Mid-Career Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Elements that Contribute to Job Satisfaction and intent to Remain in the Field

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ABSTRACT

MID-CAREER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO JOB SATISFACTION AND INTENT TO REMAIN IN THE FIELD

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Northern Illinois University, 2020
Elizabeth A. Wilkins, Director

This dissertation examined the experiences and perceptions of mid-career elementary teachers by exploring elements contributing to their level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field. Participants for the study were identified from those who responded to a questionnaire that they received via their district email addresses. All four participants were teachers with 6-17 years of teaching experience who had considered leaving the field.

Data collection strategies included a series of three interviews with each teacher, as well as responses to two writing prompts. Through analysis of the qualitative data, several common themes emerged, thus providing insight into the teachers’ conceptualization of job satisfaction. Sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction were found related to their role and the support and resources they received. The connection between each teacher’s level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field also elicited common themes. One’s fit with the organization was important, and reasons to stay in the field and consider making a change were described by the teachers. Ultimately, the influence of their level of job satisfaction on the intent to remain in the field was uniquely experienced by each teacher.

Four major assertions emerged from the findings of this study. The influence of school context on job satisfaction confirmed and extended findings from previous research. The
supports that are of greatest benefit to these teachers were described as both layered and differentiated. Two components of organizational commitment (affective and continuance) were reflected in the findings. Additionally, career intention is a construct that should include the following possibilities: intend to stay, intend to change context, intend to leave the field, and considering leaving the field. The final possibility, considering leaving the field, is one that merits continued discussion. Recommendations for educators in various roles are provided. The findings and major assertions of this study informed recommendations for future research related to job satisfaction, career stages, and intent to remain in the field.
MID-CAREER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO JOB SATISFACTION AND INTENT TO REMAIN IN THE FIELD

BY

SARAH E. WESTBERG
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Doctoral Director:
Elizabeth A. Wilkins
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This research would not have been possible without the willingness of the four participants to give their time and perspectives. I thank them for openly sharing their insights, and also want to acknowledge the valuable contributions they have made in their teaching careers.

I am grateful for my family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me throughout the pursuit of this degree. Finally, I am most appreciative of my amazing son, Liam, who in his own way has provided so much support, encouragement, and motivation.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Elementary schools are vibrant, dynamic places where children develop their identities as learners and individuals. They navigate curricula that simultaneously helps them to develop foundational skills in multiple disciplines, while allowing for the exploration of curiosities. Every day, voices can be heard singing with enthusiasm, artwork is created and displayed, and strength, agility, and teamwork are developed in the gym and at recess. Increasingly complex words are decoded, and meaning is derived from text. Mathematical proficiency grows from conceptual understandings of numbers and processes to the application of knowledge to real world problems. These young learners experience frustrations and successes as they begin their formal education.

Teachers lead, facilitate, and engage in learning with their students. They support students from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. These students rely on their teachers to discover and build upon their strengths. Teachers’ responsibilities include cultivating productive relationships with colleagues and parents, managing expectations from administrators, and adjusting to changing local and national policies. Novices as well as those with decades of experience work autonomously and collaboratively to meet the challenges of their role.
Elementary teachers at the beginning, middle, or end of their careers typically have the same responsibilities, however the level of satisfaction that they experience and their perceptions about their jobs may differ significantly. A teacher’s career stage is a possible influence on their view, since common themes are often associated with this aspect of their identity. As described by Huberman (1989), mid-career teachers are those in the seventh through eighteenth years of their career. At this point, after having navigated the novice stage, teachers experience one of two divergent paths. One consists of activism and experimentation, driven by a desire to increase their impact on students and the school. The alternative path, characterized by reassessment and self-doubt, results from a feeling that the job has become monotonous, and that other career options should be considered.

Teachers may consider leaving the field at any point in their careers. Through interviews of Swiss secondary teachers, Huberman (1989) explored career trajectories and found that 43% of the participants had thought seriously about leaving the profession, and that this occurred at the highest levels between seven and fifteen years in the field. This illustrates that teachers may struggle with their career choice and path, particularly during the mid-career stage. Day (2008) also associated mid-career years with complexities. The eight through fifteenth years were characterized by “growing tensions and transitions” followed by “challenges to motivation and commitment” in years 16-23 (p. 248).

More recent studies involving teachers in the United States reflect the challenges of navigating a teaching career. Rinke and Mawhinney (2017) found that teachers who left the field described a “simultaneous push and pull in which they balanced features of teaching with features of other positions and fields” (p. 365, emphasis in original). Mertler’s (2016) study of over 9000 Arizona teachers found that, if given the opportunity to choose again, 24% would not
select a career in teaching, and an additional 45% indicated that they were unsure if they would or would not. These views may be reflected to some extent in rates of teacher turnover (i.e., moving to a different school or leaving the profession). As Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) reported, the results from the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years indicated that 16% of teachers were involved in turnover. This group is further understood through analysis of the type of turnover experienced. While 18% of those were retirees, and 14% engaged in turnover involuntarily, larger percentages voluntarily left the field (30%) or changed contexts (37%). For those that left the field and those who changed contexts, dissatisfaction was reported as a very important reason for their decision (55% and 66%, respectively).

The elementary school provides a context for exploring the satisfaction and career considerations of teachers at the mid-career stage. A notable feature of the elementary school environment is that it is “predicated on the assumption that an elementary school teacher is a Jack (or Jill)-of-all-trades who is equally strong in all areas of the elementary curriculum” (Chan & Jarman, 2004, p. 70). This structure contrasts with what is typically found in secondary schools, where teachers specialize in fewer subject areas, often delivering the same lesson to multiple groups of students. The ability to meet the expectation of providing quality instruction across multiple subject areas likely requires a combination of knowledge and preparation, as well as experience.

An additional aspect unique to this environment is the connection between teachers and their students, which can develop in a few different ways depending on the teacher’s role. Typically, elementary students remain in the same teacher’s classroom for a significant portion of the day. This structure provides substantial opportunities for the development of supportive
relationships between students and their teachers. Also, specialists, such as those who work with students with disabilities or provide instruction in a specialized area (e.g., art, music, and physical education), often have the opportunity to work with more than one grade level. This can help to facilitate positive student-teacher relationships over multiple years.

A focus on the elementary environment ensured a common context for exploring these mid-career teachers’ experiences and perceptions. While each teacher’s context and views are unique, commonalities can be highlighted by considering their level of job satisfaction. This concept provided a means by which to examine the challenging features of the elementary context (e.g., accountability policies, students with significant needs, changing curricula), as well as the sources of satisfaction. Teachers’ reflections regarding their level of job satisfaction included common themes and factors. Their navigation of these challenges as it relates to their intent to remain in, or leave the field was the focus of this study.

While managing the challenges of their role, teachers must make a determination if they will remain in the field. This intent (whether to remain in or leave the field) is the result of each teacher’s consideration of both positive and negative aspects of their role. Of those who contemplate leaving, teachers that decide to stay have somehow resolved their concerns in a way that allows them to maintain their commitment to the field. Conversely, those who decide to leave the field have determined that their reasons to leave outweigh those to stay. The intent of each mid-career elementary teacher (MCET) to remain in or leave the field serves as a reflection of the magnitude of the concerns. Insights from those who intend to leave the field as well as those who have contemplated leaving but decide to remain are of value because they provide information about current conditions in schools and how they impact the career decisions of these professionals.
Problem Statement

The plight of mid-career elementary teachers who consider leaving the field connects to an issue receiving national attention, the problem of teacher attrition. This issue relates to concerns regarding teacher shortages in particular subject areas, regions, or schools with specific demographic characteristics. Analyses of the SASS and Teacher Follow-Up Survey reflect an increase in teacher turnover from 13.4% in 1988-89 to 15.7% in 2012-13 (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2018). This increase is of particular concern in light of the components associated with replacing a teacher, which include separation, hiring, training, and performance productivity costs (Synar & Maiden, 2012). Estimates of these costs vary in particular due to district type (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) and other factors that influence costs. With consideration given to models designed to calculate these costs and the impact of inflation, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) state that estimates reach “$20,000 or more for each teacher who leaves an urban district” (p.1).

High turnover rates may be an indication of problems within the organization, but also “can be disruptive, in and of themselves, for the quality of school community and performance” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 505). Rather than focusing on the recruitment of teachers to address this issue, as Ingersoll (2018) asserts, “the main source of school staffing problems is not shortages-in the sense of too few new candidates being produced-but rather too many existing teachers leaving their jobs” (p. 87). Teachers who contemplate leaving the field can provide insights that can inform strategies for retaining these teachers, so that schools can benefit from the expertise that they have developed.
Since not all teachers who contemplate leaving the field actually do so, those considering this option can articulate both reasons to stay and leave. The perspective of mid-career teachers is particularly valuable since as a result of their experience, these teachers are familiar with the strengths and challenges of the school context. As Kirkpatrick and Johnson (2014) describe, those in their fourth through tenth years of teaching have increased confidence, engagement, and independence. Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) characterize mid-career teachers as the “most capable and committed” (p. 38). Teachers at this stage are effective contributors as they facilitate learning opportunities for their students, collaborate with their colleagues, and continue to grow professionally. Their loss (through turnover or attrition), or even decreased engagement and motivation, must also be qualitatively considered.

However, unlike the needs of beginning teachers, little is known about how to support these individuals as they navigate the challenges of their jobs and career decisions during the mid-career stage. Although insights can be gathered by analyzing quantitative and qualitative research on reasons for leaving the field (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Strunk & Robinson, 2006), gathering the perspective of these individuals while they are still in the field offers the opportunity to articulate their decision-making process. Through their description of their experiences in schools and how they have thus far navigated their careers as well as dynamic educational contexts, MCETs’ insights are of considerable value. These teachers’ descriptions of the elements contributing to their level of job satisfaction can broaden the dialogue regarding retention, turnover, and attrition within the current educational landscape.
Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how mid-career elementary teachers’ conceptualization of job satisfaction contributes to their intent to remain in the field. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do school context factors influence mid-career elementary teachers’ level of satisfaction with their jobs?
2. How is a mid-career elementary teacher’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study provide a deeper understanding of the challenges of MCETs by focusing on those currently in the field. Through their articulation of why they consider leaving the field, these MCETs provided insights that extend and enhance the dialogue regarding job satisfaction and teacher attrition. Previous research has focused primarily on beginning teacher attrition (DeAngelis & Presley, 2007; Gray & Brauen, 2013; Hahs-Vaughn & Schreff, 2008; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Additionally, studies that described teachers’ reasons for leaving the field involved their perceptions of the contributing factors after they had already left (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). The information gathered from this study can broaden the discussion to include individuals who, although established in their field, considered leaving. The insights provided by these teachers can lead to a deeper understanding of the contexts in which they work, and how they can be best supported in these environments.
The primary beneficiaries of the understandings gained from this study are those interested in reducing teacher turnover, attrition, and retention, such as school administrators. Additionally, coaches and professional development providers who play an important role in meeting the needs of teachers at different career stages may gain new insights by considering the voices of these MCETs and how they may connect to the teachers they support. Also, for those with an interest in understanding school contexts from the perspective of MCETs, the results of this study may provide insights into the contextual elements that are most challenging. Research involving school contexts reflects variations in how the concept is defined (Lowenstein et al., 2015; Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). In this study, the MCETs described specific aspects of their school contexts that were most meaningful and relevant to them. Their insights regarding the connection of school context to job satisfaction as well as intent to remain in the field are of interest to other teachers with similar experiences or concerns. Additionally, administrators and others who are interested in supporting teachers can use the findings of this study to design, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of supports that could decrease the likelihood of attrition across the career span.

Theoretical Framework

A study focusing on teachers who are considering leaving the field naturally aligns with job satisfaction. If teachers experience and can envision continued satisfaction with their work, they are more likely to stay in the profession than those with negative experiences or outlooks (Evans, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Given that premise, job satisfaction was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study.
While research regarding levels of job satisfaction and any associated contributing factors has relevance to teachers, greater understandings can be gained when specifically considering how it is experienced in the educational context. Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) developed a three-domain model of teacher job satisfaction, which built upon Herzberg’s (1966) research regarding job satisfaction in other professions. Herzberg’s (1966) Two-Factor Theory included two categories of factors contributing to workers’ satisfaction with their jobs. He described hygiene factors, which may be dissatisfying, such as physical working conditions, benefits, and job security. The second category, motivation factors, are intrinsically based, and include achievement, recognition, and relationships. In addition to providing job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the motivation factors can lead to changes in performance.

Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) expanded upon Herzberg’s (1966) theory of job satisfaction through an exploration of factors specific to teachers. An extensive survey including teacher ratings of their levels of satisfaction overall, as well as with a range of factors provided the data to support the three-domain model. The factors that teachers found most satisfying were intrinsically based (e.g. self-growth, positive relationships, helping students to improve). The dissatisfiers were labeled as extrinsic factors and were typically out of the control of teachers. For example, the pace of change, concerns about the level of support provided, as well as negative perceptions of teachers in the media were sources of dissatisfaction.

The third domain emerging from the research (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000) included school-based factors. In contrast to the two other domains, the school-based factors were neither highly satisfying or dissatisfying. These factors varied widely from school to school (e.g. school leadership, reputation, and climate). Within each domain, MCETs provided description and analysis of their experiences and how they contributed to their intent to remain in the field of
education. Figure 1 reflects the connections between Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) three-domain model of job satisfaction and the intent to remain in or leave the field. Teachers’ experiences with the domains described by Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) model lead to a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs. Those that are satisfied or dissatisfied may intend to remain in, or leave the field of education. A teacher’s sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his or her job contributes to this intention.

**Figure 1.** The Connection Between Teachers’ Job Satisfaction and Intent to Remain in the Field.
Definitions

The definitions that follow provide clarity as to how these terms will be used in the study.

**Elementary teacher**: A teacher who is currently employed in a district that serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade, holding a professional educator license according to the state requirements (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.)

**Intent to remain in the field**: Teachers’ description of their commitment to staying in the profession (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008)

**Mid-career teacher**: A teacher in the seventh through eighteenth years of their career (Huberman, 1989; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2011)

Methodology

A qualitative approach was selected for this study. This facilitated the sharing of insights into the challenges MCETs face as they reflect on their intent to remain in the field of education. The participants were employed by schools within the same suburban county. Data were collected through a series of interviews and reflective journals. Both data collection strategies included reflection on the decision to enter the field of education, the experience of being a MCET, as well as the concept of current, past, and anticipated levels of job satisfaction. The data were analyzed through a two-phase coding process, with additional insights derived from ongoing analytic memos written by the researcher. Analysis of the interview transcripts, reflective journals, and analytic memos led to the identification of themes recurring among the mid-career elementary teachers.
Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study including an overview of the framework used, a description of the problem that requires investigation, and the research questions that are addressed. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature related to teacher job satisfaction and additional topics relevant to the study. Chapter 3 details the methods used to complete the study. Chapter 4 summarizes the data collected in the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of findings and implications for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to capture the experiences and perceptions of mid-career elementary teachers, specifically focusing on their job satisfaction and career intent. Through the exploration of their challenges and successes, the MCETs illuminate potential causes of turnover and attrition, as well as opportunities to reduce the likelihood that they will leave the field. This review of literature is divided into four sections. School context is reviewed first, since it is inextricably linked to the teachers’ experiences. The second section goes into depth about job satisfaction, the theoretical framework of the study. Then, research regarding career stages is detailed in the third section of this chapter. The fourth and final section focuses on gaps in the literature and how the present study will contribute to the current literature.

School Context

Studying individuals, groups, or phenomena requires an understanding of the time, place, and circumstances that the participants have navigated or currently experience. A discussion of these environments serves the purpose of framing the information shared and deepening the understanding of the findings. The school context certainly plays a role in teachers’ experiences. Elements connected to students, teachers, leadership, and the community surrounding the school should be considered as potential influences on teachers’ job satisfaction. For the purpose of this
study, school context is defined broadly as a combination of factors and influences experienced by those in the school.

School Context in Educational Research

The concept of school context connects to the fields of sociology and psychology, in addition to the natural association with education. Discussions of school context typically include multiple factors that are measured and analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively. Depending on the purpose of the research, relevant factors will be identified. This section will feature explorations of school context that have taken place in the past few decades.

Defining School Context

The field of school effectiveness research offers connections to school context and a continued refinement of the definition. Wimpelberg, Teddlie, and Stringfield (1989) describe the evolution of the definitions of school context in terms of three phases. The first phase was focused on understanding differences between schools, and primarily included factors related to socioeconomic status (SES) when defining school context. A primary goal of school effectiveness research was to establish equity for students, so that all groups would have the opportunity to be successful. While SES data can be collected and monitored, as Purkey and Smith (1983) caution, the differences between schools that can be measured most easily may not consistently relate to student achievement.

The second phase described by Wimpelberg et al. (1989) reflects a shift toward measuring efficacy, and understanding the contextual factors associated with student achievement. In response to policies focused on accountability, Oakes (1989) advocated that
school context indicators provide important information worth understanding and monitoring. This model of school context indicators comprised three elements that influence classroom teaching and learning. Each of these indicators -- access to knowledge, press for achievement, and professional teaching conditions -- includes components for which information can be gathered and analyzed. However, as Oakes (1989) asserts, “contextual features are most useful when decision makers understand them as enablers, rather than as causes of student learning” (p. 195, emphasis in original). Wimpelberg et al. (1989) cautioned that a focus on efficacy shifted to efficiency, however the intent to understand the relationship between context and student achievement remained an important shift associated with this second phase. These authors (Oakes, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Wimpelberg et al., 1989) illustrate the challenge of measuring and analyzing school contexts in ways that will provide information about the effectiveness of schools.

The third phase proposed by Wimpelberg et al. (1989) highlighted the need for quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The areas of school context connected to efficacy include leadership, parental involvement, cumulative resources, and multilevel effects, which can illuminate the complexities of the school context. Clearly, each of these areas can be defined in various ways, which highlights the need for different methodologies and further research.

Scheerens’ (1990) reflects the third phase described by Wimpelberg et al. (1989) because this integrated model incorporates several contributors to the school context and the relationships among them. Context and inputs (teacher experience, per pupil expenditure and parental support) are positioned as contributors to school and classroom level processes. The context is defined by three elements: achievement stimulants from administration, development of
Scheerens (1990) asserts that the indicators of school effectiveness from this integrated theoretical model can be used to monitor outcomes at the district (monitoring of the school) and school level (through self-evaluation).

More recently, Hattie (2008) identified the contributions of the school as one of five categories with the capacity to have positive or negative effects on student learning. This category of school contributions is broken down further into attributes of schools, school compositional effects, leadership, classroom compositional effects, school curriculum effects, and classroom influences. Hattie’s frequently referenced synthesis of metanalyses provides evidence that school contexts include combinations of elements that influence student achievement. Teachers have reciprocal relationships with the context of their work. As Strunk and Robinson (2006) describe, “teachers are nested within schools, which are groups within districts and then states” (p. 67). Their experiences are impacted by the school context.

**Summary: School Context**

This exploration of literature involving school context revealed a few key understandings. First, definitions of school context vary according to the purposes of the research and have evolved over the past few decades. Also, discussions of school context have developed to focus on interactions between different aspects of the environment. Finally, it is important to consider how this information will apply to a study involving mid-career elementary teachers. Teachers, like students, are at the center of the school context. Therefore, as they share their experiences and perspectives, the context will be a critical part of the narrative.
Theoretical Framework: Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Leshem and Trafford (2007) describe the framework as serving “an integrating function between theories that offer explanations of the issues under investigation” (p. 99). Research regarding how job satisfaction is conceptualized and measured, particularly for educators, will be described.

Conceptualizations of Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction involves a multitude of factors and influences that are defined by the individual and may change over time. These elements can be combined to determine an overall level of job satisfaction which may be described quantitatively or qualitatively. Individuals can rate their level of job satisfaction numerically, using a defined scale. For example, Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) analyzed teachers’ self-ratings of their level of job satisfaction using a Likert scale from one to seven. A rating of one indicated the teacher was highly dissatisfied, four was neutral, and seven was highly satisfied. When prompted to consider job satisfaction in this way, it is truly up to the individual to determine what contributes to this rating.

Another way to consider the concept of job satisfaction is through analysis of different aspects of the construct. For example, an individual could rate their level of satisfaction with their salary, workload, or relationship with the administration. Different responses are provided when focusing on one facet, rather than the overall level of job satisfaction.

Individuals as well as those in leadership roles can benefit from understanding the level of satisfaction that professionals experience in their jobs. Those in leadership roles would certainly prefer to have employees that are satisfied with their jobs and may take steps to
evaluate and improve this area. Individuals may make decisions as to whether to remain at or leave a job based on their level of satisfaction. The concept of job satisfaction has evolved through research involving multiple occupations over several decades.

Research involving workers in varied professions (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Seblynski, & Erez, 2001) as well as studies specifically focusing on teachers (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000; Fraser, Draper, & Taylor, 1998; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) aid in supporting this theoretical framework. Research involving the job satisfaction of engineers and accountants in the mid-twentieth century led to the development of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory (1966). This theory assigned factors related to job satisfaction into two categories: hygiene and motivation. The hygiene factors, related to physical working conditions, policies, benefits, and job security cannot alone provide job satisfaction. However, they can negatively impact an individual's experience, leading to dissatisfaction.

There is another category of factors that impact how satisfied an individual may be with their job, which Herzberg (1966) refers to as motivation factors. These factors, which are more intrinsically based, can lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These include achievement, recognition, and relationships. As Herzberg et al. (1959) describe, these motivation factors are not only associated with job satisfaction, they can lead to changes in performance. Those involved in management are responsible for ensuring that hygiene factors are satisfying, and that the work is rewarding in order to maximize the effectiveness of the workers’ performance.

**Job Satisfaction of Educators**

Further understanding of the job satisfaction framework can be gained by contextualizing it within a particular profession. Studies conducted to evaluate the application of Herzberg’s
(1966) Two-Factor Theory to educational settings demonstrated how it could be applied in these contexts (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1967).

Research studies designed to apply Herzberg’s (1966) conceptualization of job satisfaction involved an extensive set of measures and analyses. Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) research involved Australian teachers’ responses to an instrument containing items in seven categories. In addition to providing demographic information, teachers responded to statements regarding orientation to teaching, including reasons for entering the field, their preparedness to teach, and amount of time they devoted to different aspects of their professional lives. Commitment scales, health questionnaires to address stress, and an open-ended item for respondents to make additional comments regarding teaching provided additional information. Job satisfaction is assessed using 75 items on a seven-point Likert scale.

Analysis of the results confirmed that teachers were more satisfied by the experiences that were intrinsic to their role (e.g., student achievement, relationships with students and others, mastery of professional skills). The dissatisfiers were external, or, in Herzberg’s (1966) terms, related to hygiene. Elements seen as taking away from the facilitation of the core responsibilities of teaching were dissatisfying. These elements connected to society’s and the community’s negative opinions of teachers, policies, and low levels of support. Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) findings confirmed that Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory’s application to educational settings aligned with the research that had originated in other fields.

However, Dinham and Scott (1998) also identified and described a third domain of job satisfaction, which is comprised of school-based factors (Dinham & Scott, 2000). These factors, such as leadership, school reputation, and educational change, can support job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and vary widely from school to school. Dinham and Scott (1998) assert that if
schools were to take the challenge of improving what they have the most control over, the aspects of the third domain, that teacher job satisfaction could be increased.

Defining and Measuring Teacher Job Satisfaction

The previous section focused on the development of the job satisfaction construct, and specifically how it relates to teachers. However, it is valuable to explore the extent to which teachers are satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, information from large-scale assessments of job satisfaction will be shared.

Information about teacher job satisfaction has been presented in multiple reports over the past few decades (Choy et al., 1993; Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997; Sparks & Malkus, 2016). Therefore, teacher job satisfaction is not only a recent consideration for those within and outside of education, but one that merits ongoing investigation. The analysis of this data provides a snapshot of teachers’ perceptions and experiences at a given time. A few examples will be highlighted in this section.

In 1993, America’s Teachers: Profile of a Profession (Choy et al.) was published, featuring analysis of data from both students and teachers. These data sets, collected and published in the late 1980s and early 1990s, provided multiple perspectives on teaching and school contexts (i.e., National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, the Common Core of Data, the Recent College Graduates Study, the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty, SASS). Within this report, many aspects of teachers’ jobs were detailed, and future trends were predicted. Notably, job satisfaction was highlighted as one of six subsections in the chapter featuring teachers’ opinions about their schools and profession. One of the areas explored was intent to continue teaching. The majority, 68.3% of
public school teachers, indicated that they planned to continue teaching as long as they were able, or until eligible for retirement.

Another comprehensive report, this time focused on teacher job satisfaction, was published in 1997 (Perie et al.). This report presented analysis of the 1993-94 SASS. A satisfaction index score was developed for each teacher based on the responses to the following questions:

- How long do you plan to remain in teaching?
  Five possible responses: as long as I am able, until I am eligible for retirement, I’ll continue teaching unless something better comes along, I definitely plan to leave teaching, or undecided at this time

- If you could go back to your college days would you choose a teaching career again?
  Five possible responses: certainly would, probably would, chances are about even, probably would not, or certainly would not

- To what degree do you agree or disagree with the statement “I sometimes feel it is a waste of my time to try to do my best as a teacher”?
  Four possible responses: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree

(Perie et al., 1997, p. 4)

Based on the responses to these items, teachers’ levels of job satisfaction were determined to be high (32% of teachers), moderate (35% of teachers), or low (34% of teachers) (Perie et al., 1997). In addition to this overall assessment, a few findings related to the intended research study are notable. Elementary teachers tended to be more satisfied than secondary
school teachers, and higher levels of satisfaction were associated with younger, less experienced teachers rather than older, more experienced ones (Perie et al., 1997).

