Retention of Music Teachers Working with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students in Metro Atlanta Schools: A Qualitative Case Study

Theron Roy Petway III

University of Southern Mississippi

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RETENTION OF MUSIC TEACHERS WORKING WITH HIGH
CONCENTRATIONS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN METRO ATLANTA SCHOOLS:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

Theron Roy Petway, III

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2011
ABSTRACT

RETENTION OF MUSIC TEACHERS WORKING WITH HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN METRO ATLANTA SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by Theron Roy Petway, III

August 2011

Hiring and retaining teachers in the field continues to be an educational dilemma as 50% of all teachers leave their positions in the first 5 years. The statistics are similar for those specifically in the field of music education. Although teachers at schools with high concentrations of at-risk students face more difficulties in the classroom and are at greater risk of leaving their positions, little research has been conducted in this area. The purpose of this study is to provide a base of data related to music teacher retention in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students through a case study.

Three research questions were designed for investigation: (a) When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?, (b) What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?, and (c) What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

Eight teachers from Metro Atlanta with at least 3 years experience in at-risk schools completed a survey and interview. A cross-case analysis was used to determine
themes and draw conclusions. Research concluded that the individuals selected broke the national norm of teachers remaining in the profession and that more research would be needed to determine the factors that cause them to stay in the classroom. All teachers reported facing obstacles unique to the at-risk population when preparing for state standards assessment or Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE). The individuals also felt the need for more training, support from administration, and could have benefitted from mentoring. The study stresses the need for more research in the area of preparation and support of music educators of at-risk students.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN METRO ATLANTA SCHOOLS:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
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Approved:

__________________
Steven R. Moser
Director

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Thomas V. Fraschillo

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Jennifer S. Shank

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Edward Hafer

__________________
Joseph Brumbeloe

__________________
Susan A. Siltanen
Dean of the Graduate School

August 2011
DEDICATION

To my wonderful wife, Emily, and my beautiful daughter, Maddy.

This would have been impossible without the two of you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer would like to thank the dissertation director, Dr. Steven Moser, and the other committee members, Dr. Jennifer Shank, Dr. Thomas Fraschillo, Dr. Joseph Brumbeloe and Dr. Edward Hafer, for their advice and support throughout this project. I would especially like to thank Dr. Steven Moser for his extraordinary patience and extreme time commitment in helping to get this project completed.

Special thanks go to Dr. Thomas Fraschillo, Director of Bands at The University of Southern Mississippi, for going the extra mile to help get me into the graduate program and making sure to always take care of his own. Additional appreciation must also be expressed to Dr. Edward Hafer, Assistant Professor of Musicology at The University of Southern Mississippi; his guidance, mentorship and high expectations of his students will serve as a role model for the remainder of my career.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that students should have equal opportunities to achieve academically; therefore, urban and rural schools that serve socioeconomically disadvantaged students must employ highly qualified teachers who are prepared to teach in those particular school environments (Harper, 2009; Quartz, 2008; Waters, 2008). A number of studies show that teacher attrition is disproportionately higher in low-income, hard-to-staff schools. Teachers who serve high proportions of low-achieving, minority students, who reside in low socioeconomic areas, tend to leave their positions at a higher rate (Harper, 2009).

Boutelle (2009) notes that since school districts nationwide are losing approximately 50% of their teachers within the first five years of service, districts need to find ways to keep their teachers longer in order to achieve better results in the classroom. The challenge of recruiting and retaining high quality new teachers has been discussed for decades, and was addressed in A Nation at Risk in 1983. Many institutions have turned to research and data collection to discover why teachers are migrating to other schools or abandoning the profession entirely (Hudson, 2009).

Despite many attempts to address and correct the issue of teacher retention in these low socioeconomic areas, few results have been successful and targeting the core issues behind teacher migration in these areas continues to be heavily debated (Brown, 2008; Easly 2006). Berliner (2010) notes that many advocates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) believe that teacher and administrator performance were primarily responsible for low achievement levels by America’s poor. However, Berliner (2010) believes that it
is not the administrator or teacher to blame, but rather outside-of-school factors are more responsible for the problems associated with low achieving students. Regardless of the cause for teacher migration, little success has been found to help experienced teachers stay in these teaching settings. Olsen and Anderson (2007) did discover that a pattern of teachers who stayed longer in their at-risk teaching setting when they took on fewer roles outside of their primary teaching responsibility.

The need to find more evidence to learn specifically why teachers of the arts, including music educators, leave their positions is echoed by Siebert's 2008 study. In 2004, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released evidence that points to arts and music teachers as being greatest at risk for leaving their current teaching positions. Several studies have used the labels "stayers," "movers," or "leavers," to classify teachers’ longevity in the profession (NCES, 2004; Olsen & Anderson 2007; Russell, 2007; Scheib 2006). Amongst the different subject areas, music and arts teachers were found to be the most likely to be movers, leaving for another teaching position and a close fourth place (just behind special education teachers) to leave the profession completely (NCES, 2004). In addition, this research reveals that the teaching profession in general has a history of severe attrition due to burn out and a feeling of job dissatisfaction among its teachers (Scheib, 2006).

Multiple studies have attempted to address the issue of music teacher retention (Hancock, 2008, 2009; Hearn, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Madsen, 2002; Russell, 2007). Results of these studies show that pursuit of further education (not necessarily in the field of education) (Hancock, 2009), personal reasons (Siebert, 2008), unsatisfactory work conditions (Hancock, 2009; Hearn, 2009; Madsen, 2002; Russell, 2007; Siebert, 2008),
and lack of support (Hancock 2009; Madsen, 2002; Siebert, 2008) are reasons for leaving the field of music education prior to retirement. Johnson (2008) found that focusing on teacher preparation, attrition, increased funding, public relations, advocacy, proper assessment, and student motivation may provide relief for teacher attrition.

Unfortunately, a review of the literature also suggests that experienced music teachers are often missing from the classroom. Students who learn from experienced teachers are more likely to retain the knowledge as evidenced by higher achievement scores (Boutelle, 2009); however, a staggering number of teachers do not continue on after just three years of teaching (Fantilli, 2009). The absence of experienced teachers is even more noticeable – and in fact disproportionately higher – in schools that serve low socio-economic, low-achieving and minority students (Harper, 2009).

In order for students in low achieving schools to succeed academically, schools must employ highly qualified teachers who are prepared to teach in those particular school environments (Boyd et. al., 2008). Music students are paying the price as their classrooms are staffed by more and more under qualified teachers, while veteran teachers leave for other schools or leave the profession completely. The National Commission for Teaching and America's Future (2002) found that a third of teachers in these low socioeconomic areas leave the teaching profession in their first 3 years and 50% leave within their first 5 years of teaching. In turn, students’ academic results suffer (Waters, 2008).

The issue of teacher retention in low socioeconomic schools has become such a national crisis that it was specifically addressed in the 2002 NCLB legislation:
The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. This purpose can be accomplished by...closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. (Sec. 1001)

Analysis of the NCLB legislation shows that effects of poverty are more responsible for the problems people see in schools than are teachers and administrators (Berliner, 2010). With many of the stressors for low socioeconomic children coming from outside of the classroom, this only adds to the hurdles faced by teachers and ultimately contributes to their early departure (Berliner, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a base of data related to music teacher retention in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students through a case study. Ample amounts of research exists pertaining to the areas of overall teacher retention, music teacher retention, and retention of teachers who work in low socioeconomic schools. Furthermore, extensive research exists regarding at-risk populations and the inherent issues associated with teaching this subgroup. However, there appears to be a lack of sufficient data available for music teacher retention in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. This study seeks to address this lack of sufficient data in this developing field of research.
Research Questions

The following research questions will be posed for this study in order to provide data that is directly related to the subject of retention of music teachers working with high concentrations of at-risk students:

1. When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?

2. What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?

3. What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

Scope and Delimitations

Participants were current or former middle and high school band directors in Metro Atlanta. The number of participants in this study was limited to eight, and participants were selected based on two primary factors: the socioeconomic status of their school population must be 50% or greater (students who qualify for free and reduced lunch) and each must have at least five years of teaching experience in Metro Atlanta. Job position (i.e., head director, assistant director, elementary, middle, or high school music program) was not a factor in their selection.

Upon agreeing to participate in the study, each participant was asked to complete a background survey that provided data on such topics as:

- where they obtained their degree;
• the level of degree obtained;
• whether or not they feel their degree adequately prepared them to deal with the issues associated with teaching high concentrations of at-risk students;
• how many years of teaching experience they have;
• their own personal background as far as what type of school (socioeconomic climate) they grew up in; and
• how they came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students.

After completing the background survey, participating teachers took part in an interview designed to obtain data that helped provide answers to the research questions posed for this study. The participants took part in one personal interview. No focus group was conducted for this study. Information collected during the interview process that pertains to issues of music teacher retention but not associated with that of at-risk students was omitted in the final analysis of the overall study (this may include teacher salaries, schedule, class size, and facilities).

A four-step approach to analyzing the data collected in the interviews was used for this study: categorization of data, interpretation of single instances, identification of patterns, and synthesis/generalization. This method is consistent with a constant-comparative model as data will be analyzed throughout the collection process and will be used to bring forth further data collection (Leedy, 2005).

Methodology

This study is intended to create a foundation of data that will serve as a source for further research regarding retention of music teachers who work in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. The data collection instrument will be based on
research literature indicating that teachers who work in urban and rural schools are at greater risk of migration than those who do not. This proposal will describe:

- the methods for selecting a sample;
- collection of data instruments;
- ethical considerations;
- how the data will be collected;
- analysis of the data; and
- how the data will help to answer the study’s research questions.

A theoretical sampling method was used for the selection of sources in this study and was purposeful in that it focused on those individuals who were most apt to help develop a theory for the questions proposed. Music teachers who have worked in schools with a 50% or greater ratio of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch were solicited for participation. The data for the free and reduced lunch subgroup was obtained from the Georgia State Board of Education website.

A background survey (Appendix A) and an interview were the instruments used for data collection in this study. A background survey of the participating teachers was used to ascertain pertinent information such as educational background, years, and areas taught. The interview was based on research questions posed for this study (Appendix B).

To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were used for both the participants and for the schools in which they are teaching or have taught. Data collection with the participants did not begin until signed consent was obtained (Appendix C). The consent form outlined the participants' rights, such as the right to withdraw from the study at any time,
and the right to decline to answer any particular questions. The consent form also included the following statement from the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi:

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Once selected for the study, all participants were sent a background survey for completion prior to our interview. After the background survey was received, each participant was contacted in order to schedule an interview. The nature of the study and the plans for using the results were explained to all participants prior to each interview, and each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form. The interview was semi-structured in nature and revolved around a few central topics related to the stated research questions, which allowed for information to come forward that may not have been initially planned. The interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder, and a transcript was produced using pseudonyms to be included as an appendix in the final report. Each participant was also asked to sign a Consent to Audio Tape the Interview Form (Appendix D).

Following the data collection, the gathered information was analyzed in four steps: categorization of data, interpretation of single instances, identification of patterns,
and synthesis/generation as to be consistent with a constant-comparative model of analysis.

Definition of Terms

- **At-Risk Student**: any student who qualifies for the free or reduced lunch program. (This term will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.)
- **High concentration of at-risk students (HCARS)**: schools having greater than 50% of its overall population qualifying for the free or reduced lunch program.
- **High Musical Standards**: meeting or exceeding those standards listed on the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation tool (Appendix E).
- **Experienced Music Educator**: a music teacher with at least five years of teaching experience in the public school classroom.
- **Retention**: The ability to keep experienced teachers working in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students.
- **Urban**: Schools in large inner city locations.
- **Rural**: Rural areas are those with a population of fewer than 2,500 and those that do not lie within the boundaries of a Metropolitan Statistical Area or a Central Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- **Participant**: The educator(s) who are being interviewed for this case study.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the purpose of the study and the research questions to be used as a guide in conducting the interviews of eight participating music teachers. The scope and delimitations and a brief outline of the methodology are also provided, as well
as an explanation of terms that will be frequently used in additional chapters. Chapter II provides an extensive literature review regarding teacher retention, music teacher retention, and at-risk students as it applies to this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the existing literature indicates that ample amounts of research exists pertaining to the areas of teacher retention, music teacher retention, and retention of teachers who work in low socioeconomic schools. Furthermore, extensive research exists regarding at-risk populations and the inherent issues associated with teaching this subgroup. However, there appears to be a lack of sufficient research and data available regarding music teacher retention, migration, and attrition in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. This being the case, the related literature review for this study will begin with a review of issues concerning at-risk populations of students, followed by a look at teacher retention, and will conclude with issues specific to music teacher retention.

At-Risk Students

Defining At-Risk

The definition of at-risk has evolved over time as new observations have provided additional insights into this labeled subgroup. In past definitions, at-risk was believed to be a cultural deprivation or perhaps the failure of a school, but both of these perspectives are vague, and cast rather broad nets in an attempt to explain a student's struggle, which resulted in a definition that could fit any almost any youth (Fantini & Weinstein, 1968). Researchers also sought to solve the problems faced by at-risk students by synthesizing a list of the factors that put a student at risk (Pallas, 1989).

Anderson & Keith (1997) explain at-risk as those who are lacking "personally, or by way of their families, communities, or schools” (p. 259). Pallas (1998) believes that there are five specific areas where students who are considered to be at risk lack most
consistently: poverty, race and ethnicity, family composition, mother's education, and language background.

According to Bruce (2010), there are currently four general approaches to determining if a student is at risk:

- the predictive approach, which labels students who might be in danger of being at risk;
- the descriptive approach, wherein the label of at risk is given once students demonstrate a pattern of at-risk behavior;
- the unilateral approach, which assumes that all students will at some point in their lives find themselves in experiences that would then consider them to be at risk; and
- school factors are examined to consider the school's ability to produce students who succeed or fail academically can affect whether or not a student would be considered at risk.

Poverty is one of the major factors for a student becoming at risk, and has increased to its highest point in America since the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) began measuring this factor in 1960. According to further research by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 20% of children under the age of 18 live in poverty. Impoverished children are more likely to perform poorly in school and to drop out than children from higher income households. Black and Hispanic children are three to four times more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic White children. The South and the Southwest regions of the country have the largest populations of African American and Hispanic ethnicity, and also have the highest proportions of children at risk of school failure due to limited
education, poverty rate, and English spoken as a second language (U.S. Census, 2003, 2010).

At-risk students struggle to participate in social school activities (Mazotta, 2009; Mooij, 1999; Shields, 2001). Aggressive and impulsive behaviors as a child can lead to an adult life of relationship problems, violence, credit problems, and crime (Mazotta, 2009; Mooij, 1999). These complicated social pressures surrounding at-risk students cause them to fall behind their peers in academics and lowers their self esteem which also results in their negative view of the school environment (Mazotta, 2009).

Free or Reduced Lunch

Both the U.S. Department of Education and the State of Georgia Department of Education have established poverty guidelines to help schools determine if a student qualifies for the free or reduced lunch programs.

Table 2.1 lists the 2010 Census Bureau poverty guidelines, which are used by the U.S. Department of Education in determining free or reduced lunch eligibility.

Table 2.1

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*Note:* For families with more than eight persons, add $3,740 for each additional person (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The Georgia Department of Education has adopted the following guidelines in determining a student’s eligibility for the free or reduced lunch programs which are based on a higher level of income than the Federal Guidelines, and thus result in a larger number of students eligible for the program. Federal guidelines for free meals are listed in Table 2.2, and Georgia guidelines are found in Table 2.3 (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Table 2.2

*National Income Guidelines for Free Meals*

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<th>HOUSEHOLD SIZE</th>
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*Georgia Income Guidelines for Free Meals*

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Berliner (2010) outlined his concerns with poverty and its effects on at-risk students in his article entitled, “Are Teachers Responsible for Low Achievement by Poor Students?” He stated the following:

Backers of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) based their support on the belief that teachers and administrators primarily were responsible for low levels of achievement by America's poor. But this one-sided view is both inadequate and unsupported by the evidence. I argue that harsh social policies and the pernicious effects of poverty are more responsible for the problems we see in our schools than are teachers and administrators. That is, the problems of achievement among America's poor are much more likely to be located outside the school than in it.

(p. 1)

Rothstein (2011) believes that 75% of student failure in school is attributed to these out of school factors.
For the purpose of this study, students on free or reduced lunch (a recognized indicator of family poverty) will be used as the determining factor for identifying students who are considered at risk.

Teacher Retention

Statistics

Numerous studies and surveys have examined the data regarding teacher retention, and the statistics are quite alarming. The literature indicates that between 30-50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years of starting their teaching careers, and that they do so for a variety of reasons (Boutelle, 2009; NCTAF, 2002).

In a 2005 report, the U.S. Department of Education analyzed teacher mobility in the workforce. This report states that in 2000, U.S. schools experienced a 16% turnover rate, and, of these, 8% left to teach at another school (migrated) and the other 8% left for various reasons (leavers) such as to retire, continue schooling, taking jobs outside the field, and to care for family members. Additional studies show that since the early 1990s, the number of American teachers exiting the profession has exceeded the number of entrants by an increasing amount, with less than 20% of the attrition attributed to retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). Approximately 30% of novice teachers exit the classroom within their first three years (Fantilli, 2009). According to Maciejewski (2007) and Anderson (2000), after five years, approximately 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession. Further studies confirm these findings. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) also reported that between 40-50% of all beginning teachers leave the profession within their first five years.
To break it down further, 10% of new teachers leave the classroom within their first year, 20% exit within three years and 30% will leave within their first five years (Fantilli, 2009). In high poverty schools, the teacher turnover rate is 50% higher (Ingersoll, 2001). Attrition rates among novices teaching special education are particularly high in comparison to novices in general education (Nicholas & Sosnowsky, 2002). Novice special educators leave the profession at approximately twice the rate of teachers in the regular class, with some school districts reporting attrition rates of novice special educators as high as 50% annually (Nicholas & Sosnowsky, 2002).

