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Hired, Not Retained, and Leaving Drained: Assembling Teacher Attrition Through Drama Theory and Theatre of the Oppressed in Nevada K-12 Schools

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**HIRED, NOT RETAINED, AND LEAVING DRAINED: ASSEMBLING TEACHER
ATTRITION THROUGH DRAMA THEORY AND THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED
IN NEVADA K-12 SCHOOLS**

by

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Presented to the Doctor of Education Program
And the School of Education, GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
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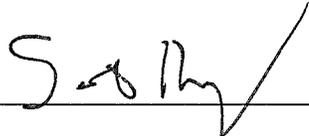
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Abstract

Teacher retention and attrition dominate the conversation with various stakeholders in the education field. Despite the continued attention, teacher attrition continues to be a significant issue nationally and in the state of Nevada specifically. This study analyzes this multi-faceted issue through the lens of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Jim Bryant's Drama Theory to provide a holistic view of the educator's experience and the possible factors leading to attrition. The study uses an original play to examine a fictional school to assess the personal factors that may lead these educators to consider leaving the profession. Then, this study analyzes the play using confrontation analysis (Bryant) and image theatre (Boal) to consider a path forward for stakeholders that are addressing the teacher attrition and retention issue. To this end, this study contends that the traditional means for recruiting and retaining educators unintentionally leads to depersonalization and isolation which are leading factors in educators leaving the field. As a result, Drama Theory and Theatre of the Oppressed features may lead to educator empowerment and a possible positive impact to the teacher attrition issue. Teacher turnover became a nationwide issue that demands attention by education professions, lawmakers, and other stakeholders. There are cases where teacher attrition has slowed and even some instances where teacher turnover is at a healthy rate. This project highlights the impact confrontation analysis (Drama Theory) and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal) could have on the depersonalization and isolation many educators feel today which may lead to empowering stakeholders to collective action. Further, this project provides implementation strategies and a Boal exercises to help facilitate these important discussions.

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Chapter 1

Problem

Over the past decade, people with various political aims or ideological predispositions attempt to rationalize the increasing divide between those educators remaining in and those exiting from the profession. To be sure, administrators find it increasingly difficult to keep qualified, effective teachers in the classroom (DeAngelis & Pressley, 2011). The ability to adequately staff classrooms has been identified as a major issue at the national level; however, this project focuses on Nevada because of my role as an educator in this state. It has become increasingly clear that Nevada, among other states, created initiatives to entice individuals to enter the profession yet this does not fully reconcile the attrition threat (CCEA, 2019; NDE, 2021). Despite the earnest efforts of teachers and administrators, traditional initiatives exhibited few positive outcomes.

For example, consider alternative routes to licensure which might fulfill a credential question but do not fully prepare or support the individual for a career in education. Alternate routes to licensure or financial benefits have largely produced more attrition instead of retention. It will momentarily fill the role in the classroom but there is little evidence of creating retention (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). Training teachers becomes a logistical issue where the revolving door is problematic for further district policies (professional learning communities, for example). It seems one possible reasoning for this continued attrition is the incentives do not accurately impact the conflict for many educators today. Nevertheless, educators need support and districts need to stem the growing tide of significant institutional and organizational strain, including, the significant financial consequence of teacher attrition.

In the early 2000s, there were an estimated 500,000 teachers leaving the profession at an estimated cost of \$4.9 billion dollars (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The staggering economic impact of this issue could be enough to instill urgency; however, it appears little has been significantly corrected. In 2015, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) estimates that the national cost of public-school teacher turnover could be over \$7.3 billion a year. For Nevada, Clark County School District in Las Vegas allocates approximately \$35.7 million to recruit, retain, and train teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). At a time when school districts are largely economically stunted this consequential figure is a significant problem if left unchecked.

Nevertheless, the teacher shortage issue has not been a phenomenon reserved for the last few years; instead, this critical issue has been on the rise since the mid-1980s (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). The Department of Education devoted significant attention to the attrition and retention issue over the last twenty years. Over the last few years, the Nevada Department of Education, Clark County School District, and Nevada State Legislature released a variety of policy reports geared toward reversing the trend, yet, despite the significant resources allocated at the state and federal level there seems to be little progress.

