20% somewhat disagreed and

the majority of participants (i.e. 75%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Since teachers' raises are overdue and a new contract is still being negotiated, it is not surprising that most participants in this survey are not satisfied with their income. Considering the unpaid overtime that these surveyed teachers put into their career, it is no wonder that they are displeased with their wages. The 5% that are somewhat satisfied with their salary are fresh out of college and are just starting their career. Therefore, a teacher's starting salary to someone without others to support *is* somewhat satisfying.

3. Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.

The third question reveals that 35% of the teachers strongly agreed that routine duties and paperwork are an interference with teaching. Moreover, 40% somewhat agree with this assertion. On the other hand, 10% somewhat disagree and 15% strongly disagree. Routine duties and paperwork such as collecting and submitting students' late passes, reporting to voluntary and mandatory meetings during preparation time, preparing student portfolios and work folders, etc. are some logical reasons why teachers' jobs get interrupted. Others may manage their time more effectively, thus are unaffected by routine duties and paperwork.

4. Necessary materials (i.e. textbooks, supplies, and copy machine) are available as needed by the staff.

Not one teacher surveyed strongly agreed with this statement. Although, 15% somewhat agreed that necessary materials are readily available. 30% of the teachers somewhat disagree and 55% strongly disagree. The school from which the participants were selected from has only one copy machine for its faculty. Therefore, the machine is usually occupied almost anytime of the day one attempts to make a copy. Supplies, such

as copy paper, are not distributed to teachers. Instead, teachers must supply their own paper. Just recently, however, the principal has offered a copy service in the main office for pre-approved reproducible materials. The teachers must first get their materials to be copied approved before submitting a request for copies. Textbooks are usually available for use; however, students do lose them and it often takes awhile to find or order replacements.

5. In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.

According to the results, none of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed with this statement. Yet, 25% of the teachers somewhat agreed that the staff is recognized for a job well done. In contrast, 50% somewhat disagree and 25% strongly disagreed. Apparently, most of the teachers feel that they themselves are not getting the recognition they deserve or that their colleagues are not being acknowledged for their efforts. This question disclosed some insight as to why teacher morale in this school may be at risk.

6. I sometimes feel that it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher.

This question brought about some disturbing results. 10% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed with this statement! Moreover, 25% somewhat agree that it is a waste of time to try to do their best as a teacher. Conversely, 15% somewhat disagreed and 50% strongly disagreed. This question points out that about 35% of the teachers surveyed at P.S. 195 suffer from low morale and are at the verge of feeling helpless.

7. The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them.

From the responses, 35% of the participants strongly agreed with this statement and 55% somewhat agreed. On the other hand, 10% of teachers somewhat disagreed

because they felt that the principal does not let them know what is expected of them. At the same time, no one strongly disagreed with this assertion. Hence, most of the participants feel clearly informed about the principal's expectations of teachers.

8. The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.

This question yielded equally divided results. 10% of the teachers strongly agreed and 40% somewhat agreed that the school administration supports and encourages the staff. At the same time, 35% somewhat disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed. Evidently, some teachers have a good rapport with the administration, thus they feel that they are being supported and encouraged. Those who have disagreed obviously are not getting the same support and encouragement from the administration.

9. The level of student misbehavior (e.g. noise, horseplay, fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or classroom) in this school interferes with my teaching.

The findings to this question reveal that more teachers than not consider the level of student misbehavior a hindrance to instruction. 20% of the teachers strongly agree and 35% somewhat agreed to the statement above. Although, 25% somewhat disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed because they feel student misbehavior is not a problem that impedes instruction. These findings are subjective because some teachers have better classroom management skills than others do. Thus, teachers with better control over student misbehavior would most likely disagree with the statement above.

10. Teachers participate in making most of the important educational decisions in this school.

Most of the responses to this question were in disagreement with the statement above. Not one teacher surveyed strongly agreed that teachers participate in making most of the important educational decisions in the school being studied. 10% of those surveyed somewhat agreed with the statement above. In contrast, 35% somewhat disagreed and 55% strongly disagreed because they feel that teachers are not given the opportunity to make most or any of the important educational decisions for the school. By not including the educators in the decision making process, the teachers may begin to feel that their opinion is invaluable. Hence, this issue may adversely affect the morale of the teachers in the school.

11. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.