Early attrition and turnover bears a heavy cost on school districts that must constantly reinvest in recruitment efforts and professional supports for novice teachers who may or may not remain in the profession (Whisnant, 2005). In Texas in 1999, 15.5% of teachers left their positions in the first year with a total of 35-43% of teachers leaving in their first three years of teaching (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). This attrition costs the state between $329 million to $2.1 billion each year (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) the cost of replacing schools teachers is estimated between $2.2 billion to $4.9 billion a year.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) studied the career paths of 50 new teachers over a four-year period. By the third year of the study, of the 50 public teachers, three were involuntarily moved to another school, eight transferred to another public school, eight left teaching completely in pursuit of another career, and three others went to the private sector of teaching. In all, 22 teachers out of the 50 studied either experienced attrition or migration (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).
When studying the results of the National Center for Education Statistics 2000-01 survey researchers found that in 1999-2000, 534,861 teachers entered the teaching profession in the United States and the following year, 546,200 left for a net loss of 11,339 teachers in one year with one million teachers in either migrating or leaving (Chandler et al., 2004).

Teacher turnover is also prevalent across grade levels. According to research, middle schools experience the highest level of teacher turnover (NCES, 2000; Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, 2001; Useem, 2003). A study of teachers hired in 1999 indicated that the turnover rates of early childhood teachers were minimal (7.2%); while secondary (12.3%), special education (13.1%), and middle school (19.2%) teachers were among the highest (Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, 2001). Useem (2003) studied high poverty middle schools in Philadelphia and reported that only 19 out of 60 teachers remained at their original school after a three year period.

Finally, Ingersoll (1995) examined the percentage of both full-time and part-time teachers who left their teaching positions to either teach in other schools or to pursue other occupations. The study used data from the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey, a national survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. Findings included the following: private schools experienced higher teacher turnover rates than did public schools, public and private schools with the lowest enrollments (under 300 students) experienced the highest turnover rates and turnover rates were higher in public schools where half or more of the students enrolled received free or reduced-price lunches.
Effects of Losing Experienced Teachers

Teacher turnover can result in negative consequences for schools (Goldberg & Proctor, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001). MacDonald (1999) stated that teacher attrition is a problem for workforce planning. Organizational stability, student achievement, staff morale, and budget allocations are all impacted by teacher turnover (Guin, 2004; Imazeki, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2006) pointed out that students in urban schools are being left behind without quality teachers to serve them and are left to struggle. In addition, beginning teachers are often faced with more challenging teaching assignments with multiple class preparations, and are likely to be assigned to teach low-performing students (Ingersoll, 2003).

To ensure a quality education for all, school districts must staff schools with highly qualified personnel; however novice teachers continue to leave the field before they can gain many years of experience (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). A high level of turnover among teachers prevents consistency in school planning, implementation of curriculum, and has been linked to decreases in student performance (Bempah, 2009; Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). Schools need to hire, train, and maintain teachers in their positions to provide an equitable education for all students, to avoid the crippling cost of replacing teachers, and to adhere to the mandates of No Child Left Behind (Shakrani, 2008). The teacher retention problem is a revolving door with novice and under qualified teachers leaving positions in low income, at-risk schools only to be replaced by novice and under qualified teachers (Shields, 2001).
The quality of a school's education and programs offered is lessened by the absence of experienced teachers (Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). The Council of the City of New York Report (2004) indicated that, "When teachers leave the New York school system they take years of institutional knowledge, teaching experiences, and classroom skills with them resulting in a ‘brain drain’. Additionally, attrition rates bring a cost to young people – one of inheriting new teachers with little of the experience and few of the immediate skills that more seasoned teachers bring to the classroom” (p. 7).

Imazeki (2005) also stated that turnover rates can have serious repercussions for the quality of education received by students since school districts in urban and rural areas are more likely to fill teacher vacancies with substitute, less qualified teachers, or simply increase the class size. The high attrition also inhibits school growth, as the focus turns to training new teachers rather than building a curriculum (Guin, 2004).

Rural and Urban Schools

An urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census is an area with at least 1,000 people per square mile, or an area surrounding a central urban core with 500 people per square mile. Rural areas are all of the other territories, not included within the boundaries of these highly populated areas (U.S. Census, 2000). Bauch (2001) noted that although both rural and urban families often struggle with poverty and little college education, the two cannot be treated the same, each have different needs.

In a 2006 interview, author and activist Kozol describes urban schools as having, "larger class sizes, far less experienced teachers, decrepit and frequently degrading buildings, tremendous overcrowding, and most of all a tremendous gap in academic achievement" (Knopp, 2006, p. 1). Jacob (2007) also paints a picture of what urban
schools look like. As the name suggests, urban schools are located in a large metropolitan area. Looking deeper, Jacob (2007) notes that urban schools have a higher rate of student's whose families do not speak English at home (making it more difficult to communicate with parents), produce lower achievement test results, have more students living in poverty, have a high transient rate among students, and lack supplies and facilities.

According to data drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics, urban educators report that educating urban youth is challenging for many of the same reasons Jacob reported. Urban students come to the classroom with obstacles such as poverty, limited English, poor health, and family instability (Lippman, Burns, McArthur & Burton, 1996). Unemployment rate in urban areas averaged 7.5% and 4.6% in the suburbs. Jacob (2007) continues to point out that urban school communities do not have a wealth of resources that comes from the tax base in the community; this tax erosion makes them reliant on more state and federal funding (Jacob, 2007).

In a 1996 study, researchers interviewed teachers about their perspectives on teaching at an urban school with high populations of at-risk students. The teachers stated that positions in these schools brought on a high level of stress since the students were often very poor, very transient, had troubled home lives, many did not primarily speak English, and were starved for attention (Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair, 1996). Conditions such as these along with safety issues, run down facilities, and lack of administrative support cause many teachers to look for employment elsewhere (Hickok, 2003). Twice as many teachers in urban areas leave their positions (Ingersoll, 2002).
Rural schools have poverty rates just as high as that of urban schools (Beeson & Strange, 2003). Although rural students may suffer from lower education levels and high poverty levels as urban students do, the needs of the two student groups differ (Bauch, 2001). With 43% of the nation’s public schools in rural areas, Beeson and Strange call for more attention to these rural schools where children struggle to get a quality education and where funding is often insufficient (Beeson & Strange, 2003). Researchers agree that due to the unique needs of rural schools, special funding is needed and should be provided (Eppely, 2009; Osterholm et al., 2006; Schwartzbeck & Prince, 2003).

Spurred by the NCLB Act of 2002, The U.S. Department of Education developed the Federal Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) to aid rural schools in reaching the standards of NCLB. The REAP program recommends using federal funds for the following purposes:

- Teacher recruitment and retention, including the use of signing bonuses and other financial incentives.
- Teacher professional development, including programs that train teachers to utilize technology to improve teaching and to train special needs teachers.
- Educational technology, including software and hardware.
- Parental involvement activities.
- Activities authorized under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program under part A of title IV. (NCLB, Title VI, Part B, Subpart 2, p. 471)
Why Teachers Leave Their Jobs

There are many reasons as to why teachers would look to either leave their current positions for new ones at better schools or even leave the profession all together. Before solutions can be developed, reasons for attrition must first be clearly defined.

Metty & Ivey (2007) concluded that compensation, teacher assignments, teacher autonomy and safety on the job were respectively the greatest factors for teacher recruitment and retention. Research conducted in Arizona by Gau, Palmer, Melnik, and Heffernon (2003) found the following:

While many teachers leave the profession for personal reasons such as raising family or retirement, others leave because of unsatisfactory aspects of the classroom environment or school system. Even so, as much as one-third of this pool may seriously consider teaching again, especially if pay were increased or class size reduced…Stress, administrative burden, and lack of respect and support are considered components of overall classroom environment…about one quarter of Arizona’s inactive certified teachers might not have left the profession had their work environment been more acceptable (pp. 2, 17).

Gau (2003) reported that teachers left for reasons such as disillusionment and stress (16%), low salary (10%), frustration with administration and bureaucracy (6%), and lack of respect or support (3%).

A University of California at Santa Cruz study looked into the main reasons teachers listed as to why they chose to leave the teaching profession. Excluding retirement, health, and personal reasons, Table 2.4 reflects the top eight responses and the percentage of the total respondents for each (Bartlett & Klempnauer, 2005).
Table 2.4

*Main Reasons for Leaving the Teaching Profession*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK ORDER</th>
<th>ALL RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inability to buy a home on teacher’s salary</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of administrative support</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary not competitive for area</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources/materials</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parent/community support for education</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discipline problems</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from colleagues</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brighton (1999) suggests that teachers leave the field based on preparation, expectations of their job roles, compensation, and work conditions. Teachers who felt a large gap between what they were prepared to teach and what their actual role was in the classroom, and teachers who perceived and expected their position to be a certain way, and realized it to be something different through the experience, both left the field at a greater rate (Brighton, 1999). A wealth of the existing research is dedicated to novice teachers’ transition from being a student themselves to becoming the teacher (Andrews & Martin, 2003; Heller, 2004; Kardos, 2005). Over 30 years of research summarizes that the first few years of teaching are the most critical to the longevity of a novice teacher's career (David, 2000; Shakrani, 2008).

From the very start, beginning teachers are asked to do the same responsibilities as that of a teacher with many years of experience. Lortie called this sink or swim type
induction for novice teachers the “Robinson Crusoe” approach and despite the 40 year gap, this is the same induction used today (as cited in Maciejewski, 2007). Halford (1998) refers to teaching as a profession that “eats its young” (p. 33). Beginning teachers often feel like failures, especially those, who teach in difficult situations, and without a mentor or support system only the strongest and mentally fittest survive (Colbert & Wolff, 1992).

The U.S. Department of Education has identified two reasons cited by the majority of teachers who leave the profession. Its findings report that:

Fifty-five percent (55%) of public school teachers who left teaching but continued to work in the field of education reported that they had more control over their own work…while 65% of public school leavers who worked outside the field of education felt that their workload in their new position was more manageable and they were better able to balance their personal and work life. (Marvel, 2007, p. 25)

In another report, the U.S. Department of Education (2005) conducted a follow-up survey given to those who had left the profession and asked them to rank what was “very important” in their decision to leave, the five considerations given most frequently were:

- retirement (20%);
- family reasons (16%);
- pregnancy/child rearing (14%);
- wanting better salary and benefits (14%); and
- opportunities to pursue a different kind of career (13%).
Additional aspects of the job that Provasnik & Dorfman (2005) found teachers were most dissatisfied with included lack of planning time, too heavy a workload, low wages, poor student behavior, and inability to impact school policy.

Although poor pay is a commonly cited reason for teachers to leave their positions it is just a reason and not the reason. Birkland and Johnson (2003) note that the lack of pay becomes more frustrating for teachers when they are displeased with their work environment or about their workload. Although pay and prestige did factor into many teachers’ decision to leave, for others compensation was merely a secondary irritant. Similar findings concluded that teacher attrition and relocation were more closely related to the teacher’s perception of their students’ behavior (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2001).

As noted in multiple studies, teacher attrition in urban schools is a much greater problem than in other educational settings with fewer low-socioeconomically challenged students (Berliner, 2010; Harper, 2009; Hickok, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002; Useem, 2003). In the data from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, Ingersoll (2002) summarized teacher responses to show that in 1999-2000 teacher attrition in urban schools was twice as high as that of low-poverty schools. These schools become hard to staff as teachers often turn down positions at these schools because of the poor neighborhoods, poor working conditions, and other complications that come with teaching in that type of environment (Harper, 2009). Educators at these urban schools increasingly leave these positions that serve low income students who so often have low levels of achievement (Jackson, 2009). Smith and Smith (2006) found that former urban educators cited that there was a direct relation to their perception of violence in their schools and their decision to leave.
What Could Make Teachers Stay

According to the Department of Education and the Offices of Research and Education Accountability (2002), the experience that veteran teachers bring to the classroom positively impacts low-income students and results in higher test scores. Teachers exiting the field took part in Ingersoll’s 2003 survey to give suggestions that could possibly help resolve the issue of teacher retention. Some of these suggestions included an increase in teachers’ salaries, reducing student discipline problems, and allowing more opportunities for teacher to collaborate (Ingersoll, 2003). Coates (2009) echoed Ingersoll’s findings that teachers believed pay increases and opportunity for career advancement would keep more educators in the classroom and added that increasing benefits and allowing for flexible work schedules would also encourage more teachers to stay.

Bobek found in a 2002 study that teachers cited five factors that influenced them greatly in their decision to stay in the field despite the challenges they face:

- relationships (mentoring programs, administrative and parental support);
- career competence and skills;
- personal ownership of careers (ability to solve problems, set goals and help students);
- sense of accomplishment (experiencing success); and
- sense of humor.

Other researchers have chosen to approach this question in a different way. In a study conducted in Arizona (Gau, 2003) former teachers chose from a list factors that
they considered to “very likely” cause them to remain in their positions. The results are listed on table 2.5.

Table 2.5

*Proposals That Would “Very Likely” Make Teachers Consider Teaching Again*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK ORDER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE RESPONDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Teacher Salaries</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Class Size</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the paperwork burden</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student discipline and making schools safer</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing tuition reimbursement for coursework</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing more support for new teachers</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing better resources and materials</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving professional advancement opportunities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing professional development opportunities</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise health insurance program</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing standards for student performance</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More training in classroom management</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminating teacher tenure</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tying teacher rewards to student performance</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an article regarding recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in the nation’s most needy urban schools, Claycomb (2000) pointed out the many different strategies that must be used to successfully address the teacher shortages:

This means serious investments in such things as rebuilding crumbling school buildings, providing state of the art learning resources, raising teachers’ salaries,
and reconfiguring management structures to allow teachers to share in the
decision making. Ultimately, it may mean investing in whole-school and
community renewal efforts that reinvigorate families, curb violence, beautify
neighborhoods, and build a sense of community. (p. 20)

Why Music Teachers Leave Their Jobs
Regarding teacher retention specifically of music educators, Madsen and Hancock (2002)
observed,

While there has been considerable research on attrition and retention of teachers
in general, there is a paucity of research on why music teachers leave the
profession and at what point in their careers they choose to leave. (p. 8)

While music is cited to be one of the greatest tools used to meet the academic and
emotional needs of at-risk students (Fitzpatrick, 2006; Hanson et al., 1991; Shuler, 1991),
it is the music teachers who are at risk of leaving their position. Music teachers face
unique challenges unlike any other teacher:

The training that music educators receive is no more lengthy or extensive than
that of other teachers, yet too often they are certified to teach K-12 instrumental,
choral, and general music; in short, virtually every aspect of in-school music. So
with a broad yet limited course of preparation, music educators are awarded full
licensure. To make responsibilities even wider ranging, administrative details
come with the job, even for the beginner: equipment maintenance and repair and
inventories of instruments, music, robes, and uniforms that may run into hundreds
or thousands of dollars. In addition to internal school relations, public relations
expectations come with the job, and thus one's work is open to general evaluation
at PTA meetings, concerts, athletic meets, and community events—assessment circumstances far broader than a visit from the assistant principal every other month. These kinds of challenges and pressures can make the current teacher dropout rate even higher. (Haak & Smith, 2000, p. 24)

With all of the different responsibilities a music teacher inherits and creates, Hancock and Madsen (2002) suggest that music teachers must have a special “drive” to perform their job well but that even over time, drive does not appear to be enough to sustain a teacher. Madsen and Hancock collected surveys from 137 students graduating in 1995 with their bachelors of music education degree and teaching certification. The 1995 survey revealed that only 79.3% had taken jobs in the teaching field and six years later the number of those teaching dropped to only 56.6% (Hancock & Madsen, 2002). These findings echo those of the 2004 National Center for Educational Statistics where music and arts was listed as the 4th highest turnover rate of teachers in the profession. Rather than a single factor, it is the combination of many perceived issues that causes teachers to leave (Heston, Dedrick, & Raschke, 1996).

Krueger (2000) interviewed thirty public school music teachers within their first ten years of teaching and observed that those teachers faced challenges unique in the field of teaching such as larger class sizes, expectations surrounding performances, financial and bookkeeping duties, as well as before and after school responsibilities. To compound these already difficult situations, many music teachers must travel between classrooms and even between schools, have less planning time, and causing them to also be physically isolated from their colleagues (Hearn, 2009).
Scheib (2004) interviewed eight in-service band directors who were looking to migrate or leave the profession in the near future. These teachers all experienced job dissatisfaction. The issues they most frequently cited were difficult working conditions, low salary, undervalued role of teaching and music education, burden of maintaining student enrollment, administration interference, and the feeling of being overworked.

One of the teachers interviewed in Scheib's study stated,

I don't think that under those conditions and job responsibilities, anyone would stay very long...[there's] a revolving door ...There were eight bands [grades] 5-12, travel to four buildings, [a] performance schedule [that] was incredibly demanding, a lot of politics, no lesson structure for about 350 students in the program. Way understaffed!!! This was all done by one person. (p. 55)

Schieb's 2006 study showed that 11.5% of arts and music teachers left their position in 2000-01. Of those that left, 69.8% moved to what they believed to be a better teaching assignment.