Despite lagging progress, educational research points to teachers as a vital resource for the success of any school community (NDE, 2020). To this end, researchers grapple with the necessary strategies to recruit, retain, and develop educators. A significant effort was made to alleviate constant stress on educators proposed by a variety of stakeholders. Nevertheless, in the United States generally and in Nevada specifically, there are multiple vacancies seemingly in each district that will go unfilled once school begins each fall.

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) recently released their findings from the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force, which sought to distill the complicated nature of the profession. The NDE Task Force addressed recruitment, retention, and general recommendations for implementation at the district and state level. One significant area of concern was retention; specifically, approximately 50 percent of teachers separate from employment in Clark County after five years (NDE, 2020). Given these claims, it is vital to understand that teacher attrition is a significant problem related to the financial strains and the time commitment of training new teachers. Nationally, school districts navigate the hiring process hoping to fill a position where the previous teacher left the profession – around ninety percent of cases. In comparison, sixty percent of teachers hired annually are replacing teachers that retired prematurely. In essence, the short-term policy initiatives geared toward recruiting teachers has run its course. These measures may place an employee in the classroom; however, they do not replace the highly qualified educator. As a result, the recruiting strategies are not met with targeted supports in the early career stage.

Wong (2003) estimated that schools spend \$50,000 to replace each new teacher who leaves the profession. More recently, roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year—attrition costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014) to approximately \$7.2 billion annually (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2016). Teacher turnover is significant for the financial strain, the impact on student learning, as well as the possible snowball impact on teachers remaining at the school. As a result of teacher shortages, remaining teachers would likely witness increased teaching loads, additional preps, and the institutional strain is felt on the stakeholders, particularly if the school is one that already experiences teacher shortages. Nevada suffers from a

significant reduction of teachers entering the field with higher rates of attrition. Additionally, Nevada has seen higher population increases in Washoe County School District (Northern Nevada - Reno) and Clark County School District (Southern Nevada – Las Vegas). Although Nevada increased education funding in recent years, the teacher retention/attrition problem will not be solved by money; instead, the solution resides in a far more complex change to the education system.

The teacher turnover crisis is well-documented nationally and in the state of Nevada. Along these lines, the teacher attrition and shortage crisis focus on the idea that teachers leave the profession for various reasons within the first five years. For context, approximately 13% to 35% of novice teachers left in their first year while 44% to 74% left within five years (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page & Marinell, 2017). It seems educators experience a significant loss within the five years which led to leaving the profession. This could be a significant loss to administrator support, teacher identity, relationships, etc., but it remains necessary to view the change in perspective within the career beginning and the fifth year.

More important still, these statistics should not be considered in a vacuum; instead, it is important to consider the overall organizational disruption as well as the student impact. The educational research corpus can be distilled into three core detrimental effects of high teacher turnover:

1. High levels of turnover undermine student achievement
2. Turnover negatively impacts teacher quality when an inadequate supply of teachers exists
3. Turnover is accompanied significant financial loss (CCEA, 2019).

One important reason for the study of teacher attrition is the impact on students. Teacher turnover impacts the school community but can impact student achievement even when replacement teachers are effective (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013); however, the research also concludes that effective teachers are often not available. Furthermore, there is a distribution mismatch between teachers who are willing to work in districts where the working conditions are not as conducive to success (McCarthy & Quinn, 2015). As it happens, these districts are often the ones most significantly impacted by teacher attrition which only compounds over time.

Along these lines, some studies claimed that classroom environment itself has marginal impact on overall teacher retention rates (Hahs-Vaughn, 2008) Moreover, Sparks et al., (2017) prepared an investigation of how mentor teachers might influence beginning teachers to remain in the field which concluded “Data analysis revealed three major themes: positive relationships; assistance and support; and avoiding isolation in the classroom” (p. 61). Nevertheless, Hahs-Vaughn (2008) concluded that “only salary was statistically significantly related to increased odds of beginning English teachers’ leaving the profession...[and] combined effects of mentoring and induction activities when controlling for teacher and school characteristics, the authors found that the results suggested none of the activities were related to attrition and migration” (p. 21). In essence, the research suggested that classroom environment did not necessarily contribute to attrition, mobility, or retention; instead, the central issues with retaining teachers centered on school cohesion, identity, and systemic change rather than temporary changes.