The majority of those surveyed objected to assertion above (i.e. 65% strongly disagreed and 25% somewhat disagreed). Only 10% of the teachers that participated in this survey somewhat agreed that parents are supportive of their work. This question gives insight to how low the level of parental support is at P.S. 195. Parents seem not to have the time to contribute or get involved in their child's education. This lack of parental support or assistance makes a teacher's job all the more arduous. It also dampens teacher morale because teachers always want to work hand-in-hand with parents, cooperatively as a team, to encourage each child to work to their best ability.

12. The principal does a good job of getting resources for this school.

This question elicited a highly negative response (i.e. 60% somewhat disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, 10% somewhat agreed, and 10% strongly agreed). Overall, 80% of the teachers surveyed believe that the principal is not doing a good job at obtaining resources for the school. As mentioned earlier, the teachers at the school being

studied shell out a lot of their own hard-earned money on necessary materials to educate their students. The results from this question indicate that most teachers are bitter towards the principal for having to layout money for resources that are distributed free in other schools.

13. My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.

The response to this statement varied (i.e. 15% strongly agreed, 40% somewhat agreed, 30% somewhat disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed). From my experience, the principal enforces school rules for students. Every morning, the principal reminds the students of what is expected of them behaviorally and academically. As far as the principal backing up a teacher, I am unaware of how the principal handles such issues, but I would imagine that he would stand by the teacher's side. Yet, the results indicate that the principal does not always support the teacher. There may or may not be valid reasoning for the principal's lack of support. No other questions were asked in this survey to allude to further explanation.

14. Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.

Most participants responded in opposition to this statement (i.e. only 5% strongly agreed, 30% somewhat agreed, 40% somewhat disagreed, and 25% strongly disagreed). Evidently, a large percentage of those surveyed feel that the teachers at this school are not consistently enforcing the rules for student behavior for students who are not in their classes. There are probably a handful of teachers in the school who do enforce the rules for students who are not in their class. However, most teachers at the school under study

are only concerned about the behavior of the students that they teach. This question points out the lack of solidarity among teachers in enforcing the school rules.

15. There is a great deal of cooperation and effort among staff members.

This question elicited a 50/50 response (i.e. 10% strongly agreed, 40% somewhat agreed, 35% somewhat disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed). From my observation, I noticed that certain teachers (e.g. those who are on the same grade level or who teach the same content) work well together and share ideas amongst each other. Hence, the staff members have formed “clicks” of close knit individuals who work together cooperatively. Aside from the *clicks*, there are certain teachers who put in a lot of effort but keep to themselves. Granted there are also some teachers at this school who put in little or no effort. Thus, the response to this question varied as a reflection of these factors.

16. I am satisfied with my class size.

Nearly all of those surveyed responded positively toward this statement (i.e. 45% strongly agreed, 35% somewhat agreed, 10% somewhat disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed). Since the participants are working in a Chancellor’s District school, it is mandated that class sizes remain small to better the education of the children who attend. Most classes consist of 18 to 25 students, which is considerable small in relation to other NYC public schools.

17. I have to follow rules in this school that conflict with my best professional judgement.

70% of the teachers surveyed feel that they are following rules that conflict with their best professional judgement (i.e. 25% strongly agree, 45% somewhat agreed, 10%

somewhat disagree and 20% strongly disagree). From informal conversations with the staff members at the school, it was found that many disprove of the programs that must be followed according to the district's regulations. Many find that the programs are unstructured (i.e. key content is not age appropriate and the lessons are not taught in a logically sequence). Despite how a teacher feels toward a program, the rule is that they must follow the curriculum and teach accordingly. In addition, it was found that many teachers object to sending children down to the lunchroom with books to read. However, the administration requires that there be a silent lunch hour in which students are reading to themselves quietly. Most teachers wish for their students to have some time to socialize at lunchtime; however, that would be against the rules.

18. Goals and priorities for the school are clear.

From the survey, 45% of the teachers said that the goals and priorities for the school are clear and 55% disagreed. More specifically, 30% strongly agreed, 15% somewhat agreed, 35% somewhat disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. In my opinion, the goals for the school are clear because the principal persistently reminded the teachers of what needs to change in order for us to get off the SURR (Schools Under Registration Review) list. At the same time, it is understandable that some feel the priorities are unclear in light of the factors addressed in question 17.

19. The amount of student tardiness in this school interferes with my teaching.

An overwhelming 75% of the teachers surveyed claim that student tardiness interferes with their job of teaching. 20% strongly agreed, 55% somewhat agreed, 15% somewhat disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. This year a new math program is required to be taught first period in addition to routine morning activities such as

attendance and checking homework. Therefore, when a child strolls in late, he or she takes time away from instruction because the teacher must stop the lesson to change the attendance forms and repeat instructions. As the number of late students rises, the more time is wasted and less is taught.