In addition to its presence in academic literature, teacher job satisfaction has been a focus of the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher from 1984-2012. The purpose of this survey was to “share the voices of teachers and others close to the classroom with educators, policy makers, and the public” (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). From 1984 through 2012, MetLife’s educator surveys highlighted various elements of the educational landscape, including standards, college and career readiness, and leadership. Teacher job satisfaction was measured in two different ways. On six of the surveys (1984, 1986, 1987, 2001, 2011, and 2012), teachers were asked: “All in all, how satisfied would you say that you are with your job as a teacher in the public schools?” The percentage of teachers responding that they were “very satisfied” ranged from 33% in 1986 to a high of 52% in 2001. A different, but related question has been asked several times between 1985 and 2009: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with teaching as a career?" More recently (in 2009), 39% of teachers of teachers reported that they were “very satisfied.” In 1985 and 1989 the lowest data point (44%) was reported. The highest data point was 62% in 2008, and the most recent was 59%, in 2009. Most recently, a brief report published in 2016 indicated that over 90% of public school teachers were satisfied in their jobs (Sparks & Malkus). This finding was documented in the 2003-04 survey (91%), 2007-08 (93%) and 2011-12 (90%).

As indicated by the described large-scale assessments, differences in the way in which teachers’ job satisfaction is determined contribute to variations in the levels reported, thus making it challenging to draw definitive conclusions. Looking more closely at subgroups or trends can provide meaningful information. Additionally, qualitative approaches (Evans, 1997,
1998, & 2001; Evans & Abbott, 1998) provide an additional layer of understanding as to how teachers’ values potentially contribute to their satisfaction with their jobs.

Describing the Ideal Job. As Evans (2001) described, reflections on her previous work regarding the job satisfaction of primary school teachers in England (Evans 1997; Evans 1998) as well as academics, representing a higher education perspective (Evans & Abbott, 1998), led to the identification of six issues that encompass the ideal job. The arrangement of the issues does not reflect their importance, and as Evans (2001) explains, the views of the individuals differed greatly. However, they are all of value to education professionals:

- Equity and justice refers to situations of perceived unfairness toward the teacher or others, as well as advantages not fairly earned by individuals or groups when the application of the same standards is the teacher’s expectation.
- Pedagogy (or androgy, in the case of adult learners) directly relates to the quality of the education provided, including methods, curriculum, school culture, and policies.
- Organizational efficiency involves how the institutions are run. Depending on the individual, any inefficiencies are problematic, or only the ones that directly impact their ability to work.
- Interpersonal relations are identified by Evans (2001) as more prominent for the sample of teachers than academics, reflective of the differences in their levels of community verses isolation. Relationships that did not meet the individuals’ needs in terms of the extent or nature of them had an impact on their work experiences.
- Closely connected to interpersonal relations is the idea of collegiality, which Evans (2001) describes as the “work-related product or output of workplace interpersonal relations” (p. 302).
● Self-conception and self-image also serve as issues that overlap with those previously described. Evans (2001) explains that it “concerns the extent to which individuals’ work contexts supported, reinforced and even shaped their perceptions of themselves, both personally and professionally” (p. 302).

A few of these six issues have strong ties to leadership, such as equity and justice and organizational efficiency. However, leaders have the opportunity to greatly influence the school context and the experience of teachers and students. Therefore, the connection between leadership and teacher job satisfaction will be described.

Connecting Leadership and Teacher Job Satisfaction. Further insights can be provided through exploration of the differences between teachers who are satisfied with their jobs and those who are not. Analysis of the 2011-12 SASS indicated 95% of teachers who felt that their school’s administration was supportive were satisfied with their jobs. Of those who did not feel that the administration was supportive, only 65% were satisfied with their jobs (Sparks & Malkus, 2016).

Researchers (Bogler, 2002; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012) have explored the predictors of job satisfaction, with particular attention to leadership. Bogler (2002) found that leadership had an impact on teacher’s level of job satisfaction. In her study, seven elements were analyzed as predictors of teacher’s job satisfaction. Four were demographic in nature, and teacher’s occupational perception was also examined. The principal’s leadership style predicted whether teachers experienced high or low levels of job satisfaction. Teachers who viewed their principal as transactional, meaning the leader was focused more on supervision and addressing teachers’ weaknesses, tended to have lower levels of job satisfaction. Those with higher levels of job satisfaction viewed the occupation of teaching as a profession and perceived the principal’s style
as transformational. This leadership approach was characterized by the principal as a role model who presents challenges and projects to teachers, while maintaining confidence that teachers can handle obstacles.

Johnson et al.’s (2012) study involving over 25,000 teachers in Massachusetts also identified predictors of job satisfaction and cited the principal as one of nine elements comprising conditions of work. Additionally, the leadership of the school or district has influence over most, if not all the remaining elements (e.g., facilities, resources, school culture). These elements, combined to reflect the work context for teachers, explained 29% of the variation in job satisfaction, whereas school, teacher, and student characteristics explained only 6% of the variation. Notably, responses from individuals were compared to those of peers in the same school. Data from schools where at least 40% of teachers and a minimum of five teachers responded were included in this study. This methodological decision allowed for the calculation of peer averages for comparison to individual ratings. The correlation between these two types of ratings for the same work environments (.52) indicated that individual ratings often reflected differences from peer ratings, despite the assumed similarities in their experiences.

Summary: Job Satisfaction

The theoretical framework --job satisfaction-- provides a solid foundation for understanding the findings of this study. Within the literature on job satisfaction, Herzberg’s (1966) Two Factor Theory and Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) three-domain conceptualization of teacher job satisfaction was explored, as well as Evans’ (2001) construct. Descriptions of teacher job satisfaction, conceptually, quantitatively, and qualitatively were included. The ways
in which job satisfaction is measured and analyzed vary, however gaining insight into how satisfied teachers are in their jobs allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges they face.

Career Stages and Teachers Who Leave the Field

The literature focusing on the stages of teachers’ careers includes varied definitions (quantitatively) and characterizations (qualitatively) of each phase. For the purpose of this study, the definition of a mid-career teacher as one who is in their seventh through eighteenth year of teaching aligns with Huberman’s (1989) research. However, highlighting additional research on career stages as well as attrition aids in connecting the elements of the study.

Career Stages

Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) identify three career stages in their discussion of developing professional capital, which values the work of educators, and focuses on building professional capacity and effectiveness. Within the construct of professional capital, decisional capital develops over the course of a teacher’s career and highlights the judgments that comprise the role. Those within the first three years of their careers are described as enthusiastic, but not necessarily as competent as those in the middle or later years of their careers. Teachers who are in the later years of their careers (22 or more years of experience) fall into a few different subcategories based on their attitude and performance, but overall, their commitment is declining. Those in the mid-career group, between the early and late career teachers have the benefit of their experience, allowing them to seamlessly adjust their instruction. Perhaps the most significant assertion regarding the mid-career teachers is that they are often neglected. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) warn: “we think we can leave the people in the middle alone. If
we leave them alone, though, there’s the danger that things become too easy, that they won’t stretch themselves” (p. 38). This perspective supports the need for additional research involving mid-career teachers. Even those who are remaining in the field may not necessarily be performing as well as they could if they were supported more effectively.

Similar to Hargreaves and Fullan (2013), Day and Gu (2007) identified phases in the professional lives of teachers. Longitudinal, mixed methods research supported the description of six phases. The third phase, occurring during the eighth through fifteenth years of teaching, was marked by increasing workloads and challenges with managing the balance between teachers’ personal and professional lives. Two subgroups emerged from this group. Some teachers sustained their engagement in their careers, while others were more detached, and were losing motivation. Day and Gu (2007) highlight the importance of meeting the needs of teachers in this phase: “getting professional learning and development relating to these two sub-groups for this key cohort of mid-career teachers is crucial because, more than in any other phases, it is likely to influence their final commitment and effectiveness trajectory” (p. 436). Similar to the assertions of Hargreaves and Fullan (2013), these concerns regarding the mid-career teachers highlight the uniqueness of their needs and the importance of addressing them. If teachers remain in their role but become detached, they cannot perform at an optimal level, and students absorb the impact of this situation. Alternatively, teachers may react to these challenges by deciding to leave the field.

Reasons Teachers Leave the Field

As reflected in Huberman’s (1989) research, the consideration of leaving the field is far from uncommon, as indicated by “up to 40 percent of the sample saying that, at one or more
points in their career, they seriously considered leaving the teaching profession” (p. 35). Research regarding teachers contemplating leaving as well as those who have actually left the field illustrates the complexity of this issue.

Insight from those who potentially leave the field is provided by Johnson and Birkeland’s (2003) qualitative study. The authors differentiate the group of “stayers” that they interviewed into two categories-settled and unsettled. By doing so, there is an acknowledgement of the fluidity of teachers’ decision making as it relates to remaining in the field. This phenomenon is similarly reflected in the work of Kirkpatrick and Johnson (2014). Some of those who were initially enthusiastic about a long career in education become less committed to remaining in the field as they progressed beyond the beginning stage of their career. The “unsettled stayers” described by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) echoed concerns of teachers who had moved from their schools (but not necessarily out of education). They reported frustrations with workloads, student discipline, and administration.

Through qualitative research, Gonzalez, Brown, and Slate (2008) capture the struggles of teachers who left the field. Among the factors that impacted their decision to leave were feelings of frustration and a lack of support from administrators. Concerns about salary were reported in these studies, as well as the quantitative research by Strunk and Robinson (2006). Boser and Straus (2014) examined the salaries of mid and late-career teachers and found that they offered limited opportunities for growth (as compared to other careers).

Inman and Marlow’s (2004) survey of teachers with less than ten years of experience supports the notion that salary conditions affect teachers differently, depending on where they are in their careers. The results demonstrated a difference between those with three years or less of experience compared to those with four to nine years. When considering if salary was a
reason to stay in the field, only 27% of those in the beginning of their careers indicated that this was the case. However, 50% of the respondents with more experience identified salary as a reason to stay in the field—perhaps reflective of the increases they earned, and an understanding of the financial rewards of longevity in the field. Significant numbers of respondents from both groups of teachers indicated that the amount of prestige associated with teaching was worse than they expected. For beginning teachers, 36%, and for those with more experience, 52% noted that prestige fell below their expectations. Very few respondents (6% of beginners and 8% of those with more experience) indicated that professional prestige was better than they had expected. While these findings do not include analysis of the appropriateness of teachers’ expectations related to prestige, it is reasonable to conclude that a disconnect between expectations related to prestige could have an impact teachers’ decisions to leave the field.

**Summary: Career Stages and Teachers Who Leave the Field**

Mid-career teachers are of particular interest due to their expertise and the value they bring to schools. However, they are at some risk for attrition. When their motivations and challenges are better understood, opportunities to address their needs may emerge.

**Gap in the Literature**

The research literature on the theoretical framework and concepts directly connected to this study provide necessary understandings, but also illustrate a gap in the literature. While teachers’ job satisfaction has been assessed frequently (e.g., Choy et al., 1993; Perie et al., 1997, Sergiovanni, 1967; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), the quantitative nature of the research does not allow for the articulation of how individual teachers determine their level of satisfaction.
Additionally, open-ended questions offer the opportunity to gather information about the implications of teachers’ perceptions of their jobs. Mid-career teachers have an important role in the school context (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Kirkpatrick & Johnson, 2014), yet further research is necessary to understand how they navigate challenges that cause them to consider leaving the field.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included a brief review of literature related to the study to provide background for understanding the findings. The theoretical framework: job satisfaction, was presented. Additionally, research related to concepts with ties to job satisfaction were described (i.e. school context, career stages, and teacher attrition, retention, and intent to remain in the field). The next chapter details the methodology of the study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine how mid-career elementary teachers’ conceptualization of job satisfaction contributes to their intent to remain in the field. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do school context factors influence mid-career elementary teachers’ level of satisfaction with their jobs?
2. How is a mid-career elementary teacher’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?

This chapter, which details the methods of the study, is organized into six major sections. The research design and participants are described, including the researcher’s experience as it relates to the study. The data collection and analysis strategies are detailed. Lastly, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Research Design

The methodology of the study must align with the type of questions that drive the research. For this study, a qualitative design provided the opportunity for an extensive exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the participants. As Mertens (2015) describes, qualitative methods are used to develop understandings and explore phenomena in depth. The
research questions for this study involved gaining insight into the phenomenon of being a mid-career elementary teacher (MCET) in a public school. More specifically, the participants’ job satisfaction was explored, as well as its connection to the intent to remain in the field.

The focus of this study includes three interconnected constructs that are uniquely defined by each MCET. The first construct is an individual’s identity as a MCET. Facets of this identity begin to emerge with the decision to pursue the education necessary to obtain a teaching position. Early career experiences establish this identity further, and at the mid-career stage, teachers have experience and typically a level of expertise that separates them from those just entering the field. Even within the mid-career stage, a teacher’s perception of themselves may change in light of various influences (e.g., challenges and successes, feedback from others).

The second important construct is a MCET’s level of job satisfaction. This can be described in a summative fashion, such as satisfied or dissatisfied. However, it can also be detailed by the elements that contribute to the overall description (e.g., salary, responsibilities of the role, collaboration with colleagues).

The third construct involves the intent to remain in the field. Each MCET describes this with regard to their individual context and the extent to which they anticipate staying in the field of education. Intent to remain in the field is uniquely defined individually and may change over time. The process of determining whether or not to remain in the field likely involves the consideration of various factors and reasons to leave (Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017; Santoro, 2011).

When considering these three interconnected constructs (mid-career stage, job satisfaction, and intent to remain in the field), a quantitative approach could be used. This approach would involve gathering information about the participants’ experiences and
perspectives using a questionnaire. For example, data could be collected regarding the frequency of particular occurrences (such as how often teachers considered leaving the field of education) or the ranking of factors contributing to job satisfaction. This would elicit information that could lead to some understanding of the teachers’ perspectives, and commonalities among various demographic groups. However, the research questions driving this study require the opportunity for the participants to provide information about their experiences and perspectives without the limitations imposed by a quantitative design. A qualitative approach allows the MCETs to provide insights and specific details that include nuances that cannot be conveyed through quantitative research methods. The identification of themes across participants addresses the research questions more thoroughly. Therefore, a qualitative research design provides the greatest opportunity to capture and understand the perspective of MCETs.

Participants: Mid-Career Elementary Teachers

Purposeful sampling was used for this study. The researcher intentionally selected the participants so that they have specific characteristics that will allow them to contribute to the topic under study (Creswell, 2002). Two characteristics were necessary for participation. The first characteristic aligned with the mid-career stage. Those with 6-17 years of teaching experience were considered mid-career teachers. The second characteristic connected to career intent. Teachers who have considered leaving the field met this criterion. A screening process was used to facilitate the selection of teachers that met both criteria.
**Selection Process**

In order to obtain a large enough population from which to select the sample, a suburban county in Illinois was selected. There are several characteristics of this county that made it an appealing choice for this study. The students residing in this county are served by three types of public school districts: elementary (grades K-8), high school (grades 9-12), and unit (grades K-12). Since this study focuses on elementary teachers, districts that only serve kindergarten through eighth grade students were selected. While the unit districts include elementary schools, their salary and administrative structures may differ from those of districts that do not include high schools.

The 29 elementary districts in this county employed nearly 2700 teachers. This starting point allowed for a substantial number of potential participants, as well as diversity within the sample of teachers, particularly in terms of the districts’ demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The potential participant group was narrowed further by considering the lens of teacher retention.

A review of each elementary district’s rate of teacher retention (percentage of full-time teachers that return to the same school year to year over a three-year period), informed the selection of the districts. Data on teacher retention is available and updated annually through the Illinois Interactive Report Card website (Illinois State Board of Education, 2017). Following the 2016-17 school year, the average teacher retention rate across the state was 86.3%. Among the 29 elementary districts, the teacher retention rates ranged from 74.5% to 94.8%. Sixteen districts had retention rates above the state average, and 13 had retention rates below the state average of 86.3%. Since the topic of this study includes elementary teachers with potential to leave,
focusing on districts where the rates of retention are below the state average was used as a strategy to increase the likelihood of identifying potential participants.

The superintendents of the selected districts were contacted via email to inform them about the study (See Appendix A). This was the only step involving district administration, and no further correspondence was initiated by the researcher with any superintendent beyond this informational email. This allowed the superintendent to ask questions or express concerns about the study. If a superintendent were to indicate that he or she did not want teachers in the district to be contacted for potential participation in the study, then this request would be honored. Two of the thirteen superintendents responded to the email, and neither expressed concerns. The other 11 superintendents did not respond to the email. Since a response from the superintendent was only necessary if there were questions or concerns, teachers in all 13 districts were considered potential participants.

The selection process took place in two phases. The first phase involved distributing the questionnaire via email and reviewing the responses to identify interested potential participants. The second phase focused on contacting those identified from the questionnaire and obtaining their consent. Table 3.1 details the timing of both phases of the selection process.

Selection Process: First Phase

First, the email addresses of teachers in the 13 selected districts were obtained from each district’s website. The total number of teachers contacted for potential participation was 1722. The first phase of data collection began with the researcher sending an email including a brief overview of the study and a link to the electronic questionnaire (See Appendix B). The questionnaire was accessible via Google Form which was linked to the researcher’s email
Table 3.1
Selection Process Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Phase</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(First Round)</td>
<td>October, 2018</td>
<td>Researcher emailed informational letter to superintendents of selected districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October-November, 2018</td>
<td>Researcher emailed description of the study and questionnaire to teachers in selected districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November, 2018</td>
<td>Researcher reviews completed questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>January-February 2019</td>
<td>Researcher emailed description of the study and questionnaire to teachers in selected districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Second Round)</td>
<td>February, 2019</td>
<td>Researcher reviews completed questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>November 2018-February 2019</td>
<td>Researcher contacts potential participants for consent via phone and email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 2018-March 2019</td>
<td>Participants sign written consent form and data collection begins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The form did not collect the respondents’ addresses automatically. Instead, those completing the questionnaire were to provide their email address for future correspondence only if they were interested in being considered for participation in the second phase of the study. Additionally, teachers who decided to complete the questionnaire were encouraged to use a personal, rather than district, email address. The responses were accessed for review by the researcher using a password protected account and device.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the individual’s teaching experiences, intent to remain in the field, and level of job satisfaction. Demographic information was also collected. Additionally, the teachers completing the questionnaire
indicated their willingness to be contacted about participating in the second phase of the research study.

The MCETs in the study were selected from the sample of participants who expressed interest in continuing with this research. Two criteria were used to identify potential participants: teaching experience and intent to remain in the field. Teachers who indicated they had 6-17 years of experience were codified as mid-career teachers, thus meeting the first criteria. Respondents who specified on the questionnaire that they had considered leaving the field meet the second criteria. Both criteria had to be met in order to be considered for participation. The additional information collected from the questionnaire (e.g., level of job satisfaction and demographic information) was used to analyze the level of diversity within the group of participants.

The process of emailing teachers from the 13 districts took place in October and November 2018. Emails were sent to a total of 1722 teachers, and 61 completed the questionnaire (3.5%). Of the 61 that completed the questionnaire, 21 met the criteria for participation (6-17 years of experience and have considered leaving the field), and 12 agreed to be contacted for participation in the second phase. The results of the first phase of the selection process are presented in Table 3.2.

Selection Process: Second Phase

The second phase of the selection process involved identifying individuals for the research study from the group of teachers that met the criteria and indicated that they were
Table 3.2

Summary of Questionnaire Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Completed Questionnaires</th>
<th>Met Criteria for Participation</th>
<th>Agreed to be Contacted for Participation in the Second Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

potentially interested in participating. The goal of this phase was to create a representative group of MCETs to participate in the study. Stake (2006) describes this as a collective case study approach, and explains that each case is researched individually, but is connected by a concept or idea. The experience of being a MCET in a public elementary school district served as the connection between the cases. This methodological approach allowed for in-depth investigation of the individual cases, with the opportunity to identify themes across cases with potential for transferability. The aim of this second selection phase was to identify no less than four and no more than eight MCETs for participation. In order to explore the cases through the theoretical framework of job satisfaction, the group of four to eight MCETs would include both those that were satisfied in their current jobs and those that were experiencing dissatisfaction.

Review of the questionnaire responses submitted in October and November 2018 yielded 12 MCETS who agreed to be contacted for participation in the study. A process was followed to determine the order in which to contact MCETs regarding potential participation. First, the names were separated into two categories, satisfied and dissatisfied. The purpose of this step was to ensure that the group of MCETs included diversity in regard to their level of job
satisfaction. The names were then randomly pulled from each category and individuals were contacted via email and provided with additional details of the study (e.g., interview and journal procedures and timelines, next steps for participation). This process continued with the goal of creating a group of MCETs with up to four satisfied and four dissatisfied MCETs. This initial process garnered four participants that ultimately completed all components of the study (i.e., three interviews and two journals). Three of the MCETs were satisfied in their jobs, while one was dissatisfied.

Selection Process: Additional Participants. The initial attempt to identify participants for the study garnered four MCETs who completed the study. However, additional efforts were made to increase the number of participants (to a maximum of eight), and further diversify the group in terms of their experience and perspective. During January and February 2019, the electronic questionnaire was sent via email to the same teachers in the 13 identified districts an additional time. This communication yielded 16 total responses. From this group, five met the criteria for participation, however none of these teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Finally, an additional strategy was used to identify potential participants. A list of educators familiar to the researcher was developed for the purpose of contacting them personally for assistance. While these educators did not meet the criteria for participation, they were asked to share the contact information of any individuals that they knew that were currently mid-career elementary teachers in the same suburban county. Similarly, the four MCETs who participated in the study were asked if they knew of others who could be contacted for potential participation. This method is described by Patton (2002) as snowball sampling, because individuals provide additional connections and the list of potential participants grows. This strategy did not lead to the identification of any additional participants. Therefore, the group of MCETs that participated
in the study were the four teachers who were identified through the initial distribution of the electronic questionnaire in October and November 2018.

**Establishing Rapport.** During the second phase of the selection process, individual communication was established between the researcher and each MCET. The goal of these interactions was two-fold: to provide information about the study and what participation would entail, and to develop a respectful relationship between the researcher and the participant. Seidman (2006) describes the delicate balance of engaging in a friendly, respectful way but maintaining a level of formality. For this study, the researcher used phone, email, and in-person contact to develop a relationship with each elementary teacher that was both respectful and productive. This was done through both proactive (offering information and reminders) and responsive communication (addressing questions and concerns that arise). The researcher prioritized making the teachers’ participation in the study as convenient as possible in terms of both time and location.

The MCETs who chose to participate were informed about the data to be collected and signed a consent form in order to participate (See Appendix C). This form included critical details about the study, such as the type of data to be collected (interviews and journals) and a description of procedures to maintain confidentiality. All participants used pseudonyms, and any information emerging from the data collection phase that would identify their school or district was omitted or renamed. Although the participants were initially contacted through the email address associated with their employer, it was again strongly recommended that once they give their consent to participate in the study that correspondence between the researcher and participant be conducted through personal phone and email.
Bracketing the Researcher’s Experience

A brief discussion of the researcher’s background is helpful in understanding the impetus for this study, as well as the contribution it makes to the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Creswell (2013) describes qualitative research as interpretive, and therefore the researcher’s experiences can impact the research process. Thus, the researcher’s experience in connection to the focus of the study will be described.

This researcher has accumulated two decades of teaching experience at the elementary level in multiple districts. Additionally, numerous certifications and endorsements have provided the opportunity to take on varied roles (i.e., classroom teacher, special educator, reading specialist). The acquisition of additional credentials and pursuit of role changes have been driven by a desire to become a more effective teacher and to learn as much as possible about the field. However, they have also served the important purpose of facilitating different career opportunities when dissatisfaction occurred. While the focus of this study is to increase knowledge about the mid-career teachers’ perspectives and experiences in light of what is currently reflected in the literature, the researcher’s background provided a foundation for understanding the data and the experiences of the MCETs.

Conversely, there may be disadvantages of the researcher’s connection to the experience of being a mid-career teacher, such as having preconceptions or biases about the participants or their experiences. Patton (2002) describes an analytical process by which “the researcher ‘brackets out’ the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions” (p. 485). This concept was essential to maintaining a focus on the
MCETs’ descriptions of their experiences and perceptions, rather than making assumptions or connections that were not directly provided.

Data Collection

Two kinds of data were collected from all four participants: interviews and journals. Creswell (2013) indicates that qualitative research typically is gathered in multiple forms, as opposed to only one type. Since each participant was interviewed three times and submitted two journal responses, the data were collected piece by piece over a period of a few months. Table 3.3 details the alignment between the research questions and the data collection strategies used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Journal 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Journal 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do school context factors influence mid-career elementary teachers’ level of satisfaction with their jobs?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How is a mid-career elementary teacher’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series of Interviews

The participants agreed to be interviewed on three occasions. The researcher and each participant identified a convenient location with minimal distractions so that a confidential, recorded conversation could take place. All of the interviews took place in small group study rooms at public libraries.

The interviews were scheduled to last between 60 and 90 minutes. This procedure aligns with Seidman’s (2006) three interview series. Each interview has a focus and encourages the contextualization of the participant’s experiences. The first interview is referred to as a “focused life history” and encourages the participant to narrate their past experiences which may have led them to their current context. The second interview involves detailing various aspects of their current experience as it relates to the topic of the study. Finally, the third interview focuses on making meaning from what has been discussed in the preceding interviews as well as the current and future experiences. As Seidman (2006) describes, by both “exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are doing now in their lives” (p. 17). Therefore, the series of three interviews provided an opportunity to garner valuable insights from each MCET.