Given these claims, teacher attrition is related to administrative support and relationships, but a few studies suggest classroom culture and school climate are also involved. Wynn, Carboni, & Patall (2007) stated, “This three-year study examines teacher retention through a

professional learning communities' framework. During the first year of data collection, 217 first- and second-year teachers in a small urban school district were surveyed to assess their perceptions of mentoring, school climate, and principal leadership" (p. 209). Along these lines, the data suggested that principal leadership and school climate were the leading influencers regarding teacher retention. Additionally, proper teacher induction and/or mentoring programs produced significant results in the retention of beginning teachers. In sum, the three central needs to create teacher retention are positive relationships, assistance and support, and avoiding isolation (Sparks, et al., 2017). If teachers felt connected to a mentor teacher and to their students in a productive, engaged way then there is a likelihood that teachers would remain in the job. Along these lines, many initiatives implement support – whether financial or relationship – at the beginning of the career instead of creating organizational strategies for navigating the issues within the profession.

One consistent program is pairing a new teacher with a mentor teacher; however, mentor teachers often do not have the required skill set to adequately assuage first year teachers and their varied needs while also remaining effective in their professional practice (Rajuan, Tuchin, & Zuckerman, 2011). There is a disconnection between the institutional initiatives and how they are addressing these issues. Established research considers teacher self-efficacy and empowerment as a strong contributor to enhanced job satisfaction. Drama Theory, Drama education, and Theatre of the Oppressed bolsters connection which various critics mentioned as a pertinent facet of teacher retention. Teacher retention depends on positive intrapersonal relationships with students and colleagues (Bennett, et.al, 2013). Given these claims, it seems that the Boal framework could lend itself to suture together the positive themes (Sparks et al., 2017) with the needed calibration of the teacher retention/attrition issue. In essence, a

despondent teacher might shift from attrition to retention if there are positive intrapersonal relationships with students, administration, or mentor teachers.

In Nevada, it seems administrative support and relationships focused on retention/attrition characteristics that have little impact on retention (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2017). It became clear that financial incentives do little to predict longevity in the field; instead, distributed leadership, leadership cohesion, and job satisfaction are leading contributors to teacher attrition or retention (Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics released a survey presenting a critical juncture nationally and a catastrophic moment locally. Nevada suffers from a tradition of increasing the number of teachers available without solving the institutional issues surrounding teacher attrition. For example, Nevada offers TEACH grants, scholarships, Troops to Teachers, Teach for America, and other alternative paths to certification without legitimately preparing teachers for success. These policies likely placed quality teachers in classrooms; however, it has produced a revolving door in some institutions that already suffer from retention issues. Additionally, Nevada exceeds turnover rates nationally as well as our border state with the national average at 16% and California at 10.5%. Most alarming, Nevada remains at 19.5% despite the statewide attention to this issue (CCEA, 2019).

In Clark County School District, 489 classrooms will not be staffed by a qualified teacher which results in 12,000 students not receiving this important resource. In May 2020, Clark County School District Superintendent Jesus F. Jara created a task force whose sole focus was to ensure Clark County School District (CCSD) can fill every classroom with a high-quality teacher by the start of each school year. In January 2021, the task force published their summary report document which provided some core principles for moving forward:

1. All students need an effective teacher from day one.

2. CCSD should use, as appropriate, these recommendations for all educators in CCSD, not just teachers.
3. How and whom we recruit and retain matters.
4. We need to grow our own teachers.
5. CCSD must urgently improve the recruitment and retention of effective teachers (CCSD, 2021).

These recommendations directly point to systematic change of the institution and support.

Further, the recommendations result in urgent Improvements in Recruitment: 1. Grow new, quality, and diverse teacher pipelines and maximize existing pipelines. 2. Create a faster, more streamlined hiring process. Further, the CCSD recommends Urgent Improvements in Retention: 1. Better understand teacher and administrator culture and resources to act on improving them over time. 2. Enhance mentorship and coaching for administrators and teachers at every level of experience (CCSD Policy Report, 2021). This two-fold approach has long dominated teacher attrition issue: how do we recruit teachers and how do we retain teachers? The answer to these questions typically results in an ironic depersonalization of the individual rather than authentic relationships. Nevertheless, it seems teacher attrition entered a phase where retention efforts will need more focus even though recruiting highly qualified teachers will remain necessary steps to ensure the overall health of the education profession.