Like the disenchanted band directors Scheib interviewed, Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) found that in addition to concerns about being overworked and the extreme time commitment needed to run a music program, “time with family” was of high importance to those who left their teaching jobs.

Heston, Dedrick, and Raschke (1996) surveyed 200 band directors from various size districts in a Midwestern state regarding job satisfaction. Significant points of stress were the attitudes and behaviors of students, teaching load, administrative duties, and lack of support. Besides having numerous factors that cause job dissatisfaction, music teachers most often defend the existence and relevance of their teaching position and
music education in general, and that is yet another stressful task that adds to educator's frustrations (Russell, 2007). It is this job dissatisfaction and burn-out that has created a history of poor teacher attrition specifically in the field of music education (Scheib, 2006).

Urban Music Education

Music provides special skills and a creative outlet especially beneficial for at-risk youth (Shuler, 1991). The positive results can be seen in Fitzpatrick's 2006 study where at-risk students who participated in a music program were given a standardized test in math, reading, science, and citizenship, and in each category scored higher than their at-risk counterparts who did not participate in any music program. For many at-risk students participating in the music program may be the reason they come to school at all (Mixon, 2005).

As beneficial as music is for these at-risk students, it is often the teachers who feel troubled and consequently feel the need to leave their positions (Adams & Dial, 1993). Fiese and DeCarbo (1995) surveyed 20 teachers identified as outstanding in an urban setting by their state music education association. While the majority felt their education prepared them to be good musicians, only three of the 20 participants felt prepared to teach in the urban classroom. On top of the oversized workload that causes many teachers to leave the profession (Haak & Smith, 2000; Scheib, 2004) music teachers at schools with high concentrations of at-risk students are guided to take on more responsibility in order to best reach and teach these troubled students. Mixon (2005) believes teachers in the urban schools should learn new skills on their own to accommodate the at-risk student such as writing culturally relevant arrangements, learning to proficiently play instruments.
of the minority cultures, providing extra practice time at school, and being present in the student's non-musical classes to boost recruitment. Robinson (2004) and Weinstein (1995) both believe that the music teacher transcends educator and becomes a "surrogate parent" for these at-risk students, a role that far surpasses a typical teacher job description.

Financial hardship is a challenge that faces music educators in at-risk schools. A frustration for urban music teachers stems from outdated resources (Kindall-Smith, 2004) or in many cases budget cuts which lead to a lack of resources entirely (Renfro, 2003). This lack of resources leaves many children without instruments and has many teachers in these urban settings often dipping into their own pockets to purchase materials for their programs (Mixon, 2005). Little funding, poor training in urban education and the feeling of isolation can cause teachers to leave their positions (Renfro, 2003) and to seek positions in suburban, less stressful environments (Shann, 1998).

What Could Make Music Teachers Stay

In general, schools that recognize music as being important have a higher music teacher retention rate (Russell, 2007) since teachers who are successful also report being happier and stay in their positions longer (Foley, 2004). Teachers look for schools where support is in place, where they feel confident in their students, their safety, and where they can continue to grow over time (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Ingersoll (2001) believes that the teacher's ability to grow and climb a career ladder is a contributor to a teacher's happiness in their position. Student enthusiasm, school support, and love of music are the most frequent responses of factors that lead to teacher job satisfaction (Hesto, Dedrick, & Raschke, 1996).
Lautzenheiser (2001) interviewed music educators who had left the field. The exiting educators responded they would have benefitted from training in listening skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills. Madsen (2001) points out that more focus on preparation of music, teaching, classroom management, and presentation skills should be provided to new teachers to increase the likelihood that they stay. Training teachers on the student culture within the at-risk community is needed considering 90% of teachers that make up the staff are white, while the majority of the students they teach are minorities (Catapano, 2006; Hinkley, 1995).

Hinkey, Kremp, Milthaler, and Zieber (2003) reported on a discussion group held at the Ohio Music Educators Association conference that also believed that improving pre-service training could remedy teacher attrition. The group recognized the need to address and brainstorm ways to retain young music educators. Ideas gathered from the conference focused on teacher preparation that included more hands-on experience early in pre-service training. One additional idea was that of relying more on masters degree students whose experience as veteran teachers would allow them to serve as mentors (Kremp, Milthaler, & Zieber, 2003).

Roulston, Legette, and Womack (2005) concluded after their research that if schools are to retain teachers they must have the guidance of a mentor. Pre-service teachers who are transitioning into their role as a teacher, can receive help from a mentor to help synthesize what they learned from textbooks and what they experience in the actual classroom (Catapano, 2006). While first year teachers often have seminars and meetings to orient them to school practices, many of the topics, such as, curriculum, and state test guidelines, are not directed to the needs of music teachers and the lack of
appropriate support (Conway, 2003). Having a mentor within the music field allows the beginning teacher to have support to ask specific curricular, management, and performance questions (Conway, 2003). Although the methods behind mentoring new teachers is still evolving, having in-service teachers serving as mentors is a way to have new teachers learn from master teachers without taking these experienced mentors out of the classroom completely (Conway & Holcomb, 2008). The teacher’s sense of pride in the impact they make on students lives may be what keeps them in the classroom, but as a whole, the area of why music teachers stay or leave is an area which requires more research (Madesn & Hancock, 2002).

Summary

The literature in this chapter focuses on past studies regarding teacher retention, music teacher retention and at-risk students. While the review of related literature uncovered a major concern related to the lack of research pertaining to music teacher retention, it does show there are many concerns that cause teachers and specifically music teachers to leave their positions. While no one factor seems to be the issue causing attrition, many factors contribute to what shows to be a significant amount of teacher turnover. This turnover disrupts curriculum, school atmosphere, and inevitably, student learning. While little research exists specifically when analyzing this plight in the realm of music education, some suggestions are made such as mentoring, and improving the work environment that may encourage teachers to stay.

Chapter III discusses the case study methodology employed for this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is intended to create a foundation of data that will serve as a source for further research regarding retention of music teachers who work in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. The data collection instrument is based on research literature indicating that teachers who work in urban and rural schools are at greater risk of migration than those who do not. This chapter covers the methodology used in this study. Once the timeline and research questions have been restated, the research design is followed by a brief description of the participants and their profiles. The methods used for data collection provides a description of the background survey and individual interview questions. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the methods for data analysis and interpretation.

Timeline for the Study

Data collection began in the first week of February 2011, after the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi gave its final approval for this study. Collection took place during the entire month of February and consisted of a background survey and subsequent interview by each of the eight participants. After the individuals who were selected for the study had signed the consent to participate form, they were sent the background survey via email, and were asked to return it using the same method. The participants were given one week to complete and return their surveys. Once the surveys were returned, personal interviews were scheduled and conducted.
Research Questions

In order to ensure that the data that is directly related to the subject of Retention of Music Teachers working with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students in Metro Atlanta Schools, the following three research questions were posed for this study:

1. When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?

2. What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?

3. What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

Research Design

Qualitative Research Designs

When little information exists on a topic, when variables are unknown, when a relevant theory base is inadequate or missing, a qualitative study can help define what is important – that is what needs to be studied (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). As stated in Chapter II, very little information exists in the area of retention of music teachers working with high concentrations of at-risk students. It is for this reason that a qualitative research design was chosen for this study.
Case Study

A Case study, as defined by Leedy and Ormond (2005), is the study of a particular individual, program or event for a defined period of time. Case studies, as defined by the American Psychological Association’s Publication Manual (2010), are reports of case materials obtained while working with an individual, a group, a community, or an organization. Case studies illustrate a problem; indicate a means for solving a problem; and/or shed light on needed research.

Data Collection

In a case study, the researcher collects data on the individual(s), program(s), or event(s) on which the investigation is focused. These data often include observations, interviews, documents (newspaper articles), past records and audio visual materials. In many instances, the researcher may spend an extended period of time on site and interact regularly with the people who are being studied (Leedy & Ormond, 2005).

The data collection instruments used in this study were a background survey and individual interviews. The background survey (Appendix A) was emailed to the individuals once they were selected and had signed the consent to participate form (Appendix C) and the individual interviews took place within a week thereafter.

Background Survey

The questions in the background survey focused on four main areas: (a) educational background, (b) work experience, (c) personal educational experience and (d) how they came to teach at a school with high concentrations of at-risk students.
Educational background was obtained to identify those participants who have advanced degrees and to see if the educational background of the individuals made any difference in an educator’s ability to work with at-risk students. Work experience was obtained along with the type of student population at the schools, so as to see, if the participants have any, and or how much, experience working with at-risk student populations. Personal educational experience was collected in order to see if any of the participants went to schools with high concentrations of at-risk students themselves. This could be important in helping to understand if the participants in this study are able to relate to the culture that is associated with at-risk populations. Finally, the survey asked each participant just how they came to work at a school with high concentrations of at-risk populations. This was used to see if they chose to work in those schools or if it was the only choice if they wanted a job.

*Individual Interviews*

The individual interview questions used in this study were constructed using information from the three main research questions posed for this study. An approximate equal number of questions were constructed pertaining to each research question with the total number of questions asked in the interview equaling seventeen.

The participants in the study were identified and they had signed the consent to participate form (Appendix C) they were sent the background survey via email. Once the survey was returned, also via email, individual interviews were scheduled. The interviews were conducted in person and in a public place (restaurant, coffee shop, etc). All individuals were asked to sign a consent to record form (Appendix D) and the interviews were recorded using a Sony ICD-PX720 digital voice recorder.
Prior to beginning the recorded interview, the purpose of the study was explained along with a reading aloud of the three research questions posed for this study. Participants were asked to try to keep their answers to three or four concise sentences containing the most pertinent information for their answer. However, it was explained that if they wanted to expand on their answer they were more than welcome to do so. Once the participant was ready, the recording began with the first question being asked.

As stated by Leedy & Omond (2005), interviews in a qualitative study are rarely as structured as the interviews conducted in a quantitative study. Instead, they are either open-ended or semi-structured, in the later case revolving around a few central questions. That being the case, a semi-structured interview approach was used for this study. Participants were sometimes asked follow-up questions based upon the answers they gave to the original question in the interview. Follow-up questions were based on the participants’ responses so not all of them were asked the same follow-up questions.

At the end of the formal portion of the interview and before the recording was stopped, each participant was asked if there was any additional information regarding working with at-risk students that they would like to add that was not asked in the interview.

After the interview was completed, a transcript of each interview was created and used for the information in the analysis of the data. All names of individuals and schools mentioned in the interviews were changed and given an alias as to protect the privacy of those involved in the study. The full original transcripts were stored and secured in a personal safe in the home of the researcher.
Participants

More often than not qualitative researchers are intentionally nonrandom in their selection of data sources. Instead, their sampling is purposeful: They select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation. This process is referred to as theoretical sampling, which is choosing data sources that are most apt to help researchers develop a theory of the process in question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). For these reasons, a theoretical approach was used in selecting the participants for this study.

The eight individuals for this study are all experienced (five years or more) band directors located in the Metro Atlanta area and have either worked in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students in a previous position or are currently working in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students. The data for each school’s at-risk population was obtained from the Georgia Department of Education’s website. Once a school was identified as having more than a 50% free or reduced lunch population, the band director of that school was contacted and asked how many years of experience he or she had. If they had more than 5 years they were then asked if they wanted to participate in this study. Gender, race, and degree were not factors in choosing the sample for this study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in a case study typically involves the following steps (Leedy & Ormond, 2005):

- Organization of details of the case. The specific “facts” about the case are arranged in a logical order.
• Categorization of data. Categories are indentified that can help cluster the data into meaningful groups.

• Interpretations of single instances (exceptions). Specific documents, occurrences, and other bits of data are examined for the specific meanings they might have in relation to the case.

• Identification of patterns. The data and their interpretations are scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns that characterize the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal.

• Synthesis and generalization. An overall portrait of the case is constructed. Conclusions are drawn that may have implications beyond the specific case that has been studied.

These five steps were used in conducting the analysis and interpretation of the data in this study. The results are located in Chapter V.

Conclusion

In this chapter the timeline, research design (qualitative designs, case study), research questions, participants, participants profiles, data collection (background survey and individual interview), data analysis and interpretation were all defined, along with an explanation as to why each was incorporated in this study. Chapter IV will provide a cross-case analysis of the data.
CHAPTER IV
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

“The mission of the U.S. Department of Education is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, n.p.). Numerous studies have examined our nation’s success in attaining this goal of equality in schools with a significant student population coming from low-income families. Many of these studies indicate that teacher attrition is higher in low-income schools and teachers who serve high concentrations of at-risk students tend to leave their positions at a higher rate (Harper, 2009; Quartz, 2008; Waters, 2008). In a study by Boutelle (2009), he indicated that nationwide approximately 50% of teachers leave their jobs within the first five years of service and that school systems need to find better ways to retain teachers longer. Many school systems have looked to research and data collection to help figure out why teachers are migrating or leaving the profession entirely (Hudson, 2009). Despite attempts to address the issues regarding teacher attrition in these low socioeconomic areas, few attempts have been successful, and teacher migration in these areas continues to be a source for debate in the education community (Brown, 2008; Easley, 2006).

In order to accurately address why music teachers in schools with a high concentration of at-risk students leave their positions more frequently than teachers who work in low at-risk schools, this study measures responses from both a survey and interview of eight music teachers who have worked in high at-risk schools to determine if
a pattern exists that could help explain why they chose to migrate away from schools with high concentrations of at-risk students.

This study provides qualitative data that is intended to be used as a basis for further research in the study of retention of music teachers who work in high at-risk schools. Explanations as to why there is a high teacher turnover in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students may lead to improved teacher preparation at the pre-service level, and better in-service support for current teachers.

Organization of Data Analysis

Data analysis in this case study is organized in the following steps:

- *Organization of details of the case.* The specific “facts” about the case are arranged in a logical order.

- *Categorization of data.* Categories have been indentified that can help cluster the data into meaningful groups.

- *Identification of patterns.* The data and their interpretations were scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns.

- *Interpretations of single instances (exceptions).* Data collected from background surveys and interviews were examined for the specific meanings they might have in relation to the case.

- *Synthesis and generalization.* An overall portrait of the case was constructed.

These steps are consistent with data analysis in a case study of this type (Leedy & Ormond, 2005).

The data in this study is presented in two different categories: participant profiles and research questions. The participant profiles reflect the information gathered in the
background survey (Appendix A), which was sent by e-mail to each teacher once they agreed to participate in the study. The survey collected information on participants’ level of education, years of teaching experience, employment history, number of at-risk schools they have worked in, personal educational experience, and how they came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students.

Research Questions

The questions for the individual interviews were constructed using information related to the three principal research questions of this study:

1. When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?

2. What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?

3. What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

The taped interview consisted of 17 questions (Appendix B). There were three specific interview questions associated with research question one, six questions associated with research question two, and seven questions related to research question three. The data gathered in the interviews was organized and categorized in relation to the interview questions that were associated with each research question. A full transcript of the participant interviews has been added as an appendix (Appendix F) at the
end of this study. Identification of patterns and single instances were notated and an overall synthesis of the data gathered in the interviews was included.

Participant Profiles

Don

Don received his bachelor’s degree in 1998 and has a total of 12 years of teaching experience. While teaching he received his Master of Music in 2004 and is currently working on his Ph.D. in music education. Don’s teaching career has included working at a middle school for five years teaching band in grades 6-8 to a high population of at-risk students. He then moved to a high school for the next five years teaching band in grades 9-12 to a high population of at-risk students. After 11 years of working with high concentrations of at-risk students, Don migrated last year to a new high school in a different location in the metro Atlanta area that has a very low at-risk population.

Don stated that he felt that his degree(s) did not adequately prepare him for working with high concentrations of at-risk students. His only teaching experiences were at the university lab school and student teaching, but neither of those groups included at-risk students. He went on to say that he felt that all discussions in courses of teaching were about teaching in a bubble.

Don stated that he grew up in a school system with a low at-risk population. Most of the students in his school lived in single-family homes and he had very few friends with financial issues or concerns.

When asked to explain how he came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students, Don stated that it was his first job out of college and that he took what he could get. He did add that he felt he had no idea what he was getting into.
Edwin

Edwin has a total of 19 years of teaching experience and holds three degrees, Bachelors in Music Education, Master of Music in Trumpet Performance and a Doctor of Music Education. His teaching career has a number of stops including five different schools and school systems. Edwin began his career teaching band in a middle school with a high at-risk population before working with two high schools for the next 10 years that also included high concentrations of at-risk students. For the last 6 years he has taught at two different high schools with low concentrations of at-risk students and has also been on the part-time faculty at a local university.

When asked if his degree(s) adequately prepared him for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students, Edwin stated that it did but only “somewhat.” He had two student teaching experiences with master teachers in at-risk environments. Also, Edwin’s dissertation study was an observation study of 30 middle school music programs, many of which were in at-risk areas. He also did other field work and observations for his doctorate in music education in at-risk schools.

Because his father was in the military, Edwin attended a variety of schools while growing up, including a military base school, a suburban school and one city school with a variety of low at-risk population to some with high at-risk populations.

When asked to briefly describe how he came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students Edwin stated “bluntly” it was the job he was offered. Plus having good student teaching experiences in those environments, he was not afraid to apply for those jobs. Also, he was confident that he could succeed in those situations. Edwin went on to add the he feels music is a calling and that he sees a lot of inequity
toward those schools and those students. He believes that all children can learn and that by teaching successfully in those environments, he helped to show that to be true. Edwin left those teaching situations because of the money constraints, NCLB, poor administration, and because of the challenges of the high transient rate that comes with those socio-economic situations.