For this study, the first interview focused on life history and the path to becoming a teacher (See Appendix D). The MCETs were asked about their experiences as a pre-service student, as well as teachers who made an impact on them. Additionally, they were asked to explain when and how they made the decision to pursue teaching as a career. The second interview was centered on the experience of being a MCET (See Appendix E). For instance,
they were asked to describe a typical week, as well as specific experiences, such as the process of being evaluated by an administrator. These questions were designed to show what it is like to be a MCET, and how different aspects of the role are perceived and experienced. The final interview allowed the participant to consider their identity as a MCET as well as how they envision their career path in the future (See Appendix F). In particular, the MCETs were asked to describe their level of job satisfaction and their intent to remain in the field. The series of interviews took place over a period of a few months. The interviews were scheduled approximately two weeks apart. This timing allowed for transcription of the interviews and for the transcripts to be reviewed by the researcher and shared with each MCET. Table 3.4 displays the alignment of the research questions with examples of interview questions.

Reflective Journaling

In addition to the interviews, the MCETs shared their thoughts through reflective writing. These elicited texts (Charmaz, 2006) are generated for the purpose of participation in the study. This type of document is different from those that are naturally created by the teacher and could be shared, such as lesson plans or reflection documents submitted to administrators. The researcher emailed the teachers with directions and a prompt for journaling (See Appendix G). There were two opportunities for journaling. The initial opportunity occurred between the first and second interview, and the prompt encouraged them to describe what makes them feel satisfied and dissatisfied with their jobs. The second and final journal response, to occur between the second and third interviews, will focus on the decision to remain in or leave the field, and the reasons behind it. The teachers were directed to engage in journal writing for approximately 15-20 minutes per entry and to email their responses back to the researcher
### Table 3.4
Alignment of Research Questions and Example Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do school context factors influence mid-career elementary teachers’ level of satisfaction with their jobs?</td>
<td>Describe the school(s) that you have worked in. What have been the biggest challenges in those settings? How have you handled these challenges? Describe your greatest success(es).</td>
<td>Describe a situation or event this school year that left you feeling very satisfied with your job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How is a mid-career elementary teacher’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe your intention to remain in the field. How likely are you to remain in the field in the next few years? Please explain how you came to this conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

prior to the next interview. The responses to the journal prompts were discussed as part of the second and third interviews. The journaling experience served a dual purpose. It allowed participants to reflect on topics discussed in the interviews and make connections that they may not have identified during the interview. Additionally, these written documents can be analyzed for their connection to the themes that emerge in the interview portion of the study. The alignment of the research questions and the journal prompts is reflected in Table 3.5.
Table 3.5
Alignment of Research Questions and Journal Prompts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Journal 1</th>
<th>Journal 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do school context factors influence mid-career elementary teachers’ level of satisfaction with their jobs?</td>
<td>Briefly describe the elements of your job: a. that make you feel satisfied b. that make you feel dissatisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How is a mid-career elementary teacher’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Briefly describe your biggest challenges to remaining in the field. How do these challenges impact your career decisions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase primarily involved examining the documents that were generated during data collection (transcripts and journals). Additionally, memos produced by the researcher helped to elicit meaning from the data and make connections between what was shared by different MCETs. Both paper-based and digital strategies were used in this process. This approach aligns with Seidman’s (2006) recommendation of “working first on a paper copy and then transferring the work to the computer” (p. 125).

Analytic Memos

The researcher wrote memos to document thinking throughout the data analysis phase of the study. Yin (2011) supports continually documenting the researcher’s thoughts to allow for the preservation of ideas whose merit may not be initially clear. Memo writing is part of a recursive process of analysis. The analytic memos were analyzed in order to deepen the
understanding of the data collected from the participants. While typically brief in nature, these memos were written in direct response to a concept or quote from one of the MCETs, for the purpose of documenting reflections and promoting deeper analysis.

**Thematic Coding**

As described by Charmaz (2006), coding is “the process of defining what the data are about” (p. 186). Given that it is a process, the data analysis aspect of the study requires a level of openness and flexibility in regard to the themes that may emerge. Mertens (2015) suggests that the codes need to emerge and be adjusted after review.

The interview transcripts and journal entries were reviewed in a few different ways. As each piece of data (interview transcript and journal response) was collected, it was examined by the researcher, and initial impressions and questions were documented. This procedure informed the development of follow up questions during the second and third interviews. Once all of the pieces of data (three interview transcripts and two journal responses) were collected, they were analyzed holistically, since they reflect the MCET’S insights on five occasions. This approach allowed the researcher to realize the benefits of collecting multiple pieces of data from a small number of individuals. Additionally, the data were grouped (Interviews 1, 2, and 3; Journals 1 and 2) for review.

Following the data collection phase, the documents (i.e., transcripts and journals) were analyzed in two cycles. The first cycle (initial coding) involved examining the data piece by piece and coding concepts and potential themes. Charmaz (2006) emphasizes staying very close to the data during this phase and moving through it quickly. Rather than applying predetermined codes, the words of the participants themselves aided in generating the concepts that emerged.
Paper copies of the transcripts and journals were reviewed during this cycle. Different colors of highlighter were used to identify a few essential, recurring concepts (i.e., satisfaction and dissatisfaction), notable words and phrases were underlined or circled, and notes were added throughout the documents. To break down the data further and develop a system for organizing five pieces of data (three interview transcripts and two journals) for each MCET, a digital version of each document was developed using a spreadsheet. Each cell included a phrase, sentence, or small paragraph to analyze and code. This process provided initial codes.

The second cycle (axial coding) is focused on connecting data and coding categories and subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Whereas the first phase of coding essentially breaks data into parts, the second phase reconstructs the data and explores relationships and connections. The coded concepts that emerged were organized into themes and understood collectively. During this phase, representative quotations were identified that connected to the themes that emerged from the data. The spreadsheet system was helpful in the second phase of coding, as it generated a process for checking for alignment with the paper copies that were initially analyzed. Paper copies of the spreadsheet were cut into pieces so that each coded concept could be physically sorted according to theme and eventually subtheme. Then, the coded concepts were cut and pasted digitally to create a new spreadsheet that was organized by theme and subtheme. Appendix H includes an example of this strategy. Previously established representative quotations were used to ensure alignment with the supporting quotes from additional MCETs.
Establishing Themes and Subthemes

The analysis processes described led to the identification of themes and subthemes. However, criteria were established to ensure that sufficient data supported each theme and subtheme. First, a theme (or subtheme) needed to be reflected in the data from at least two MCETs, and preferably three or all four. Data from only one MCET, no matter how substantial, was insufficient to support a theme or subtheme, since an important goal of this study was to discover commonalities among the participants. Additionally, a minimum of four coded concepts was necessary to establish a theme or subtheme. A theme or subtheme which included data from only one MCET or which was supported by fewer than four coded concepts was not considered beyond this part of the data analysis phase.

Verification Strategies

Strategies were used to ensure that valid tools were being used for data collection. Additionally, checks were incorporated into the data analysis phase. Verification is defined as “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p.17). This process supports the goal of conducting a valid qualitative research study.

The researcher developed protocols for the interviews and journals so that they aligned with the research questions. In order to validate these tools, assistance from colleagues was requested. Two teachers whom the researcher was familiar with, both at the mid-career stage, reviewed the interview and journal protocols. They were asked to offer suggestions for improvement and clarity. In addition, these teachers provided feedback regarding the effectiveness of the interview questions and journal prompts in eliciting responses that would
thoroughly address the research questions. Their insights were a valuable source of information that supported revisions of the protocols prior to the data collection phase.

The interview series also embeds considerations for validity (Seidman, 2006). Interviewing the same individuals on multiple occasions over a short period of time provides an opportunity for the teachers to naturally construct their own checks for consistency. The interview protocols include opportunities for teachers to clarify topics that were discussed as well as their responses to the journal prompts. The researcher asked follow-up questions throughout the interviews for clarification and also offered opportunities to discuss journal responses during these face-to-face meetings. These procedures ensured that the teacher had multiple opportunities to resolve any inconsistencies and highlight key points.

Additionally, opportunities for peer review were incorporated in the data analysis process. A colleague reviewed data from each of the MCETs and noted themes, which were reviewed for alignment with the documents coded by this researcher. A different peer reviewed the alignment of quotations with each theme to ensure that they had been accurately sorted. In addition to the verification strategies embedded into the data collection phase, each part of the process (i.e., coding, analytic memos, peer reviews) provided assurance that the analysis accurately reflected the data that was collected.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology of the study. Information about the qualitative research design, participants, and the researcher’s experience were provided. Data collection strategies and data analysis techniques and procedures were outlined. The next chapter presents detailed findings of the study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the interviews and journals. The chapter begins with introductory sketches describing each MCET. Then, a presentation of major themes and their related subthemes follows.

Introduction to the MCETs

This section introduces each MCET using brief sketches to highlight their background, experiences, and priorities. While the MCETs are similar in career stage and employment at a public elementary school in the same county, their differences are reflected through the narratives and accompanying summary table.

Danielle

After realizing that a career in graphic design might not be as appealing as she originally envisioned, Danielle decided to pursue a degree in education midway through her undergraduate studies. Given her interest in elementary and special education, she pursued both certifications, anticipating they would collectively give her more flexibility in the job market. When reflecting on what she found motivating about the field of education, Danielle described “seeing students grow, seeing new things happen that were not imagined before” (Interview 2).
Despite her dual certification, all of Danielle’s 15 years of teaching have been in the role of a self-contained special education teacher. Most of those years she taught students with severe emotional and behavioral needs. Then, the district started a new program and her administrators felt that she could take on the challenge. Danielle is now in her second year of teaching students with significant cognitive disabilities. In this role, she advocates for the supports she feels are necessary to effectively meet her students’ needs. This requires extensive technical knowledge, thoughtful planning, and communication with the many adults she works with, including paraprofessionals, general education teachers, specialists, and administrators.

Danielle is at a crossroads in her career, and unsure if she will continue in the field due to dissatisfaction with her job. As she described, “I do find a pause now where it’s like, how much longer do I want to continue doing the same thing I’m doing?” (Interview 1). She has previously applied for positions as a special education resource teacher, which would involve supporting students with fewer, less complex needs than those she currently teaches. Additionally, an important consideration for her is continued professional growth, but again, her next steps are uncertain: “I’m actually right now trying to decide what will be my next true professional development” (Interview 1).

Kristen

Kristen “always wanted to be a teacher” and at the age of 38 has accumulated 17 years of experience (Interview 1). Her drive to challenge herself and excel in her profession was evident and reflected an intensity with which she approached her work and desire to advance in her career.
Although some teachers begin their careers in challenging, urban settings primarily due to the availability of jobs, it was Kristen’s goal to work in this environment. She spent the first four years of her career in a large urban school district, teaching all subjects at the middle school level. Kristen’s principal had her stay with each group of students for two years (seventh and eighth grade). Next, she taught a charter school while earning her master’s degree in administration. Kristen earned a second master’s degree in mathematics, which prepared her for a role working with fifth and sixth graders at a magnet school within her same urban district. With a focus on gaining leadership experience, Kristen returned to the charter school environment. She served as a team leader for third through fifth grade teachers, provided coaching support for teachers, and handled student discipline. Most recently, she moved to a suburban elementary district to serve as an instructional coach. Kristen continues to focus on accumulating experiences to help her gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to become a successful administrator.

Given her varied roles as an educator, combined with her long-term career goals, Kristen analyzes the challenges in her building and district as well as trends and policies in the field of education. Among her concerns are that “there are so many initiatives that schools adopt and I feel that we have really gotten away from the educational strategies/philosophies that have worked in the past” (Journal 2). She continually challenges herself to use the lens of a prospective administrator, by asking herself, “If I were given this school, what would I want done differently?” (Interview 2). While she does not plan to stay in her current role as an instructional coach, Kristen anticipates that she will remain in the field, ideally as an administrator.
As a music teacher, Greg enthusiastically described both his passion for his subject area and the joy received from sharing it with students. Greg previously taught middle school in a large suburban district for four years before transitioning to his current district; he now serves as a general music teacher for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. He teaches all 600 students in the building, and his style reflects his love of music and uplifting personal qualities: “I try to pile on the happiness and joy as much as I can” (Interview 1).

Initially, Greg had difficulty obtaining a teaching position, which he attributed to having a master’s degree without any teaching experience. His undergraduate degree was in music performance, and he pursued a master’s degree in education because he discovered he enjoyed teaching music lessons and felt that teaching offered a more stable career path than that of a performing musician.

Currently, Greg is extremely satisfied with his role and the district. However, his family is his most important focus, and he has concerns as to how to provide financially in the future. He summed up his perspective by explaining:

I feel like for the amount of work you do and the amount you put in, and you’re emotionally invested, it would be nice to not have to worry about financial stuff, like living-not necessarily paycheck to paycheck-but not really moving up and feeling like you’re getting ready for the future. (Interview 2)

Additionally, he wonders if his enthusiasm for teaching will wane in the future, resulting in a less fulfilling experience for him and his students. As he shared in his journal writing, “I am so excited and energized by it now, and I am afraid that will start to fade, especially coupled with the fact that my income/lifestyle is not likely to drastically change” (Journal 1).
Carmen was a 53-year-old Latina bilingual kindergarten teacher with nine years of teaching experience. She exuded an energy and warmth that could be easily envisioned serving her well in an environment full of young, excited learners. Carmen described her love for the primary grades and the opportunity to provide a solid foundational experience as having a reciprocal quality: “I love seeing the progress because they are so open and accepting of new information. And they always teach me something new” (Interview 1).

Prior to earning a degree in education, Carmen worked in a large, urban school district, however, her role focused on health education, since she had a background in nursing. Through these experiences and the encouragement of administrators who saw her potential, she became determined to complete the requirements for a teaching certificate. She continued pursuing her own professional growth by earning a master’s degree. Carmen described her desire to develop as a professional in this way: “I am committed to try to always keep on learning and evolving for as long as I can” (Journal 2). Her rationale for pursuing coursework and professional development opportunities involved both her internal drive and motivation to improve her practice. “It’s just the nature of the person that I am. If I want to be better at what I do, I need to learn more” (Interview 3).

Most of Carmen’s career has been spent in the urban school setting. She taught various grade levels in three different buildings. She also served as a co-teacher to provide support to students with disabilities. However, the challenges of these settings, and particularly a culture of distrust and the actions of administrators caused her to seek a position in a different district. This was a critical move for her, as she explained, “I don’t know if I could have survived another year in [the district] or stayed in teaching” (Interview 2). Now in her second year in the new
district, Carmen felt supported by administration and colleagues. She described it as the “perfect job” (Interview 1) and envisioned continuing to thrive in this environment.

**Summary of Characteristics of the MCETs**

Table 4.1 details information about each MCET, including current role, credentials, teaching experience, and demographic information. These data were collected through the online screening questionnaire, interviews, and journals.

As reflected in Table 4.1, the primary similarity among these MCETs was their level of education. Greg earned his teaching credential as part of his graduate studies, while Danielle, Kristen, and Carmen completed master’s programs while teaching. Their years of teaching experience reflect both ends of the definition of a mid-career teacher (6-17 years). Notably, three MCETs (Kristen, Greg, and Carmen) were completing just their second year with their current district. In terms of demographic information, the teachers ranged in age from 30-53. While two of the MCETs were Caucasian and female, a Latina female and a Caucasian male added diversity to those studied.

Perhaps the most interesting difference among the MCETs involved their current role. While all were employed at a public elementary school within the same county, each had a different role, area of expertise, and associated responsibilities. Carmen’s role as a bilingual kindergarten teacher was probably the most representative of a typical elementary teacher. She had her own classroom and worked with a group of students in the same grade level all day, providing instruction for multiple subjects. Danielle’s role incorporated some of those aspects, but through the lens of special education. She had a considerably smaller number of students; however, she was similarly responsible for providing instruction across all subject areas. Due to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Danielle</th>
<th>Kristen</th>
<th>Greg</th>
<th>Carmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Role</td>
<td>Self-Contained Special Education Teacher (Grades 3-5)</td>
<td>Instructional Coach (Grades K-5)</td>
<td>Music Teacher (Grades K-5)</td>
<td>Bilingual Kindergarten Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credentials</td>
<td>Degree Attained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Master’s Degree (two)</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Ed Administration</td>
<td>Middle School Administration</td>
<td>(K-12)</td>
<td>Bilingual Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Current District</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Districts (Total)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the complexity of her students’ needs, Danielle worked in collaboration with specialists who served her students, such as the speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, and social worker. While their roles were vastly different, both Greg and Kristen’s responsibilities included a building-wide focus. As a music teacher, Greg had his own classroom, however throughout the day he taught many different groups, since each class typically came to him for
instruction twice per week. He was in the unique position of working with all students in the building, most likely throughout their time at this elementary school, starting with kindergarten through fifth grade. Finally, Kristen’s role was unique in that she did not consistently have students assigned to her at a given time. Rather, her focus was on supporting the teachers in the building as they implemented curricula and instructional strategies. The basis of this work included weekly meetings with grade level teams of teachers, which allowed her to draw upon her extensive experience as a teacher, as well as her expertise in mathematics and leadership.

While the MCETs backgrounds and current roles differed, all were at the same career stage. For each research question, a more detailed description of their perspectives and experiences follows.

RQ1: How do school context factors influence MCETs’ level of job satisfaction?

This research question focused on making connections between the school context the MCETs experienced and their level of job satisfaction. Broadly defined, school context referred to a combination of actors and influences identified and/or experienced by an individual or group within the school. The open-ended nature of this definition allowed each MCET to highlight elements of their specific context that meaningfully connected to their level of job satisfaction.

The MCETs first two interviews and initial journal entry served as the primary sources of support to answer Research Question 1. Three themes and related subthemes emerged from the data: (1) Role and the Elementary Environment, (2) Valued Supports, and (3) Resources. Each subtheme was supported by quotes from the interviews and journals. These quotes, or coded concepts, supported each theme or subtheme. Each theme or subtheme required the support of coded concepts from at least two of the four MCETs. Additionally, at least four coded concepts
were necessary to establish a theme or subtheme. The themes and subthemes for Research Question 1 are captured in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Themes and Subthemes: Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Role and the Elementary Environment</td>
<td>Unrealistic Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role-Specific Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Valued Supports</td>
<td>Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching/Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Resources</td>
<td>Professional Development and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space, Supplies, and Technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Role and the Elementary Environment

The first theme details aspects about their role within the elementary environment found to be satisfying or dissatisfying. Five subthemes emerged from the data. The first subtheme - Unrealistic Expectations - was connected to dissatisfaction. Whereas the second subtheme - Role-Specific Experiences - included satisfying and dissatisfying elements. The three remaining subthemes (Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role, Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students, and Student Success) were exclusively satisfying. Table 4.3 includes a representative quotation for each subtheme as well as the number of coded concepts attributed each MCET. Each subtheme included connections to job satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. In the summary tables used to capture the data, *italics* are used to visually differentiate the subthemes associated with job dissatisfaction.

The next sections provide further explanation of each subtheme. The first section focuses on those elements that were dissatisfying (Unrealistic Expectations and Role-Specific Experiences). Following that is a section detailing Role-Specific Experiences connected to satisfaction. The final section includes the remaining subthemes that were exclusively satisfying (Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role, Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students, and Student Success).

Unrealistic Expectations: Dissatisfying

The MCETs described a variety of expectations that, in their view, were not realistic and caused dissatisfaction. These ranged from requirements of individuals such as administrators, to perceptions of what was demanded of teachers as a result of initiatives and mandates at the state and/or national level.
## Table 4.3

Role and the Elementary Environment Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Representative Quotation</th>
<th>Coded Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Role and the Elementary Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Unrealistic Expectations (Dissatisfying)</td>
<td>“Nowadays, every child seems to have some sort of label. Teachers are expected to have 30 different plans in place to match each child. It’s just not realistic” (Kristen, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A: Role-Specific Experiences (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“That’s one thing I love about teaching music, especially in the elementary school. I really can create whatever I want as long as I’m happy with it and my principals are happy” (Greg, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B: Role-Specific Experiences (Dissatisfying)</td>
<td>“The new room needed so much that there was no time or energy left to do what I had previously been able to do to take a ‘break’ from the chaos yet still contribute to education in other ways” (Danielle, Journal 1).</td>
<td>Total: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“Next week I’m meeting with a couple of teachers because we’re planning an interdisciplinary after school unit. The school does after school instruction, and I like doing that. It’s something different” (Danielle, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“It’s [elementary] my favorite level I’ve ever taught...I like being at that level. The kids are so much more excited for what we do. It’s more fulfilling for me than teaching high school or middle school” (Greg, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Student Success (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“I still think that’s what’s motivating about the field, in general, is seeing students grow, seeing new things happen that were not imagined before” (Danielle, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For some of the MCETs, the amount of time and energy required by the role was notable. As Danielle simply stated, “Really, teaching demands a lot of time to feel good and [to do] the job well” (Journal 2). She continued, noting that over the course of her career, her priorities had changed:

I would work hours each evening perfecting things. I would spend much more time in the actual class environment setting materials up. When kids arrived, it became more apparent how much time I was putting in outside of the actual school day and also my priorities were shifted. (Journal 2)

She also described how this shift impacted her personally: “My kids and the time spent with them, and sleep became more of a priority and then created inner conflict as I knew teaching was better with more time invested” (Journal 2). Prior to becoming a parent, Danielle was certainly willing to contribute significant time to her job. Kristen also described the time-consuming nature of a career in teaching. However, unlike Danielle, Kristen expressed a level of frustration regarding the time and energy expended, including what she received in return:

You spend countless hours planning lessons, grading papers, making yourself available to parents and students, attending outside workshops, and for what? You will not hear me complain about my current salary, but it has taken years for me to make a solid living. (Journal 2)

Kristen’s description of the demands of the role included activities beyond the school day. Danielle also experienced significant challenges specific to her job. Additionally, her administrator supported the idea of spending extensive time preparing. Danielle described their differing perspectives:

When starting a new position, one that had a room with little supplies, one administrator shared that she created materials each evening and that cutting laminate while watching TV or having her kids help was something that she did regularly. So, after working all day with intense students, coaching paras, organizing materials, being there early for set up, the message I got was that it is expected that I do more, that I use my time and even adjust the time I spend with my own kids to meet the needs of the job. (Journal 2)
In addition to this message from an administrator, a behavior specialist consulting in Danielle’s classroom recommended and demonstrated approaches that she did not feel were sustainable for the classroom teacher. She found that voicing her concerns did not improve the situation:

When I disagreed after unsuccessful attempts at encouraging my paras to do what was modeled or getting hit, pushed, and kicked, I was labeled as being uncooperative again, and I was reminded that these behaviors were part of the position. Well, when I began this in no way did I say hey, I want to work my butt off and then be in the position of being a behavior manager...Don’t expect the person who is trying to teach coach, prompt a whole group to stop and intervene in a physical way because then it breaks the system and then they’ve got to fix that too. (Journal 2)

For Danielle, the unrealistic demands were specific to her role, and she found little support from her administrator. Kristen and Carmen’s connection to the theme of unrealistic demands differed because they broadly referred to the complexity of student needs and how teachers strive to address them. Kristen explained: “There’s so many other needs that our kids come with that we have to address before we can even start to think about teaching” (Interview 3). In Carmen’s view, it was necessary to redefine the teacher’s role in light of these needs: “You’re caught in the middle as a teacher, because we’re not just teachers. We’re the social workers. We’re the moms. We’re the dads. We’re the doctor. We’re the grandmas. We’re everything for these kids” (Interview 1). While Carmen looked at these issues from the perspective of a caring and committed teacher, Kristen expressed concern about the disconnect between the needs of students and the capacity of the school to address them: “Students are coming to school with such significant social emotional needs, that staff doesn’t have the proper training/resources to handle this. Schools are barely hanging on to meet all these needs” (Journal 2). Even when primarily considering academic needs, Kristen noted, “Nowadays every child seems to have some sort of label. Teachers are expected to have 30 different plans in place to
match each child. ‘It’s just not realistic’ (Journal 2). In addition to the challenge of meeting individual student needs, Kristen described pressures put upon schools:

I feel like districts and schools are under such pressure to perform. There’s so many initiatives and laws out there, and so it’s like, ‘We’ve just got to get this in place’ instead of taking that time to really listen to what teachers are saying. (Interview 3)

Therefore, besides the pressures of implementing numerous initiatives while working with students with increasingly complex profiles, teachers’ feedback was not necessarily prioritized as part of these processes.

In summary, three out of the four MCETs (Kristen, Danielle, and Carmen) expressed dissatisfaction with unrealistic expectations placed on them as teachers. The next subtheme, Role-Specific Experiences, also revealed feelings of dissatisfaction. However, only Kristen and Danielle shared that perspective.

Role-Specific Experiences: Dissatisfying

Kristen and Danielle described specific aspects of their roles that were dissatisfying. For Kristen, the primary issue was the contrast between how the role was defined and her reality: “I feel frustrated with this current role because teachers don’t see the benefit of instructional coaches. Basically, my job title is math coach, but I really do very, very little coaching with teachers” (Journal 1). Her understanding of the role of a coach did not align with the structures the district currently had in place:

There’s no follow-through, there’s no true one-on-one coaching where you really sit down and plan the lesson, you observe the lesson, and then you debrief. There’s no coaching cycle that’s been put in place. I feel like that’s part of the frustration with this current role. It is not what I expected coming into it based on the job description. (Interview 2)
For Kristen, this kind of issue was particularly problematic since she was seeking an administrative role in the future and wanted to make sure that her work leading up to it was a productive and purposeful experience. Additionally, Kristen experienced a sense of isolation, which she attributed to her role: “I don’t feel like I’m a part of that [school] family. I don’t feel like I belong there. I think that’s because of the position I’m in, the actual role” (Interview 3). While she had opportunities to lead and support teams of teachers at each grade level, her work differed from that of most educators in the building.