Purpose

Along these lines, previous teacher attrition and retention studies leave an opening for further study, namely in the context of narrative ethics and drama theory frameworks because of a focus on personal relationships. Teacher attrition and retention issues typically garner attention

through empirical research; however, the narrative ethics and drama theory techniques are an opportunity to explore teacher retention and attrition aimed at garnering a discussion about the underlying issues of this critical topic. The following are umbrella topics for policy changes aimed at curbing the attrition rates:

1. School Cohesion
2. Working Conditions
3. School Leadership
4. College Scholarships
5. Financial Rewards
6. Mentorship Programs (CCEA, 2019).

The central concept of these umbrella topics is to surround a teacher with support and financial incentives rather than build from teacher identity and contribution to the environment. In creating these frameworks, the individual teacher is sometimes subjected to a depersonalization or default program implementation as leading to the isolation and frustration many teachers who leave the profession feel. As such, the purpose of this study is to theorize teacher attrition within a dramatic framework, namely the ability to create a play that presents individual identities within a school environment that places the teacher attrition/retention issue in a findable context. Theatre maintains a robust history of challenging social issues and providing an opportunity to explore themes pertinent to our lives. Additionally, Drama Theory and confrontation analysis provide a template for how to negotiate the intricacies and complexities of the teacher attrition issue that quantitative studies cannot fully represent. Chapter 2 follows that tradition insofar as providing an opportunity to explore these core issues facing education in a unique, narrative format from the traditional policy report formats. This project

follows closely the template provided in *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* where Anna Deavere Smith presented a one woman show providing voices to the inhabitants of Los Angeles during the Rodney King riots. Smith interviewed approximately three hundred people to gather a full spectrum of the experience. A year prior, Tony Kushner wrote *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, which is a two-part play that deviates into a complex, metaphorical rumination on AIDS and America in the 1980s. This play provides a foundation for theatre and literary culture, particularly in a national conversation about social issues. Furthermore, August Wilson wrote his century cycle, often referred to as the Pittsburgh Cycle, which focuses on the African American experience in Pittsburgh during each decade of the 20th Century. Lynn Nottage continues this tradition by writing *Ruined* and *Sweat*, two plays that offer a glimpse of the impacts of colonialism in Africa (*Ruined*) and of changing city compositions and loss of traditional work (*Sweat*).

Finally, *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufmann and *Bang, Bang You're Dead* by William Mastrosimone are two plays that provide a voice to high school students and their central concerns surrounding school violence and hate crimes. *The Laramie Project* provides a verbatim theatre experience of Laramie, Wyoming and the inhabitants in the aftermath of Matthew Shepard's murder. *Bang, Bang, You're Dead* explores the context surrounding a high school shooter in the events leading up to and immediately after a school shooting. Although the plays focus on different themes they generally aim to provide a method to teach about prejudice, tolerance, social change, and citizenship.

This study explores teacher attrition realities through a dramatic framework akin to Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) along with Jim Bryant's Drama Theory. In this way, Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal consider theatre to explore the systemic oppression they

face and through this theatrical work enact change. One main TO component is the oppressed, and not the oppressor, should create solutions to the issues by posing problems, reflective thinking, gaining knowledge, and collaborative decision making. The potentially hyperbolic language notwithstanding, the policy reports are often presented by an institution rather than teachers. In other words, the institutions create financial incentives or mentoring programs from their position and on a conceptual level rather than the moment specific adaptations to bolster a teacher's identity. The play, an original work, explores the factors leading to teacher attrition while also examining the efforts, problems, and reluctance of a teacher to remain within the field from the educator perspective.

Augusto Boal famously used legislative theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed to enact change within the Brazilian government. In a similar way, this play will bring the audience into the performance with various dramatic techniques to change the discussion about teacher attrition/retention as a passive experience to an active experience. It may not lead to a solution itself; instead, it may give these stakeholders an opportunity to discuss the persistent problem through values and narratives instead of data and policy.