20. Aside from report card conferences, the only time you see or speak to parents is when there is a problem or crisis.

65% of the participants were in favor with this statement (i.e. 30% strongly agreed, 35% somewhat agreed, 15% somewhat disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed). The response elicited from this question corresponds to the participants' response to question 11. Apparently, there is a lack of parental involvement unless a problem or crisis arises. It seems as though teachers and parents do not communicate at P.S. 195 unless it is absolutely necessary. Of course, this lack of contact or joint effort between parent and teacher may have adverse effects on the student. Moreover, the teacher's perception and attitude toward teaching may become negative if parents are not working together with the teacher to encourage students to succeed.

21. If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher or not?

The majority of the teachers who participated in this survey report that they would become a teacher if they had the chance to start over again. 30% of the participants claim that they are *certain* that they would become teachers, while 30% said that they would *probably* become teachers. 20% of those surveyed believe that *they probably would not* become teachers if given the chance to start over. 10% declared that they *certainly would not* become a teacher given the chance to change and 10% reported that

chances are about even for and against. For the most part, this sample of teachers from P.S. 195 is satisfied with their choice of profession. Although, the results yield that about 40% may have liked to do something other than teaching for a living. Interestingly, 50% of the male teachers claim that they *probably would* not become teachers. Only 21% of the female teachers felt negatively toward their career choice. 14% of the female teachers surveyed claim that they would *certainly not* become teachers and 7% reported that they *probably would* not teach. Another 14% of the female teachers claim that chances are about even for or against their choice of profession (none of the male teachers felt this way). 33% of the male teachers and 29% of the female teachers surveyed reported that they *probably would* become teachers again. 36% of the female teachers versus 17% of the male teachers reported that they would *certainly* become teachers if they had the chance to start over. Out of the 9 individuals surveyed that had less than 10 years of teaching experience (i.e. regardless of sex), 5 of them (i.e. 56%) were more in favor of not becoming a teacher if they had the chance to do it over.

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

The responses to this question varied. 15% of the sample definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as possible. 25% of those surveyed are undecided at this time. 5% will probably continue unless something better comes along. 30% plan to remain in teaching until they become eligible for retirement. Lastly, 25% plan to continue teaching as long as they are able to teach. Overall, 45% of the sample is not very committed to their career as a teacher whereas 55% assert that they plan to continue teaching. Oddly enough, some teachers who stated that they would still want to be a teacher given the

opportunity to change the past revealed that they are uncertain about remaining in the teaching field.

Conclusions

This study reveals that experienced teachers (i.e. teachers who have more than 10 years of teaching experience) have a more positive attitude toward teaching than teachers who have less experience.² About 78% of the sample of teachers with less than 10 years experience are unhappy teaching and are planning to leave or are undecided (see **table 1** below). In contrast, 81% of the experienced teachers plan to teach until they are eligible for retirement and some plan to teach even longer. Obviously, the experienced teachers are older than the less experienced teachers are; thus, they may be more settled and less likely to think about changing professions. Young, inexperienced teachers still have many career options available to them. Therefore, they are the ones who are more tempted to abandon their teaching career. In addition, the experienced teachers were mostly married and the majority of inexperienced teachers were single. Those who are married rely on two incomes, whereas those who are single are more likely to feel the need to look for a higher paying job to support themselves.

Other results conclude that experienced teachers spend less time on school-related activities *after* school hours than less experienced teachers do. Likewise, experienced teachers dedicate less time on the weekends to lesson planning and grading than do less experienced teachers. The results also reveal that experienced teachers are more likely to have taught summer school or an after-school program. More than half of the experienced teachers have majored in education while in college, whereas less than half

² Please note conclusions were based solely on the sample population of teachers that participated in this study.

of the inexperienced teachers majored in education. Unfortunately, close to half (i.e. 44%) of the less experienced teachers believe that it is a waste of time to try to do their best as a teacher. Meanwhile, 73 % of the experienced teachers were opposed to that view.

Question 6: I sometimes feel that it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher.