Like Kristen, Danielle also had dissatisfying experiences related to her role. As a self-contained special education teacher, she worked with students with more intense needs. Upon making a change from working with students with emotional disabilities to those with cognitive disabilities, her availability to serve her school and district in other ways changed: “The new room needed so much that there was no time or energy left to do what I had previously been able to do to take a ‘break’ from the chaos yet still contribute to education in other ways” (Journal 1). Danielle also shared concerns about the physical demands of her role, the sensory overload that she experienced, and a struggle with not being able to meet the needs of students in the way she knew would be most beneficial:

With some of the students, especially ED [Emotional Disability] and even a couple of kiddos I have had in the past couple of years, they’ll have such wild behaviors, and you can’t with the resources available in the classroom, serve or address the behaviors as you think should be, as you know should be, but you can’t do it consistently because you don’t have as many aides as you need. You don’t have that psychotherapy available right when that kid has that meltdown. And it would be a frustration that we can’t do what’s good for the kid because we don’t have the resources that we need, so we have to do the bare minimum, which over time can be frustrating. (Interview 1)

Another stress Danielle experienced involved the aides or paraprofessionals that support students in her classroom. The paraprofessionals have a wide range of responsibilities, including teaching
and supervising students in Danielle’s classroom, as well as during lunch and recess. These support staff play an integral role in her classroom, and Danielle noted that “this year it took until the beginning of November to become fully staffed” (Interview 1). In addition to spending the first trimester of the school year understaffed, Danielle recognized that the skills of paraprofessionals varied widely, and that the coaching and training responsibilities always fell to her. She articulated her frustration, and provided an example of the impact on students: “She’s [student] almost having some of her bullying behaviors reinforced by allowing her to do some things because we don’t have that many people, and some of my paraprofessionals are literally scared of her” (Interview 1). Therefore, beyond the difficulties that come with being understaffed, Danielle also had to take on the challenge of developing the skills of her paraprofessionals.

Two subthemes (Unrealistic Expectations and Role-Specific Experiences) were sources of dissatisfaction. Detailed next are Role-Specific Experiences that brought satisfaction. This will be followed by the three remaining subthemes that were also sources of satisfaction (i.e., Opportunities Beyond the Teaching Role, Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students, and Student Success).

**Role-Specific Experiences: Satisfying**

The MCETs detailed specific aspects of their roles that were satisfying, however, differences in level of job satisfaction emerged from the data. For example, as an instructional coach, Kristen’s source of satisfaction involved working with teachers to analyze data and student work: “I enjoy that my role helps me to show teachers students’ strengths and growth targets based on classroom data and standardized data” (Journal 1). This aligned with her area of
expertise and what she valued: “I see the importance of analyzing student work to drive instructional decisions” (Journal 1).

In contrast, Greg found his distance from a focus on data to be positive: “I am aware of it, but I take it for granted too, that I really get to design every one of my lessons and nobody cares about their test score in the end” (Interview 3). However, this perspective still values growth, just defined differently: “I think a lot of teachers would say ultimately when it comes down to it, it’s a really satisfying career because you’re seeing growth, and you’re seeing progress immediately, and it’s right there in front of you” (Interview 2). Similarly, Danielle valued those moments of success working directly with students: “I LOVE inductive learning and really enjoyed being able to use more complex strategies with ED [Emotional Disability] students whom these strategies worked for” (Journal 1, emphasis in original). As a source of satisfaction, the value of these strategies was dependent on the population of students Danielle served. Rather than identifying a specific strategy as Danielle had, Greg highlighted the outcome of his efforts: “I feel most satisfied when I can see joy in my classroom. Being a music teacher has lots of moments of joy” (Journal 1). Additionally, Greg spoke positively about the level of autonomy unique to his role: “That’s one thing I love about teaching music, especially in the elementary school. I really can create whatever I want as long as I’m happy with it and my principals are happy and parents are happy” (Interview 1). He emphasized the connection to his subject area: “Music is good because really, nobody’s telling me what to do, so I can decide whatever I’m going to decide” (Interview 3). Three MCETs (Kristen, Danielle, and Greg) described ways that they experienced satisfaction in their roles. The next section includes another source of satisfaction, opportunities beyond the teaching role.
Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role: Satisfying

Three of the four MCETs (Danielle, Carmen, and Greg) were involved in providing supplemental instruction or engaging in some other activity beyond their teaching responsibilities. Those opportunities provided a level of satisfaction for the MCETs. For example, Danielle contributed to the school community through leadership projects. She described how this served as a source of fulfillment contrasting with the demands of her teaching assignment:

I have been satisfied with being able to help in larger contexts of the school/district as there was an opportunity to think outside of my often stressful classroom, it was like a small ‘break’ where I still was able to contribute and use skills to support but without the circus climate that a special education self-contained room sometimes feels like. (Journal 1)

One example she shared involved changing the way teachers provided redirection for student behavior. She fondly recalled the impactful work she engaged in with the support of a previous principal:

She [the principal] let me develop a way to address students, a kind of flow chart...and that was nice, I got to teach, and I got to provide research on why these things were important for students. I was able to conduct surveys, smaller scale. So, that was just kind of nice to help out in that way. (Interview 1)

There were also opportunities for Danielle to show how her vision could be implemented while demonstrating her teaching skills:

The principal actually let me, if the teachers wanted, come in and do a lesson. And so, what the teachers would do is they’d give me their academic objective, so I’d do some quick understanding about that, and I’d do a lesson, and I would model the actual redirecting student behavior with the positive redirects. (Interview 1)

Danielle also provided after-school enrichment classes for students, which she indicated were well-received and noticed by her colleagues: “I had a lot of kids excited about my last additional instruction group, and they were wanting my group again, and they [teachers] were like, ‘What
are you doing?” (Interview 1). Danielle was open to teachers visiting her group and planned to collaborate with a few colleagues on an upcoming additional instruction group.

Danielle was one of two MCETs who provided after-school instruction. Carmen supported an after-school math club and appreciated the positive feedback she received: “The kids just loved it to the point where they would go, ‘Are we doing it again this year?’” (Interview 2). She also attended evening family activities. At her school’s Literacy Night, she “was the bookmark maker, paper bag puppet maker, and there’s one more that I did...we had fun” (Interview 2). After-school instruction and family events were not required of Carmen or Danielle, but those opportunities served as examples of their willingness to make additional contributions.

Greg also contributed his time and expertise beyond the school day; however, this was expected as part of his role. He taught chorus to fourth and fifth graders after school once a week. He described it as challenging due to the energy level of the students, but noted, “The week before was great so I feel like I’m making progress, starting to figure it out” (Interview 1). This type of opportunity for students aligned well with Greg’s intentions during the school day which included sharing his expertise in music while providing an engaging experience for students.

Greg, Carmen, and Danielle found satisfaction through providing additional instruction or support beyond their primary teaching responsibilities. Each of the MCETs had different types of experiences aligned with this theme, however, they all found them to be positive and something they would like to continue to contribute. The next subtheme also provided satisfaction for the MCETs.
Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students: Satisfying

The MCETs described characteristics that were unique to the age and developmental level of elementary students, which for them created a satisfying feeling. Greg explained that feeling: “It’s [elementary] my favorite level I’ve ever taught...I like being at that level. The kids are so much more excited for what we do. It’s more fulfilling for me than teaching high school or middle school” (Interview 1). Carmen also had experienced working with older students, and articulated the contrast:

I like the little ones because they’re easier to mold and to really help. I like the older ones but sometimes there’s just too much attitude, and they think that they can speak to you like they speak to their parents or other adults they know. (Interview 1)

Additionally, Carmen noted that she and her students learned from each other: “I love seeing the progress because they are so open and accepting of new information. And they always teach me something new” (Interview 1).

Both Carmen and Danielle described how adults may underestimate the students’ capabilities. Carmen explained:

I just love how they [students] open up and how parents, on the first day, always say, ‘oh, because my child this...’ I’m looking at them going, you just don’t know your kid, do you? They’ll be completely different in my room. (Interview 1)

While expectations for Danielle’s students involved both their disability and their age, she was committed to increasing the expectations:

I feel satisfied when adult expectations are raised regarding students. So many times, paraprofessionals come in thinking the kids are incapable. For example, my current classroom the aides rush to put the students’ things away for them, open all of their breakfast components for them. It took time but after showing the students could be taught to do many things for themselves, the paras began expecting the same. (Journal 1)

Like Danielle, Carmen valued increasing her students’ level of independence and supporting them in their early experiences in school. Carmen explained the critical nature of the elementary
years: “I really fell in love with the primary grades. Kindergarten, first, second, even third, because that’s the foundation. If that foundation is shaky, their educational career is going to be so difficult” (Interview 1). The MCETs’ understanding of the characteristics of elementary students helped them to facilitate student success, and experience satisfaction in their jobs. The next subtheme highlights the connection of student success to satisfaction.

Student Success: Satisfying

Naturally, all the MCETs described student successes as a source of satisfaction. While the kind of success experienced by students varied as a result of differences in classroom environments, the MCETs articulated its positive impact. For example, Danielle connected student success to the positive aspects of being in the field of education: “I still think that’s what’s motivating about the field, in general, is seeing students grow, seeing new things happen that were not imagined before” (Interview 2). Kristen also sought ways to facilitate student growth, and experiencing it was a source of satisfaction. In her view, it required creativity and reflection to create the opportunity for students to develop their problem-solving skills. Kristen described the interaction between student success and how she could adjust to their needs:

I like learning, and I like being able to explain things and watch kids figure things out. I really like watching them tackle problems…or if they’re struggling, they’re like, ‘I don’t get it.’ And I like being able to be like, ‘OK, well, how else can I approach this?’ (Interview 1)

Both Danielle and Greg shared stories of students who met a specific goal or exceeded expectations. Danielle, for instance, proudly recalled the progress of the students with emotional and behavioral disabilities:
Several of my kids were in the ACE [advanced] math class. Even though they came in at kindergarten with me, I was able to work with them well enough that they succeeded beyond what was expected. So that was nice, and reinforcing, validating, I guess. (Interview 1)

Danielle also found satisfaction with the potential long-term impact of her work with the students with emotional and behavioral disabilities: “For a long time I was satisfied knowing that I was helping students become better/safer adults” (Journal 1). This success was also evidenced by the students’ reintegration into a less restrictive environment: “I had several kids move from the emotional/behavior disorder class back to their home school or out to full day, that was always very nice” (Interview 1). Like Danielle, Greg also valued the impact of his instruction beyond the school context. He explained:

Because kids, when they’re playing instruments, they always kind of like it-it's fun. And that’s what music should be. But when those things can carry over and they’re still thinking about it and they’re applying it and doing it somewhere else, and ‘Oh, now I really want to do band because I really liked what you did here’-that’s really satisfying to me. (Interview 2)

Greg appreciated hearing about times when something he had taught in his class extended to the students’ lives. Carmen also proudly described situations where she had an impact on students’ learning by identifying their interests. She explained how her efforts to motivate students to develop reading skills by providing comic books led to success: “It was two boys and a girl. Then they’re all reading-I was like, yes! Yes! I knew it! Now they’re bookworms…I’m like, good, that’s what I want” (Interview 1). While the kind of successes that each MCET experienced with their students differed, all found satisfaction when success occurred.

Summary for Theme 1

The first theme, Role and the Elementary Environment, included subthemes related to satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the MCETs. Unrealistic Expectations were a source of
dissatisfaction for the MCETs. Role-Specific Experiences were both satisfying and dissatisfying. Three subthemes - Opportunities Beyond Teaching Role, Developmental Characteristics of Elementary Students, and Student Success – were sources of satisfaction for the MCETs. The next section describes the second major theme, Valued Supports.

Theme 2: Valued Supports

The second subtheme reflects a variety of supports that the MCETs could have experienced. When those supports were present and matched to the needs of the MCETs, they provided satisfaction. However, if the supports were absent or replaced with negativity, dissatisfaction occurred. Six subthemes were connected to Valued Supports: (1) Administrators, (2) District Culture, (3) Coaching/Mentoring, (4) Colleagues, (5) Students, and (6) Parents. All but one subtheme includes connections to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The exception was Students, a support that was satisfying.

Each subtheme, representative quotations, and number of coded concepts are presented in Table 4.4. The next sections include narrative descriptions of each subtheme along with supporting evidence. The first subtheme, Administrators, contains both satisfying and dissatisfying connections for the MCETs.

Administrators: Satisfying

Administrators were the most frequently referenced subtheme by the MCETs. This group included district-level administrators (e.g., superintendents, assistant superintendents, and directors), as well as building principals and assistant principals. Interestingly, similar numbers of satisfying (33) and dissatisfying (36) experiences were coded. In both categories, Carmen had
Table 4.4
Valued Supports Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Representative Quotation</th>
<th>Coded Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A: Administrators (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“That kind of stuff feels good when you get positive feedback from administrators and they’re like, ‘We’re so glad you’re here’” (Greg, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 33</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 11</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B: Administrators (Dissatisfying)</td>
<td>“When you have leadership that’s negative towards you all the time and positive to everyone else, you’re thinking, am I really that bad? Do I not know what I’m doing? These are the questions that run through your head” (Carmen, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A: District Culture (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“In this district I believe that they really invest a lot in their teachers, and they support their teachers as much as possible” (Carmen, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B: District Culture (Dissatisfying)</td>
<td>“You’re just treated like a number, just a cog in the machine and definitely by the end-and I was only there for four years-I really felt not valued or appreciated at all. And a lot of people felt like that” (Greg, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A: Coaching/ Mentoring (Satisfying)</td>
<td>“I love it. I can go to my coach like, I’m not sure how to do the gradual release lesson plan that my principal wants me to try...Because if I go through it once with somebody, I got it and I’ll do it on my own” (Carmen, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B: Coaching/ Mentoring (Dissatisfying)</td>
<td>“There was no mentoring or coaching or anything like that. They assigned you one within the building, but in all honesty, there was no formalized plan for any induction into the building. So, it was really like sink or swim, and pray that you have someone on your grade level team that’s willing to help” (Kristen, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Danielle: 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kristen: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen: 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on following page)
Table 4.4 (continued)

| 4A: Colleagues (Satisfying) | “I asked other teachers how they did it. We are our own best resources. And I would go to others and say, ‘OK, he said this and this about me—how do I change that? How can I do better?’ And they would give me their ideas of how to do it. And then I’d make it my own” (Carmen, Interview 2). | Total: 8  
Danielle: 3  
Kristen: 0  
Greg: 2  
Carmen: 3 |
| 4B: Colleagues (Dissatisfying) | “When that partner that had taught the other class, when she left it was very different. You don’t have that immediate—oh, I need to ask about something that someone else will totally understand. That wasn’t there” (Danielle, Interview 2). | Total: 12  
Danielle: 3  
Kristen: 3  
Greg: 1  
Carmen: 5 |
| 5: Students (Satisfying) | “I just feel like I have a lot of stories like that, where they’re like, ‘you’re the best teacher I had, I learned so much from you.’ It’s little things like that, and just hearing from them five years later, ten years later, I appreciate that” (Kristen, Interview 2). | Total: 17  
Danielle: 2  
Kristen: 2  
Greg: 3  
Carmen: 10 |
| 6A: Parents (Satisfying) | “We just did an all Beatles show for fourth grade and I had probably six or seven parents come up to me individually, being like, ‘I really appreciate you doing that because now we’re singing that music together. We’re coming together as a family and we’re listening to the Beatles.’ That’s my favorite thing. Now I affected their family life, and that’s really satisfying for me to hear” (Greg, Interview 2). | Total: 9  
Danielle: 0  
Kristen: 0  
Greg: 4  
Carmen: 5 |
| 6B: Parents (Dissatisfying) | “The night of the show came and literally five minutes before it started my principal came in and he was like, ‘one of the dads is really upset about your song choice...We ended up taking out one song that he had a problem with. I don’t blame him for feeling the way he felt, I can’t judge his emotions, but the facts behind it were wrong and the kids suffered that part of it...It was a very ugly thing and it left me feeling very dissatisfied” (Greg, Interview 2). | Total: 5  
Danielle: 0  
Kristen: 1  
Greg: 2  
Carmen: 2 |
more coded concepts than the other MCETs. Administrative support was an important influence on her experience as a teacher. Dissatisfying aspects were connected to her previous district, while satisfying ones were associated with her current context. Particularly in her interviews, Carmen explained these contrasts:

> I would go to others and say, ‘OK, he [the principal] said this, this, and this about me—how do I change that? How can I do better?’ And they would give me their ideas of how to do it. And then I’d make it my own. And sometimes that didn’t even work with this particular principal. I really don’t know how I got under this man’s skin, but he really had it out for me. Because now I’m in this district, and I’m doing just about the same thing I’ve always done, and I’m getting complimented, and I’m getting help, and I’m liked for what I’m doing. (Interview 2)

While Carmen generally referred to support from her current administrators, Kristen, Danielle, and Greg described specific positive qualities they appreciated. Kristen described her principal as “very easy to talk to” and “not afraid to get his hands dirty, to roll up his sleeves. I think that goes a long way when it comes to teacher relationships” (Interview 3). Danielle’s principal was similarly approachable, and willing to lend a hand so that she could leave her classroom to observe her students: “I could even let my principal know, ‘Hey, I want to check out how they’re [the students] doing. Can you come in and just keep an eye real quick while I go find out?’” (Interview 2). This support had a positive impact on her effectiveness in meeting the needs of her students: “And I could have more support [from the principal], I could give more support [to the students]” (Interview 2). Danielle described specific things that her principal did to support her work with students, whereas Greg identified a feeling of empowerment that he experienced. This allowed Greg to do the job that he loved, in the way that he found most enjoyable. He explained:
I am especially satisfied with the support I get from my building administrators. They have always encouraged me to find my own way of doing things. They hired me for me, and they want to see what that can bring. That is an extremely freeing feeling. It does come with its own set of pressures, which mostly are due to my own anxieties and insecurities, but I am grateful for the level of trust they have in me. (Journal 1)

While discussing expectations surrounding the demonstration of student growth, Greg shared how the support of his administrator directly connected to his job satisfaction: “That’s why I’m so lucky now-if my administrator was like, ‘No, we need to see data, we need to see much more growth,’ then I wouldn’t enjoy it as much” (Interview 2).

Greg’s experience with supportive administrators empowered him to thrive in his role. Although Greg’s support was focused on his current setting, Kristen’s experience illustrates support that connects to future opportunities. She explained how her principal helps her to gain experiences that will be helpful as she pursues an administrative role: “He [the principal] knows what my goals are, so he helps to give me some different opportunities for that” (Interview 1).

Like Kristen, Carmen also appreciated support from her administrator when considering future goals. As she considered pursuing National Board Certification, Carmen identified the role administrative support could play:

I didn’t get that [administrator support] before. And then having that now makes me want to do more and be more. So that’s why I was like, ‘You know, maybe National Boards, I can tackle it this time.’ I know I have the support and if I get lost or flounder, I can say, ‘I’m a little stuck here-could someone help me?’ And they’ll guide me to the right people. (Interview 1)

Carmen anticipated reaching a professional goal with the support of an administrator, whereas Danielle described a previous experience of attaining a professional goal while changing the culture of her school:
I had some difficulty, and I actually came to her [principal] with a frustration...the way that they [teachers] were interacting with some of the students. So I did approach my principal with wanting that to be a part of my leadership project...So we did, and she [the principal] let me do a whole [initiative] - it was complex - but she let me develop a way to address students, a kind of flow chart. (Interview 1)

Danielle’s willingness to work towards improving the culture of her building was only possible with the support of her principal. In addition to addressing this issue, which was a source of frustration for her, Danielle developed additional skills beyond her work with students. She facilitated opportunities for her colleagues to learn: “I got to teach, and I got to provide research on why these things were important for students. I was able to conduct surveys, smaller scale. So, it was just kind of nice to help out in that way” (Interview 1). The support of Danielle’s principal made it possible for her to grow as a professional and experience satisfaction.

As all of the MCETs described, supportive administrators provided opportunities for growth, and they encouraged communication. One of the ways that administrators provided support was through feedback and dialogue. For example, Carmen and Greg appreciated that the evaluation process included opportunities to discuss their teaching. Specifically, Greg’s principal noted that his limited background in music did not prevent him from appreciating the quality of the teaching he observed:

He’s given me for the last two years really good reviews, because he’s like, ‘I don’t have to know what you’re talking about to know that the kids are engaged and learning.’ He’s like, “I knew from the first minute that I was in your room that they were 100% with you every minute that you were in front of them.” (Interview 2)

Greg then described the impact of these positive evaluations on the way that he viewed his job:

I feel really good here [current district]. My evaluations at this school have been as high as you can get. And maybe my administrator’s a little easier on me, but it’s been a really good fit for me. I got 99 out of 105 on my last evaluation, which is insane, it’s really good. I feel good about that; he doesn’t have to give me that. (Interview 1)
In addition to affirming his skills as a teacher, Greg associated this feedback with the overall feeling that this district was a good fit for him. For Carmen, her principal’s observation of her teaching and follow-up conference were positive as well, with his reassurance playing a critical role: “My first observation, I was so nervous. I was sweating buckets, and my principal looked at me. He goes, ‘Relax, you’re doing fine. If you weren’t the teacher I was looking for, you would not have been hired’” (Interview 1). The conference that followed included “collaboration,” and Carmen noted the efforts of the principal: “It’s not a quick pre-[conference] or post-[conference]. He digs down deep and wants to help you be the best at your craft, and I appreciate that” (Interview 2). Not only was constructive feedback provided by the administrator, it was valued by the MCET.

While the evaluation process offered opportunities for the administrators to share feedback, the MCETs identified additional examples of recognition of their successes by administrators. Kristen’s work with teachers as an instructional coach garnered support from administrators:

I’ve brought in with my weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings with each grade level a Student Work Analysis Protocol, and that has been really successful. The superintendent has come and observed. The assistant superintendent has observed. And they’ve talked about how impactful that is, and that it’s really what a high-performing PLC looks like, so that’s been a good success. (Interview 1)

The support of district administrators was also described by Carmen: “My director will come into the room and sit back and watch, or she’ll leave me a note, or she’ll say ‘Hey, see me in my office’, and she’ll say, ‘Oh, I really like what you did here, and wow, you have a bunch of characters - I like how you handled this child or that child’” (Interview 2).

All the MCETs provided examples of the support they received from administrators. Specifically, their administrators demonstrated support by providing feedback, creating
opportunities, or instilling trust in them as teachers and professionals. The next section details experiences with administrators that were dissatisfying for the MCETs.

Administrators: Dissatisfying

Danielle, Kristen, and Carmen shared experiences with administrators that connected to dissatisfaction. As previously discussed, the feedback from administrators was a source of satisfaction, however, Carmen and Danielle described situations in which the feedback had a critical tone. In her interviews and journals, Carmen made a total of 20 references about administrators connected to dissatisfaction. Although each of those experiences took place in her previous district, she felt compelled to share them, often to illustrate the contrast with her current district. She concisely described one of her concerns: “I feel that with [previous district] it’s cut and dry - you did it wrong and it’s like, that doesn’t help. I’m being yelled at or scolded, and I’m an adult” (Carmen, Interview 2). In addition to receiving criticism, Carmen perceived that she was targeted by her administrator: “When you have leadership that’s negative towards you all the time and positive to everyone else, you’re thinking, am I really that bad? Do I not know what I’m doing? These are the questions that run through your head” (Interview 2). Feelings of self-doubt were a direct result of the feedback received from the principal.

Danielle also described interactions involving control: “I have had a discussion with an administrator who specifically stated that he was, at the time, of the Machiavellian thought of gaining fear before love. Really?! How about respect?” (Journal 2). She also shared a feeling of powerlessness connected to her salary, and her need for the job. After expressing concerns about the behaviors of her students and the supports she felt were necessary, Danielle expressed frustration: “I was labeled as being uncooperative again, and I was reminded that these behaviors
were part of the position. I feel that they may know they’ve got my nice paycheck dangling so I should do whatever” (Journal 2). After the administration brought a specialist to her classroom to model behavior strategies, Danielle described her mixed feelings:

Then they brought in a ‘specialist’ who said I didn’t know what I was doing and that she would take over the class to show me. The ‘takeover’ was supposed to last a week but ended up lasting two days where afterwards I was given a larger room and more paras as well as an open budget to redesign the room. Although the incident left the students with a better setting, it also left me even more angry, feeling beyond disrespected, and if I didn’t have kids of my own, I would have quit right there. (Journal 1)

Since Danielle did not have the option of resigning from this position due to her need to support her family, she remained. This significantly impacted her relationship with an administrator:

“It eroded my commitment to the district I am housed in and some trust with my closest administrator because of course, there is never a ‘sorry’” (Journal 1). Like Danielle, trust also played a role in one of Kristen’s experiences with an administrator. She valued opportunities to develop skills that would lead to an administrative role, and an agreement was made at the beginning of her practicum that she would be promoted to assistant principal. However, the principal didn’t follow through on the agreement:

It had to do with the fact that she was actually not a certified principal. And so, it was kind of like, she didn’t want to put someone in that was more qualified than her, type of thing. So, it’s one of those things where I was really kind of discouraged by it because you kind of reneged on the deal. And it wasn’t necessarily that I needed to be assistant principal at that school, it was any of them in our network. But in order for that to happen, she has to recommend me for it, and she wouldn’t do it. (Interview 2)

Kristen’s experience reflects broken agreements with significant career implications. This took place several years ago, and she has yet to obtain a position as an administrator. Danielle also experienced a problem with administrators agreeing to something and then not following through:
Last year, I was told I was going to be able to be part of hiring process [for paraprofessionals] because I expressed the frustration that existed after we went through a couple aides who weren’t quite prepared for what it was...then it never came to fruition. (Interview 3)

Therefore, the consequences of her lack of involvement in the hiring process for classroom paraprofessionals was twofold: reduced trust in the administrator and an increased likelihood of turnover in this critical role.