Boal's work focused on the dramatic theorizing of a societal issue with the intention of instigating legitimate change that does not simply remain within the confines of the theatrical space. The play uses four actors and a series of recorded visuals, slides, audio recordings, and other media to explore the teacher profession. The actors each play several different roles that include parents, students, teachers, and administration. Additionally, the audience are given scripts and invited to participate in the storytelling. In essence, a traditional study would report the concepts and topics already mentioned in this chapter; however, *Room 212*, the play in chapter 2, works to place the reader in the education experience. Further, Drama Theory, TO,

and *Room 212* provide an idea of how to apply these principles to an individual school or district. Along these lines, the experiences explored through the narrative technique are further explored within the final chapter.

Significance

Researchers opine that the teacher is the most important factor in determining student performance. The State of Nevada clearly articulated the need to recruit, train, and retain effective educators for longevity instead of further revolving door policies which negatively impacts the students and the school. The NDE began studying the teacher attrition/retention issue in the mid-2000s promising to alleviate the issue; however, the Nevada State Legislature committed resources to craft a policy report in the most recent legislative session. In February 2021, the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force (NSTRRATF) concluded that there was multi-faceted, proactive approach to hopefully reverse the alarming teacher attrition rate. There were fifteen total recommendations each labeled in certain categories. The NSTRRATF followed in the historical policy themes of financial incentives and mentorship but also offered new policies to attempt recruiting individuals to the profession. The heart of this policy report is to acknowledge challenges and offer possible solutions to this issue.

There is an overwhelming amount of research concluding that teacher attrition and retention is a significant issue regardless of your central concern. Teacher attrition challenges have been concerning for numerous years; however, we are amid an unknown teacher flight event because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers leaving the profession and administrators unable to fill the posts with qualified individuals will have a lasting impact on the financial stability, the academic stability, and the institutional stability of many school districts.

Within the literature, it seems many factors relate to the likelihood of attrition or retention. For retention there seems to be a central focus of positive relationships (through PLCs, mentors, students). For attrition, it is the exact opposite. Most teachers leave the profession because of significant breakdown or loss in the relationships between themselves and an administrator, the students, coworkers, etc. The educator experienced a significant loss in teacher identity and autonomy. To this end, the play theorizes and dramatizes policy decisions through the characters instead of individual responses from participants. The play creates an experience of these educators that traditional research methods usually do not show. In other words, the play could develop a morally mature perspective instead of announcing or positing values (King, 2010).

Teacher attrition has been studied from various perspectives resulting in this multi-faceted issue being arranged in easy-to-understand reports. It has become clear that districts should provide sustained support to new educators during those first crucial years to have an opportunity to retain these highly qualified educators. However, building sustained support and building relationships is not a straightforward endeavor for any stakeholder. It is vital for positive relationships, built on trust, to be at the forefront of educator environments. In this way, quantitative studies and traditional social science research has shown these categories are necessary; however, it may not be sufficient for teacher attrition issue. It is presumed that the same dependable system would be successful in a large urban district versus a small rural district which neglects the site specific and individual specific cooperation and conflict points that occur within that system. The cooperation points and conflict points of any system leads to some element of options, dilemmas, and resolutions (Bryant, 2016). Additionally, the Nevada

Department of Education, and others, neglected to focus on the specific individuals entering the classroom.

Regardless of the source, academic researchers and school district stakeholders equally suggest that teacher identity is important for the likelihood an educator will remain in the field. This identity is their sense of professional success as well as the feeling they are a valued contributor to the overall school culture. Nevertheless, external factors (i.e. salary) receive more attention because of the more straightforward connection. If salary is an issue, we can raise the overall salary. If identity is an issue, how do we effectively empower educators? Further, mentorship programs where a novice teacher is paired with a veteran teacher is often used to suggest supports are in place; however, the mentorship programs often lead to varied success. *Room 212*, the play in Chapter 2, presents the humanistic side of the data that would suggest a mentorship program is successful or not. For the mentorship program to be successful the mentor and the mentee each need to feel a sense of empowerment in the program.