Experienced Teachers (< 10 years)	Less Experienced Teachers (>10 years)
18% Strongly agree	0% Strongly agree
9% Somewhat agree	44% Somewhat agree
18% Somewhat disagree	0% Somewhat disagree
55% Strongly disagree	56% Strongly disagree

Table 1

Experienced Teachers (Those who have been teaching for more than 10 years.)	Less Experienced Teachers (Those who have been teaching for less than 10 years.)
Spend 6 hours on school related activities after school hours	Spend 10 hours on school related activities after school hours
84% have a positive attitude toward teaching; 18% negative	44% have a positive attitude toward teaching; 24% negative; 22% neutral
45% plan to stay until retirement	11% plan to stay until retirement
36% plan to stay as long as they are able	11% plan to stay as long as they are able
9% want to leave the profession	22% want to leave the profession
9 % are undecided	56% are undecided
55% majored in education	44% majored in education
82% has taught the after-school program	67% has taught the after-school program
64% has taught summer school	22% has taught summer school
55% dedicate a significant amount of time on the weekends to lesson planning/grading	89% dedicate a significant amount of time on the weekends to lesson planning/grading

These findings indicate that more teacher training and experience leads to less stress, more efficiency and ultimately high morale. The less experienced teachers have a heavier workload than teachers with at least 10 years experience do because they are still in the process of learning how to design lessons for student mastery and be a good classroom manager. Thus, less experienced teachers spend more of their spare time on work-related activities. According to the results, pedagogical duties consume a large portion of a new teacher's life and it drains their spirits. The less experienced teacher spends anywhere between one and twenty-five hours on school-related activities after

school hours a week. On average, that is about 10 after school hours that less experience teachers dedicate each week (i.e. including weekends). Teachers with a lot of experience spend much less free time on work-related activities (see **table 1** above). Experienced teachers are more time efficient because they are well acquainted with administering and grading assessments and filling out report cards. Furthermore, experienced teachers are familiar with the curriculum and have often taught the same lessons year after year. They know how to control a classroom and how to establish a good rapport with students. Thus, experienced teachers may not have to make as many calls home or hold as many parent-teacher conferences as do teachers who are less experienced.

Question 9: The level of student misbehavior (e.g. noise, horseplay, fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or classroom) in this school interferes with my teaching.

Experienced Teachers (< 10 years)	Less Experienced Teachers (>10 years)
9% Strongly agree	34% Strongly agree
27% Somewhat agree	44% Somewhat agree
45% Somewhat disagree	0% Somewhat disagree
19% Strongly disagree	22% Strongly disagree

It is also important to note that the majority of teachers who participated in this study felt that they are not getting a great deal of support from their students' parents. This lack of parental support for teachers is likely to lead to low teacher morale. If parents do not create a home environment that promotes learning and reinforces what is being taught at school, the teacher's job becomes overloaded and all the more difficult. Teachers need to work together with families to support student achievement. When parents are uninvolved and all of education is left up to the teacher, the student is less likely to succeed in school ("Parent Involvement and Student Achievement," 1997). To make matters worse, teachers often feel responsible for their students' outcomes and

blame themselves when a student is not succeeding (Thomas, 1984). Some teachers are personally involved with their students and their students' lives. This interest and involvement does not cease at 3 o'clock. As a human being, teachers cannot help but remain aware and concerned about the issues their students have (i.e. both in regard to their learning and their lives). According to Parent Involvement and Student Achievement (1997), teachers who really care tend to feel guilty because there is so much more that could be done, so much more that would help their students. This can become a huge problem that lowers teacher morale because there is no way any teacher can be successful when their goal is to do everything. Eventually, all that happens is exhaustion and a pervasive feeling of failure and defeat. Hence, the lack of parental involvement is another factor that lowers teacher morale.

There was a significant correlation between working conditions and teacher morale. The results point out that routine duties and paperwork interfere with teaching, which in turn dampens the pleasure of this profession. Most of the teachers surveyed (i.e. regardless of their years of experience) complained that necessary materials are not available as needed. (See tables below) In addition, the majority of teachers gripe that the principal does not do a good job of obtaining resources for the school. This survey supports the conclusion that the environment that these public school teachers work in has important deficiencies. Without substantial improvement in the work environment for these teachers, their morale will deteriorate and eventually teacher retention will be a problem facing this public school.

Question 3: Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.

Experienced Teachers (< 10 years)	Less Experienced Teachers (>10 years)
27% Strongly agree	45% Strongly agree
45% Somewhat agree	33% Somewhat agree
18% Somewhat disagree	0% Somewhat disagree
10% Strongly disagree	22% Strongly disagree

Question 4: Necessary materials (i.e. textbooks, supplies, copy machine) are available as needed by the staff.