This first subtheme, administrators, included connections to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the MCETs. Administrators may provide helpful feedback and affirmation, or they may be associated with challenges that MCETs faced in their roles. The next subtheme focuses on district culture.

**District Culture: Satisfying**

The MCETs’ experiences with district culture were sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. District culture can be defined as the beliefs and values of the organization and are reflected in the practices and experiences that take place within its’ schools. Since all four of the MCETs taught in more than one district over the course of their careers, comparisons of districts’ cultures were reflected in the data.

All of the MCETs experienced satisfaction with district culture when appreciation, celebrations, and opportunities for collaborative learning occurred. Carmen provided examples when she felt appreciated: “They really celebrate your accomplishments and support you to do better” (Interview 2). She described a welcoming environment, where “they really invest a lot in their teachers, and they support their teachers as much as possible” (Interview 2). This support connected with Carmen’s desire to continue developing her skills: “Being in a district where it’s so supportive helps me want to do more and improve on my craft” (Interview 3). Like Carmen,
Kristen also experienced a district culture that celebrated and encouraged further learning. She described a unique opportunity that captured her district’s culture:

There was a group of 12 distinguished teachers, and that was kind of their reward for a job well done, to live in Mexico for the summer and take [Spanish language] classes and learn more about what their lives are like and what their culture is. (Interview 1)

This opportunity to travel and continue learning allowed Kristen to return to her teaching role with improved language skills and an acknowledgment of her contributions to the district. Greg also felt that his district encouraged continued learning, however, each teacher chose his/her own path. He explained: “Almost every teacher in my building has a master’s degree, and some of them are already at plus 60 [graduate hours beyond a master’s]. They really encourage advancement” (Interview 1). As Greg, Kristen, and Carmen collectively described, a district culture that valued and supported continued learning lead to greater job satisfaction.

Another way in which district culture connected the MCETs with job satisfaction was support of collaborative relationships. For example, Danielle described how a district focus on collaboration aligned with her vision for reserving time to meet with members of her team:

“Luckily, the district was having a whole focus on collaboration. [Once a week] we have an hour of collaboration time and all of the support staff understand that they’re going to be out for that hour for this meeting” (Interview 1). The district culture supported Danielle’s vision for finding a common time to work with her team. As a result, she was extremely pleased with the outcomes:

Even though we’re just barely halfway through the year it’s just made such a big difference. For example, I have a field trip tomorrow. I have every support staff member going, because I knew over a month ago and was able to share it at the staff meeting. (Interview 1)
While Danielle’s district honored her desire to develop structures for team collaboration, Carmen valued the opportunity to share knowledge and expertise. She described how the district’s culture was one that encouraged colleagues to support each other:

> We [teachers] are our best resources. If I don’t understand something and I know that you’re the guru of this, then I’m going to go to you. I have no shame in saying, ‘I’m not sure about this, help me out.’ And I think all teachers should feel that way. My new district embraces that. (Interview 2)

She also explained how the administrators played a role in the development of a supportive district culture: “In this district, just about all the principals that I’ve run into, they’re very nice, they’re very positive, they’re very supportive, and they haven’t forgotten what it was like to be a teacher” (Interview 2).

As Carmen described, the similarities among administrators positively influenced the district culture. However, in her previous district, Carmen had a much different experience. Along with Carmen, Kristen and Greg collectively described dissatisfying elements related to district culture.

**District Culture: Dissatisfying**

Greg felt that the size of his former district was a significant contributing factor to the negative culture:

> You’re just treated like a number, just a cog in the machine, and definitely by the end, and I was only there four years, I didn't feel valued or appreciated at all...It’s just so big, you can’t think about teachers as individuals, you have to think about numbers. (Interview 1)

Akin to Greg, Carmen also noted a lack of appreciation at her previous district: “It really sucks the life out of you. You give so much, and sometimes it’s not even appreciated.” (Interview 2). She also described a district culture where teachers were disconnected: “There was really no
comradery. There was more like, ‘I’m on my own little island, leave me alone.’ You had acquaintances, but it wasn’t something like they had your back” (Interview 1). As Greg and Carmen described, MCETs want to feel valued and appreciated.

While Carmen and Greg described general feelings of dissatisfaction attributed to district culture, Kristen’s experiences were related to her responsibilities as an instructional coach. The source of this frustration included misconceptions about the purpose of her role. She explained:

I feel frustrated with this current role in that teachers don’t see the benefit of instructional coaches...The culture in the building is that teachers believe a coach is only to be used if you are basic on your evaluations. Teachers are resistant to having a coach come into their classroom to help with instruction. (Journal 1)

This issue was further complicated by the instability of the role itself:

Coaching’s been in a holding pattern because the school board does not believe in coaching...So every year there’s a threat that the positions will be cut. I think that does hinder the district from really creating some kind of a model that they’d have to cut. It’s just frustrating. (Interview 2)

Kristen’s experience with culture in her current district was a source of dissatisfaction. Although passionate about coaching, she saw the potential for success limited by teacher perceptions and a lack of support for the role from the school board.

Coaching/Mentoring: Satisfying

As part of the third subtheme, coaching and mentoring supports were either available or absent for the MCETs in their districts. Kristen provided a definition of both supports:

There's a difference between a coach and a mentor. A coach is someone who does not have a classroom, who is devoted entirely to the instructional aspect. Really focusing on your planning, your instruction, your classroom environment. You can have a mentor that's going to go through the nuts and bolts, who's going to explain, this is how we pick up our kids, and this is how we take them to lunch-different things like that that a coach doesn't need to do. (Interview 2)
As Kristen explained, coaching and mentoring have different purposes. However, they are included in the same subtheme because of their core similarities. Coaching and mentoring are not directly connected to administrators and evaluation protocols. Additionally, they are often formally embedded for those who are new to teaching or the district (primarily mentoring), and for the purpose of increasing effectiveness (primarily coaching).

Three MCETs had satisfying experiences with coaching and mentoring. For example, Carmen described multiple supports that she received: “I got a coach, got a mentor. I can go to my other bilingual class people...and say, ‘Hey, what do you think about this?’” (Interview 1). Carmen’s use of coaching support also tied to her desire to become a more effective teacher. She provided an example of how she worked with her coach:

> I kind of lost practice [implementing a specific writing curriculum] so when we started doing it I was like, ‘Am I doing this right?’ And he’s [the coach’s] like, “Remember the trainings.” And I asked him, and he showed me, and I was like, “I’m doing okay, that’s right.” Just the reassurance that I’m doing it correctly because I’m here to help my students. (Interview 2)

The coach’s encouragement and affirmation of her understandings allowed Carmen to continue to develop her expertise.

Although Carmen was given coaching and mentoring support, Kristen’s experience was mixed. When she was teaching, Kristen participated in mentoring, but did not consistently have the benefit of a coach. She acknowledged the potential impact of coaching support: “When I got to a district that had coaching, it was like, ‘Ah, yes, okay, this is what’s missing’” (Interview 2). She further demonstrated how she valued this type of support by attaining a role as an instructional coach.

Greg’s experience with mentoring differed from Kristen and Carmen’s because it was not tied to being new to a district. Instead, Greg was provided with mentoring support to develop his
expertise in addressing the needs of a specific group of students. Although he was an
experienced music teacher, Greg did not have a strong vision for how to teach a small group of
students with disabilities who he worked with once a week. Fortunately, another music teacher
who provided the same type of service could help Greg: “I could go watch her every week, and
so I learned just by observing her” (Interview 2). This mentoring support provided an
opportunity for Greg to develop his skills by learning from another colleague. While Greg,
Carmen, and Kristen experienced satisfaction connected to coaching and mentoring, three of the
MCETs experienced dissatisfaction related to the absence of this type of support.

Coaching/Mentoring: Dissatisfying

Three of the MCETs (Carmen, Kristen, and Danielle) associated dissatisfaction with a
lack of coaching and mentoring. For instance, Carmen’s previous district did not provide
coaching support. This negatively impacted the overall district culture:

They didn’t have that [coaching support] in [previous district]. I don’t know how to call it, but there was really no camaraderie. There was more like, ‘I’m on my own little island. Leave me alone.’ You had acquaintances but it wasn’t something like they had your back. (Interview 1)

Like Carmen, Kristen also described a lack of mentoring and coaching support in her previous
district:

There was no mentoring or coaching or anything like that. They assigned you one [a mentor] within the building, but in all honesty, there was no formalized plan for any induction into the building. So, it was really like sink or swim, and pray that you have someone on your grade level team that’s willing to help. (Interview 2)

Kristen also explained the potential impact of a lack of mentoring and coaching support:

I think not having formalized supports, that’s why you have a lot of turnover. For me, it wasn’t a big deal not having a coach per se, or not having somebody that could help me through it, but I saw it in other teachers. (Interview 2)
While Carmen and Kristen described the absence of coaching and mentoring support, Danielle shared a different perspective. She advocated for the support to be built in throughout one’s career, since needs may change:

They offer mentors at the beginning of a career, which is wonderful, and it’s necessary. But I don’t think mentors should always go away. Or, for example, when I entered a different stage of having kids. It’s a different kind of energy you bring, or you may have after having worked in a system for so long that it may not be a bad idea to keep mentors or to every once in a while, pair a mentor. Because I’ll even say, being able to talk about this stuff is a good thing, and to reflect. It may not always come up naturally in the relationships you have in your work environment...It may be more venting, instead of, “Let’s really talk about how everything’s feeling and about where you are wanting to go and what you are wanting to do next”. (Interview 2)

Danielle, Kristen, and Carmen described circumstances when formal coaching and/or mentoring were absent and could have been of value. The next subtheme focuses on the experiences and relationships the MCETs have with their colleagues.

Colleagues: Satisfying

As the fourth subtheme, three out of the four MCETs reported that the support of colleagues contributed to their level of satisfaction. Carmen, for instance, appreciated a colleague who helped her with special education paperwork that she found challenging. This colleague not only offered to review the draft that Carmen created but also to sit down with her to make revisions. Carmen explained what the extra effort from this “angel” meant to her: “She didn’t have to, but she found time in her day to sit down and do that with me” (Interview 1). This support from a colleague not only helped Carmen to feel less stress and anxiety as she completed the paperwork, she also improved her ability to develop documents that described students’ individual needs.
Like Carmen, Greg also valued colleagues’ input. He described the steps he takes to develop rapport with colleagues, specifically by attending grade level planning meetings:

As much as I can, I try to have them [teachers] see me and show that I really care. It has gone a long way in just overall rapport among everybody...Sometimes I just pop in and talk for a couple minutes, and sometimes I’m at the whole meeting - it varies. I don’t do it every week. I don’t have to, it’s not something that they require of me...So if I’m having an issue with a kid it’s always different than it is in a math class. Whether it’s worse for them or worse for me, it’s interesting to talk about the kids in a different context. (Interview 2)

For Greg, the impact of these interactions included improved work with challenging students. Additionally, the positive relationships with the other teachers in the building provided a source of satisfaction.

Danielle, like Greg, had a role that was different from most of her colleagues in the building. Therefore, she similarly sought out collaborative relationships. While she created a process for partnering with specialists that worked with her students, she valued the support of others in a similar role. However, the frequency (three meetings each year), was insufficient in her view. She noted that it was “rare to be able to actually talk with people who are talking the same language as you” (Interview 3). However, she felt that collaborative conversations with other teachers could provide “really meaningful discussions” and a chance to “come back to the same discussion with some reflection” (Interview 3). Danielle also felt that she “would be able to maybe ask for resources a little more. Just having a common conversation is good too” (Interview 3). Although Danielle did not have sufficient opportunities to collaborate with others who taught in similar settings, she appreciated the potential of the support of these colleagues.

Carmen, Greg, and Danielle experienced satisfaction connected to experiences with colleagues. In contrast, the next section details dissatisfaction related to colleagues.
All four MCETs shared experiences with colleagues that connected to dissatisfaction. Such as, Carmen described the interactions among colleagues in her previous district: “I’m not a competitive person. I just want to do the best for my students. So when you have teachers who are competitive and are throwing you under the bus it’s like, OK, why?” (Interview 2). Additionally, when she sought the assistance of colleagues and was not supported, she felt that she “had nowhere to turn to” (Interview 1). Although most of her day was spent working directly with students, these issues with colleagues still caused considerable dissatisfaction for Carmen.

While negative interactions and relationships such as Carmen described clearly caused dissatisfaction, other experiences were more subtly linked. For Carmen and Greg, their dissatisfying experiences with colleagues connected to district supports intended to foster positive outcomes through collegial collaboration. For example, Carmen described a conflict with a co-teacher in her previous district: “Co-teaching works best when the other teacher is more accepting of you. It’s really hard when they think you’re the help...and everything you are suggesting is being shot down” (Interview 1). Carmen and her co-teacher had very different views of how to share teaching responsibilities. Rather than taking a collaborative approach, Carmen described the co-teacher’s directive: “You work with those students, I’m working with these - I'm like, that’s not cooperative learning, that is not what you’re supposed to do” (Interview 1). Situations like these made it even more challenging to provide instruction for students.

Like Carmen, Greg experienced dissatisfaction related to colleagues. Although he did not work directly with colleagues in teaching situations such as what Carmen described, he
discovered philosophical differences between himself and the other music teachers in the district. He found that his view as to how to best use instructional time did not align with that of the other music teachers in his Professional Learning Community. Greg described his frustration:

They [the other music teachers in the district] have that curriculum, and they teach exactly that. They developed this curriculum just to have something, and they give tests constantly. And every week they’re giving these formal assessments, and I hate that, I hate it. It’s a huge waste of time. It doesn’t benefit the kids at all. It doesn’t benefit me any more than if I’m just watching them and giving a checkmark. (Interview 2)

Therefore, although there was time in his schedule to meet with the other music teachers, he did not find it particularly beneficial. Carmen also felt that her Professional Learning Community did not meet her needs effectively: “It’s really difficult to sit with the monolingual teachers, and they’re talking about things, and I’m just sitting there like, this has nothing to do with what I’m doing” (Interview 3). For both Carmen and Greg, these opportunities for collaboration with colleagues were less satisfying due to the individuals in the group, and a lack of alignment of their roles or philosophies.

While the chances Greg and Carmen had to work with colleagues were a source of dissatisfaction, Danielle’s role provided limited opportunities to work with others. As previously described, she valued collaboration with colleagues. However, due to the student population she served, at times Danielle was the only teacher in her role. She explained the impact of this circumstance:

When that partner that had taught the other class left it was very different. You don’t have that immediate, ‘Oh, I need to ask about something’ that someone else will totally understand. That wasn’t there. That was part of why I thought, ‘Wow, I don’t want to do that again.’ So, I asked for a different position. (Interview 1)

Unfortunately, in addition to being assigned to a different role than the one she had requested, Danielle was the only teacher for an additional year. The proximity of colleagues in the same
role was something Danielle appreciated, and perhaps was more cognizant of the value of this support since it is not always available.

As an instructional coach, Kristen’s opportunities to access the support of colleagues was only at the district level with other coaches. However, she experienced unexpected challenges as the person who had previously served as the coach decided to return to a teaching role in the same building. Kristen explained:

An area that causes dissatisfaction is the person who had the job before me decided to go back to the classroom and teach. So, she is teaching in my building, and teachers go to her for questions about math or to ask for support instead of coming to me. She also does not tell them that she’s no longer in that role, and so she basically does my job and hers as well. It has been extremely difficult to establish any kind of relationship with teachers because of this. (Journal 1)

This dissatisfaction was so significant that she considered pursuing a different job: “It was really rough last year. So much so that I was like-I don’t know if I want to stay. It was just like, ‘What am I doing here? She’s basically doing my job for me’” (Interview 1).

The experiences and relationships with colleagues provided a unique contribution to the MCETs’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs. While administrators are associated with the evaluation process, and coaches and mentors are often assigned to work with teachers, interactions and relationships with colleagues developed more organically. When understanding, empathy, and expertise was shared, colleagues contributed positively. However, if interactions were negative, or isolation was experienced, dissatisfaction was the result. The last two subthemes explore stakeholders not employed by the school but with definite connections to the MCETs’ job satisfaction.
**Students: Satisfying**

When the MCETs described their students, they referred to those they were currently teaching, as well as students they taught earlier in their careers. For all four MCETs, experiences with students were a source of satisfaction. Carmen, Danielle, and Greg connected satisfaction to student learning. Carmen, for instance, described how seeing students learn impacted her: “I feel satisfied when my students get a concept. Those ‘ah ha’ moments are amazing” (Journal 1). Whereas, for Danielle, student satisfaction also extended to the paraprofessionals she supervised and coached: “Elements of my job that make me feel satisfied include the times when I can see student or even paraprofessional success” (Journal 1).

In addition to appreciating the moments where student learning took place, the MCETs found satisfaction as they reflected on the long-term impact of their efforts. Danielle explained how her previous work with students with Emotional Disabilities brought satisfaction: “For a long time I was satisfied knowing that I was helping students become better/safer adults” (Journal 1). While Danielle experienced satisfaction related to addressing complex student needs, Greg appreciated times when students applied their enjoyment of music to other contexts. He explained:

> Because kids, when they’re playing instruments, they always kind of like it’s fun. And, that’s what music should be. But when those things can carry over and they’re still thinking about it and they’re applying those things and doing it somewhere else, and oh, now I really want to do band because I really liked what you did here, that's really satisfying to me. (Interview 2)

Greg’s appreciation for the impact of learning beyond the classroom, in addition to Carmen and Danielle’s examples, illustrated how student success connected to job satisfaction for the MCETs.
Another source of satisfaction included teacher/student relationships. Two MCETs described the impact of these relationships. Such as, Kristen shared that one year her students made an especially meaningful gesture:

My birthday is in May, so my first year those kids threw me a surprise birthday party. They organized the whole thing. They collected money from all the kids, and they ordered pizza. I remember one of my kids who just gave me...he was a headache at times...he wouldn’t do his work, and he was in charge of getting the cake. And he went to the grocery store to get the sheet cake. And there wasn’t anybody there to write happy birthday, so he bought the icing himself and wrote it on the cake. So, for me, that kind of relationship building with the kids was a huge success. (Interview 1)

This example illustrated how Kristen’s efforts to build relationships with even the most challenging of students were successful and made her feel more satisfied in her job.

Both Kristen and Carmen fondly recalled being known as a student’s favorite teacher. Kristen explained:

I just feel like I have a lot of stories like that, where they’re like ‘You’re the best teacher I had, I learned so much from you.’ It’s little things like that and just hearing from them five years later, ten years later, I appreciate that. (Interview 2)

Similarly, Carmen described how students made efforts to reconnect with her after she left her position: “One student just wanted to come and see me. And when he found out that I was no longer working there he hunted me down on Facebook” (Interview 2). Carmen also expressed how meaningful it was when students connected with her on social media:

It’s those moments that I meant something in a child’s life. They remember me fondly. They appreciate me, or they look for me on Facebook. They say, “Hi, Ms. L. Do you remember me?” And I’ll friend them. (Interview 2)

Through this example, Carmen showed how the relationship built in the classroom was memorable for teacher and students alike, and there was value in continuing it beyond the initial
opportunity. In contrast, there were fewer opportunities to interact with parents. With those experiences, the MCETs reported feelings of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Parents: Satisfying

Interactions with parents took place either within the school context or in the community. The MCETs described more satisfying (n=9) than dissatisfying (n=5) experiences with parents. Carmen, for example, valued the ways in which parents contributed to the school environment:

The Parent Teacher Organization is just amazing, as well as the Bilingual Parents’ Association. They’re just wonderful ladies, and they really work hard to give to our school, and I really appreciate everything they do, and I don’t mind coming to certain events. (Interview 2)

Carmen’s willingness to attend events driven by an appreciation for the efforts of the parent organizations reflected a positive reciprocal relationship. Whereas, in Greg’s role, he worked with students to prepare a performance to share with parents. He described the feedback he received from parents, and the impact of the performances:

Many parents were like, ‘Thank you for introducing them to the Beatles because now we listen to it together.’ So that makes me feel really happy. And I hear that all the time now, that ‘My kids are singing Bob Dylan songs at their house, and this is really cool that we can talk about that.’ And that is the biggest success I can have, that parents and kids are bonding over something that happened in my room—it doesn’t get any better than that. (Interview 1)

While Greg received support from parents regarding the connections they made with their children over music, the parents of Carmen’s students credited her with their academic successes. These parents were particularly appreciative when the successes were unexpected or challenging to attain. Carmen spoke of one student who had reached his goal on a standardized test when she taught him. A parent provided an update on his progress: “I saw his mom the other day in the store, and she’s like ‘He’s reading. He's now above his grade level, and I thank you.’
That makes my day” (Interview 2). Carmen’s example as well as Greg’s experiences with parent feedback reflect how those experiences provided satisfaction for the MCETs.

Parents: Dissatisfying

The data revealed that parents could cause job dissatisfaction for the MCETs, in particular Carmen, Kristen, and Greg. Such as, Carmen shared her frustration with parents who did little to support their child’s learning at home: “I know that there are five [in the class who are not at grade level in reading] that there’s no way - not because I’m not trying, but because there’s not the support at home and that’s what drives me crazy. I can’t do anything” (Interview 3). While Carmen wanted parents to become more involved, those that Kristen described were at the opposite end of the spectrum: “I felt like they [parents] were always trying to catch teachers doing something. So that was probably my biggest challenge” (Interview 1). Like Kristen, Greg described an experience where he received similar scrutiny:

The night of the show came and literally five minutes before it started, my principal came in and he was like, ‘One of the dads is really upset about your song choice.’ We ended up taking out one song that he had a problem with. I don’t blame him for feeling the way he felt, I can’t judge his emotions, but the facts behind it were wrong, and the kids suffered that part of it...it was a very ugly thing, and it left me feeling very dissatisfied. (Interview 2)

This experience was in sharp contrast to the positive feedback he typically received and found so validating.

Summary for Theme 2

The second theme, Valued Supports, included six subthemes. Five of the subthemes - Administrators, District Culture, Coaching/Mentoring, Colleagues, and Parents – provided
experiences with satisfaction and dissatisfaction. One subtheme, Students, was associated with satisfaction for the MCETs. The next theme, Resources, includes elements that connect to the level of satisfaction each MCET experienced in their job.

**Theme 3: Resources**

While the MCETs have teaching experience and expertise, the availability of resources impacted how they do their jobs, as well as their level of job satisfaction. Danielle highlighted the importance of having resources: “Dissatisfaction is...having to battle for things to make the job even doable, let alone making the job well done” (Journal 1). Table 4.5 reflects the two subthemes connected to Resources, representative quotations, and number of coded concepts.

Next, each subtheme will be detailed with supporting evidence. Both subthemes include connections to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

**Professional Development and Training: Satisfying**

The MCETs described various professional development and training opportunities. These included coaching, observations of others in similar roles, and traditional professional development presentations. While some of these opportunities positively impacted their role, some needs were not met or addressed effectively.

Greg and Carmen shared ways that their districts provided professional development supports specifically tied to their role and responsibilities. For Carmen, this was primarily in the form of a coach:

He’ll [the coach will] meet with me to discuss what’s going on in my classroom, and how he can help me if I have a problem. If I’m not sure of something, I’ll say, ‘I’m not sure of this, can you show me again?’ (Interview 2)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Resources</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Representative Quotation</th>
<th>Coded Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A: Professional Development and Training</td>
<td>Satisfying</td>
<td>“I could go watch her [music therapist] every week, and so I learned just by observing her” (Greg, Interview 2).</td>
<td>Total: 4 Danielle: 0 Kristen: 1 Greg: 1 Carmen: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B: Professional Development and Training</td>
<td>Dissatisfying</td>
<td>“It was communicated to me that this was an autistic classroom and in fact was cross categorical so the 2-day training on teaching autistic students in a one to one setting was kind of ridiculous” (Danielle, Journal 1).</td>
<td>Total: 6 Danielle: 2 Kristen: 2 Greg: 1 Carmen: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A: Space, Supplies, and Technology</td>
<td>Satisfying</td>
<td>“I have an abundance of things that my students need. I literally do not need to purchase anything for my classroom” (Carmen, Interview 1).</td>
<td>Total: 5 Danielle: 1 Kristen: 0 Greg: 0 Carmen: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B: Space, Supplies, and Technology</td>
<td>Dissatisfying</td>
<td>“I was given a tiny classroom with eight students with moderate to severe needs” (Danielle, Journal 1).</td>
<td>Total: 5 Danielle: 1 Kristen: 1 Greg: 0 Carmen: 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carmen’s ability to easily access a coach to support her in her teaching provided satisfaction as well as increased effectiveness. Greg also accessed support to develop his skills further. He observed a music therapist who worked in the district so he could develop strategies for working with students with disabilities during their weekly music class. He explained the impact of this opportunity:
I could go watch her every week and so I just learned by observing her. I was so lucky, because really, I don’t know what I would have done. I watched her for a whole year every Friday. And once you start to see what it is, you can start to be creative and think of other things. I didn’t know what those kids needed, I had no idea what it was like, and she was really great about just telling me, ‘Look, this is why I do this—it makes them feel better in this way, this is how you can do this.’ I’m so fortunate that I had that person to watch and learn from because I don’t know what I would have done. (Interview 2)

While Greg and Carmen provided examples of professional development supports in their roles, three MCETs shared ways in which professional development needs were not effectively addressed.