Gene

Gene has 9 years of teaching experience. He received his bachelor’s degree in 2001 and his masters in music with a conducting emphasis in 2009. His teaching career consists of four different high schools. In each case he taught band in grades 9-12 with two of the schools classified as having a low at-risk population and two having a high concentration of at-risk students to include his current position.

When asked if his degree(s) adequately prepared him for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students Gene said that it/they did not. He received very little, if any, education of different learning styles, implications of demographics, or teaching strategies needed for working with at-risk students.

Gene grew up in a school system with a low at-risk population. Families seemed to reflect (or exceed) the national average for two parent households. The families seemed to be predominantly middle to upper-middle socio-economic status and were mostly Caucasian (greater than 90%).

When asked how he came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students Gene stated that he was recruited to the Atlanta area by a music colleague. There were two high school positions open, both of which were high at-risk schools. He
interviewed at both and when given the choice between the two schools he selected the one in which he is currently teaching.

Madelyn

Madelyn has a total of 9 years of teaching experience. She received her bachelor’s degree in 2002 and her master’s in music education in 2007. When asked to outline her teaching career, Madelyn stated that when she graduated in 2002 she accepted a job at a high school in the metro Atlanta area as an assistant band director. She considered the population at the time of her hiring to have been a relatively low at-risk population. As the years progressed and new school lines were drawn the population changed, raising the percentage of at-risk students. In 2009, she had a baby and left the school, because the after school demands were too high and the lifestyle was not conducive for a new mother. Madelyn accepted a position as an elementary music teacher at a title I school with an even higher at-risk population than the previous school. She is currently in that position, teaching music for a half day and remedial reading for the other half.

When asked if her degree(s) adequately prepared her for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students she said that it/they did not. Madelyn’s classes mainly discussed philosophies and principals of education in general. She stated that she never received the classroom management training she needed to feel prepared for teaching at-risk students or addressing their parents.

Madelyn stated that she grew up in a school system with a low at-risk population, where students were expected to strive for good grades, and where graduating from college was not an option but an expectation.
When asked to describe how she came to teach a high at-risk population, she said that the area where she first started teaching changed due to re-districting, creating a larger at-risk population. She found herself in her current position because it was the only job available when she had to leave her first position to take care of her daughter.

Natalie

Natalie has a total of 6 years of teaching experience. She received her bachelor’s degree in 2003 and her master’s of music education in 2005. She spent her entire 6-year career at the same middle school in metro Atlanta teaching band and general music to a high at-risk population of students.

When asked if her degree(s) adequately prepared her for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students, Natalie stated that it/they did not. She student-taught in a diverse school, but it was nothing like what she experienced while teaching at her middle school. She cannot remember about the issue of teaching at-risk students mentioned in any of her classes, much less taught how to teach in that situation.

Natalie stated that she grew up attending a school with a low at-risk population.

In describing how she came to teach at a school with high concentrations of at-risk students, Natalie stated that she did not have a teaching job when she got out of college, so when the middle school job opened up after the school year started, she took it.

Ron

Ron received his bachelor’s degree in 2003 and his master’s in 2008. He has a total of eight years of teaching experience at three different schools systems. His first two jobs were at middle schools teaching band in grades 6-8 and each had a high
concentration of at-risk students. His current position is at a private school where he teaches grades 5-12 to a low at-risk high socio-economic student population.

Ron stated that nothing in his course work specifically prepared him to teach high concentrations of at-risk students, and although he did conduct/participate in two or three observations of music teachers who taught high concentrations of at-risk students, this experience did not prepare him for his later positions.

Ron grew up in a school system with a low at-risk population in a suburban county in South Georgia. He stated that the school population was primarily from middle to upper middle socio-economic families.

Ron came to teach in the two middle schools with high concentrations of at-risk students out of necessity, stating that in both cases he took several interviews at a variety of schools, but was offered jobs only at schools with at-risk populations. He stated further that he believes these job offerings were because he had little or no experience.

Roy

Roy has 28 years of teaching experience and holds three degrees, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s of Music Education, and an Educational Specialist in Music Education. His teaching career has a number of stops including six different middle schools. His first four positions had a high concentration of at-risk students and his last two did not.

When asked if his degree(s) prepared him for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students, Roy stated that it did not. He went on to say that successful teaching of at-risk students requires the collaboration of the teacher with parents, administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, other teachers, and requires participation at in-
service sessions directed towards working with at-risk students. He said that such collaboration was not taught in his degree program.

Roy attended what he described as a small town system with one elementary, one middle, and one high school that was located in a rural area with a mostly low at-risk, blue collar and farming population,

When asked to briefly describe how he came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students Roy stated that the administration at his first school offered support to the band program. He came into his next position after he married and relocated to be with his wife. He stated that each school had high concentrations of at-risk students as a result of re-districting, aging community, and changing socio-economic environment.

Thomas

Thomas received his bachelor’s degree in 1989 and his master’s in music with a wind/band conducting emphasis in 2005. He is currently pursuing his Ed.D in Teacher Leadership and Learning with an Instructional Technology Concentration. Thomas has a total of 22 years of teaching experience in five different school systems. His first four teaching positions consisted of a mix of middle and high schools teaching band to grades 6-12 to mostly low at-risk populations of students. Thomas’ current position is at a middle school in the Atlanta metro area, where he teaches band to grades 6-8 and consist of a very high concentration of at-risk students.

Thomas stated that his degree(s) did not adequately prepare him for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students. He said that the topic was never addressed at any point in his degree work.
Thomas grew up moving a great deal, so he actually attended four different school systems in two states. To the best of his memory the population in each school he attended was a low at-risk population with middle to upper-middle socio-economic status among its students.

His current position at a school with a high concentration of at-risk students was a surprise for Thomas. He moved to Georgia to be closer to his family, and the middle school he interviewed for was a mix of low at-risk population and high at-risk population. By the end of his first year, a new school opened in his district and the low at-risk students moved to the new school, leaving his current school with mostly high at-risk students.

Cross-Case Analysis of Participant Profiles

*Patterns*

Cross case analysis of Table 4.1 shows that all eight participants have at least six years of teaching experience, have earned a graduate degree in the field of music education, were not prepared by their degree to work with at-risk students and grew up in a school system that had a predominantly low at-risk student population. This would indicate a pattern among these eight participants of all being experienced teachers (as defined by the researcher for this study as having at least five years of teaching experience). All have earned some level of graduate degree in music education but none of the eight felt as if their music education degree adequately prepared them to work in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. An additional pattern was observed with the type of school system that the participants grew up in that all of the eight participants for this study grew up in schools with a low at-risk student population.
Additional information was gathered regarding the participants’ employment history to include the number of low and high at-risk schools worked in as well as how many years spent working in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students.

A cross case analysis of the data indicates a pattern within the eight participants for this study exists regarding work experience with both high and low at-risk student populations. Six (Don, Edwin, Gene, Ron, Roy, and Thomas) of the eight participants had worked in schools with high concentrations of at-risk and also in schools with low concentrations of at-risk students.

Further cross case analysis reveals that of the eight participants, seven (Don, Edwin, Gene, Madelyn, Natalie, Roy, and Thomas) have at least five years of teaching experience working with high concentrations of at-risk students.

One additional pattern was observed when performing the cross case analysis of the data gathered in the participants background survey. Six (Don, Edwin, Gene, Natalie, Ron, and Roy) of the eight participants are no longer teaching in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students.

Exceptions

Exceptions were observed among the eight participants when asked how they came to teach in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. Only one of the participants (Gene) did so by choice. Of the remaining seven participants four (Edwin, Madelyn, Natalie, and Ron) said that it was “the only job available,” one (Don) said he “took what he could get,” one (Roy) did so because of getting relocated due to getting married, and one (Thomas) said he did so “by surprise.”
A further exception was identified with two participants (Madelyn and Natalie), who had worked solely with at-risk students during their teaching career. All other participants had worked with both at-risk and non at-risk students. When asked how long they had worked with at-risk students, only one (Ron) had less than five years working with at-risk, he had three. One additional exception was Natalie. She was the only participant in the study who is no longer teaching music. One exception was observed when describing their teaching career with Madelyn and Thomas. They are the only participants still working with at-risk students.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide a summary of the participant profiles. Table 4.1 offers a summary of the participants’ characteristics and 4.2 a summary of participants’ work experience.

Table 4.1

**Participant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>TOTAL YEARS TAUGHT</th>
<th>HIGHEST DEGREE</th>
<th>DID DEGREE PREPARE YOU FOR WORKING WITH AT-RISK?</th>
<th>TYPE OF SCHOOL SYSTEM PARTICIPANTS GREW UP IN</th>
<th>HOW DID YOU COME TO TEACH IN A SCHOOL WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Took what I could get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Only job offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>By choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madelyn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Only job available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Only job available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Only job available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>Marriage relocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>MME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low at-risk</td>
<td>By surprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2

Participants’ Work Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS WORKED</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WORKED IN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF AT-RISK SCHOOLS WORKED IN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS</th>
<th>STILL TEACHING MUSIC</th>
<th>CURRENTLY TEACHING AT-RISK STUDENTS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madelyn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-Case Analysis of Participant Interviews

In this section, each principal research question is presented, followed by their related interview questions. A cross-case analysis of the interview responses was performed with patterns and exceptions being identified for each. Once all of the related interview responses were analyzed for patterns and exceptions in pros format, each section was then summarized with a related conceptual matrix for clarity of analysis.

Research Question #1

When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?

Interview Questions 1-3 Related to Research Question #1

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?
2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your
decision to leave your teaching position?

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as
it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students?

*Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Questions 1-3*

The three interview questions related to research question number one were
constructed to help find insight into the participants feelings and perceptions regarding
what it was like to work with high concentrations of at-risk students, whether or not
factors associated with at-risk students had an impact on their decision to leave that
teaching position, and what factors they felt were most important when it comes to
retaining teachers who work with at-risk students. Questions one and three were both
open ended subjective questions which allowed for a wide variety of responses. Question
two was objective and only allowed for a “yes” or “no” answer; however, after their
response to question two, the participants were asked to elaborate on their answer.

A cross case analysis of the interview responses to questions one through three is
located below. Identifiable patterns will first be discussed, followed by identification of
any exceptions.

*Patterns*

Patterns were identifiable in all three interview questions. When asked to
describe what their teaching experience was like as it relates to working with at-risk
students, six of the eight participants answered with some type of a positive response.
Don, Edwin, Gene, Natalie, Ron, and Roy all said that the experience was, “very
rewarding,” “fulfilling,” or “very positive.” Edwin stated that, “when you are able to take
people who don’t have a lot, or a lot of opportunities, and you are able to give them life changing opportunities, it is very rewarding.” However three (Gene, Natalie, and Ron) had mixed responses in that while they all said that the job was rewarding and fulfilling, they also stated that it was “frustrating” and “challenging” at the same time. Natalie summed up her mixed feelings with the following response:

It was definitely rewarding in some respects. Because those kids, they didn’t have a lot, and band was one thing that they really enjoyed. But at the same time, all of the challenges that we faced with lack of family support, lack of home training, the disrespect that we had to deal with, and the administration not caring, that was the most frustrating part for me.

A clear pattern emerged with interview question number two when it was asked if factors associated with teaching at-risk students had an impact on their decision to leave their teaching situation. Six (Don, Gene, Natalie, Ron, Roy, and Thomas) of the eight teachers in this study said “yes” teaching at-risk students did impact their decision to leave. Don described his situation when he said, “I felt like I would never really fit in. I tried to meet them where they were. I was always going to be an outsider. Ultimately that was the main reason I decided to leave.”

When asked what they consider to be the most important factors related to teacher retention, as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students, the participants gave a variety of responses. Factors mentioned were frustration, scheduling, supportive administration, funding, preparation of teachers and lack of parent support. One factor that the majority (six of eight) identified was a supportive administration. Edwin, Gene, Madelyn, Natalie, Ron and Roy all agreed that without supportive
administration, the job of working with at-risk students is made much more difficult. In speaking of his concerns with administrative support, Ron stated the following:

For me, I feel like if there was a better support structure as far as administration goes it would have helped. The administration was always embattled with issues of their own and everyone was just hung out to dry. As a result, the teachers I worked with were all burnt out and years of working in the situation had just run them out of energy.

Exceptions

Exceptions were observed in responses to all three interview questions pertaining to research question number one.

When asked to describe her teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students, Madelyn stated that she felt “unprepared.” When asked to explain just what she meant, she went on to say the following:

I wish I would have had some sort of instruction of how to deal with at-risk students because I feel that this is a very specific population. No one ever in my undergrad or graduate work ever addressed them as being any different. And there is definitely a difference and to ignore them does them a disservice because I think I may have missed out on some critical skills that could have helped both me and my students.

Thomas was the only participant to respond to interview question one by describing the students and not himself when he stated, “The hard part is motivation. There are a lot of people who want things for free. There are people who want things to happen and they just don’t understand what it takes to get there.”
Madelyn was the only participant to answer “no” to interview question number two. When asked if factors associated with her at-risk population had an impact on her decision to leave her teaching position she explained that it did not because she actually left from one school with a high at-risk population and moved to a new school with an even higher at-risk population. Her main reason for leaving was the birth of her daughter. She moved from a high school to an elementary school because of the better working hours so that she could spend more time with her daughter.

Edwin was also an exception with his response when he stated, “I left my position more because of a lack of administrative support and their view of the school relative to at-risk students.” He went on to say, “If I had better administrative support I may still be at that school.”

Two exceptions were also present in interview question number three. When asked what they thought were the most important factors in working with at-risk students, Don cited frustration and Thomas said he wasn’t sure but he “knew it wasn’t money.” Don went on to explain, “You put in ten times the effort to get one tenth the product and other people just don’t understand that.”

Thomas indicated that he is not sure what would encourage music teachers to remain at their job. He went on to say, “What is keeping me here is that I cannot find another job.”

Table 4.3 offers a summary of the participant responses to interview questions one through three.
Table 4.3

Summary of Participant Responses to Interview Questions 1-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIBE TEACHING AT-RISK STUDENTS</th>
<th>DID FACTORS WITH AT-RISK IMPACT YOUR DECISION TO LEAVE?</th>
<th>WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN WORKING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>Very rewarding</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Not Really</td>
<td>Scheduling, supportive administration, funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>Rewarding, meaningful and challenging</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administrative support, scheduling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madelyn</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Preparation of teachers, administrative support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Rewarding but frustrating</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administrative support, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Fulfilling but frustrating</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>Very positive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Hard to motivate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not sure, I know it is not more money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question #2

What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?

Interview Questions 4-9 Related to Research Question #2

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?
8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

*Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Questions 4-9*

The six interview questions related to research question number two were constructed to help find insight into what obstacles, if any, were presented in preparation for their yearly Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) performance as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students. The questions helped to determine if they participated in LGPE, if the standards for LGPE were representative of the standards they had for their at-risk students, how they ranked compared to those standards, if obstacles associated with the at-risk students kept them from achieving higher music standards, and finally to see if those obstacles had an effect on the teachers migration away from their school.

Interview questions four through nine were all objective in nature and a simple yes or no answer would have been sufficient. However, participants felt so strongly about their experiences they rarely were able to give just a one word answer.

A cross case analysis of the interview responses to questions four through nine is located below. Identifiable patterns will first be discussed to be followed by identification of any exceptions.
Many patterns were identified when comparing participants’ responses to interview questions four through nine. When asked if they participated in the LGPE all eight participants said that “yes” they did.

When asked if they felt LGPE standards (Appendix E) were a good representation of the goals they had for their at-risk students five (Gene, Natalie, Ron, Roy, and Thomas) of the eight said that “yes,” the standards were representative. Two of the participants (Gene, and Natalie) went on to explain that the standards only related musically, they did not represent all of the standards they had for their students. Natalie added, “Yes, musically. But we had a lot more to do for them character wise.”

Participants were asked how their at-risk students ranked in relation to the standards listed for LGPE and six (Edwin, Gene, Madelyn, Natalie, Ron, and Thomas) of the eight stated that for the time they were at their schools they received consistently superior (I) and excellent (II) ratings. Gene added the following expanded answer when he described what it took him to get a superior rating with his at-risk students:

Last year they got very high marks. The top group got a superior rating. But to accomplish that, there was a lot of extra work by the band director to fill a lot of the voids that are there. So if you look at the LGPE standards like tone, intonation, etc. those skills are not there from the middle school and they are not there from their private lesson teachers because there aren’t any. So a good analogy is in order to get to the end of the race, I have further to run with my kids.

One additional response that was recorded in regards to the standards being representative came from Ron when he said, “I felt the judging was fair. I felt it was
right where they were. I felt the goals on the judges’ sheets were appropriate for my students just like any other student.”

While each participant had multiple responses to interview question seven, the responses varied greatly and no apparent pattern were identifiable.

A pattern was identified with interview question eight. The participants were asked if the obstacles they listed in question seven kept them from achieving higher musical standards at LGPE, all eight said “yes” they did. Don added, “You were so fixated on just the notes and rhythms. Trying to get them past that was tough. They just wouldn’t go past it.” Further insight into how these obstacles kept them from achieving the goals they had for their students was offered by Natalie. She said, “If I was at a school where the students could get rides to and from rehearsals, and if the parents were more involved, etc., it would have been a lot easier.”