Experienced Teachers (< 10 years)	Less Experienced Teachers (>10 years)
0% Strongly agree	0% Strongly agree
18% Somewhat agree	11% Somewhat agree
27% Somewhat disagree	33% Somewhat disagree
55% Strongly disagree	56% Strongly disagree

Another factor that indicates low morale is that half of the teachers surveyed believe that teachers are not being evaluated fairly and half claim that the school administration's behavior toward the staff is not supportive and encouraging. Moreover, an overwhelming number of teachers surveyed claim that they are not able to partake in making the most important educational decisions for the school. Consequently, many feel that they have to follow rules that conflict with their best professional judgement. In conclusion, low morale is a result of the new and ever-changing initiatives that come down the pipe (i.e. from the district to the teachers). The principal expects teachers to be willing to accept and participate in new scripted measures that may conflict with their pedagogical training or beliefs. The ultimate joy, happiness, and intrinsic rewards that lie in the beauty of teaching dissipate when teachers are faced with brick walls built by the district. A teacher's style emerges from a creative blending of learned techniques and

individual personality. It is important for each teacher to be aware of his or her own personal style. When teachers are not given the freedom to exercise their effectiveness in their own unique way, their spirit for teaching weakens. According to Thomas (1984), teachers measure their job satisfaction by factors such as participation in decision-making, use of valued skills, freedom and independence, expression of creativity, and opportunity for learning. Therefore, when a teacher does not find the meaningfulness in or objects to the district's new initiatives their internal motivation, work satisfaction, and high-quality performance decreases.

Recommendations

Despite administrative and financial constraints in the school being studied, a variety of innovations can be implemented to improve teacher morale. First, the teachers with less than ten years of experience need to lighten their workload. It is easy to allow teaching to take over all aspects of one's life; however, it is not healthy for one's spirit. A solution would be to have inexperienced teachers network with their more experienced colleagues. Teachers should use their preparation periods to get together with each other to do joint lesson planning and share classroom management ideas. If possible, it would be helpful if the principal provided new teachers with the opportunity to team-teach with veteran teachers as a way of enhancing new teachers' sense of effectiveness.

The next step to lift teachers' morale is to reach out to parents and solicit their involvement. Linda Lumsden's study on teacher morale found that teachers in any school setting who receive a great deal of parental support are more satisfied than teachers who do not (1998). It would be beneficial for this school to provide a variety of parent-involvement activities and a variety of times for parents to get involved

throughout the year. First, the staff needs to consider parents' needs and interests when planning parent-involvement activities. A large portion of the parents who send their children to the school under study are non-English speaking minorities who earn low-incomes. In response to this need, the school should provide childcare for parents of young children and conducting activities in multiple languages to make parent-involvement activities more accessible and inviting to these parents. If that solution were too costly, an alternative solution would be to create a room in the school building that is specifically for parents. This room may make the parents feel comfortable in the school. The school can also try to get one or two strong parent representatives from each target group to serve as school liaisons. Hopefully, this plan would build mutual trust and a successful partnership between parents and teachers to enhance education and teachers' morale.

According to Lumsden's study (1998), people who feel empowered tend to have higher morale. The teachers in this study claim that they are not included in making important educational decisions for the school. By not involving teachers in decisions about policies and practices and acknowledging their expertise, administrators are lowering the teachers' morale. To increase teacher morale, the administration should let the teachers have some voice in making educational decisions for the school or at least consider their opinions since they are the ones who know the students best. Instead of having teachers control school management details, an alternative solution to increase teachers' sense of empowerment would be to give them the opportunity to gain greater knowledge about their field, their professional community, and educational policy. The

principal can implement this solution if he lets teachers more frequently attend conferences on educational topics of their choice.

Lastly, the management of existing resources needs to be improved because over time a lack of resources creates stress among teachers and low morale. As Carol Ascher stated (1991), money spent on well-stocked classrooms and good copying machines is a wise investment when compared with the cost of continually replacing disgruntled teachers. Moreover, it is important to involve teachers in decisions that can be made at the school level. When teachers help make decisions about such resources as books, paper, and other classroom supplies, they can use their own expertise to improve the professional culture of the school. Not only would the management of existing resources improve, teacher morale would rise and so would the climate of the school because teachers would no longer resort to *beg, borrow, and steal* (Harry & Rosemary Wong, 1998).