**Professional Development and Training: Dissatisfying**

Danielle and Kristen attended trainings that were not a match for their needs. Danielle described her frustration with the experience: “It was communicated to me that this was an autistic classroom and in fact it was cross categorical, so the two-day training on teaching autistic students in a one to one setting was kind of ridiculous” (Journal 1). Kristen also attended a training that was not matched to her level of expertise:

I was the only one that had coaching experience. They [the district] spent tons of money training us to be coaches. But the training they sent us to was the one that I had already gone through, so I had to sit through it again. Even though I had, in my interview, told them who I was trained through, which was part of the reason that was who they went through, and then I had to sit through it again. (Interview 1)

These formal training opportunities that Kristen and Danielle attended did not address their needs and caused frustration due to the misuse of their time. Greg also experienced professional development opportunities that were not purposeful in his view. He found that the meetings with other district music teachers did not meet his need for collaboration:
We have School Improvement Planning days, and we meet with the other music teachers, and I don’t find that beneficial to me personally at all, purely because of the other music teachers. It would be great to talk that stuff out-in theory, that’s what it’s for. The other three do get something out of that, but they don’t get a lot...we don’t do things very similarly. (Interview 2)

For Greg, Kristen, and Danielle, attending professional development activities that were not a match for their needs was a source of dissatisfaction. Next, the MCETs’ experiences with more tangible resources will be described.

**Space, Supplies, and Technology: Satisfying**

This subtheme includes what the materials the MCETs have access to and the space where they teach. Access to an appropriate space, supplies, and technology helped the MCETs to do their jobs. The absence of these things was a source of dissatisfaction.

Danielle and Carmen shared examples of ways that their needs were met. Danielle appreciated that her requests for materials were consistently honored: “I have not been denied anything this year except for professional development (which requires subs), but as far as, ‘Hey, this would be good in the classroom...’ Got it. Things like that-that's nice” (Interview 3).

Carmen was similarly provided with the materials and technology she needed to do her job:

> If I need chart paper, all I have to do is ask. It’s nice that all of my students have working tablets...I have an abundance of things that my students need. I literally do not need to purchase anything for my classroom. (Interview 1)

While Carmen and Danielle shared their appreciation for the availability of materials, there were other ways in which their needs were not met, causing dissatisfaction.
Space, Supplies, and Technology: Dissatisfying

The connections to dissatisfaction were also shared by Carmen and Danielle and reflected the unique nature of their roles. Carmen explained:

My district supports a lot—they give you things, they’re like, ‘Hey, here’s this, hey, here’s this,’ and if I can’t use it, I’m like, OK, but it’s not in Spanish. I can’t use it if it’s not in Spanish...although I’ll go through the training [for an online learning tool for students] and it will be: ‘Oh, it’s going to be in Spanish, don’t worry about it. We’ll have it.’ Still waiting. (Interview 3)

Carmen’s students needed these curricular resources in Spanish to meet their needs and address the goals of the program. For Danielle’s students, the physical space was a critical factor in addressing their needs, and she did not find it to be appropriate. Danielle described the classroom as “a tiny classroom with eight students with moderate to severe needs” (Journal 1). She identified “working without the resources needed to feel good about the job you are doing” as her “second largest point of dissatisfaction” (Journal 1). She voiced this concern and eventually was moved to a larger classroom. However, this experience was very dissatisfying for her, particularly given that she was teaching a new program, instead of a different role that she had requested.

Summary for Theme 3

The third theme, Resources, included two subthemes with connections to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. All of the MCETs shared how resources played a role in their level of job satisfaction. Those resources were tangible (e.g., supplies, technology), but also included activities such as professional development and training. The presence or lack of resources impacted their effectiveness as well.
Summary: Research Question 1

The findings from the first research question were reflected in three themes: Role and the Elementary Environment, Valued Supports, and Resources. All three themes included elements that were sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the MCETs. The relationship the MCETs described between school context factors and job satisfaction reflected nuances, since the same factor (e.g., Role-Specific Experiences, Administrators, and Professional Development and Training) frequently connected to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In total, the data reflected 13 subthemes connected to this research question. Four of these subthemes were exclusively tied to satisfaction, and one was associated with dissatisfaction. Eight out of 13 subthemes (62%) included satisfying and dissatisfying elements. This reflects a complex relationship between the school context and the MCETs’ level of job satisfaction. For example, an element of the school context (i.e., district culture) provided satisfaction in one situation or circumstance, and dissatisfaction at a different point. Therefore, the school context influences MCETs’ level of job satisfaction in ways that are specific to the situation and those involved.

Next, the findings connected to the second research question are detailed. The MCETs’ perspectives on the future are highlighted, with particular focus on their intent to remain in the field of education.

RQ2: How is a MCET’s intent to remain in the field influenced by their level of job satisfaction?

The second and final research question focuses on the connection between job satisfaction and each MCET’s intent to remain in the field. As illustrated by the data aligned to the first research question, job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors within the school context. This research question provided an opportunity for the MCETs to look toward the
future. While Journal 2 and Interview 3 were the primary sources of data connected to this research question, the other journal response and interviews provided insights as well. In alignment with the guidelines previously described, for a theme or subtheme to emerge, it must be supported by coded concepts from at least two MCETs. At least four coded concepts in total were an additional requirement for the establishment of a theme or subtheme. First, three themes connected to this research question are described, as they reflect the common views of multiple MCETs. Then, the MCETs’ individual perspectives are detailed.

Themes: Research Question 2

Each theme contributes to the development of an understanding of the MCETs’ values and considerations as they reflected upon their intent to remain in the field. Three themes emerged from the data. The first theme focused on the importance of fit, and all the MCETs connected to this theme. The second and third themes (Staying in the Field and Considering Change) included the MCETs’ reflections on reasons they intend to stay in the field as well as why they considered making a career change. Kristen, Greg, and Danielle’s perspectives are included in the second and third themes. Table 4.6 presents the themes and subthemes that address Research Question 2.

Theme 1: The Importance of Fit

The first theme highlights the extent to which the role, school or district complements a teacher’s characteristics and values. This concept, which will be referred to as “fit,” was described by all the MCETs. When assessing fit, multiple contributors to their level of job satisfaction were analyzed. Specifically, they considered the alignment of their values and
Table 4.6

Themes and Subthemes: Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: The Importance of Fit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Staying in the Field</td>
<td>The Desire to Stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impediments to Making a Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Considering Change</td>
<td>The Challenges and Demands of a Career in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considering Leaving the Field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

strengths to the context and role, as well as the support and feedback they received. Therefore, a better fit connects to a higher level of job satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of remaining in the district and the field.

Carmen defined and explained how evaluating fit is essential to successfully navigating one’s career. First, she noted the challenges of meeting others’ expectations, even if you want to make a situation work:

There’s always going to be that one person and for some reason or another, there’s nothing you can do that’s right in their eyes. That’s the wrong fit. You know, it’s a like a shoe. You like that shoe, it looks good, you want to fit your foot into it, but guess what? Your foot doesn’t fit and it’s going to hurt and it’s going to ache and it’s going to make you feel miserable. Take that shoe off and find something else. Same with your job. (Interview 3)

In addition to her suggestion to make a change if there isn’t a good fit between a teacher and district, Carmen advocated for being proactive. For example, she noted that working in some schools or districts involved significant challenges that teachers may not be prepared to handle: “It’s not for everyone. If you do not have the right temperament...know your schools, know your
principals, know your area, and know yourself” (Interview 3). Similarly, Danielle felt that it was important to evaluate the alignment between a teacher and the organization. She advocated for movement early in a teacher’s career: “I would say go to multiple places. Don’t settle right away...I think that it’s a good idea for your first stretch. Find a place. Know your values and recognize those things that support your values in an organization” (Interview 3). Danielle and Carmen both highlighted the importance of knowing yourself.

Kristen extended Danielle and Carmen’s perspective as she emphasized the importance of knowing your strengths when applying for a position:

“When you go to accept a job, you really need to think about is this the grade level that I want? Is this the grade level that I am capable of being successful at? You can’t go in with the mindset like, ‘I just need a job. I’ll take anything.’ It has to be the right fit...You’ve got to go somewhere where you feel like you have some kind of strength.” (Interview 3)

Although Kristen felt that it was important to critically evaluate fit during the application and hiring process, Greg described challenges in attaining his first teaching job: “I moved back, and it took 18 months to find my first job after probably 200 applications. And that was middle school general music which was never on my radar at all...There’s just not a lot of openings” (Interview 1). Once he gained experience in his initial role, Greg made a change to a different district and grade level.

Greg explained that his current job “was a really good fit for me” (Interview 3). Although he had started to feel comfortable with his role in his previous district, he differentiated an overall feeling that he currently experiences: “I feel really good here” (Interview 3). While reflecting on his evaluations, he made connections to fit:
My evaluations at this school have been as high as you can get. And maybe my administrator’s a little easier on me, but it’s been a really good fit for me...I was always proficient in [previous district], and it doesn’t matter, that’s how you get hired back. And I got to my new school and it’s fully excellent, and it’s like, maybe this is a good fit for me. (Interview 3)

Since Greg successfully navigated a change to an environment that he felt was a good fit for him, his perspective differed from Danielle’s. She aligned the assessment of fit with early career decisions, based on her own difficulty attaining a role working with less complex students:

It was a mistake being talked out of a specific position a couple of times. If you feel it, if you feel it in your gut, then okay, now go for it. If that doesn’t happen, then find a good place to land early in your career. (Interview 3).

For Danielle, finding a better fit for herself did not necessarily align with an administrator or district’s vision for her future. Years later, she is still trying to attain a position she feels will be a better fit for her.

Like Danielle, Carmen connected the concept of fit to making a change. She expressed a belief that evaluating the fit of multiple contexts is important prior to making the decision to leave the field:

If you’re miserable in that job, you start questioning, do I still want to be a teacher? Before you quit your profession that you worked so hard to do, try it somewhere else. And if you still feel that way, then alright, quit. But if you don’t then all you can do is get better at what you’re doing because you’re just finding where you belong. (Interview 3)

Carmen’s concept of “finding where you belong” and continuing to focus on improvement reflected her values, and how she has taken steps to become successful and satisfied in her job.

Summary for Theme 1. All the MCETs connected to this first theme, the importance of fit. Kristen reflected on the importance of fit early in a teacher’s career. For Danielle, fit is a consideration across career stages, which reflects her current level of dissatisfaction with her role. Carmen and Greg successfully navigated a change to a district where there was a better fit
for them. Both of these MCETs were in their second year of teaching in their current district and found that fit positively impacted their intent to remain in the field.

**Theme 2: Staying in the Field**

The MCETs discussed staying in the field, both in reference to themselves and in regard to other teachers’ experiences. A decision to remain in the field may be indicative of a high level of job satisfaction and a continued commitment to the profession. However, it may also be the result of limited options for change, and a desire to avoid taking risks.

**Subtheme 1: The Desire to Stay.** At the mid-career stage, teachers have invested their time, energy, and money in teacher preparation and developing their skills further while working. Greg described the level of investment he has contributed thus far:

Professionally, I have a lot invested in it [teaching career]. I went to college and I went to grad school and I have student loans to be a teacher and I kind of have this responsibility now to see that through. And I have a lot of time and energy invested in knowing how to do it. (Interview 2)

While Greg reflected on the investment he has put into his career, Carmen also shared a commitment to continuing to grow: “I believe that to remain in the teaching profession, one needs to continue to learn and evolve as a teacher. I am a true believer in the more I know, the farther I will go” (Journal 2). Greg expressed a similar view connecting improvement with his continuation in the field: “I’ve put a lot of time in to figure out how to do it well. And I’m not at the top of my game, I didn’t figure it out...but things are going well now and there’s always room for improvement. (Interview 2). Both Carmen and Greg envisioned continuous improvement as integral to their teaching in the future.
In contrast, Danielle connected to what originally drew her to the field of education. She explained: “I’m doing something purposeful and supporting the community. I think that’s a good thing” (Interview 3). Danielle felt that her intention to remain in the field was stronger earlier in her career: “The first ten years...even beyond some of the little conflict, I was still like, ‘No, education is a good thing.’ It’s been more lately... ‘How come these schools don’t have it together yet?...Why is there such a struggle?’” (Interview 3). Despite these concerns and questions, Danielle maintained a connection to her original desire to make a purposeful contribution to her community as a teacher.

Finally, Greg summarized the appeal of a career in education by highlighting the daily satisfactions teachers experience:

I think a lot of teachers would say ultimately when it comes down to it it’s a really satisfying career because you’re seeing growth and you’re seeing progress immediately and it’s right there in front of you. And those moments of satisfaction when things go well make it all worth it. (Interview 2)

Greg’s reflections illustrate how teachers may maintain a commitment to staying in the field of education, with the awareness of the challenges the job entails.

Greg, Carmen, and Danielle highlighted the reasons a teacher would want to stay in the field of education. These included their investment in developing as a professional, and the reasons that they are drawn to the field. The next subtheme focuses a different connection to staying in the field.

Subtheme 2: Impediments to Making a Change. Three MCETs explored reasons that teachers may stay in their position and the field. These considerations reflected perceived impediments to making a change, including salary implications and a discomfort with taking risks.
As Danielle contemplated making a change to a different district or role, she shared concerns that were reflective of her career stage:

I have great benefits. I have great pay. I really do. I would have...in hindsight, it wouldn’t matter quite so much earlier on if I had been like—oh, well, yeah, sure. I’ll take that as opposed to this. (Interview 3)

Danielle’s assessment that she may face a pay cut by changing districts as a mid-career teacher aligned with Kristen’s experience. In her 15th year of teaching, Kristen moved to a new district, and explained the potential complications with a change at this point in her career:

I am lucky in that my district rewards new hires by counting all of their previous experience in their contract. Most districts don’t do that. You’re lucky if you can get ten years of outside experience counted for your salary. Knowing that, it makes it hard to move to a different district. (Journal 2)

In addition to salary implications of a move as Kristen and Danielle described, Greg expressed concern regarding the availability of jobs:

I can see why somebody might stay in a job that they don’t love because it’s just so hard to find something else. You play it safe; you stay where you are. I’ve talked to a lot of people who are kind of in that position too, like I only have 12 years until I retire, I might as well stay here. (Interview 1)

The concept of staying in a particular position or in the field as a way of “playing it safe” aligns with Kristen’s view. She described how a comfort level is established and drives career decisions:

I think in the beginning, people look at a career like, ‘This is my career. This is my passion. This is what I do.’ I think once teachers get that tenure and they’re in it for ten years, it changes more to, ‘this is my job.’...they just get very comfortable...Then I think they also look at, ‘Well, where am I going to go? If I go somewhere else, I’m basically starting all over. I won’t have my tenure. I may not get all the credit for my experience.’ It’s the unknown, the fear of the unknown. (Interview 3)

In Kristen’s opinion, a teacher’s fear of losing what they have built up over a long period of time results in an avoidance of change.
Summary for Theme 2. As Kristen, Greg, and Danielle articulated, staying in a position may be the result of fears, and a desire to maintain the salary and tenure that has been established. The next theme reflects a different perspective. The third and final theme focuses on considerations that are associated with making a change.

Theme 3: Considering Change

By definition, MCETs have the perspective of experience, as well as the ability to envision the future based on the trends they’ve observed. Many factors are considered when contemplating a change, including their level of job satisfaction and the long-term implications on their career and family.

Subtheme 1: The Challenges and Demands of a Career in Education. The MCETs described contrasts between a career in education and other fields. They referenced the amount of time teaching requires beyond the school day and the financial aspects of a career in education.

Danielle and Kristen highlighted the time required for teachers to successfully perform in their roles. Danielle explained: “Really, teaching demands a lot of time to feel good and as you are doing the job well” (Journal 2). Kristen also described the discrepancy in time allocation between doing the job and doing the job well: “The role does not end at 3:30. It’s not an 8:00 to 3:30. You have to take the work home and grade it, especially your first couple of years” (Interview 3).

In addition to describing the time required for the role, Kristen and Greg reflected on what they put into their jobs and the compensation they received. Kristen described an imbalance:
You spend countless hours planning lessons, grading papers, making yourself available to parents and students, attending outside workshops, and for what? It has taken years for me to make a solid living. (Journal 2)

Kristen also noted that her increases in salary were the result of a combination of her years of experience and her self-funded graduate studies. Greg expressed a similar frustration with his contributions to his job and the compensation he received:

I feel like for the amount of work you do and the amount you put in, and you’re emotionally invested, it would be nice not to have to worry about financial stuff, like living—not necessarily paycheck to paycheck—but not really moving up and feeling like you’re getting ready for the future. (Interview 2)

The financial aspects of teaching did not come as a surprise to Greg. He summed up the well-established implications of a career in education: “Everybody’s always known that teachers are not doing it for the money—it's such a cliché, but it’s absolutely true because it’s not a lucrative career” (Interview 2). Despite this understanding, Greg still struggled with the financial reality of his chosen career path:

You feel like a professional, and you feel like, maybe we can go on vacations, and your friends you grew up with, they’re doing things, and you feel like—there's not a lot of room for advancement in my career. I could be an administrator, I guess there’s a couple of options, but if you’re going to be a teacher you’re sort of like, ‘on the ride’, and you have very little input, unless you leave and go somewhere else. (Interview 2)

In order to address the kind of concerns that Greg described, Kristen supplemented her income through a part-time job. She explained how the financial limitations of a career in education coupled with the stress involved can serve as a deterrent for those considering this field:

I worked a second job at a restaurant for ten years while I was teaching and going to grad school. I fully understand that I have my summers off and all major holidays off, so I am not complaining about that. It’s just people don’t want to go into the education field because the pay can be lousy compared to other industries and the level of stress that teachers face in low socio-economic schools is not worth it. (Journal 2)
In addition to the financial differences between a career in education as compared to other fields, Kristen highlighted the hours teaching required, and described the impact on family life:

Most jobs you can leave the work at the office when you go home for the night. This is not true for teaching. During the school year we are spending a lot of our free time doing work for the job at the sacrifice of our families. (Journal 2)

Danielle also described the impact of the hours on family life. She identified changes that she made in her allocation of time outside of the workday in response to the needs of her family:

Personally this [time spent working beyond the school day] was easier to achieve before kids as I loved putting more time into school activities. I would work hours each evening perfecting things. I would spend much more time in the actual class environment setting materials up. When kids arrived, it became more apparent how much time I was putting in outside of the actual school day and also my priorities were shifted. My kids and the time spent with them, and sleep became more of a priority and then created inner conflict as I knew teaching was better with more time invested. (Journal 2)

Like Danielle, Greg noticed a shift in his work life balance after the birth of his first child. However, he experienced less internal conflict than Danielle:

Before I became a parent it was more on work, less on life, and since it's more on life and less on work and I would imagine that for a while, maybe not the rest of my career, but certainly for a while, it's going to be more life heavy than work heavy. (Interview 3)

As Kristen, Danielle, and Greg described, the demands of their jobs potentially and actually impacted their family lives, and in ways that they do not feel is experienced in other career paths. Three MCETs described the challenges of a career in education, and how it may differ from other paths. The impact of the time demands, coupled with financial limitations, can make it a challenging career choice. The next subtheme includes perspectives on leaving the field.

Subtheme 2: Considering Leaving the Field. As the MCETs discussed the concept of leaving the field, some were more connected personally to the idea than others. Kristen
described why others may leave the field and Greg reflected on how he would feel about leaving. Lastly, Danielle envisioned what conditions would allow her to choose another path.

Kristen’s description of the current landscape of education highlighted the demands of the role: “Teaching isn’t just teaching anymore. We are expected to wear so many more hats and it takes a toll on even the strongest of teachers” (Journal 2). She also expressed concerns about the current needs of students, and how they impact teachers. She connected leaving the field with the challenges schools face in addressing student needs:

Students are coming to school with such significant social emotional needs that staff doesn’t have the proper training/resources to handle this. Schools are barely hanging on to meet all these needs. Teachers get burnt out so quickly and end up leaving the field. (Journal 2)

Kristen described the demands of the role, and how they can become overwhelming for some teachers. Greg appeared more comfortable with what his role entailed. Instead, he reflected on what he had invested already as a mid-career teacher. He considered the impact of leaving:

Like any job skill, when you do it long enough, you feel sad leaving, like, what did I do that for? Like if I left for some corporate job, all that stuff, all of that work to figure out how to communicate with kids and how to run a classroom, maybe it would all be for nothing and it would be kind of sad to just leave that. So, I put in the time, that’s why I want to keep doing it, but I also love it. (Interview 2)

For Greg, the combination of the investment of his time and the development of expertise sustained his commitment to a career in education, however, his love of teaching was most important.

In contrast, Danielle reflected on what she could gain by leaving the field. She considered the potential impact on her family: “Let’s say it [an opportunity] gave more time during the day for my family where you volunteer and whatever at school, and the quality of our living wasn’t sacrificed too much, I would totally take it” (Interview 3). While the feasibility of
making a change was unclear, Danielle presented the perspective that making a change was desirable.

**Summary: Research Question 2 Themes**

Through the description of three themes, the MCETs’ common perspectives were detailed. All the MCETs described how fit played a role in a career in education. The exploration of the remaining themes (Staying in the Field and Considering Change) illustrated the complexities involved in conceptualizing intent to remain in the field. The description of these themes serves as an introduction to the individual perspectives that follow. While the themes illustrated commonalities, each of the MCETs provided a unique reflection of the connection between their level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field.

**Individual Perspectives**

Each MCET reflected on their intent to remain in the field and their level of job satisfaction. Table 4.7 presents characteristics related to each concept and their alignment with each MCET’s perspective.

**Table 4.7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>MCET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently satisfied with their job</td>
<td>N  Y  Y  Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intending to remain in current position</td>
<td>N  N  Y  Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intending to remain in education</td>
<td>Unsure  Y  Y  Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would consider opportunities in other fields</td>
<td>Y  N  Y  N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in Table 4.7, each MCET’s level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field was uniquely positioned. Three MCETs were satisfied, and two of these intended to remain in their current position. Three intended to remain in education in the future. Two MCETs were open to considering opportunities in other fields. These perspectives are described individually, beginning with the MCETs that had the strongest intention to remain in the field.

Carmen

Carmen’s experiences in two different districts produced contrasting levels of job satisfaction which impacted her intention to remain in the field. Previously, she was “drowning in negativity and dreading going to work every day” (Interview 3). A pivotal conversation with her administrator forced her to consider other options:

When I went for my evaluation meeting, the principal said to me: “You know you’ve lost your luster. I don’t think your heart is in the career you’ve chosen. You might want to consider something else.” And that just broke my heart. (Interview 3)

After this conversation, Carmen reflected and affirmed her commitment to her career choice. She attributed her struggles primarily to elements of the school and district context. She decided it was time to look for a teaching job in a different district. The move to a new district was necessary for her, but she was aware of the risks and sacrifice made: “I left a tenured job to be non-tenured somewhere else because I don’t need that kind of stress in my life. I need support” (Interview 3). This change was essential to her continuing in education and finding satisfaction in a supportive environment.

In her current district, Carmen indicated that she is “very satisfied” with her job and noted that “I haven’t felt this good about teaching in a long time” (Interview 3). Her intention to remain in the field is strong, in large part due to the positive experience in her current district.
The supports she received are integral to her focus on continuous improvement and dedication to facilitating student success. At the age of 53, she anticipated at least another decade of teaching:

Well, after this year, I really, truly in my heart believe I have another good ten years to give to my profession before I say, ‘OK, it’s time’. But who knows? I might change my mind and do another ten...I enjoy going to work. I enjoy the students and I enjoy the comradery I have now with the colleagues I have and the ideas and the support from administration as well as the district. (Interview 3)

The level of satisfaction that Carmen experienced with multiple aspects of her role (e.g., students, colleagues, and administrative support) directly connects to her intent to remain in the field. Not only can she predict that she will continue teaching into her sixties, Carmen is open to extending her career even further.

Greg

Greg’s enthusiasm for his role as a music teacher connected to a high level of job satisfaction: “Every part of my job right now, at this moment, I'm really happy with. I wouldn't really change anything” (Interview 3). However, he had concerns as to the sustainability of this level of satisfaction:

One of my biggest anxieties is that I become less satisfied, because I've never been this satisfied with a job in my life. And maybe I will be more satisfied. I can't imagine what that would be. I don't have a vision for what the next step would be. (Interview 3)

Although he appreciated and recognized that his current job was very satisfying, Greg’s experiences in his previous district impacted the way that he viewed the field of education:

I'm a little bit jaded and cynical about education in general because my previous district had so much turnover, and we were treated so much like a number. And that being my first job kind of set me up for maybe these insecurities and anxieties a little bit. (Interview 3)
Greg’s previous district was much larger, and his position was at risk of being eliminated. He identified a “feeling of imbalance” that made him “always sort of hesitant to ever feel comfortable” (Interview 3). While his current job has provided a high level of satisfaction in addition to a more stable environment, Greg’s intention to remain included nuances, and an openness to opportunities that may arise.

Even though he is very satisfied in his current job and career choice, Greg recognizes that making a change is possible. He wants to be open to these possibilities:

I hope that I'm always going to stay at least somewhat aware of if something presents itself. Because you never know-this job presented itself and it's great, it's amazing. Maybe something else will present itself too, just because I'm really happy now doesn't mean I couldn't be even happier. (Interview 3)

Greg frequently described his satisfaction with his career choice and his current role. However, he identified concerns about his salary when reflecting on a career in education. He explained:

I wish I made more money. I know this is not high-minded or philosophical, but it is the truth...It is the only thing that makes me want to find a different career. I love my job, and the satisfactions of being a teacher still outweigh the dissatisfactions, but it is something that is discouraging about my job. (Journal 1)

This concern about the financial limitations he faced as a teacher also played a role in Greg’s difficulty picturing himself at a later career stage. He shared concerns about how his job satisfaction and ability to sustain the energy required to perform at his current level may change:

I am also insecure about doing this particular job long-term. I cannot visualize myself doing this as a 55-year-old. Actually, I also can't picture my life at 55 period. I just don't know if it is a sustainable job for me. I am afraid of the day that I stop loving my job or start to take it for granted. I am so excited and energized by it now, and I am afraid that will start to fade, especially coupled with the fact that my income/lifestyle is not likely to drastically change. (Journal 1)
However, the satisfying elements of Greg’s job positively impacted his intent to remain in the field for the foreseeable future. For Greg, even though the financial aspects of his career choice are problematic, he has embraced his identity as an educator in a powerful way:

> There's no extrinsic thing that's going to keep me doing it [teaching]. I am an educator and that's what I really want to do and that's what I love to do. It all comes down to if I made way more money, then it wouldn't be an issue. But it wouldn't change anything, I still love teaching, I would do it for less money. I just love doing it. And I think that when you have that, you just have to do it. And I know that I would miss it if I was doing something different. (Interview 3)

As a teacher who is very satisfied in his role, Greg intended to remain in the field. While it is somewhat challenging for him to picture himself at a later stage in his career, his desire to continue teaching is strong.