Question nine asked the participants if the obstacles as they relate to LGPE preparation have an impact on their migration as a teacher and five (Don, Edwin, Gene, Madelyn, and Thomas) of the eight said that “yes” they did. Madelyn said that while she is still in a school with a high concentration of at-risk students, she will be leaving it soon. She said, “I cannot sustain this for much longer. It is too draining.” Don seemed to sum up their responses when he added,

I never thought I was going to get them any better than I had them. The students liked being in band and all but as far as getting to the next level I didn’t think I was ever going to get them there. A part of me felt that maybe the next person could. It is defeating.
Exceptions

Interview question one asked if the participants in this study participated in LGPE and all eight said that they did so no exceptions were identified for that question.

With question two there were three identifiable exceptions. Three (Don, Edwin, and Madelyn) of the eight participants stated that the standards for LGPE were not representative of the goals they had for their at-risk students. Don stated that “Yes, it pushes you but in the end it is very frustrating. The comments are not really helpful. The judges do not know how far you have brought them to get them to that point. They only hear the performance and that is it.” In describing how she established her standards for her students at LGPE, Madelyn noted that,

I had two standards for my students. Students who are not at-risk come with a different set of skills that the at-risk students don’t have. So I had to think of them in two different sets of standards to bring those up to the level of the non at-risk students. I had a whole different set of standards, how to sit up, how to deal with your peers.

Another exception for question number two was Edwin who had a unique approach with his students when it came to setting standards and expectations for LGPE. He stated, “For me LGPE was a barometer for growth. We were being compared to groups with a very different socio-economic background and that did create some challenges. I think sometimes at-risk kids think the world is stacked against them. However, they do need to know that no one is going to hand them anything for free. So we had our years when we got our I’s and we had our years we got our II’s. For me it was always about the growth and how far the students came in their preparation. It was
not about us comparing ourselves to other schools it was about us comparing ourselves to ourselves.”

Analysis of interview question six noted that only two of the eight participants reported making ratings at LGPE lower than an excellent (II). Don and Roy both stated that while at their school with high concentrations of at-risk students they consistently received excellent (II) and good (III) ratings. At no time in their tenure at the school did they ever receive a superior (I) rating.

The question with the most exceptions was number seven. While one or two of the participants identified the same obstacles in preparing for LGPE, most of them had at least one obstacle that only they identified. The two obstacles that were duplicated were “no private lessons” (Don and Ron) and “can’t get students to after school practices” (Natalie, Ron, and Thomas). A list of the obstacles in preparing their at-risk students for LGPE appears below:

- No private lessons;
- Cultural expectations were too different;
- Scheduling, not able to get students into band class;
- Students lack of skill and knowledge of the instruments;
- Classroom management, not able to get them to rehearse properly;
- Transient students, never knew from one month to the next who you had;
- Conceptual obstacles, at-risk students don’t understand what excellence is; and
- Not able to fundraise enough money to bring in extra help.

Natalie stated that her school was over 40% transient. She went on, “The transient issue was the worst. So when you have two tuba players and they both move
out right before LGPE what are you going to do?” Thomas said, “The last time I had an after school rehearsal only ten of the forty students showed up. They just can’t get rides home.” Another statement regarding obstacles came from Edwin when he noted, “I had one year that I went to LGPE and the first time that I saw all of the students together was on the stage at festival.”

No exceptions were identified when the participants were asked if they thought the obstacles they listed kept them from achieving higher musical standards at LGPE. All respondents stated that “yes,” they did.

When asked if the obstacles as it relates to LGPE preparation had an impact on their migration as a teacher, three of the participants said that “no” they did not. The exceptions in this response were Natalie, Ron and Roy. Natalie stated that LGPE made it more stressful but it did not make her want to leave her school. Ron summed up his response with the following,

You don’t feel like you are getting any personal satisfaction musically. And there are times when I wonder if I have just lowered my musical standards. But to save my sanity, I had to lower my standards.

Table 4.4

Summary of Participant Responses to Interview Questions 4-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PARTICIPATE IN LGPE</th>
<th>WERE LGPE STANDARDS REPRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>HOW DID YOUR STUDENTS RANK?</th>
<th>OBSTACLES IN PREPARATION FOR LGPE</th>
<th>DID OBSTACLES HOLD YOU BACK?</th>
<th>DID OBSTACLES EFFECT YOUR MIGRATION?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not really helpful</td>
<td>If’s and III’s Never got a I</td>
<td>No private lessons, cultural expectations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>For me it was more about growth</td>
<td>I’s and II’s</td>
<td>Scheduling, can’t all my kids in class</td>
<td>Sometimes, Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Relative to music, Yes.</td>
<td>I’s and II’s</td>
<td>Lack of skill, instruments below standards</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PARTICIPATE IN LGPE</th>
<th>WERE LGPE STANDARDS REPRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>HOW DID YOUR STUDENTS RANK?</th>
<th>OBSTACLES IN PREPARATION FOR LGPE</th>
<th>DID OBSTACLES HOLD YOU BACK?</th>
<th>DID OBSTACLES EFFECT YOUR MIGRATION?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madelyn</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not for at-risk students, No</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Musically, yes</td>
<td>I’s and II’s</td>
<td>Transient students, getting to practices</td>
<td>No, Not really</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I’s and II’s</td>
<td>No money so no lessons, can’t get to practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>II’s and III’s</td>
<td>Conceptual obstacles, attendance at practices</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I’s and II’s</td>
<td>Can’t get students to afterschool practices</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question #3

What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

Interview Questions 10-17 Related to Research Question #3

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?
16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Questions 10-17

The eight interview questions related to research question number three were constructed to help find insight into the participants’ feelings and perceptions regarding the types of support that is most lacking in public schools, and the kinds of support they have had working with at-risk students. The questions were also designed to learn what was the most meaningful support they received, and if they felt the support was adequate, and if the amount of support had a negative or positive effect on their teaching longevity. The questions also sought to determine if at any point in their careers they had ever considered leaving a teaching position because of the obstacles faced in dealing with at-risk students. Additional information was collected to determine if the participants felt that training on how to work with at-risk students would have helped, and at what point in their careers they felt the training would have been most effective. Four (10, 11, 14, and 17) of the eight questions were open ended subjective questions which allowed for a wide variety of responses. The remaining four (12, 13, 15, and 16) questions were subjective and a simple one word answer would have been sufficient, however, the participants were asked to elaborate on their answers if they wished to do so.

A cross case analysis of the interview responses to questions 10 through 17 is located below. Identifiable patterns will first be discussed, followed by identification of any exceptions.
Patterns

Interview questions 10, 11, 12, and 13 each had a wide variety of responses from the participants and no clear patterns were identifiable. Each of their responses to those questions was identified as exceptions and will be addressed in the exceptions section to follow.

When asked if the amount of support given in working with at-risk students had a positive or negative effect on their teaching longevity, five (Madelyn, Natalie, Ron, Roy, and Thomas) of the eight participants stated that it had a “negative effect.” When Thomas was asked the question, he responded with the following, “The only thing keeping me here now is that there are not a lot of expectations, and I am working on my degree. If not for that, I would be out of here.” Ron summed up his experience with the following statement,

Yes, I would say negative. It had more to do with interpersonal relationships with teachers who were burned-out. It was hard to go in everyday and see teachers all around that had just given up. That’s just how I felt. Lack of support most definitely had a negative impact. If you feel like you are doing it on your own then there is not a lot of hope there.

A pattern was identified in interview question 15: “At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?” Six of the eight participants (Gene, Madelyn, Natalie, Ron, Roy, and Thomas) said that they had. Madelyn commented that the administration also played a role as well as the students.
Yes. Not so much because of what the students put you through but because of the administration. You just don’t know if you can always climb that mountain and you often wonder if there may be a better mountain to climb somewhere else.

In his response to question 15, Roy seemed to put the blame on the administration, but still related to issues dealing with the at-risk students. He stated, “There were many times I was thinking that there were unrealistic expectations of the administration that were unbearable.”

The two most identifiable patterns appeared in the final two interview questions when the participants were asked if more training would help and when that training should take place. They almost all gave the exact same responses. When asked if more training in dealing with high concentrations of at-risk students would have helped their situation, all eight responded with a “yes” answer. Don stated that, “It would have helped with the culture shock. If nothing else, just help to understand the mindset of low income families.” In a similar response, Madelyn added, “It would have helped because maybe I would have known more about what I was getting into. Even a class on counseling, what do you do when a student comes up to you and says, ‘I think I am pregnant’?” Natalie was just as specific with her response when she said, “In College no one ever talked with us about how to deal with at-risk students. No one ever told us what to do when your two tuba players move right before festival.”

Another identifiable pattern was noted in the final interview question when the participants were asked when training for dealing with at-risk students should take place. Seven of the eight participants (Ron was the only exception) stated that some form of training should take place during a teachers undergraduate years. Additionally, seven of
the eight participants (Gene was the only exception) also noted that they felt training while on the job would also be helpful. In her response, Madelyn said that, “It would be before I got started. I also think it needs to be taught in phases; before you start teaching, then after you start teaching, and then follow-up. It needs to be continuous.” Roy felt more like it should all take place in teacher’s undergraduate years. He said, “Undergrad can really prepare you. There is no crystal ball and they can give you what you need.”

The other common theme was that seven (Gene was the only exception) of the eight participants felt that training should be on the job with some type of mentorship in place. Don felt that while undergraduate work would help, mentorship was the better of the two choices. He stated,

The only way you could do it would be close mentorship after the teacher gets into the teaching situation. You can’t have everyone student teach in an at-risk situation so there is no way that student teaching alone can help. More at the undergrad level would help but mentorship would be the best way.

Edwin agreed with Don, when he said, “It has to be ongoing. A component in your undergrad would be helpful but on the job training is best. Mentoring would also help a great deal.” Natalie gave an almost identical response when she said, “Undergrad would help but continuous would be best by far.” Thomas also felt that continuous training and mentoring is best. He said, “I think it would have to be continuous. Some in your undergrad would help but you did not have a situation to stick it to so it didn’t help. It would be nice to have a mentor.”
Exceptions

Multiple exceptions were indentified in questions 10 through 13 and a few single instance exceptions were identified in questions 14, 15 and 17. All exceptions are discussed below.

When asked to give the types of support that is most lacking in the public schools when it comes to teaching high concentrations of at-risk students, no clear identifiable patterns were present. While four (Edwin, Madelyn, Natalie, and Roy) of the eight participants listing administration as one of the area’s most lacking, other responses varied. Their diverse responses ranged from the support from people who understand, to scheduling, and classroom management. They also identified funding, parents, and indicated that it’s not the money, with one saying he had no support that he knew of, all as additional factors.

Don indicated that support from people who understand was most lacking for him. He felt there were not a lot of teachers who have done it,. In Ron’s district, 70 to 80% of the bands were from upper income areas and there were not many programs like his in Ron’s district. “By the time I was in my sixth year, I was the second most tenured teacher in the school because so many people leave.”

Edwin had a different take on what he considers to be the most lacking support stating, “Scheduling, funding, and a lack of understanding what it is that I teach in my subject area.” Edwin indicated that when his school did not make AYP the School Board brought in a new administration. Ron said, “They just assumed that every teacher there was a slug.” Gene listed scheduling and classroom management as most lacking. He expanded on classroom management when he stated, “Learning the little things that you
can say that can take an irate student from a temper level of ten down to a calm level two instantaneously. And in reverse the little things that you shouldn’t say that can take a student from level two to level ten.” Madelyn listed administration as what was most lacking. She explained, “In my first position there was no support. It was like the administration went out of their way to always blame the teacher when the students did not succeed. At-risk students come with deficiencies that the teacher is always trying to make up for and I don’t think the administration always understands that reality.”

Two of the participants responded with the exceptions “I had no support that I knew of” and “It’s not the money. They gave me plenty” (Thomas). Ron felt as if he was “on his own.” He continued,

Maybe I was just buried into what I was doing and maybe I just was not aware of what was going on but I was not aware of any kind of support system being in place specific towards dealing with at-risk students at all so I am not really sure what one really looks like, so I don’t know if one was in place or not.

The exceptions for interview question 11 were just as varied. When asked what kinds of support they did have in working with at-risk students, responses included the following: being funded well, good administration, boosters, and mentors. Three (Don, Gene, and Thomas) of the eight participants listed that they were well funded, four (Edwin, Gene, Natalie, and Thomas) of the eight stated they had good administration at some point, and three (Madelyn, Ron, and Roy) stated that they had good mentors along the way.

Don described his funding of the program in the following statement, “I was funded. I bought instruments (eight new clarinets). I had financial support from the
district office. I had a great principal. He understood and would support me. He would pay for things.” While Edwin did list administration as one of the types of support he felt he had, he qualified his response with the following, “My first administrator, I would say yes. My second administrator I would have to say, no. With a bad administrator it is like trying to swim with your hands tied and with ankle weights on.” While Ron did state in his last response that he felt as if he had no support at all, he did offer that he felt he had one teacher who was kind of like a mentor for him. He stated, “The one thing I would say is that there was always a Spanish teacher or a teacher who knew Spanish that would be willing to translate a parent’s letter or email for me.”

Exceptions were just as prevalent with interview question 12. The participants were asked what type of support they felt was the most meaningful in working with high concentrations of at-risk students. Responses included the following: help from friends, a good scheduler, administration, fellow teachers, and mentors. Four (Don, Madelyn, Ron, and Roy) of the eight participants listed mentor teachers as being most meaningful, three (Gene, Natalie, and Thomas) listed administration and one (Edwin) listed a good scheduler.

When asked to expand on his response regarding mentor teacher being most meaningful, Ron said, “One on one relationship with mentor teachers that I sought out that did not teach in my school. I had to go search and find teachers that taught in similar situations as mine. I went out and found a teacher who taught at a school with a high at-risk population. I was calling him all the time.” In describing her former principal, Natalie said, “She was great in a lot of ways. She was a very positive person. That
helped a lot.” When Edwin described his scheduler he said, “One of the schools I taught at had an amazing scheduler and he made a big difference.”

When asked if the support they received in working with at-risk students was adequate, three different exceptions were identified. Four (Gene, Madelyn, Ron, and Roy) of the participants said that “no” the support was not adequate, two (Don and Thomas) participants said that “yes” the support was adequate, and the final two (Edwin and Natalie) participants said that the support was adequate at first but then changed when the administration changed.

When asked to expand upon his response that he did feel as if the support was adequate for his needs, Roy said, “In the big picture of things I would have to say no. If the support had been adequate I would still be there.” Thomas was asked to expand on why he felt he had adequate support and he responded with, “I think so. What can people do to make me feel more emotionally supported?”

Both Edwin and Natalie started out with what they felt was adequate support but then the administration changed and the support stopped. Natalie spoke of her situation, “Yes. The first two years it was great. After that I got a new administrator and it went downhill from there.”

Tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 offer a full summary of the participant responses to interview questions 10 through 17. With the large amount of data available, the responses have been divided into two separate tables. 4.5.1 is a summary of interview questions 10 through 13 and 4.5.2 is a summary of interview questions 14 through 17.
Table 4.5.1

*Summary of Participant Responses to Interview Questions 10-13*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SUPPORT MOST LACKING</th>
<th>KINDS OF SUPPORT YOU HAVE HAD</th>
<th>MOST MEANINGFUL SUPPORT</th>
<th>WAS SUPPORT ADEQUATE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DON</td>
<td>Support from people who really understand</td>
<td>I was well funded, friends that helped</td>
<td>Help from friends</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDWIN</td>
<td>Scheduling, funding, administration that understands</td>
<td>Have a good administrator</td>
<td>A good scheduler</td>
<td>Yes and no, depended on the administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENE</td>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Administration, county money, boosters</td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADELYN</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Mentor, but that was all I had</td>
<td>Fellow teacher who is in the same position as me</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATALIE</td>
<td>Administration, parents</td>
<td>Once had a good principal, she was helpful</td>
<td>My former principal</td>
<td>Yes at first, then it went downhill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RON</td>
<td>I had no support that I know of</td>
<td>Fellow teacher</td>
<td>Mentor teachers</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROY</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Fellow teachers</td>
<td>Mentor teachers</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS</td>
<td>It is not the money</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5.2

*Summary of Participant Responses to Interview Questions 14-17*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECT ON LONGEVITY</th>
<th>CONSIDERED LEAVING BECAUSE OF AT-RISK</th>
<th>WOULD MORE TRAINING HELP?</th>
<th>WHEN SHOULD TRAINING TAKE PLACE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DON</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mentorship while on the job, undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDWIN</td>
<td>Positive with a good administrator</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mentoring, ongoing, undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENE</td>
<td>Absolutely positive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADELYN</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Undergrad, on the job training (OJT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5.2 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECT ON LONGEVITY</th>
<th>CONSIDERED LEAVING BECAUSE OF AT-RISK WOULD MORE TRAINING HELP?</th>
<th>WHEN SHOULD TRAINING TAKE PLACE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATALIE</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergrad, OJT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RON</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OJT, NOT undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROY</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergrad, grad school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergrad, OJT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Chapter IV provides the data collected for this study. This chapter provides a brief review of the purpose of this study, an explanation of how the data is organized and analyzed, a review of the research questions and a cross case analysis of the participant profiles and interview questions.

The data presented in Chapter IV will be used to construct the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V
IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

An extensive review of the research literature indicates that ample data exists pertaining to teacher retention (Boutelle, 2009; Ingersoll, 1995; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; NCTAF, 2002; USEEM, 2003) and retention of teachers who work in low socioeconomic schools (Bauch, 2001; Hickok, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002; Jacob, 2007; Knopp, 2006). Furthermore there is extensive data regarding at-risk populations and the inherent issues associated with teaching this subgroup (Bruce, 2010; Mazotta, 2009; Pallas, 2009; Shields, 2001; U.S. Census, 2010). However, there is a noticeable lack of data regarding music teacher retention, (Madsen & Hancock, 2002), and a noticeably smaller amount addressing those who teach in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. The purpose of this study is to address this lack of data by providing a base of data related to music teacher retention in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students, which can be used to inspire additional research in this overlooked area of music education.