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Sex	Years Experience	Question 3	Question 4	Question 6	Question 9	Question 16	Would you become a teacher if you could start over?	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?
Female	15	A	D	A	B	A	Probably not	until retirement
Female	23	C	C	D	D	B	Certainly would	undecided
Female	18	C	D	A	D	A	Certainly would	leave
Female	4	A	B	B	A	C	Probably would	leave
Female	12	A	C	B	A	B	Certainly would	as long as able
Female	12	D	D	D	C	A	Certainly would	as long as able
Female	2	B	D	D	B	A	Certainly would	until retirement
Female	18	A	B	C	C	A	Probably would	until retirement
Female	2	A	D	D	D	A	Chances are even	probably continue
Female	2	B	C	B	B	B	Chances are even	undecided
Female	11	B	D	D	C	B	Probably would	as long as able
Female	2	A	D	D	A	B	Certainly not	leave
Male	6	D	C	D	C	B	Certainly would	as long as able
Female	3	D	C	D	D	A	Certainly would	leave
Female	20	B	D	D	B	A	Probably would	undecided
Male	35	B	C	D	C	D	Probably would	until retirement
Male	17	B	B	C	C	B	Probably not	until retirement
Male	2	B	D	D	B	C	Probably would	until retirement
Male	2	A	D	B	A	B	Probably not	undecided
Male	14	B	D	D	B	D	Probably not	undecided
						A	Probably would	as long as able

A = strongly agree
 B = somewhat agree
 C = somewhat disagree
 D = strongly disagree



Years Experience	Bachelor's in Ed.?	*Hours	**Weekends	Taught After-School?	Summer School?	Would you become a teacher if you could start over?	How long do you plan to remain in teaching?
15	Yes	8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Probably not	until retirement
23	No	11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Certainly would	undecided
18	No	None	No	Yes	Yes	Certainly would	leave as soon as I can
4	Yes	1	No	Yes	No	Probably would	leave as soon as I can
12	Yes	15	Yes	Yes	No	Certainly would	as long as able
12	Yes	8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Certainly would	as long as able
2	No	16	Yes	No	Yes	Certainly would	until retirement
18	Yes	10	No	Yes	Yes	Probably would	until retirement
2	No	6	Yes	No	No	Chances even	probably continue
2	No	5	Yes	Yes	No	Chances even	undecided
11	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	No	Probably would	as long as able
2	Yes	10	Yes	Yes	No	Certainly not	leave as soon as I can
6	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	No	Certainly would	as long as able
3	Yes	15	Yes	Yes	No	Certainly would	undecided
20	Yes	2	No	Yes	Yes	Probably would	until retirement
35	No	2	No	No	Yes	Probably not	until retirement
17	No	4	No	No	No	Probably would	until retirement
2	No	10	Yes	Yes	No	Probably not	undecided
2	No	25	Yes	Yes	No	Probably not	undecided
14	No	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Probably would	as long as able

* Hours means the number of hours spent on school-related activities after school hours.

** Weekends refers to the question: Do you dedicate a significant amount of hours to lesson planning/grading on the weekends?



<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Years as a Teacher</u>	<u>If you could start over again, would you become a teacher?</u>	<u>How long do you plan to remain in teaching?</u>
Female	59	Divorced	Hispanic	18	Certainly not	plan to leave
Female	31	Divorced	Black	2	Certainly not	plan to leave
Female	37	Married	Hispanic	15	Probably not	until eligible for retirement
Male	55	Married	White	35	Probably not	until eligible for retirement
Male	61	Married	White	2	Probably not	undecided
Male	44	Single	White	2	Probably not	undecided
Female	25	Single	White	2	Chances even	undecided
Female	23	Single	White	2	Chances even	continue unless something better arises
Female	28	Married	Hispanic	4	Probably would	plan to leave
Female	50	Married	Blk/Wht/Indian	20	Probably would	until eligible for retirement
Female	40	Married	White/Indian	18	Probably would	until eligible for retirement
Female	40	Single	Black	11	Probably would	as long as I am able
Male	57	Divorced	White	14	Probably would	as long as I am able
Male	44	Single	White	17	Probably would	until eligible for retirement
Female	43	Single	White	2	Certainly would	until eligible for retirement
Female	55	Divorced	White/Hispanic	12	Certainly would	as long as I am able
Female	60	Married	White	12	Certainly would	as long as I am able
Female	41	Married	Black	23	Certainly would	undecided
Female	41	Divorced	Hispanic	3	Certainly would	undecided
Male	43	Single	White	6	Certainly would	as long as I am able



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