**Kristen**

Kristen’s career path includes teaching and leadership roles within urban and suburban settings. Her level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field reflect her firm belief that she will be making a change to an administrative role in the future. Kristen described her level of job satisfaction as “average. I don’t love it [the job]. I don’t hate it. It’s what I’m doing now” (Interview 3). Rather than looking for ways to find greater satisfaction within her current role, she looked ahead: “For me, this isn’t my final job. I know it’s not...For me, I can handle it not being something I love because I’m not going to be there, hopefully, for 10 or 20 years” (Interview 3). She recognized that other educators may find this level of job satisfaction to be problematic, given that they may anticipate remaining in a specific role for the foreseeable future. However, Kristen accepts that her level of job satisfaction is unlikely to change:
I feel like it [level of job satisfaction] would stay the same. I’m not seeing it changing for good or bad. I feel it’s just middle of the road. I know that if the position were to get cut, which every year we don’t know, I know that I would not want to go back into the classroom. If it was between staying in this district and going back into the classroom or moving and finding a new job, I would most likely look for a new job. Even though the salary and the financials are phenomenal. (Interview 3)

While she contemplated when, rather than if, she will make a change, Kristen’s intention to remain in the field doesn’t necessarily waiver. Instead, she considered the timing of the change, and the kind of position she would like to attain. The process of assessing her desire to remain in her current context was familiar:

I feel like usually my last year somewhere is really where it’s like, I can’t do this particular position anymore...Like it’s time for me to move on. I’ve done everything that I can here, I could do it for another year, but it’s always going to be the same thing. When I see there’s no more room for growth, then I look at it as: ‘It’s time for me to go.’ (Interview 3)

Her history of making changes in terms of her school and district, as well as her role (from teacher to coach) provided a level of confidence that she can successfully navigate these shifts.

While working in various roles, Kristen pushed herself to take steps to prepare for future roles:

Initially in my teaching, it was always that I’m trying to get as much experience with different grade levels, with curriculum, different teacher leadership experiences so that I can have a better understanding of just the inner workings of schools. Then when I went into coaching, again, it was, what do I need to learn in this role that’s going to help me with what my end goal is? What are the take-aways? What are things that I need to make sure that I’m doing and paying attention to? (Interview 3)

Kristen’s approach to her role is heavily influenced by her desire to become an administrator. Similarly, her level of job satisfaction, although not very high, was tolerable given its position within a context of anticipated change. While her intention to remain in the field was strong, Kristen’s future includes uncertainties as she prepares to meet her professional goal.
Danielle’s level of job satisfaction directly affected how she viewed her career path. When asked, she described herself as “not so satisfied” with her job (Danielle, Interview 3). When she considered how this may change in the future, Danielle appeared notably frustrated: “I could not see my satisfaction getting any better at this time. That’s for sure. It would either be the same or faltering” (Interview 3). She explained the limited way in which she can impact her level of job satisfaction:

I try not to bring it [work] home so much. I have tried to compartmentalize my work...My planning would make the satisfaction, I think, not decrease to too bad of a level, but it’s still at a level where I would not advocate for someone to go into this. (Interview 3)

As Danielle described, her experience in a job that she did not find satisfying affected how she perceived a career in education. Danielle attributed this shift in her view to experiences in the field: “Sadly, when my daughter said she wanted to be a teacher, my first gut feeling was ‘oh no, ugh’, whereas before having spent time in this system I would have felt a great happiness” (Journal 2). This reaction reflects the conflicting thoughts and emotions that Danielle experienced when considering her future.

For Danielle, experiencing dissatisfaction in her job is a reality that she does not anticipate will change. Therefore, she was seeking opportunities within the field of education and open to something outside of education as well. She explained:

If something were to come up, like if someone was like, “Hey, I’ve got this opportunity and you would make X”, then I would be like, “Yeah, OK, I’ll do that.” What holds me back a little bit from that is I do like, like the reason I went into education. I'm doing something purposeful and supporting the community. I think that’s a good thing. (Interview 3)
While she has a desire for change, Danielle is clearly conflicted. As she reflected on her intentions, Danielle described her reasons to stay: “I stay at this point because I make decent money and I have kids who depend on me. But I am looking, and if an opportunity comes up that makes sense for me, I would definitely take it” (Journal 2).

Danielle was dissatisfied with her job and was seeking a change. However, she was concerned about the alignment of a potential opportunity with her family’s needs. She described a possible scenario: “My husband and I discussed options. If he were able to get to a certain level, then I would say, ‘Okay, I’m done, I’m out.’ But there’s too much...it’s hard to say to your career, like ‘no’” (Interview 3). Danielle’s level of dissatisfaction may result in her departure from the field of education; however, she was open to all possibilities.

**Summary: Research Question 2**

Descriptions of each MCET’s level of job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field advanced the individual narratives beyond their current experiences into the future. Carmen and Greg experienced a high level of job satisfaction and intend to stay in their current roles. However, despite his high level of job satisfaction, Greg was open to possibilities that may address concerns he has about a long-term commitment to the field of education. Kristen and Danielle’s paths are not as clearly defined. Kristen was not particularly satisfied in her current role; however, this is less problematic for her due to her goal of becoming an administrator. Danielle was dissatisfied with her job and was exploring different opportunities. However, she was cognizant of what she may need to sacrifice in order to make a change.

While the level of job satisfaction the MCETs experienced played a role in their intent to remain in the field, it cannot be seen as the only influence. The only MCET that experienced a
high level of job satisfaction and is therefore intending to remain in the field is Carmen. However, this may also be due, to some extent, to her proximity to potential retirement. At the age of 53, she did not need to envision sustaining her career for two or more additional decades. Like Carmen, Greg experienced a high level of job satisfaction, and intended to remain in the field. Although he did not intend to pursue a different career path, he was open to possibilities.

Kristen’s level of job satisfaction was notably lower than Carmen and Greg’s, and she openly considered making a change. However, this reflected her goal, rather than in response to her level of job satisfaction. Lastly, Danielle’s intent to remain in the field reflected her lower level of job satisfaction. Notably, she cannot foresee this level changing, so she remained open to other possibilities within and outside of the field of education. For all the MCETs, the level of job satisfaction that they experienced has some connection to their intent to remain in the field but cannot be seen as the only consideration.

Chapter Summary

The findings of the study were detailed in this chapter. The chapter began with an introductory sketch of each MCET which provided background information. Data connected to each research question was described using themes that connected multiple MCETs. Lastly, each MCETs’ intent to remain in the field was detailed individually. The next chapter includes a discussion of these findings, as well as their implications and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The design of this study supported an open-ended sharing of reflections by the MCETs regarding their level of job satisfaction and how it influenced their career intentions. Chapter 4 included the findings, with supporting evidence from the interviews and journals. This final chapter includes a discussion of the major outcomes related to job satisfaction and intent to remain in the field. Four major outcomes will be presented in light of previous research and with consideration given to their implications. Then, limitations of the study will be addressed as well as recommendations to the field of education and for future research.

Major Assertions and Implications

This study focused on the connection between job satisfaction and career intentions for elementary teachers at the mid-career stage. These connections will be described in two different ways. First, a visual model of the relationships will be presented. Then the four major assertions will be discussed in detail.

The findings of this study supported the idea that determining career intent is a process. This concept is presented in Figure 2. Teachers’ previous experiences, length of time in their district, as well as their current level of job satisfaction serve as “contributing elements” to begin this process. These elements are understood and analyzed through the lens of a mid-career teacher. This perspective is constantly evolving based on additional experiences and reflections. A few broad categories (i.e., individual priorities and professional goals, alignment of values
with current and anticipated realities, job satisfaction: satisfiers and dissatisfiers) allow for the individual construction of this perspective. The analysis of the contributing elements utilizing the perspective of a mid-career teacher leads to four possible outcomes for career intent.

![Figure 2. A Model of the Connection Between Mid-Career Teachers’ Previous Experiences, Job Satisfaction, and Intent to Remain in the Field.](image-url)
To some extent, all of the components of the model could be applied to teachers at different career stages. The contributing elements are broad enough that a beginning, middle, or late-career teacher could identify meaningful previous experiences as well as their current level of job satisfaction. The career intent outcome includes four possibilities, and teachers may be drawn to one or two over the others. Also, they may change their intent at another point in time. However, the components of the “perspective” section are more specific to the mid-career stage. For example, individual priorities and professional goals have likely already transformed and evolved from what they may have included at the beginning of a teacher’s career. With the knowledge and perspective gained through experience, a mid-career teacher may be better equipped to identify a path to a professional goal.

Another element, “alignment of values with current and anticipated realities” embeds the assumption that at the mid-career stage, teachers have a sense of what is important to them on a practical and moral level. This allows them to evaluate the extent to which what they have identified as important will be found in their present or future as an educator. This concept was illustrated by Danielle, as she experienced conflict with the kind of educational services that were provided for her students. As she came across these conflicts, Danielle sought support from administrators, with mixed results. She valued her role in providing effective programming for her students but was dissatisfied as she navigated barriers to achieving her goals.

Job satisfaction, the third element within the “perspective” section, also uniquely connects to the mid-career stage. By definition, the positioning of this career stage can reflect on an established past, while maintaining an awareness of a substantial path ahead. In reflecting on this position, the MCETs noted experiences they wanted to avoid, based on what they had
observed of other teachers. Greg provided an example of what late-career teachers may experience, and his hope to sustain his creative energy:

> It seems like when people get to that point in their career, they start to get really tired and they lose some of their energy to be creative. I hope that I don’t get like that, but my job requires so much of that...if I don’t have that, it’s going to make my job not as fun, it’s going to be less enjoyable and less fulfilling. I’m just afraid of burning out. (Interview 2)

Greg’s quote also demonstrates how his currently satisfying experience as a MCET informs his perspective on a different stage in his career. While the three components of the mid-career perspective included in Figure 2 could be applied to other career stages, these components are particularly relevant to the mid-career stage.

The model presented in Figure 2 indicates that as both the current level of job satisfaction and previous experiences are viewed through the perspective of a mid-career teacher, four different outcomes regarding intent are possible. This model both extends and reconceptualizes elements of a previously presented visual from Chapter 1 (see Figure 1). Figure 1 illustrated the idea that teachers’ job satisfaction includes components that are satisfying or dissatisfying, as well as school-based factors (neither highly satisfying or dissatisfying). Overall, teachers are either satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs, and will either intend to remain in the field or intend to leave the field. Figure 2 reflects different understandings based on the findings of this research study. The next four sections provide further discussion regarding how components of this model are supported by the findings and in light of previous research.

**Assertion 1: School Context Influences MCETs’ Level of Job Satisfaction**

The focus of the first research question involved how the school context influenced MCETs’ level of job satisfaction. The underlying assumption was that the context played a role in job satisfaction, and that commonalities could be seen among participants teaching in
potentially very different contexts. The emergence of three themes (Role and the Elementary Environment, Valued Supports, and Resources), and 13 related subthemes reflected that the context was, in fact, quite influential on the level of job satisfaction that teachers experienced. Notably, for eight of these thirteen subthemes, the same elements (e.g., district culture, professional development and training, and colleagues) provided satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the MCETs.

Akin to this study, previous research by Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) investigated educators’ perceptions of job satisfaction and serves as a critical point of discussion. Their research built upon Herzberg’s (1966) Two-Factor Theory of job satisfaction by exploring how it applies within educational contexts. Educators in Australia, England, and New Zealand (Dinham & Scott, 2000) completed questionnaires that included 75 items regarding elements of and the extent to which they were sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Analysis of these responses confirmed alignment with Herzberg’s theory. Sources of satisfaction included elements that were integral to the job of teaching, and intrinsically motivating. Dissatisfaction was associated with what Herzberg referred to as “hygiene factors,” which are oriented in the conditions of work, such as compensation, supervision, and policy. Additionally, Dinham and Scott identified a third domain, consisting of school-based factors which are not highly satisfying or dissatisfying, such as school leadership and climate. These factors vary from school to school.

In order to consider these findings in light of this previous research, it is necessary to revisit the elements of the school context that provided satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or both. Table 5.1 presents the subthemes that emerged from this study alongside Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) findings.
Table 5.1
Common Sources of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>• Opportunities beyond teaching role</td>
<td>• Self-growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developmental characteristics of elementary students</td>
<td>• Mastery of professional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student success</td>
<td>• Student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students (as a valued support)</td>
<td>• Helping students change their behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive relationships with students and others</td>
<td>• Positive relationships with students and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>• Administrators</td>
<td>• School leadership, climate, and decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• District culture</td>
<td>• School infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role-specific experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coaching/Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Space, supplies, and technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>• Unrealistic expectations</td>
<td>• Increased expectations on schools</td>
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</table>

As reflected in Table 5.1, the subthemes that emerged from this study aligned with elements in Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) research across all three domains. The intrinsic satisfiers involved professional skills and opportunities to support student success. A broad category of “unrealistic expectations” described by the MCETs connected to dissatisfying elements that were identified in previous research.

This study also provided further evidence of the school-based factors comprising the third domain identified by Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000). While they asserted that these factors are neither highly satisfying or dissatisfying, the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction was not quantified by the MCETs. Therefore, these elements (e.g., administration, district culture, and
colleagues) are associated with the third domain described by Dinham and Scott due to their dynamic nature, and the understanding that they are influenced by the school context.

Although the findings of this study primarily reflected similarities to Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) research across all three domains, there were notable differences as well. Across all three domains, previous research identified elements that were not described by the MCETs. Additionally, two subthemes served as sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction but were not reflected in Dinham and Scott’s research. Table 5.2 presents these nuances.

Table 5.2
Unique Sources of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>None (all subthemes aligned with Dinham and Scott’s)</td>
<td>• Feeling part of a collegial, supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>• Parents</td>
<td>• School reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional development and training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>None (all subthemes aligned with Dinham and Scott’s)</td>
<td>• Educational change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of support services for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes to promotion procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Community’s opinion of teachers and their working conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the comparisons between the findings of this study and previous research yielded many similarities and a few differences, it is worthwhile to consider possible explanations for these differences. One consideration is the impact of the career stage of the teachers in this study. All of the MCETs in this study had taught in multiple districts, and three of the four (Greg, Carmen, and Kristen) articulated important contrasts in the contexts they experienced.
While Dinham and Scott’s research focused on educator’s current perceptions, this study included information shared by the MCETs regarding their previous experiences. Given their career stage, the MCETs had potentially highly varied experiences to describe.

Additionally, Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) explored the idea of change in job satisfaction over the course of one’s career by having educators rate how their level of satisfaction had changed since they started teaching. Twelve percent of respondents noted no change, while 29% were either more satisfied or highly satisfied currently. Fifty-nine percent indicated that they were more dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied than they were initially. This is certainly a concerning finding, but also reflects the likelihood of job satisfaction decreasing over the course of one’s career. While this phenomenon was not specifically articulated by the MCETs, they did describe variations in their level of job satisfaction at different points in their careers.

Another possible reason for these differences in the ways that Dinham and Scott’s (1998, 2000) educators and these MCETs view the contributors to their job satisfaction connects to the methodology, as previously referenced. Dinham and Scott’s research involved responses to multiple choice questions, whereas both the interviews and journal writing provided opportunities for description of how various experiences within the school context connect to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Examples of satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding the same element can be captured through qualitative strategies, whereas the quantitative approach used by Dinham and Scott required a definitive selection between one (highly dissatisfying) and seven (highly satisfying).

It is also possible that, if asked directly about all of the elements examined through the questionnaire used by Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000), the MCETs may have similarly
categorized those elements (as satisfying, dissatisfying, or both). However, this would not have been in alignment with the methodology of this study. These methodological differences may play some role in producing variations. However, given these differences as well as the small number of participants offering their perspectives for this study, the overall alignment of these elements is substantial.

The first assertion supported the important role school context plays in job satisfaction. Alignment between the findings of this study and previous research by Dinham and Scott (1998, 2000) provided further support for the extension of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory to highlight the role of the school context.

**Assertion 2: MCETs Benefit From Layered, Differentiated Supports**

The findings from the first research question included three themes describing the influence of the school context on their level of job satisfaction. One of these themes, Valued Supports, details how the work of MCETs is impacted by those they encounter in their work lives. The emergence of this theme, with its six subthemes and supporting evidence from all of the MCETs, reflects the importance of support and the impact of situations where it was lacking. Colleagues, students, and parents were among the six identified supports. However, this discussion will focus on three of the supports that are part of the professional community: administrators, district culture, and coaches and mentors.

**Administrators**

The presence of these supports was notably beneficial for the MCETs and occurred in a few different ways. Supportive administrators provided feedback that reinforced continued
effective practices, or guided improvements. For example, Greg noted that his administrators “always encouraged me to find my own way of doing things” (Journal 1). This kind of support empowered Greg at a stage in his career where he could build upon his established skills as a teacher and continue to build upon strengths. Kristen was also guided to grow as a professional. She received support in pursuing her goal of becoming an administrator: “He [the principal] knows what my goals are, so he helps to give me some different opportunities for that” (Interview 1). These examples illustrate the ways that administrators supported MCETs in alignment with their needs, strengths, and goals. Not only were these actions tied to the effectiveness of the MCETs in their roles, but they connected to job satisfaction for the MCETs.

**District Culture**

District culture was another Valued Support identified by the MCETs. While many factors contribute to the culture that is created and experienced, administrators play an important role in supporting a culture where teachers and students can thrive. Carmen best summarized the impact of being a part of a district where teachers are appreciated and supported: “Being in a district where it’s so supportive helps me want to do more and improve my craft” (Interview 3). Not only does a positive district culture help her to thrive, it motivates Carmen to go further and become more effective. Danielle’s experience in a district culture that encouraged collaboration connected to her ability to problem solve ways to better support her students. She took the initiative to develop meeting structures that allowed for weekly team collaboration among herself, as the special education case manager, and the specialists that worked with her students. The MCETs professionally benefitted from a positive district culture and used their knowledge and experience to extend the impact to their students.
Coaching and Mentoring

The MCETs in this study had varied experiences with coaching and mentoring. As a new teacher in the district, Carmen was strongly supported in this way. She explained that she has the support of her mentor and a coach, which was particularly helpful when implementing new curricula and instructional strategies. In contrast, since Danielle had been with her district for several years, and was in a specialized role, she did not have the benefit of these supports.

However, she provided insights as to how mentoring support would be beneficial:

They offer mentors at the beginning of a career, which is wonderful and it’s necessary. But I don’t think mentors should always go away. Or, for example, when I entered a different stage of having kids. It’s a different kind of energy you bring, or you may have after having worked in a system for so long that it may not be a bad idea to keep mentors or to every once in a while, pair a mentor. Because I’ll even say, being able to talk about this stuff is a good thing, and to reflect. It may not always come up naturally in the relationships you have in your work environment...It may be more venting, instead of, “Let’s really talk about how everything’s feeling and about where you are wanting to go and what you are wanting to do next.” (Interview 2)

Danielle’s perspective highlights the idea that MCETs also need support. She associated formal mentoring exclusively with the beginning teacher experience, however she provided a rationale for how a mentor could be of benefit.

Like any professional, MCETs benefit from supports. However, due to their level of expertise that they have developed since moving beyond the novice stage in their careers, MCETs may not always receive these supports. Additionally, their needs included nuances. The examples provided by these MCETs demonstrate how supports that are tailored to their needs enhanced their effectiveness and level of job satisfaction. Above all, when the MCETs had opportunities to voice their perspective, access the supports they needed, develop new skills, and implement their ideas, they grew as professionals and positively impacted their work with students and other professionals.
Assertion 3: Mid-Career Teachers Experience Affective and Continuance Commitment

This research study included the MCETs’ view of their intent to remain in the field. The reasons behind staying in the field or considering a change connect to research on occupational and organizational commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) describe commitment as a psychological state involving three components: affective, continuance, and normative. Commitment is unique to an individual, as “an employee can experience all three forms of commitment to varying degrees” (p. 68). Each component of commitment will be described in light of the findings of this research.

Affective commitment connects to one’s emotions, and continued employment is driven by a desire to remain. Connections to affective commitment were embedded in the findings from both research questions. The first theme, Role and the Elementary Environment, included subthemes that referenced positive relationships with students, and various opportunities to give additional time and energy to the organization. A subtheme that emerged from the findings from the second research question, “The Desire to Stay,” aligns directly with the affective component of commitment. For example, Danielle described her teaching as “doing something purposeful and supporting the community” (Interview 3), eliciting positive feelings about her role and continuation in the profession. These connections to affective commitment are not surprising, given that teaching involves supporting student growth and is often interactive in nature.

Continuance commitment focuses on need, and an understanding of the costs associated with leaving. One subtheme closely connected to this component of commitment: “Impediments to Making a Change.” Concerns about taking a reduction in salary by moving to another district, or even having difficulty finding a different job were noted by the MCETs. As Greg explained:
“I can see why somebody might stay in a job that they don’t love because it’s just so hard to find something else. You play it safe; you stay where you are” (Interview 1).

The final component, normative commitment, refers to a feeling of obligation to continue employment with an organization. The findings did not reflect this component of commitment. Perhaps it would have emerged if the MCETs had an opportunity to intentionally describe their connection to each component of commitment. However, it is notable that ties to affective and continuance commitment emerged without such direct questioning. The lack of evidence of normative commitment may, to some extent, reflect the characteristics of the MCETs selected for this research study. Besides their career stage, these teachers indicated that they had considered leaving the field. If their level of normative commitment was higher, they may not have been as likely to have considered leaving the field. Therefore, the presence of normative commitment, nor the influence of its potential absence, cannot be determined. Given that this study focused on just four MCETs, this assertion focuses on what was reflected in the findings: connections to affective and continuance commitment.

**Assertion 4: Intent to Remain in the Field Can be Influenced and Changed**

The final assertion of this research study focuses on intent to remain in the field, and how it can be differently understood in light of the findings. As presented in Figure 2, teachers may intend to stay in the field, intend to change their context, consider leaving the field, and intend to leave the field. This conceptualization highlights the process of considering various elements through a mid-career lens, leading to an articulation of career intent. Job satisfaction serves as an important influence, given its role as a contributing element for consideration through a mid-
career lens. Additionally, those at this stage have established satisfiers and dissatisfiers, which play a critical role in defining their perspective and ultimately, career intent.

This research study featured each teacher’s unique experience with intent to remain in the field. Intent to remain in the field may be directly impacted by a change in context. Carmen best illustrated this experience. In her previous context, she was extremely dissatisfied, and considered leaving the field. Instead, she made a change to a different district, and became a highly satisfied teacher who intends to continue teaching for some time. Greg was highly satisfied with many aspects of his job, however his concerns about the financial implications of a career in teaching led to an openness to opportunities that could better meet his financial goals.

The exploration of the career intentions of teachers while they were in the field created an opportunity to consider how these intentions may connect to attrition and retention. The same reasons that teachers leave the field are most likely meaningful influences on the experience of those who consider leaving. As indicated by surveys of teachers who left the field following the 2012-13 school year, 55% cited dissatisfaction was a very important factor (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Of the four MCETs that participated in this research study, Danielle experienced dissatisfaction and considered leaving. Her situation certainly aligns with the idea that dissatisfaction leads to decreased intent to remain in the field and possible attrition.

Kristen, as a MCET who was not particularly satisfied with her current role, provided an example of how dissatisfaction does not necessarily align with attrition. She planned to continue in the field in order to continue to pursue her goal of becoming an administrator. She anticipated increased satisfaction upon making this change. However, Kristen indicated that her ability to accept this level of satisfaction was, in large part, due to her confidence in a future role change: “I can handle it not being something I love because I’m not going to be there, hopefully, for 10
or 20 years” (Interview 3). Danielle’s experience differed from Kristen’s since she did not know if obtaining a different position was possible, as she was unsuccessful in previous attempts to do so. It is also possible that if Kristen became less satisfied, or even continued at her current level of satisfaction without the confidence that she would reach her goal of becoming an administrator, her intent could be impacted, similar to Danielle.

The reiteration of these MCETs experiences with intent and job satisfaction demonstrates that the considerations when determining intent are individually constructed. An important concept presented in Figure 2 is the expansion of the categories around intent. Descriptions of teachers’ career decisions include well-established group descriptors, such as “stayers”, “movers” and “leavers” (Bobbitt, Faupel, & Burns, 1991) and even subcategories, such as “settled stayers” and “unsettled stayers” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). To some extent, parallel categories could be applied to intent (i.e., intend to stay, intend to move, intend to leave). Intent can also be measured quantitatively, thus supporting a categorical approach. For example, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) assessed teachers’ motivation to leave the profession through analysis of their responses to three statements (e.g., “I often think of leaving the teaching profession”). However, given the findings of this research study, it is important to include the category, “considering leaving the field.” Through this conceptualization, greater understandings of teachers’ previous experiences, anticipated opportunities, and their perspectives can be gained. A teacher may consider leaving the field briefly, or it may be something that weighs on them daily, over a long period of time. For some teachers, it may be a recurring experience.