Chapter V discusses the findings and interpretations of data presented in Chapter IV along with recommendations for application of the findings and suggestions for further research. The findings of the data are presented in two major categories, first the background surveys, followed by the personal interviews. The background survey findings are presented in three major themes: (a) educational background, (b) years working with at-risk students, and (c) current job status. The findings from the interviews are also presented in three major themes:
1. Factors regarding teacher retention that emerged as important to those who work with high concentrations of at-risk students
2. Obstacles associated with at-risk students that prevent the achievement of high standards at LGPE
3. Issues regarding support for teachers who work with at-risk students and how it impacts teaching longevity.

Each theme relates directly to the three research questions posed for this study. The findings and interpretations are presented in the same format as Chapter IV, with each research question being broken down by their related interview questions. Each research question is compared to the related literature from Chapter II and is analyzed for similarities and differences. Recommendations for addressing issues uncovered in this study and suggestions for further research follow the findings and interpretations sections.

Findings and Interpretations

Background Surveys

Background surveys were sent to each of the eight participants in this study prior to conducting their interviews. Information regarding the participants total years taught, highest degree earned in music education, how participants came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students, number of years worked with at-risk students, and current teaching status was collected and organized for analysis. Analysis of the data indicated patterns in educational background, years working with at-risk students and current job status. These three themes are discussed in detail below.
**Theme 1: Educational Background**

The eight participants in this study had a total of 113 years of teaching experience between them, with the lowest number of years taught being six and the most years taught being 28. The average numbers of years taught was 14. Seven of the eight participants (88%) are still teaching with only one of the eight having left the profession all together. The large percentage (88%) of those who participated in this study who are still teaching go against the national average. As Boutelle (2009) indicated, school districts nationwide are losing approximately 50% of their teachers within the first five years of service. All of the participants in this study have more than five years experience.

Boutelle (2009) and Fantilli (2009) stated that students who learn from experienced teachers are more likely to retain the knowledge as evidenced by higher achievement scores. All eight participants (100%) in this study had at least six years of teaching experience and had obtained some level of graduate degree from a university. Six of the eight had a Masters degree, one had a Specialist and one had a Ph.D. in music education. This would indicate that all eight of the participants are experienced teachers as defined for this study.

When the participants were asked if they felt their degree had prepared them for working with high concentrations of at-risk students, all eight (100%) stated that it did not. As Madsen (2001) pointed out, more focus on preparation of music, teaching, classroom management, and presentation skills should be provided to new teachers to increase the likelihood that they will stay. Additionally, Catapano (2006) stated that training teachers on the student culture within the at-risk community is needed,
considering 90% of teachers that make up the staff are white, while the majority of the students they teach are minorities. All eight participants (100%) in this study were white and all (100%) grew up in schools systems with a low percentage of at-risk students. The data collected in this study supports the assertion that more training, education and better preparation is needed for music education majors at universities with a special focus on student culture of at-risk students.

**Theme 2: Years Working With At-Risk Students**

As multiple studies have indicated, teacher attrition in urban schools with a high concentration of at-risk students is a much greater problem than in other educational settings with fewer low-socioeconomically challenged students (Berliner, 2010; Harper, 2009; Ingersoll, 2002; Kickok, 2003; Useem, 2003). As stated earlier, the eight participants in this study have a combined 113 years of teaching experience with an average of 14 years teaching. When it comes to their years spent working with at-risk students, the participants range from as little as three to as much as 14 years. The average number of years the participants had spent teaching in schools with a high population of at-risk students was eight. Six (75%) of the eight participants had worked in more than one school with high concentrations of at-risk students and one (13%) had work in three different schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. If, as stated earlier, teacher attrition is a much greater problem in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students, and as Boutelle (2009) notes, school districts are losing approximately 50% of their teachers within the first five years of teaching; the eight participants in this study go against the national trend in this area. They all have more than five years of teaching experience. Only one (13%) of the participants in this study met that national
average when it came to time worked with at-risk students. He (Ron) spent just three years teaching in an at-risk school however, he is still in the teaching profession. All of the remaining seven exceeded the national average. This would suggest that for the participants in this study, something kept them in those teaching situations longer. While an answer as to why they stayed longer will not be provided here, this would make for an area of additional research in the future.

**Theme 3: Current Job Status**

The National Commission for Teaching and America’s Future (2002) found that a third of teachers in low socioeconomic areas leave the teaching profession in their first three years, and 50% leave within their first five years of teaching. Additional studies show that since the early 1990s, the number of American teachers exiting the profession has exceeded the number of entrants by an increasing amount with less than 20% of the attrition attributed to retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). Finally, Ingersoll (2001) stated that in high poverty schools, the teacher turnover rate is 50% higher than in low poverty schools. Of the eight participants in this study, seven (88%) are still teaching with only one (12%) having left the profession altogether. These statistics would indicate that the participants in this study go against the national average when it comes to number of years worked with high concentrations of at-risk students.

While the participants in this study go against the national average when it comes to years worked with at-risk students, they do meet the national statistics when it comes to whether or not they are still working with at-risk students in their current position. Of the eight participants in this study, six of them (75%) no longer work in schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (1990-
91) conducted a Schools Staffing Survey and it indicated that turnover rates were higher in public schools where half or more of the students enrolled received free or reduced lunches. Useem (2003) studied high poverty middle schools in Philadelphia and reported that only 19 out of 60 teachers remained at their original school after a three year period. These statistics are consistent with the results found in this study.

Research Questions

In order to provide data that is directly related to the subject of Retention of Music Teachers working with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students, the following three research questions were posed for this study:

1. When describing teaching experiences, what factors of teacher retention emerge as important for music teachers who work with at-risk students?
2. What are the common obstacles found in music programs with at-risk student populations that prevent the achievement of higher musical standards as they relate to the Georgia Music Educators Large Group Performance Evaluation?
3. What is reported as the most meaningful support given to music educators teaching at-risk students? How does this support affect the teaching longevity for those surveyed?

Interviews

Personnel interviews were conducted with all eight participants in this study. Once they agreed to participate and had completed the background survey, the interviews were conducted and recorded on a digital voice recorder so they could be transcribed at a later date. A full transcript of all the interviews is included in Appendix F. The interview questions were constructed directly from the three original research questions.
posed for this study. Analysis of the data indicated patterns in: (a) factors regarding teacher retention that emerged as important to those who work with high concentrations of at-risk students; (b) obstacles associated with at-risk students that prevent the achievement of high standards at LGPE; and (c) issues regarding support for teachers who work with at-risk students and how it impacts teaching longevity. These three themes are discussed below.

**Theme 1: Important Factors Regarding Teacher Retention When Working With At-Risk Students**

The first interview question asked the participants to describe their teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students. Responses ranged from very rewarding to frustrating. The reasons cited as to why it is frustrating are similar to those found in the related literature. Jacob (2007) noted that urban schools have a higher rate of students whose families do not speak English at home (making it more difficult to communicate with parents), produce lower achievement test results, have more students living in poverty, have a high transient rate among students, and lack supplies and facilities. Erskine-Cullen and Sinclair (1996) interviewed teachers about their perspectives on teaching at a school with high concentrations of at-risk students. The teachers indicated that positions in these schools brought on a high level of stress since the students were very poor, very transient, had troubled home lives, many did not primarily speak English, and were starved for attention. Of the eight participants interviewed for this study, six (75%) indicated that their overall experience in working with at-risk students was either “rewarding,” “fulfilling,” or “very positive.” Of those who answered in the affirmative, they all said that the ability to help those students most
in need and give them experiences that a music class can provide, was what they found to be the most rewarding. Robinson (2004) and Weinstein (1995) both believe that the music teacher transcends educator and becomes a surrogate parent for at-risk students, a role that far surpasses a typical teacher job description. This trend goes against Jacob (2007) as well as Erskin-Cullen and Sinclair (1996). It is important to note that while some did say that it was rewarding, five (63%) either had a mixed response or stated they were unprepared and the students were hard to motivate. Of those stating mixed responses, frustrating was the term most used. Frustrating issues cited by the participants correlate directly with those listed by Jacob (2007) and Erskin-Cullen and Sinclair (1996). Three (38%) had mixed responses and two (25%) stated they were unprepared and the students were hard to motivate. Answers to this particular response will not be addressed in this study but could make for a basis for further research at a later date.

The eight participants in this study were all asked what they thought were the most important factors of teacher retention as it relates to working with at-risk students. Responses varied greatly. Participants listed frustration, scheduling, supportive administration, funding, preparation of teachers, and parents as factors they felt were most important. Of the responses given, six (75%) of the eight cited “administration” as one of their important factors. Hickok (2003) stated that conditions such as safety issues, run down facilities, and a lack of administrative support cause many teachers to look for employment elsewhere. A University of California at Santa Cruz study (Bartlett & Klempnauer, 2005) cited lack of administrative support as the number two factor, just behind the inability to buy a home on teacher’s salary, as important factors for teacher retention. Further, Gau (2003) reported that teachers left for reasons such as
disillusionment and stress, low salary, frustration with administration and bureaucracy. A review of the data gathered in the participant interviews and the related literature indicate that administration is one of the most important factors in working with at-risk students. While frustration, scheduling, funding, and parents were also listed by the participants, each can be categorized as a single instance and no additional themes were identifiable.

According to a study by Jackson (2009), teachers increasingly leave positions at schools that serve low income students. Heston, Dedrick, and Raschke (1996) found that rather than any single factor, it is the combination of many perceived issues that cause teachers to leave. Of the eight participants in this study, six (75%) indicated that factors associated with teaching at-risk students did have an impact on their decision to leave their previous teaching position. This would indicate that factors related to working with at-risk students have a negative impact on teacher retention.

**Theme 2: Obstacles Associated With At-Risk Students That Prevent the Achievement of High Standards at LGPE**

Interview questions four through nine asked the participants about their perceptions and experiences in attending their states’ Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE), and whether or not that experience had an impact on their migration. Topics included the equity in the LGPE standards for at-risk students, how their students ranked against those standards, what obstacles, if any did they face when preparing their students, if those obstacles held them back from attaining higher standards and if those obstacles effected their migration. Of the eight participants, all (100%) attended LGPE while at their schools with high concentrations of at-risk students. Seven (88%) felt that the standards for musical excellence set for LGPE were representative of those standards
they had for their at-risk students and all (100%) stated that their bands consistently scored “Superior” (I) and “Excellent” (II) ratings.

Teacher attrition in urban schools is a much greater problem than in other educational settings with fewer low-socioeconomically challenged students (Berliner, 2010; Harper, 2009; Ingersoll, 2002; Kickok, 2003; Useem, 2003). Smith and Smith (1998) found that former educators cited that poverty, race and ethnicity, family composition, mother’s education, and language background all contributed to poor music teacher retention. These findings correlate directly with the findings in this study. When the participants were asked if they faced obstacles in preparing their groups for LGPE they all (100%) cited that indeed they had. Factors listed were no private lessons, cultural differences, scheduling, instruments below standards, transient students, students not able to get to after school practices, and conceptual obstacles. When asked if they felt these obstacles held them back and kept them from obtaining higher musical standards, all eight (100%) said that “yes” they had.

An additional correlation with the research literature was noted in this study when the participants were asked if the obstacles in preparing their at-risk students for LGPE had an impact on their migration. Five of the eight participants stated that “yes” the obstacles faced when preparing their students for LGPE had an impact on their decision to migrate to another teaching position. As noted by Heston, Dedrick, and Raschke (1996), it is a combination of many perceived issues that cause teachers to leave and not any one single factor.
Theme 3: Issues Regarding Support, Training and Education for Teachers Who Work With At-Risk Students and How They Impact Teaching Longevity

Interview questions 10 through 17 asked the participants for their perceptions regarding the types of support, training and education they received in working with at-risk students and how those issues impacted their teaching longevity. When asked to describe the support they felt was most lacking in working with at-risk students, responses ranged from support from people who really understand, scheduling, funding, classroom management, administration, parents, to not being aware of any support to speak of. Of the multiple answers, administration was mentioned the most with four (50%) of the participants stating that it was the most lacking of any type of support they received. These results are in direct correlation with Gau (2003) and Bartlett and Klempnauer (2005) when they both cited administrative support as among the most lacking to teachers who chose to leave the profession. Additional similarities to the participants’ responses were noted in a study by Heston, Dedrick, and Raschke (1996). They surveyed 200 band directors from various size districts in a Midwestern state regarding job satisfaction. They discovered that attitudes and behaviors of students, teaching load, administrative duties and lack of support were the most significant sources of stress for the teachers surveyed.

The participants were also asked what types of support they felt they were given. Their responses included being funded well, having a good administrator, boosters, and some type of mentor. Of the various responses given, five (63%) of the participants stated that a “mentor” was the most common type of support they received. As noted by Johnson and Birkland (2003), teachers look for schools where support is in place, where
they feel confident in their students, their safety, and where they can continue to grow over time. Roulston, Legette, and Womack (2005) concluded that if schools are to retain teachers they must have the guidance of a mentor. The results from the participants in this study also correlate with Conway (2003) when she stated that having a mentor within the music field allows the beginning teacher to have support to ask specific curricular, management, and performance questions. Results from this study and those of the related literature indicate that administrative support is lacking and that mentorship is considered to be the most important type of support that can be given to teachers of at-risk students.

The participants were asked if they felt the support they received was adequate for their needs in working with at-risk students. Only two (25%) said that “yes” it was adequate. Four (50%) said that “no” it was not and two (25%) stated that it was adequate when they had a good administrator, but that it was not when the administration changed. Results from multiple studies show that lack of support (Hancock, 2009; Madsen, 2002; Siebert, 2008) is a main reason for teachers leaving the field of music education prior to retirement. The participants were then asked if issues pertaining to lack of support in dealing with at-risk students ever caused them to consider leaving their teaching position and six (75%) said that “yes” it had. The results from this study correlate directly with the related literature and that issues with lack of support in dealing with at-risk students are a contributor to poor teacher retention.

The final two interview questions asked the participants if they felt more training and education in learning how to work with at-risk students would help, and if so when should it take place. In a 2008 study, Johnson found that focusing on teacher preparation provided relief for teacher attrition. Additionally, DeCarbo (1995) surveyed 27 teachers
identified as outstanding in an urban setting by their state music education association. He found that while the majority felt their education prepared them to be good musicians, only three of 27 participants felt prepared to teach in the urban classroom. Mixon (2005) believes teachers in the urban schools should learn new skills to accommodate the at-risk students. These findings are in agreement with the participants in this study. All eight (100%) stated that they felt more training in how to work with at-risk students would have helped.

When asked when teacher training and education should take place and when it would be most effective, seven (88%) of the eight participants agreed that it should take place in the teachers’ undergraduate years of college. This would agree with findings by Hinkey, Kremp, Milthaler, and Zieber (2003) when they reported on a discussion group held at the Ohio Music Educators Association conference that also believed that improving pre-service training could remedy teacher attrition. Ideas gathered from the conference focused on teacher preparation that included more hands-on experience early in pre-service training. It is important to note that while seven (88%) of the eight participants in this study stated that the undergraduate years would be best, six (75%) stated that it is also important for continuing education and training to take place once a teacher is in the classroom.

Recommendations

This study of retention of music teachers who teach high concentrations of at-risk students has several possible implications for music education, music teacher retention, and music teacher preparation. Future studies in music teacher retention of those working with at-risk students should consider the following:
1. It would appear that additional preparation of undergraduate and graduate music education majors on how to work with and better understand the cultures of at-risk student populations is needed at the university level. Developing a curriculum that helps to address the specific issues associated with teaching at-risk students and ways in which to better understand their culture could help. As was pointed out by Catapano (2006) more teacher education on student culture within the at-risk community is needed considering 90% of teachers in this area are white while the majority of the students they teach are minority.

2. Better ways of recruiting and retaining experienced teachers in schools with high concentrations of at-risk student populations is also needed. To ensure a quality education for all, school districts must staff schools with highly qualified personnel (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). Results of this study indicate that the participants taught in schools with at-risk populations because it was the only position they could get. If school systems are going to be able to improve retention, they must find ways to attract experienced teachers. School systems should get teachers to come to their schools because they are excited to be there, and not feel as if they had to settle for a job they did not want.

3. Once schools systems are able to attract experienced teachers they must then be able to provide the support systems needed to retain them. While participants in this study indicated that they found working with at-risk students rewarding and fulfilling, they still indicated that factors associated with teaching at-risk students had an impact on their decision to migrate. It would appear that administrative support is the single most important factor associated with retaining teachers in at-
risk schools. Additional training of administrators on how to provide appropriate support of their teachers in at-risk schools could help.

4. While the participants indicated that they were able to achieve high musical standards at LGPE, they did face many obstacles in preparing their students that had an impact on their decision to migrate to another school. In order to address these obstacles, funding must be increased in high at-risk schools so that the music teacher can purchase private lessons and quality instruments for their students, as suggested by the participants in this study. While it may be possible for a music teacher to solicit free lessons and donated music instruments, this only adds to the already over worked and over stressed job load and would only increase the likelihood that they would look to migrate as soon as possible. An additional obstacle the music teachers in this study indicated was not being able to get students to attend after school rehearsals in preparing for LGPE. The biggest reason cited was that the students could not get a ride home from practice. One possible solution to this would be for the school system to provide an after school bus that could take students home. If the cost of a bus is not in the school systems budget, then the administration could work with the music teacher to help identify creative ways to fit additional practices into the regular school day.

