

PREVIEW

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TEACHING TO EARN: HOW INCENTIVES IMPACT RETENTION IN RURAL  
TEXAS K-12 DISTRICTS

A Dissertation-in-Practice

Presented to

The Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Sarah Borowicz

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TEXAS K-12 DISTRICTS

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## ABSTRACT

### TEACHING TO EARN: HOW INCENTIVES IMPACT RETENTION IN RURAL TEXAS K-12 DISTRICTS

by

Sarah Borowicz

This study was designed to investigate how non-monetary incentives impact teacher retention as well as how non-monetary incentives compare to monetary incentives when retaining teachers in small rural Texas K-12 districts. The study consisted of a cross-sectional survey of teachers ( $N=64$ ) from eight rural districts with student enrollment between 230 and 514 in Region XI, which fall within the 3A conference of the University Interscholastic League. Participants were asked a 29 question survey that provided information related to the following non-monetary and monetary incentives found in research, classroom autonomy, values and mission, professional development, mentoring programs, low student to teacher ratio, additional planning time, student discipline, decision making, availability of resources, salaries, bonuses/stipends, loan forgiveness, and housing. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data. Results indicated that non-monetary incentives have a greater impact on teacher retention than monetary incentives. For campus and district leaders, these findings may provide information beneficial for decision making in regard to what types of incentives may be offered to support the highest teacher retention rates.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, Chelsae Knight. My first teacher in being a great leader. I love you!

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction to the Study**

The purpose of this cross-sectional survey study was to determine how non-monetary incentives influenced the retention of teachers in rural Texas K-12 public school districts. This chapter includes an overview of the background of the problem for the study. Following the background are the statement of the problem, theoretical framework, the purpose of the study, and the research questions guiding the study. The rationale and significance of the study, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and definitions are also included. The chapter ends with a brief chapter summary.

### **Background**

Job satisfaction among teachers has been a growing concern over the past decade (Hilton, 2017; Paufler, 2018; Ingersoll, 2003). Several factors have influenced this decrease in job satisfaction including work-related stress, adequate compensation, and job-embedded supports (Ingersoll, 2003). In fact, Molero Jurado, Perez-Fuentes, Atria, Oropesa Ruiz, and Gazquez Linares (2019) found that these negative influences are causing teachers to leave the profession.

High needs areas have an even higher concern for teacher retention (Aragon, 2016; Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Math, Science, and Special Education have a higher than average shortage for filled teaching positions with little to no improvement since 2003 (Aragon, 2016). In addition to the shortage in these high needs areas, teachers in these areas are also leaving the profession at a higher rate than their colleagues who teach in areas that are not high need (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that Math and

Science teachers were leaving the profession at higher rates do to other careers in the fields of Math and Science that had higher paying salaries and better benefits. Unlike other shortage area teachers, Special Education teachers were shown to leave the profession or change to other teaching areas due to the additional work-related stressors that teachers in this specific field face including additional paperwork and more extreme student behaviors. In addition to shortage areas, retaining minority teachers in shortage areas is an even larger challenge (Ingersoll, Mays, & Collins, 2019). Increasing decision-making, autonomy, and the demographics of the school are all factors that influence the retention of minority teachers (Ingersoll, Mays, & Collins, 2019; Reyes & Alexander, 2017).

As a way to counter these shortages, many districts have implemented “grow your own” strategies to support the development of students in becoming teachers (Dessoiff, 2010). “Grow your own” strategies have been shown to increase the number of teachers available to districts. However, these teachers have not been grown to fill shortage areas specifically, which has not reduced the amount of shortage area teaching positions that are still present (Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, & Salgado, 2005). In addition, there is higher than average turnover rate for teachers in shortage areas (Darling-Hammon & Podolsky, 2019).

Hanson and Yoon (2018) found approximately one in five teachers resigned each year, and the rate was higher in low socioeconomic and low performing schools. This rate has been identified to be even higher for teachers hired later in the school year (Papay & Kraft, 2016). This reduction in the teacher workforce caused an increase in the number of teachers new to the profession. Lack of autonomy, lack of opportunities for professional

growth, and disproportionate workloads have been gleaned to be reasons why teachers leave the profession (Van Droogenbroeck, Spryt, & Vanroelen, 2014). Furthermore, Hilton (2017) determined increasing private sector salaries, job stress, workload, and poor student behavior made it more likely teachers would leave the profession.

Due to the increased attrition in rural districts and challenges that rural districts face, small rural districts have often become a place for new and alternatively certified teachers to gain the experience they need to obtain a job in a preferred location (Wowek, Murakami, Bunch, Viamontes, & Campbell, 2018). Moreover, Darling-Hammond and Podolsky (2019) deduced alternative certified teachers were 25% more likely to leave the profession. In conclusion, the chance of retaining a teacher who holds an alternative certification has been identified to be 14-22% less likely to occur than teachers with a standard certification (Reyes & Alexander, 2017).

Holme, Jabbar, Germain, and Dinning (2017) identified three types of turnover that have required different approaches for retention efforts which are chronic, cumulative, and episodic. Rural schools were found to have struggled the most with chronic instability at a rate that is more than double that of urban and suburban schools. Some of the factors that have made retaining teachers in rural areas challenging are the inability to provide similar living conditions to teaching positions in suburban and urban areas such as housing and community resources (Monk, 2007). In addition to a lack of community resources, rural districts are limited in the amount of compensatory benefits