Among the most essential aspects of career intent is that it may change. While intent can ultimately lead to action (e.g., looking for a different job, resigning), it may change before any
observable action is taken. A teacher’s goals, values, and level of job satisfaction are reflected in their intent. Capturing and understanding intent creates an opportunity to change it. However, the challenge of making a difference in a teacher’s intent is that it may be only known and understood by the individual, rather than shared with others. Those within the school context identified as Valued Supports by the MCETs (i.e., colleagues, coaches, and administrators) have potential to support changes that could help a teacher to remain in the field. Unfortunately, the process of determining intent, as described by the MCETs, may occur in isolation, or with limited support.

This assertion promotes the perspective that if a teacher’s intent is understood, appropriate support can be provided, which may lead to an increased likelihood of remaining in the field. However, this is based on the assumption that a teacher who considers leaving the field is a valued contributor, with a history of effectiveness, and the ability to continue teaching in a similar way. For those who are not effective and do not have the combination of skill, will, and support to improve quickly, attrition is necessary to minimize the negative impacts on students. This study focused on those still in the field who considered making a change for their own reasons.

Perhaps Carmen serves as an example to illustrate that a mid-career teacher can experience dissatisfaction, consider leaving the field, leaves one school context and goes to another, completely changing her path from potential attrition to thriving and satisfied. How many other teachers, particularly at the mid-career stage, will reach the same point as Carmen, but either cannot or will not make that critical change? It is impossible to know the answer to this question, however a first step is to understand that teachers’ intent may change over the course of their careers, with the potential of being positively impacted.
Summary of Major Assertions

The major assertions of this research study focused on job satisfaction, need for support, commitment, and intent to remain in the field. Job satisfaction was influenced by the school context in alignment with previous research. One avenue for increasing job satisfaction for MCETs would be to provide differentiated supports to meet their needs more precisely. Affective and continuance commitment were discussed in light of previous research. Additionally, possible influences on intent were suggested. Next, limitations of the study will be provided.

Limitations

While important findings and implications for the field of education emerged from this qualitative study, limitations must also be presented. First and foremost, this research study included only four MCETs. Although diversity was present in their demographic characteristics, roles, and experiences, this group was selected randomly from those who completed the online questionnaire. Therefore, they do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of most or all MCETs. It is also quite possible that their perspectives are not typical of those with the same demographic characteristics, roles, and experiences. Additionally, these MCETs were employed within the same county, so it is not possible to generalize these findings to a larger or more geographically diverse population.

Recommendations to the Field of Education

The findings of this study have illustrated connections between a few important constructs for teachers: level of job satisfaction, career stage, and intent to remain in the field.
These constructs are individually experienced by teachers and impacted by a multitude of factors and influences. However, there are specific recommendations to the field of education with potential to reframe the dialogue around these constructs and thus, the experiences of mid-career teachers. Recommendations will be shared for administrators, coaches and professional development providers, and teachers.

**Administrators**

Administrators have an opportunity to impact MCETs’ experiences in a few different ways. Most importantly, they play a critical role in establishing and making changes to the school context that supports satisfying or dissatisfying experiences. This includes providing resources and feedback. Administrators can provide supports for teachers which will help them to be more effective as well as more satisfied in their roles. As they make critical decisions that impact teachers, those at the mid-career stage likely have a perspective to share. Administrators who provide opportunities for teachers to share their feedback send a message that their staff is valued and promote a collaborative culture.

While administrators’ efforts to intentionally support a positive culture are of benefit to all teachers, there are actions that they can take to specifically address the needs of MCETs. For example, developing an open dialogue outside of the evaluation system creates a space for MCETs to share their perspective, and in particular, how their level of job satisfaction can be maintained (if it is high) or increased (if it is lower). Administrators who have built rapport with their teachers are more likely to be seen as supportive. Therefore, teachers who may benefit from a change in their role or a different perspective can share their concerns and obtain support.
As they support teachers in setting goals and reflecting on their careers, administrators have an opportunity and a responsibility to positively impact teachers’ level of satisfaction.

Coaches and Professional Development Providers

Educators who play a critical role in supporting the professional development of teachers would benefit from an increased understanding of career stages. At the mid-career stage, in particular, teachers are seeking meaningful opportunities that enhance their effectiveness and apply to their roles.

Collaborative structures such as Professional Learning Communities can be beneficial, particularly if they are purposefully created, and driven by meaningful goals. However, it is also essential to provide opportunities for the teacher to create their own path for learning. Individualized coaching supports that value the voice of the teacher and are dialogical in nature are more likely to meet the needs of teachers at this stage.

Often coaches and professional development providers must facilitate adult learning in situations where the skill level and knowledge base of teachers is very diverse. There may be common goals, such as the implementation of a specific curriculum or strategy, but the way in which teachers learn will likely vary. Therefore, when designing and implementing adult learning opportunities, using a career-stage lens is an effective strategy. This can be accomplished simply through questioning strategies which encourage teachers to make connections between new strategies and previous practices. Similarly, positioning new learning in light of established practices creates an opportunity for those at the mid-career stage to thoughtfully merge their experiences with future goals, while valuing the expertise that they have developed thus far in their careers.
This qualitative research study sought to capture the experience of being a MCET. In doing so, the complex interactions between job satisfaction, career stage, and intent to remain in the field were articulated by the four participants.

While this study focused on one career stage, it is recommended that teachers remain connected to their original reasons for entering the field. Although it is likely that these reasons were rooted in a very different perspective than that of a teacher with experience in the field, it is valuable to revisit them in the pursuit of a satisfying job. While a reconnection to goals and motivations may be facilitated by a school leader as a means of connecting to purpose, culture, or change, it is ultimately the responsibility of each individual to reflect on their career and how to sustain it. This should be done intentionally, and regularly, at least a few times a year. Strategies for connecting to previous and current motivations to remain in teaching may be found through dialogue with colleagues, mentors, or through literature.

Teachers, particularly at the mid-career stage, must also have an understanding of their level of job satisfaction, and particularly how it is influenced. Depending on what an individual teacher finds satisfying or dissatisfying, there may be ways to make adjustments within the context to increase satisfaction. However, if a teacher continually experiences dissatisfaction, changing context may be a way to find and reconnect with the more satisfying aspects of a career in education. While there are risks involved in making a change, the potential positive outcomes can outweigh these risks. It is important for teachers to value their job satisfaction enough to take action in order to ensure that a career that they have invested themselves in is as rewarding as it can be.
Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this research study highlighted the perspective of MCETs that extend the dialogue regarding job satisfaction, career stages, and career intent. Future research utilizing multiple methodologies will further expand the literature regarding these concepts. While several different recommendations are shared, they all include teachers as participants in the research. This reflects a continued need to feature teachers’ perspectives to inform understandings within the field of education.

Recommendations for Future Research: Focus on Job Satisfaction

As they discussed their level of job satisfaction, the MCETs in this research study demonstrated how this concept is individually experienced. Additionally, one’s level of job satisfaction may change over time, and is influenced by various elements of the school context. Future research should include continued explorations of the how job satisfaction is influenced, as well as strategies for increasing it.

Although in this study, both teachers who were satisfied and dissatisfied with their jobs considered leaving the field, identifying ways to increase teachers’ level of job satisfaction remains an important strand of research. Since the impact of Valued Supports connected to job satisfaction for these MCETs, an important extension of this research would be to explore even more specifically, how each support connects to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These understandings could lead to the development of guidance for supports that improve the level of satisfaction that MCETs (and perhaps those at other career stages as well) experience.
Recommendations for Future Research: Focus on Career Stages

In order to further expand understandings regarding career stages, future research can look more closely at how teachers at different career stages experience job satisfaction within their context. While this study established a connection between job satisfaction and school context for MCETs, it did not include teachers at the beginning or later stages of their careers.

Qualitative explorations of this strand of research could focus on a narrow set of factors, and then consider the role of career stage. For example, a study focusing on the impact of a particular leadership style for teachers could include inquiries about how teachers’ perspectives may be impacted by their career stage. If mid-career teachers were the focus of the research, they could be asked, “How would your view of this leadership style be similar or different if you were an early career teacher?”. Or, teachers at any stage could be provided with brief descriptions of career stages and asked to identify which one is likely to respond best to the leadership style being studied. Rather than focusing on teachers from just one stage, groups of teachers at the same stage could collectively describe their perspective through focus group dialogue. Analysis of these shared understandings, specific to each career stage group, could further define and inform understandings of each career stage.

Researchers may include career stage as one of several variables when analyzing research findings for different groups (e.g., Day, 2008; Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2013). However, it is not typically the focus of the research. Therefore, research focusing on the career stage as the primary variable could provide increased insights into how teachers at different stages experience their satisfaction in their context. By focusing on a particular context (ideally, the same school), the opportunity arises to better understand the role of the career stage lens. A mixed methods approach could be utilized to garner quantitative data from a larger sample of
teachers (via a questionnaire), which could be analyzed according to career stage. The findings from this phase would inform a subsequent qualitative phase by identifying views that were more influenced by career stage. Follow up interviews with representatives of each career stage could provide further insights into the construct being explored. This intentional focus on the impact of the career stage would serve to inform understandings about how those at different career stages experience satisfaction, or a particular aspect of their role or context.

**Recommendations for Future Research: Focus on Intent to Remain in the Field**

Future research that focuses on intent to remain in the field would be of greatest benefit if approached from a longitudinal perspective. This research provided a snapshot of four individuals, during part of one school year. It is likely that a teacher’s intent to remain in the field changes within the same school year, and certainly from year to year. The focus of future research exploring intent would be to better understand which factors influence it, as well as the extent to which teachers can control these influences.

The series of three interviews (as well as two journals) provided the researcher with an opportunity to get to know each participant in depth, by establishing and building rapport over these face to face meetings, and also exploring their past experiences and current contexts in detail. However, in doing so, the opportunity to focus extensively on intent to remain in the field was somewhat limited. Therefore, future research primarily exploring intent could center around two concepts: the reasons teachers want to remain in the field and the reasons they consider leaving.

A qualitative approach would serve as the primary methodology for these explorations. However, more quantitatively based exercises could be incorporated to promote dialogue. For
example, teachers could be asked to rate their intent to remain in the field at various points in
time, over the course of one or more school years. They could also be asked to rank the
influences on their intent to remain in the field. Then, teachers could describe the reasons behind
their thinking. A longitudinal approach would allow for increased understandings of how intent
connects to attrition, by exploring the factors that influence individuals’ experiences.

**Recommendations for Future Research: Multiple Constructs**

Finally, conducting research connected to the effectiveness of an intervention offers
opportunities to impact teachers’ experiences with one or more of the constructs explored in this
study (i.e., job satisfaction, career stage, and intent to remain in the field). The “intervention”
would entail participation in an online professional development activity over the course of
several weeks. This would be facilitated by instructor who would take the approach of a coach
or mentor. An online format would allow for flexible delivery of content and engagement with
others outside of a teacher’s context. A professional development organization could facilitate
this type of activity.

The structure of such an intervention would begin with matching teachers who may
benefit. For example, teachers who were interested in increasing their level of job satisfaction
could participate in an intervention designed to help them understand and address contributing
elements. Research on job satisfaction, combined with activities to promote reflection could be
incorporated in a way that would allow each teacher to gain insights into their current situation
and consider different approaches. A questionnaire could be used to evaluate teachers’
understandings and their level of job satisfaction at the beginning and end of the intervention.
Similarly, teachers participating in an intervention with a career stage focus could gain support through engagement in professional development. Through the introduction of career stage models (e.g., Burke, Fessler, & Christensen, 1984; Huberman, 1989; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001), teachers can use this lens to reflect on their past, present, and future. Intent to remain in the field can also be viewed as a changing construct, influenced by multiple elements (See Figure 2). Participation in an intervention focusing on either or both of these constructs (i.e., career stage and intent to remain in the field) could serve the purpose of providing support to teachers as they navigate their careers. Perhaps this kind of support could play a role in helping teachers to gain insight into what the field of education has, and potentially can continue to offer them. Research evaluating the effectiveness of this type of intervention could involve a quantitative approach, as previously described. However, a qualitative approach could allow the participants to describe the role of the professional development activity in impacting their view of career stage and intention.

These recommendations for future research require both the design of the intervention and the evaluation of it. The goals of the intervention, whether focused on job satisfaction, career stage, or intent to remain in the field, must align with the instruments and methods used to evaluate its impact. Then, the findings of the research can inform changes to the intervention itself with the potential to increase its effectiveness.

Conclusion

“Teaching isn’t just teaching anymore. We are expected to wear so many more hats and it takes a toll on even the strongest of teachers.” (Kristen, Journal 2)

Kristen’s brief, thoughtful reflection on the challenges of teaching highlights the increasing demands of the role as well as the impact on sustaining a career in education. This
study explored the perspectives shared by Kristen, Greg, Danielle, and Carmen at a particular point within their experience at the mid-career stage. The insights they provided illustrated the complexity of a navigating a career in education. Although they experienced success and varied levels of job satisfaction, these MCETs contemplated making career changes.

Additional explorations of MCETs experiences, their level of job satisfaction, and the influences upon it will further demonstrate the importance of their voice to schools, districts, and communities. Whether they are experiencing satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or considering making a change, mid-career teachers are of value to their schools and the field. Increased understandings of this subgroup of educators can lead to the identification and promotion of improved supports to enhance their sustainability in the field of education. The challenge of intentionally addressing MCETs’ job satisfaction and career intentions falls not just on the teachers themselves, but upon others within the school context who must create an environment with supports and opportunities for continued growth.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

LETTER TO DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS
Appendix A: Letter to District Superintendents

Dear [insert superintendent’s name],

My name is Sarah Westberg, and I am a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University. I am conducting a research project titled *An Exploration of Mid-Career Elementary Teachers’ Challenges to Remaining in the Field*. The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and concerns of mid-career elementary teachers as they reflect upon their career paths. I am writing to you to inform you about the project, since I am planning to contact teachers in your district for potential participation.

In order to identify participants for the study, I will send an email to teachers in several public school districts. The email addresses will be obtained from the district website. This email will include a link to a brief questionnaire that teachers can complete. Teachers have the option of including their contact information at the end of the questionnaire, because I will be contacting a few individuals for participation in the remaining phases of the study (i.e., three face to face interviews and responses to two reflective journals).

Participation in all phases of the study (i.e. questionnaire completion, face to face interviews, and reflective journal responses) is completely voluntary, and can be withdrawn at any time. All responses will be kept confidential, as will any identifying information about the school or district. Each participant will use a pseudonym.

This is a project involving gathering data from individual teachers who express an interest in participating by responding to the questionnaire. Therefore, you are not at this time, nor will you be, asked to provide information related to your district or teaching staff. Rather, the purpose of this letter is to ensure that you have accurate information regarding this project, including who to contact with any questions or concerns. I can be reached at [contact information] or [contact information]. Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins is my advisor, and she can be reached at [contact information]. Thank you for your understanding as I pursue this project, which I believe will be a valuable addition to the current literature regarding professionals in the field of education.

Sincerely,

Sarah E. Westberg
APPENDIX B

EMAIL AND SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE
Appendix B: Email and Screening Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify participants for the research project titled, An Exploration of Mid-Career Elementary Teachers' Challenges to Remaining in the Field, being conducted by Sarah Westberg, a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University.

Your completion of the questionnaire is optional, and any responses you provide will remain confidential. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks to your participation in this questionnaire. It should take 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

If you would like to be considered as a potential participant in the second phase of the study (i.e., being interviewed and completing two reflective journals), please provide your contact information at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at [redacted] or Northern Illinois University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at [redacted] or [redacted].

I agree to the terms as stated above:

_____Yes (questionnaire will continue)
_____No (no further questions will be displayed)

**Educational Background**

1. Please indicate your highest level of education:

_____Bachelor’s Degree

_____Bachelor’s Degree with additional graduate hours

_____Master’s Degree

_____Master’s Degree with additional graduate hours

_____Doctoral Degree
Teaching Experiences

2. What is your current position?
   _____Elementary Classroom Teacher
   _____Special Education Teacher
   _____Special Subject Area Teacher (Art, P.E., Music, etc.)
   _____Specialist (Reading, Math, English as a Second Language, Gifted, etc.)
   _____Administrator
   _____Other

3. Which of the following positions have you previously held (check as many as apply)?
   _____Elementary Classroom Teacher
   _____Special Education Teacher
   _____Special Subject Area Teacher (Art, P.E., Music, etc.)
   _____Specialist (Reading, Math, English as a Second Language, Gifted, etc.)
   _____Administrator
   _____Other
   _____I have not held any other positions

4. How many years have you taught (in total)? ______

5. How many years have you taught in your current district? ______

6. How many years do you anticipate that you will continue teaching? ______
7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
highly dissatisfied neutral highly satisfied

8. Which statement best describes the extent to which you’ve thought about leaving the field of education?

_____ I have not considered leaving the field of education.

_____ I have considered the possibility of leaving the field of education at some point in the future.

_____ I am strongly considering leaving the field of education when possible.

**Demographic Information**

9. What is your age? _____

10. Gender: ____________

11. Please describe your ethnic/racial background: ____________________

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Providing your contact information does not mean that you are obligated to participate in the remaining phases of the study (i.e., three face to face interviews and responses to two reflective journals).

I agree to be contacted and provided with further details regarding participation in the study. *Please provide your personal (rather than district) contact information.*

Name____________________________________

Email____________________________________

Phone number______________________________

Preferred method of contact: _____ email_____ phone
Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter

I agree to participate in the research project titled An Exploration of Mid-Career Elementary Teachers’ Challenges to Remaining in the Field, being conducted by Sarah Westberg, a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and concerns of mid-career elementary teachers as they reflect upon their career paths.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: participate in three face-to-face interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes each, and submit two reflective journal responses via email. Each writing response will take approximately 15-20 minutes. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Sarah Westberg at [redacted] or Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins [redacted]. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at [redacted].

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include gaining deeper insight into the challenges that teachers face as they navigate the middle of their careers and consider leaving the field of education. As a participant in this research, I may benefit from the opportunity for reflection and sharing my experiences and perceptions.

I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential by Sarah Westberg. I will be assigned a pseudonym. I understand that the recordings and transcripts of the recordings of interviews will be stored digitally and all collected communication between myself and Sarah Westberg will be stored in a password protected device and maintained for up to five years after the conclusion of the study.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

I, ______________________________ agree to participate in this study.

(printed name)

Signature of Subject ___________________________ Date ______________

I agree to be audio recorded during interviews.

Signature of Subject ___________________________ Date ______________

Northern Illinois University

9/27/2018

Approved by MURB
Visit the year from above date
APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 1
Appendix D: Protocol for Interview

Part A: Obtaining consent for participation
1. Prior to the meeting, provide the participant with a copy of the informed consent document.
2. Thank the participant for coming to the interview. Discuss and review the informed consent document.
3. Ask the participant if he/she has any questions about the document and address them.
4. Ask the participant to sign the informed consent document. Provide a copy of the signed document for the participant.
5. Inform the participant that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. He/She will receive a copy of the transcription for their review prior to the next interview.
6. Obtain permission to start recording.

Part B: Interview
1. Begin recording.
2. Inform the participant that I am a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University and that for this study, I would like to learn about the experiences, perceptions and concerns of mid-career elementary teachers.
3. Inform the participant that this initial interview will focus on the decision to become a teacher, and early career experiences. Ask the participant the following questions:
   a. Tell me about yourself as a professional. What do you teach? How long have you been teaching?
   b. Describe your experiences as a student. Were there teachers that made an impact on you? Tell about any role models or important influences in your education.
   c. How did you come to the decision to pursue a career in education?
   d. Why did you become an elementary teacher? To what extent did you consider other grade levels or subject areas?
   e. Tell me about the path to your current position. Have you worked in other schools? Have you held different positions? Have you pursued additional certifications or endorsements?
   f. Describe the school(s) that you have worked in.
      i. What have been the biggest challenges in these settings?
      ii. How have you handled these challenges?
      iii. Describe your greatest success(es).
   g. Today we’ve focused on your path to becoming a teacher and the beginning of your career. Is there anything else that we haven’t discussed that you feel is important or should be highlighted?
4. Thank the participant for sharing their responses.
5. Inform the participant that the next interview will focus on the experience of being a mid-career elementary teacher. Establish a date, time, and location for the second interview.
6. Stop recording.
APPENDIX E

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 2
Appendix E: Protocol for Interview 2

Part A: Obtaining Consent for Participation
1. Welcome the participant and thank them for their continued participation.
2. Ask the participant if he/she has reviewed the transcript of the first interview, and if he/she has any questions or would like to clarify anything that was discussed.
3. Inform the participant that this interview will focus on the experience of being a mid-career elementary teacher.
4. Inform the participant that this interview will also be recorded and transcribed. He/she will receive a copy of the transcription for their review prior to the next interview.
5. Obtain permission to start recording.

Part B: Interview
1. Begin recording.
2. Ask the participant the following questions:
   a. *This question will be developed after reviewing the teacher’s response to the first journal.* In your journal response, you described ____________. Can you tell me more about ____________?
   b. Describe a typical week in your professional life. Tell about what you do when you are with your students. What are the things that you are responsible for before and after your time with students?
   c. Tell about the influences on your work responsibilities. To what extent do you have control over how your time is spent?
   d. Describe your experiences with teacher evaluation. How does the feedback you receive from administrators affirm your perceptions of your teaching? How do you resolve discrepancies between the feedback you receive and your self-assessment?
   e. Describe a situation or event this school year that left you feeling very satisfied with your job.
   f. Describe a situation or event this school year that left you feeling dissatisfied with your job.
   g. Today we’ve focused on the experience of being a mid-career teacher. Is there anything else that we haven’t discussed that you feel is important or should be highlighted?
3. Thank the participant for sharing their responses.
4. Inform the participant that the next interview will focus on his/her intent to remain in the field, and what influences this decision. Establish a date, time, and location for the third interview.

Stop recording.
APPENDIX F

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW 3
Appendix F: Protocol for Interview 3

Part A: Obtaining Consent for Participation
1. Welcome the participant and thank them for their continued participation.
2. Ask the participant if they have reviewed the transcript of the second interview, and if he/she has any questions or would like to clarify anything that was discussed.
3. Inform the participant that this interview will focus on his/her intent to remain in the field, and what influences this decision.
4. Inform the participant that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. He/she will receive a copy of the transcription for their review.
5. Obtain permission to start recording.

Part B: Interview
1. Begin recording.
2. Ask the participant the following questions:
   a. This question will be developed after reviewing the teacher’s response to the second journal. In your journal response, you described ______________. Can you tell me more about ______________?
   b. Overall, how satisfied do you feel with your job? What would need to change in order to make your job more satisfying?
   c. As you look ahead, do you anticipate becoming more or less satisfied with your job? Why?
   d. Describe your intention to remain in the field of education. How likely are you to remain in the field in the next few years? Please explain how you came to this conclusion.
   e. When reflecting on your career, when did you have the strongest intention to remain in the field? Why?
   f. What advice would you give future teachers to prepare them for the rigors of their role?
   g. In your opinion, what should be done to increase the likelihood that educators like yourself will remain in the field?
   h. Today we’ve discussed the influences on your intention to remain in the field. Is there anything else that we haven’t discussed that you feel is important or should be highlighted?
3. Thank the participant for sharing his/her responses, and for completing this series of three interviews.
Stop recording.
APPENDIX G

WRITING PROMPTS
Appendix G: Writing Prompts

Writing prompts and directions will be emailed to each participant on two occasions.

1. After the first interview has been completed:

Please spend 15-20 minutes responding to the writing prompt that follows.

*Briefly describe the elements of your job:*

   a. *That make you feel satisfied*
   
   b. *That make you feel dissatisfied*

2. After the second interview has been completed:

Please spend 15-20 minutes responding to the writing prompt that follows.

*Briefly describe your biggest challenges to remaining in the field. How do these challenges impact your career decisions?*
APPENDIX H

EXCERPT FROM ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM FOR DATA ANALYSIS
Appendix H: Excerpt From Organizational System for Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guide to Interview Transcript and Journal Codes in Spreadsheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MCET</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 2: Valued Supports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching/Mentoring (Satisfying)</th>
<th>Coaching/Mentoring (Dissatisfying)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A70</strong> got a coach, got a mentor. I can go to my other bilingual class people, because we only go to 3rd grade bilingual, and say, hey, what do you think about this? Hey, how can I help you make your life easier with 1st and 2nd grade? Oh, can you do this in kindergarten? That way, when they come here, they know what they're doing. I'm like, yeah, I can implement that.</td>
<td><strong>A72</strong> Didn't have that there [coaching, admin support]. I don't know how to call it but there was really no camaraderie. There was more like, I'm in my own little island. Leave me alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A74</strong> I love it. I can go to my coach like, I'm not sure how to do the gradual release lesson plan that my principal wants me to try. I said, okay, and I read it and I went to my coach and I said, this reads like stereo. Can you please walk me through it? Because if I go through it once with somebody, I got it and I'll do it on my own.</td>
<td><strong>H2</strong> my first teaching—there was no mentoring or coaching or anything like that. They assigned you one within the building, but in all honesty, there was no formalized plan for any induction into the building. So it was really like sink or swim, and pray that you have someone on your grade level team that's willing to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R106</strong> my district, I found out, brings in music therapists for these kids, and I was like, this is amazing, so then I could go watch her every week and so I learned just by observing her...I had no idea what it was like and she was really great about just telling me, look, this is why I do this it makes them feel better in this way, this is how you can do this.</td>
<td><strong>M170</strong> I do think there's a difference as you get—they offer mentors at the beginning of a career, which is wonderful, and it's necessary. But I don't think mentors should always go away. Or, for example, when I entered a different stage of having kids, it's a different kind of energy you bring or you may have after having worked in a system for so long that it may not be a bad idea to keep mentors or to every once in a while, pair a mentor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>