5. It has already been discussed that having support systems in place is key to retaining quality music teachers. One support system identified in this study that participants felt would be most effective was that of a mentor. A new teacher having the ability to turn to an experienced educator within the school and who has the experience to relate to the issues faced in working with at-risk students is
considered to be the most meaningful of all the types of support given. Having a mentor within the music field allows the beginning teacher to have support to ask specific curricular, management, and performance questions (Conway, 2003).

Offering experienced teachers an opportunity to serve as a mentor and then giving them the training they need to do the mentorship properly could help greatly to reduce the number of teachers migrating away from at-risk schools.

6. It would appear that more continuing education and on the job training in working with at-risk students would also be helpful. School systems could offer teachers in-service workshops that are taught by successful educators from at-risk schools. However, having continuous classes, workshops, and lectures on how to work with and better understand the cultures of at-risk students is key to its success. A onetime workshop or class does not appear to be the answer.

7. The most significant recommendation found in this study is the need for more research in the field of retention of music teachers working with at-risk student populations. Plenty of data exists regarding teacher retention and at-risk students. However, there is a noticeable absence of data pertaining to music teacher retention and more specifically to music teachers working with at-risk students.

Suggestions for Further Research

As pointed out above and by other researchers (Madsen & Hancock, 2002), there appears to be a lack of sufficient studies in the field of music teacher retention in general, and an even greater lack in the area of music teacher retention of music teachers who work with high concentrations of at-risk students. This being the case, it is important that
additional research be conducted in this overlooked and understudied area of music education.

The participants in this study went against the national average in a number of statistical ways. One of the more interesting contradictions was that of the participants in this study who worked with at-risk students, yet all but one is still teaching. A future study may want to look for answers as to why such a large percentage of the participants in this study decided to stay in teaching and to see if there are solutions found that could be applied to other teachers across the country.

Studies indicate that teachers find working with at-risk students to be very frustrating and unrewarding. However, of the participants in this study, six of the eight stated that working with at-risk students was rewarding, fulfilling, and positive. Additional studies as to why some teachers find working with at-risk students rewarding, fulfilling, and positive may lead to findings that could help administrators develop plans that could help those teachers in at-risk schools find better ways to cope with the stress and burnout, reported to be the case for so many.

It was noted by the participants in this study that lack of parental support was a major factor in dealing with at-risk students. Future studies could look into the factors that explain why it is that parents of low socio-economic at-risk students tend to not get involved in their child’s education as much as parents from more affluent areas. This is important because until students can get the same support at home as they do at school, a teacher is limited in what they can do to help a child learn.
Summary and Conclusion

Retention of music teachers who work with high concentrations of at-risk students is a very important issue facing music education. While universities are continuing to produce many outstanding talented music educators, these new teachers are finding that sometimes the only jobs available are those in at-risk schools. These very energetic and motivated new teachers are full of hope and dreams of a long career in music education only to find that when they get into these low socio-economic schools they have little or no support. This leads to frustration, desperation, burnout and eventually migration. If they are lucky, that teacher will go out and find a better school to teach in, with more support in place, and will continue to contribute to the advancement of music education. If not, that teacher who was once full of promise and hope will get out of teaching altogether and find another more rewarding field to work in.

This research indicates that additional preparation of undergraduate and graduate music education majors on how to work with and better understand the cultures of at-risk student populations is needed at the university level. This study also suggests that if school systems are going to be able to improve retention at schools with high concentrations of at risk students, they must find ways to recruit and attract experienced teachers. Again, once school systems are able to attract these experienced teachers, they must then be able to provide the support systems needed to retain them. It is vital that funding be increased in high at-risk schools so that the music teacher can purchase private lessons and quality instruments for their students, and these same school systems should attempt to provide an after school bus that could take the band students home. A new teacher that is able to reach out to an experienced mentor within the school is
considered to be the most meaningful. This study indicates that offering experienced teachers an opportunity to serve as a mentor and then giving them the training they need to do the mentorship properly would increase teacher retention. Most significantly, more research is needed in the field of retention of music teachers working with at-risk student populations. It is imperative that this research is conducted and we look for better ways to attract, support and retain new teachers. The future of music education is depending on it.

The next step in research regarding retention of music teachers who work with high concentrations of at-risk students is to conduct a survey of a larger population, no less than 100 to 150 participants, to see if the patterns established among the eight participants in this study hold true and to look for generalizability of the data to a larger population of music teachers.
APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND SURVEY

Sonny Petway
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education
sonnypetway@hotmail.com
(678) 469-0266

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research study. The survey you are about to take will help us get ready for our interviews by briefly summarizing your background information, discussing working with at-risk students and discussing your teaching experiences. The survey should not take more than 30 minutes to complete. Please type your answers directly on the document and return them to me via email.

1. Please state your full name
2. When did you receive your bachelor’s degree?
3. Do you have a degree other than a bachelors? If so, please list what type or types and when you received it (them).
4. Would you say that your degree (degrees) adequately prepared you for teaching high concentrations of at-risk students?
5. How many teaching years of experience do you have?
6. What type of school system did you grow up in (high at-risk population or low at-risk population)? Briefly describe the population to the best of your ability.
7. Please outline your teaching career. List chronologically the school’s name, years taught, grades, subject areas and categorize each as either low at-risk populations or high at-risk populations.
8. Briefly describe how you came to teach in a school with high concentrations of at-risk students.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. Your answers will be very valuable to helping understand what background you bring to your teaching situation as well as this study. Please email your completed form back to me when completed.
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?
17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Sonny Petway
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education
sonnypetway@hotmail.com
(678) 469-0266

INFORMED CONSENT FROM

Dear Music Teacher:

I am writing to ask permission to interview you for a research project entitled Retention of Music Teachers working with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students, A Case Study. The purpose of this study is to measure responses from a survey of music teachers who have worked in high concentrations of at-risk schools to determine if a pattern arises as to why they chose to leave their teaching positions prior to the national average. If you are willing to participate, the study will be conducted during January and February 2011. Participation in this study will include the completion of a background survey and one interview. Should you wish to withdraw from participation once the study begins, you may withdraw at any time. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Results from the study will be available to you upon your request.

All information that is gathered from the survey will held in strict confidence. There will be few participants in this study. If you chose to participate in this study please keep your responses and comments about this study anonymous. Your name and the name of anyone mentioned in the interview including other teachers, administrators, university professors and schools you have attended will not be used in this study. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your signature below indicates your consent to participate in this study:

Your name (printed) __________________________________________

Your signature _______________________
Date: _____/_____/_____
APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO AUDIO TAPE THE INTERVIEW

Sonny Petway  
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education  
sonnypetway@hotmail.com  
(678) 469-0266

Your signature on the next line indicates consent to audio tape your interview. The audio recording will not be heard by any other party except for you or me as the primary researcher.

Signature: ____________________________________________  
Date: _____/_____/_____

Thank you,  
Sonny Petway
APPENDIX E

BAND LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (LGPE)

BAND LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Date: ________ Classification: ________ No of Players: ________

School and Name of Performing Group: ____________________________

Selections:
1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Final Rating

Use no Plus or Minus in final rating

Adjudicator will grade principal items A, B, C, D or E or materials in the respective squares for each selection. Comments must deal with fundamental principals and be constructive. Minor details may be marked on music furnished to adjudicators.

1. 2. 3.

TONE (beauty, blend, control)

1. 2. 3.

INTONATION (chords, melodic line, tutti)

1. 2. 3.

TECHNIQUE (articulation, facility, precision, rhythm)

1. 2. 3.

BALANCE (ensemble, sectional)

1. 2. 3.

MUSICALITY (expression, phrasing, style, tempo, artistry, fluency)

1. 2. 3.

*May be continued on other side

OVERALL

1. 2. 3.

OTHER FACTORS (not included in the graded evaluation)
Choice of music, appearance, stage presence

Signature of Adjudicator: ____________________________
1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

It was very rewarding. You really learned how to teach. You sink or swim. You have to learn classroom management. If you can teach there you can teach anywhere. I did not know what I was getting into when I was getting into it. I grew up in an affluent area which was much different. It was rewarding but it was also very frustrating. You feel like you put in 10 times the effort to get 10 times less results.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

Yes, I felt like I would never really fit in. I tried to meet them where they were. I was always going to be an outsider. Ultimately that was the main reason I decided to leave.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

The frustration. You put 10 times the effort to get 1 tenth the product and other people just don’t understand. They can say they understand, but they just do not get it. The only way you can survive is to focus on the students. Which is great and all but in the end you got into this for a reason and a part of that is the music and in the end that is just not going to be there. You have all these goals and aspirations but they never happen. And a part of you says you know maybe I am just not the person to get these students there, maybe someone else can do it better.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

LGPE in the district I was in was on a different level. When the three judges are two major college directors and the third is one of the top high school directors in the country it is different than going to LGPE in most districts. So the level of
expectation is what really frustrated you about LGPE. You had judges who were expecting to hear some of the best high school bands in the country and some of the bands in our district are and we are just not at that level. Yes it pushes you but in the end it is very defeating. The comments are not really helpful. They do not know how far you have brought them to get them to that point. They only hear the performance and that’s it.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

II’s and III’s. I never got a I while at my school.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

You don’t have anyone who studies privately. That makes trying to teach oboe, horn, bassoon, etc. more difficult because you just don’t have the time. You have kids who don’t have high quality reeds or instruments. I never had a wood clarinet in my band until I bought them.

At these at-risk schools if a kid brings home a report card with all C’s on it, mommy is ok with that. Just good enough is ok for them. They have absolutely no concept of where you are trying to go with them. They tend to make up their own minds about what is good enough. They think oh I am playing the right notes and rhythms I am set. Trying to get the students to understand the level you are trying to take them. They have never been to that level in anything in their life so they cannot relate. They are not compliant about the things you ask of them like sit down, flat your chin, sit up straight, etc.. They are not going to do it just because you say so. They don’t think it is important.

Follow-up: Do think that is a cultural thing specific to at-risk students or is it independent of the at-risk community? I think a lot of it has to do with being at-risk. They don’t believe that there is anything better. Studies have shown that people who are poor are happy with their lives. We look at that and think we don’t want to be like that but they don’t know any better.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes. They did. You were so fixated on just the notes and rhythms. Trying to get them past that was tuff. They just wouldn’t go past it. You also have the problem in that you know they are capable of so you challenge them and they just don’t put in the work. You know what they could do but they just don’t.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?
Yes. I never thought I was going to get them any better than I had them. The students liked being in band and all but as far as getting to the next level I didn’t think I was ever going to get them there. A part of me felt that maybe the next person could.

It is defeating. You go home every year with your II’s and III’s from LGPE and you wonder if you are not good enough, are you not cut out for this.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

Support system of people who really understand. Those who have done it. There are not a lot of those. In my district 70 to 80 percent of the bands are from upper income areas and there are not many programs like ours out there. You are surrounded by your teachers. By the time I was in my 6th year, I was the second most tenured teacher in the school because so many people leave. I worked real hard to develop that around me while I was there. I got a lot of us together to try and work things out but I was alone with it.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

I was funded. I brought instruments (8 new clarinets). I had financial support from the district office. I had a great principal. He understood and would support me. He would pay for things. I worked with some phenomenal musicians and teachers but they could not relate to what I was going through. They couldn’t. So they were little help.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

Mentor teachers

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

Yes

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

It made me stay. I wasn’t really looking to leave. I got money when I needed it. I had friends that helped. It helped me get through the day. It helped me focus on the kids. I had the same principal the entire time I was there!

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

I’ve always been the type of person who just deals with what I have. I wasn’t looking to go anywhere. When I was teaching middle school band, I was
interviewed for some high school positions but that was the motivation. I was not looking to get out of that situation. So no, not really.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

I think it would have helped at first. It would have helped with the culture shock. Just to understand the mindset of low income families. Learning more about the low socio economic high at-risk populations. So training would have helped but just setting in a class and having a teacher tell you about it is not going to get it.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

The only way you could do it would be close mentorship after the teacher gets into the teaching situation. You can’t have everyone student teach in an at-risk situation so there is no way that student teaching alone can help. More at the undergrad level would help but mentorship would be the best way.

“Edwin”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

Some of it was very rewarding. When you take people who don’t have a lot or a lot of opportunities and you are able to give them life changing opportunities it is very rewarding. For example, I took my at-risk student to Japan and that is an experience that they would have never had if it were not for being in my band. Teaching is about growth and when you can take kids who do not have a lot and help them grow that is what is most rewarding.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

It had more to do with admin and their view of the school relative to at-risk students but there is a fatigue factor that comes into it. Where I taught there was a high transient rate, limited funds, because of the transient rate you had a wide variety of background, and it also lead to students leaving at real inopportune times and those had a real fatigue factor to it.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

I think good effective scheduling so that the students are in the classes that they need to be in. The admin taking the time to make sure that the students are in the classes they should be in is very important. Funding is an issue because the students not have the means to pay for things. They don’t have the funds to buy the best instruments or to even buy the fundamental supplies. They will purchase
what they can afford to buy and a lot of times that is going to be the cheap #2 Rico Reed and plastic mouthpiece and making that work is very difficult.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

For me LGPE was a barometer for growth. We were being compared to groups with a very different socio-economic background and that did create some challenges. I think sometimes at-risk kids think the world is stacked against them. However, they do need to know that no one is going to hand them anything for free. So we had our years when we got our I’s and we had our years we got our II’s. For me it was always about the growth and how far the students came in their preparation. It was not about us comparing ourselves to other schools it was about us comparing ourselves to ourselves.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

We had years that we got all I’s and some years we got II’s. every year was a different year.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

The biggest thing was that I didn’t have the students in the classes that they needed to be in. So we were scheduling after school rehearsals with students who had transportation issues, students who had work expectations, some of them were in tutoring. I had one year that I went to festival and the first time that I saw all of the students together was on stage at festival. That year we got II’s.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

It varied year to year. As my admin changed it made it harder and harder. When the admin changed it went from very supportive to very unsupportive. The obstacles got greater and we were restrained due to those obstacles.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

Yes. I specifically left my last job because of the admin. I was told that I had to spend 15 minutes a day teaching a non subject relating course. And I had to do
that before we could play our instruments. It told me that what I teach was not of value.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

Scheduling, funding, understanding what it is that I teach in my subject area. Because the school did not make AYP they brought in a new admin and they just assumed that every teacher there was a slug. Since the kids weren’t learning it had to be the teachers fault. As a result we were turning over close to 50 teachers every year. So there was no continuity in any of the core classes. The admin thought that writing essential questions on the board would make students learn. They were looking for a simple answer to a difficult problem. It was that mindset that made me say I just can’t teach there anymore.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

One of the schools I taught at had an amazing scheduler and it made a big difference. Having an admin that understands and is there for the students you can make it happen. If the admin is a been counting number cruncher they tend to be very bad for at-risk students because they are not focused on the child. Master teachers are always focused on the child. Funding is important.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

A good scheduler.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

My first admin I would say yes. My second administrator, no. With a bad admin it is like trying to swim with your hands tide and with ankle weights on. Untie my hands and leave on the angle weights and I may have a chance.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

If had kept the admin that I have when I first got there I could have stayed for 30 years. The students wanted to learn and with the support I would have stayed longer.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?
I looked for help from a lot of my fellow teachers. I think you have to understand that one size does not fit all. You have to be creative. I think differentiation is very important in your teaching of at-risk students. Young teachers want to teach the way they were taught. If they came from a really good program they are expecting everyone to play all of their scales 3 octaves. So learning how to make realistic expectations, teaching them how to make a connection between work and success so that they learn to work harder.

Learning how to be creative. They need to know how to arrange a piece for French horn. Some say that if you don’t have French horns you shouldn’t play that piece so in theory, if you don’t have horns you shouldn’t play any piece. Common sense will tell you that is not right.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

It has to be ongoing. A component in your undergrad would be helpful but on the job is best. Mentoring would also help a great deal.

“Gene”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

I would say that it is challenging for me professionally and personally which I enjoy that part so in some ways that is the attractive part of it for me. It is meaningful in the sense of I fulfill a role in a lot of these kids lives that they do not have otherwise. So my value to them is pretty high. It is rewarding meaningful and challenging.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

Yes, I left my first teaching job and I would say that they are at-risk students. There are two reasons why I left: The biggest reason is that my role on the job is that I was there to fulfill a position on the faculty and not build a program. So I did not fell supported by the administration at all. There are a set of challenges you are going to have working at an at-risk school and in my opinion administrative support if number one. When I first got to my current situation, I knew that my longevity was going to be decided by how supportive my administration was and the minute it let up I was out. And that is exactly what happened in my first teaching job. I quickly realized that I was just the guy down the hall because they needed a music teacher and I was not going to take on these challenges without support so I left. The other reason is that I saw in that building a behavior from those kids that – a culture and a behavior that I did not want to be a part of everyday. Kids using profanity outwardly in the hallways with no
reprimand. I felt the kids were running the building instead of the adults. So there was an atmosphere that I did not want to be a part of.

As far as my current situation is concerned, the level of preparation of the students at my feeder programs would have an impact on my decision to leave this situation. I feel like I am teaching these students on a first or second year level on their instruments. These kids are not prepared for high school. And then there is the numbers issue as well and then the administrative issues as well.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

Administrative support. Scheduling, that is creating scheduling that is going to support our growth as music teachers. I understand that the kids have to take remedial math but I also need to see me kids every day. So administrators who understand those things. The money that it takes to build a program regardless of what your economic situation is. I am very fortunate in the county I work in in that my boosters have a lot less money..the money is a really important key.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

Relative to music. Yes.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

I think as the program has built over the past 6 years they have done well. Last year they got very high marks. The top group got a superior rating. But to accomplish that, there was a lot of extra work by the band director to fill a lot of the voids that are there. So it you look at the LGPE standards like tone, intonation, etc. those skills are not there from the middle school and they are not there from their private lesson teachers because there aren’t any. So a good analogy is in order to get to the end of the race, I have further to run with my kid. Attendance at rehearsals is an issue. Like my kids my kids are good with attendance because I have figured out how to be good about that. They have to show up because they are not going to go to their private lessons teacher and work on their music.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?
Yes. A number of things come to mind like what I was just talking about relative to skill development on the instrument. Knowledge of the instrument. When you are playing grade 4 or 5 music it takes a certain knowledge and skill set to play that music and when you are starting low and you have got to go further. What also comes to mind is the instruments and equipment are below standards. I just finished buying new mouthpieces for my saxophones so that they could improve their tone. I have a responsibility to provide those things for my students.

As a band director I feel that a big part of our jobs is teaching the students how to match the person next to you. Doing something the exact same way as the person next to you. In a lot of the at-risk populations I have worked with, being like the person next to you is culturally different than what is a part of the rest of their lives. When they feel that individuality and self expression is important so when you tell them to be like the people on each side of you, it tends to be something that is not a cultural responsibility that they should have. So you have to convince them why do you have to sound that way.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

I would say the things that I spoke about, no. What more affects me is the middle school issues and not having them prepared for the high school level. That component to me is huge. The other thing that we have not spoken about is that I really believe that family values that at-risk families have on education, specifically music is very low and that is a major factor. That manifest itself in something like LGPE so that is a factor that my impact teacher migration. So when I got to my current school and I saw that fees to be in the marching band was $800 and no one was in the band we had to reevaluate that. We looked at the band and asked if this band was a box setting on the shelf at Wal-mart would someone in our community be willing to take it off the shelf put it in their basket and pay for it? I found out that education is not valued very highly and music education is even less than that. So it has to be a very small price tag for them to buy into it. So the private lessons are not going to be there, the equipment is not going to be there, having reeds is a problem. I am bringing in 8 private teachers and I am spending $1000 tomorrow and I don’t have it. We are spending money tomorrow that we do not have. So I will spend the rest of the year just trying to raise the money to pay for that. We are $15 to $20,000 in the hole. As a result, I spend all of my time fundraising and not teaching my kids how to play their instruments.
10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

We talked about the scheduling side of it and I feel like I have had pretty good support relative to scheduling however when you have a school where %60 to %70 of the freshmen failed math I and you have a school with a very high failure rate, the schools are then forced to put remedial course work into their schedules and the minute that goes into your school, that is going to take the place of your elective offerings.

Classroom management. Learning the little things that you can say that can take a kid from level 10 with their temper down to level 2 instantaneously. And in reverse the little things that you shouldn’t say that can take a kid from level 2 to level 10. So how do you take a class of 6th graders who are totally out of control and calm them down? I think you can but I see a lot of teachers who cannot do it with the at-risk population.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

Administration, County Money, boosters

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

Two things, acknowledging the role of the administrators. The financial benefits we have of this school being located in this county. If we were in any other county without the financial support we would not have any of the things that we do have. The presence of my administration at events and the willingness of my admin to take on some of the financial obligations that the band has like transportation to contest, etc. The last two years I have had a really big booster organization and that has also helped a lot. Also, I have a secretary that helps me a great deal.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

No.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

Absolutely positive.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?
Yes it would make a difference. But I think there are two factors that extend beyond training. One is money. Like the issue with private lessons, the students do not have the money to take them. The school system supports me by giving instruments and equipment but when it comes to bringing people in to help with the band it is up to the boosters to raise that money. And I cannot produce enough to give the students what they need. So in an at-risk community, how do you raise the money, training needs to be in place on how to do that. Classroom management would have helped a great deal but it would have had to do specifically how to deal with at-risk students. My training did not do that. Stronger methods classes in the universities would have helped. In at-risk schools I have to teach everything!

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

During the undergrad and then also during the first several years of your appointment at that school. It needs to not be something in addition to your responsibilities. So If I have a choice of going to school A with low at-risk populations and I will not need to get training on how to work with them or to go to school B with a high at-risk population and will need to get additional training in order to work with them, then I am not going to do it.

“Madelyn”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

I feel that I have been teaching at-risk students all 9 years that I have been teaching. I think I was unprepared to do what I am doing now. As a whole I think it has been a progress and a growth on my part and I think I am still learning.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

No. It was personal reasons because I actually moved into a higher concentration of at-risk students in my new position.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

I would say preparation for pre service teachers. I wish I would have had some sort of instruction of how to deal with at-risk students because I feel that this is a very specific population. No one ever in my under grad or graduate work ever addressed them as being any different. And there is diffidently a difference and to ignore them does them a disservice because I think I may have missed out on some critical skills that could have helped both me and my students. Some sort of
on the job mentoring program would have been nice. Administration support as well.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

I had two standards for my at-risk students. Students who are not at-risk come with a different set of skills that the at-risk students don’t have. So I am having to think of them in two different sets of standards to bring those up to the level of the non at-risk students. I had a whole different set of standards, how to sit up, how to deal with your peers, etc.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

I think middle of the road, average.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

Yes. Classroom management. I had the information in my head but my skills in dealing with the students held me back. You can’t prepare music when no one is listening to you, or when they have no instruments to play on. A big part of what we did was just getting the students in the chair so that you could work with them. In that I was not always successful and so I did not always achieve my standards.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

It didn’t in my moving from one school to another. But it will when I leave the school I am at now. I cannot sustain this for much longer. It is too draining.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

The administration. In my first position there was no support. It was like they went out of their way to always blame the teacher when the students did not
succeed. At-risk students come with deficiencies that the teacher is always trying to make up for and I don’t think the admin always understands that.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

I did briefly have a mentor and that was helpful. I just wish it had lasted longer.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

That from a teacher who is in the same position as me and who can understand.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

No. It just let me know what was lacking.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

Yes, I think I am tired. I want to provide that support from someone else but I am just tired.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes. Not so much because of what the students put you through but because of the administration. You just do know if you can always clime that mountain and you often wonder if there may be a better mountain to climb somewhere else.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

Yes. It would have helped because maybe I would have known more about what I was getting into. Classroom management help would have worked. Even if I had had just one class it would have helped. I needed an entire semester on just classroom management. Even a class on counseling, what do you do when a student comes up to you and says I think I am pregnant. No one ever addressed that for me. That would have been amazing help. MENC should have some sort of task force to help teachers of at-risk students.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

I think it would be before I got started. I think it needs to be in phases; before you start teaching, then after you start teaching, and then follow-up, etc
“Natalie”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

It was definitely rewarding in some respects. Because those kids, they didn’t have a lot and band was one thing that they really enjoyed. But at the same time, all of the challenges that we faced with lake of family support, lack of home training, the disrespect that we had to deal with, the admin not caring, that was the most frustrating part for me.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

Definitely. You just get tired of dealing with the same problems every day. I know that there are those problems at every school but a lot of it was the disrespect from the kids and the lack of admin support in a school like that.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

Much more administrative support. Trying to get parents on board as well would help as well.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

Yes. Musically. But we had a lot more to do for them when it came to character wise.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

I’s and II’s mostly

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

Yes. The transient issue was the worst. We were over 40% transient. So when you have two tuba players and they both move right before LGPE what are you going to do? Getting rides to and from rehearsals was also a big issue so we could not have after school practices.
8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes. If I was at a school where the students could get to and from rehearsal, parents were involved, etc. it would have been easier.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

No not really. LGPE made it more stressful but it did not make me want to leave.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

Administrators and Parent help. Admin was always pulling students out of my classes.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

At one time I had a different principal and she was a big support to the program and while she was there the job was much easier to do.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

My former principal. She was great in a lot of ways. She was a very positive person. That helped a lot.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

Yes. The first two years it was great. After that I got a new administrator and it went downhill from there.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

Yes. She was the main part of me deciding to leave.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

I think so. I college no one ever talked with us about that. No one ever told us what to do when your two tuba payers move right before festival. I have a friend
who teaches in a high at-risk school and her principal supports her and she loves it there.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

In undergrad would help but continuous would be best by far.

“Ron”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

I would say it was fulfilling. I felt good about what my students were able to achieve. I really felt like progress was being made. I did feel frustrated at times, specifically as it relates to issues associated with the at-risk population, specifically the language barrier, transportation and finances. Communicating with the parents was really difficult because of the language barrier. Kids would not afford instruments. Whenever we would have outside of school events, it was hard to get kids there. Kids would show up in taxes or walk a long distance.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

It probable did on some levels. It was not the main reason. Just from a pure teacher satisfaction standpoint about what my students were doing I felt really good about it. So I would like to say that no, it did not.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

For me, I feel like, if there was a better support structure as far as administration goes it would have helped. The administration was always embattled with issues of their own and everyone was just hung out to dry. AS a result the teachers I worked with were all burn out and years of working in the situation had just run them out of energy.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

Yes. I felt 100% positive about LGPE.
6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

They did well, the group I was responsible for got all I’s one year and all II’s the next. I felt that was right where they were. I felt the judging was fair. I felt the goals on the judges’ sheet were appropriate for my students just like any other student.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

I don’t think they were teaching obstacles but I do think if they has the money to take private lessons for instances or the means to attend after school rehearsals then yes but all in all I did not think of it as an obstacle, I thought it was ok.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

No. I don’t think so.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

Maybe I was just buried into what I was doing and maybe I just was not aware of what was going on but I was not aware of any kind of support system being in place specific towards dealing with at-risk students at all so I am not really sure what one really looks like so I don’t know if one was in pace or not.

Follow-up: So you don’t think you had any kind of support system in place? Did you feel like you were on your own?

That is correct. I felt like I was on my own.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

The one thing I would say is that there was always a Spanish teacher or a teacher who knew Spanish that would be willing to translate a parent letter or email for me. Other than that there wasn’t anything in place that I was aware of. Maybe there was a system in place to help but I was never made aware of it.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

One on one relationship with mentor teachers that I sought out that did not teach in my school. I had to go search and find teachers that taught in similar situations
as mine. I went out and found Bill (alias, teacher who taught at a school with a high at-risk population). I was calling him all the time.

Follow-up: did you feel that you had to search him out on your own?

Yes.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?
No, but it is hard for me to say because I was not sure even what types of support were in place.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?
Yes I would say so. More having to do with interpersonal relationships with teachers who were burned out. It was hard to go in every day and see teachers all around that had just given up. That’s just how I felt. Lack of support most definitely had a negative impact. If you feel like you are doing it on your own then there is not a lot of hope there.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?
Yes. I am sure that was a factor when I left the school with at-risk kids but it was so far on the back burner its hard for me to look back and say that that was a reason. I really think it was not a reason, if it was it was way in second place.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?
I am sure it would have.

Follow-up: did you get training in your undergrad?

No.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?
I would say definitely after graduation. I think that for undergrads, there is no way possible that they can understand what they are about to deal with. Its hard to really know what kind of help your are going to need. I think the most valuable is ongoing throughout your career. But I think you have to teach for a semester or a year in a place like that before you can realize just what you are getting into.

Wrap-up comments:

It was a great felling. If you were passionate about the students, it was a great feeling to give you all to them and see them finally getting. That was very
It was a point of pride when you see them stacking up against other students from other areas a lot of anger when you saw other teachers not show that kind of passion. Maybe they did initially but from years of teaching they may have just gotten burned out. Those teachers were just beat down. When I left, I felt like I had kind of let the students down more or less.

“Roy”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

It was actually very positive. There was a lot that I learned about myself working with them. It tended to change my perception of those students and it helped me realize that those students need my help.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

In part yes. I guess there is a lot of questioning that I had to go through wondering if I was doing the right thing for them and for me. Sometimes that can cause a lot of doubt and made me want to teach in a position where I did not have to fight those battles.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

There has to be support from the admin. It has to be admin that will recognize the difficulties that teachers encounter and not try to gloss over it. For instance “all students are teachable”, if you go with that premise then it plays on those issues of doubt that I already mentioned.

4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

Yes I think that the standards are good and appropriate. But I think that when you have problems with student involvement when preparing for LGPE there outlook on the process may be such that they do not take it as seriously as non at-risk students.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?
Mostly II’s. sometimes III’s sometimes I’s I do think that it reflected their performances.

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

In a word, yes. Just getting kids to come to a pre LGPE performance was very difficult. Student attitudes that it was just a field trip. Conceptual obstacles.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes. When you are trying to perform and you have ¼ of your students not attend it makes it very difficult when it is not a true representation of your band.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

I don’t think LGPE was the reason that I left.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

The administration. They may have a preconceived idea of how things should be. I would also say realism. Admin not being realistic about what you are facing.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?

It really came from my colleges not the admin. They were more willing to advise. You really do rely on your colleges who are struggling just like you are. They are willing to talk openly, provide you with advice, and most of all just listen.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

Mentor Teachers

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

In the big picture of things I would have to say no. If it were I would still be there.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

Negative. I did feel the need to leave mainly for a change. I felt the need to make some kind of change.
15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes. There were many times I was thinking that there were unrealistic expectations of the administration were unbearable.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

Absolutely. Yes. One of the good things is that we had LSS (learning support strategist). They were very good about helping work with the at-risk population. They helped us learn how to work with them. At one point the principal brought in people to help us with our gang activity.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

While you are in the school. Undergrad can really prepare you. There is no crystal ball and they can help you like you need. Graduate school would help because you could seek it out.

“Thomas”

1. How would you describe your teaching experience as it relates to working with at-risk students?

The hard part is motivation. There are a lot of people who want things for free. There are people who want things to happen they just don’t understand what it takes to get there. In general we find that a lot of them just won’t practice. I think most of them like to play they just don’t like to play the music that we have.

2. Did factors associated with your at-risk population have an impact on your decision to leave your teaching position?

Every year. Because it is just emotionally and mentally draining. It is not the time involved in the job it is more of the mental aspects. Lots of stress.

3. What would you say are the most important factors related to teacher retention as it relates to working with high concentrations of at-risk students (HCARS)?

I know it is not more money. I don’t know what it would take to get people to stay. What is keeping me there is that I cannot find another job. I have applied but nothing has panned out. I have a family, a mortgage to pay so I keep doing it. There are times when there are good days and bad days but overall it just gets very draining.
4. Did you participate in the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) when you were at your school with HCARS?

Yes.

5. Do you feel that the standards for the LGPE are a good representation of the goals you have for your at-risk students?

Yes. We try to push them to the same standards. They have a sense of pride but they can’t translate that to practicing.

6. How did your students rank against the LGPE standards?

Superiors and excellents

7. Did you face obstacles when preparing your students for the LGPE as it relates to your at-risk population?

The last time I had an after school rehearsal out of 40 students only 10 showed up. They can’t get rides home. Most of them ride the bus. If we could fundraise better it would help. We only raise about $1000 per year. If I had more money I could bring in clinicians or maybe hire a bus to drive them home after practice.

8. Do you feel as if those obstacles kept you from achieving higher musical standards?

Yes. Since they will not practice I need to do the practicing for them in class. If they could get a ride home that may not be as big of a problem.

9. Did these obstacles as it relates to the LGPE preparation have an impact on your migration as a teacher?

It has. You don’t feel like you are getting any personal satisfaction musically. And there are times when I wonder if I have just lowered my musical standards. But to save my sanity, I had to lower my standards.

10. What types of support is the most lacking in the public schools as it relates to teaching HCARS?

It is not the money. The county is not afraid to through money at it. That helps. There is some training. But the money goes toward instruments but not instruction.

11. What kind of support have you had in helping to work with HCARS?
Other than money, there is not a lot there. Especially from the district. My principal has been very supportive. She gets it.

12. What would you say is the most meaningful support you have received?

Administration.

13. Do you feel as if the amount of support was adequate for your needs?

I think so. What can people do to make me feel more emotionally supported? I don’t know who to call. I attempted to get with other directors in my area in similar situations and talk about what we can do to help each other but our district boss told us that we were just complaining and that all kids are alike. We were told to stop meeting. I wanted to tell him that yes I have worked in the school district that Tiger Woods sends his kids to and I have worked in this one. There is a difference.

14. Did the amount of support given have a positive or negative effect on your teaching longevity? In what ways?

The only thing keeping me there now is that there are not a lot of expectations and I am working on my degree. If not for that I would be out.

15. At any point in your career, have you considered leaving a teaching situation because of the obstacles associated with teaching at-risk students?

Yes. Every year.

16. Would more training or support in dealing with HCARS have helped?

I think so. They bought us Ruby Pains book about teaching at-risk students. I just can’t find a lot of info on how to work with at-risk students. We are 81% free or reduced lunch.

17. When would the training be most effective (pre graduate, post graduate, post employment, continuously throughout your teaching career)?

I think it would have to be continuous. Some in your undergrad would help but you did not have a situation to stick it to so it didn’t help. It would be nice to have a mentor.
APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6829
Fax: 601.266.5599
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11012503
PROJECT TITLE: Music Teacher Retention: A Case Study of Band Directors Working with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students in Metro Atlanta Schools
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 08/01/2010 to 03/31/2011
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Thoron Roy Petway, III
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts & Letters
DEPARTMENT: Music
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 02/07/2011 to 02/06/2012

[Signature]
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

2-5-2011
Date
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