The narrative project allows for more humanistic approaches to this teacher attrition question. Researchers committed vast amounts of resources to study the facets that impact teacher retention and attrition, but the issue persists. It is difficult to precisely state how narratives could present an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in this conversation.

Nevertheless, there is a unique opportunity in a poem by Walt Whitman:

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-
room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Traditional social science paradigms successfully arranged the teacher attrition and retention issue in columns, charts, and diagrams; however, there are instances that are not accounted for in the final assessment of the issue. In this poem, the speaker experiences a description of the night sky separate from the experience of the night sky. The phenomenon was reduced to a lecture room and a straightforward explanation. Teacher retention and attrition has numerous successful studies that have arranged the issue into a series of topics; however, Drama Theory, Theatre of the Oppressed, and *Room 212* offer an opportunity to account for the unaccountable in the quantitative analysis by showing the human experience of teachers and students. Further, there is an explanation of how to approach a specific school or district facing teacher attrition to use these ideas in Chapter Three.

Definition of Terms

To begin, Drama Theory became a more rounded framework for supporting those tackling real-life confrontations in a variety of practical settings (Bryant, 2016). Drama Theory emerged from soft-game theory which supposes interactions between characters and develops solutions out of these interactions. Although this sounds like “play” it is within this play that the conversations occur to engage strategically with others to propose solutions. In essence, game theory follows a process of creating and communicating common knowledge, defining the game, analyzing the dilemma, managing the dilemma, and then transformation framing. Bryant (2016) states “Driven by the desire to dispel the dilemmas of confrontation or cooperation characters use all their creativity to find ways of achieving their ends despite the challenges of the interaction” (p. 113). The characters do not rely on fixed viewpoints; instead, they confront, challenge, and create common knowledge and a theory for a solution. Further, Drama Theory provides a structure and language for systematic discussion of conflict pathologies, pathologies that may

show how, when, and possibly why confrontations are not resolved (Bryant, 2016). Drama Theory works through these confrontations by scene setting and allowing for the unexpressed to be brought forth through the characters. In sum, it seems vital for the teacher attrition rate to slow that more explicit confrontation and cooperation analysis points are examined by administrators and teachers.

Although the research corpus signals the significance of the teacher attrition there does not seem to be a resolution to this issue since Nevada remains at a critical juncture and the United States generally reports a teacher attrition problem. Drama Theory suggests that there is a shadow confrontation and unexpressed or unresolved issues: “sometimes in interactions what is signaled is ignored or misunderstood. Sometimes what the characters believe possible is blinkered or restricted. Sometimes what they know is shallow and their vision is impoverished. Sometimes the relationship between characters has been poisoned” (Bryant, 2016, p. 129). The traditional means for teacher retention would have little impact on an educator that views the current situation as restricted, ignored, or misunderstood. Additionally, the impact of these dilemmas results in some unexpressed issue that the actor – the educator – does not feel able to fully express. In other words, Drama Theory and narrative ethics attempts to pull out the subtext and the ideas that are unexpressed in the empirical research.

Similarly, TO fundamentals have long been used in various contexts from political activism to education. One pertinent philosophy is the right for people to act, to be mindful of their social community and the ongoing process to engage and enact questioning and problem solving. It is within the Boal’s democratic praxis that research should be continued to bolster the well-being of educators. Furthermore, if an educator’s fundamental rationale for leaving the profession centers on depersonalization rather than external factors (salary, for example) then it

could stand to reason that the democratic nature of the site should align itself with the empowerment of the educators. In other words, Freire and Henry Giroux claim, if educators take risks and are offered an opportunity to speak in particular ways and be willing to critically confront their role in the school then they should be willing and able to live this purpose rather than merely propose without any true change (Freire & Giroux, p. 141). Along these lines, the following terms are vital to the further understanding of the application of TO, specifically the Rainbow of Desire, to educators' reflexivity.

Drama Theory (DT) – a collection of frameworks to show how best to communicate to manage emotionally charged confrontations (Bryant, 2020; Bennett, Bryant & Howard, 2001). DO focuses on the characters eliminate dilemmas and lead to a fundamental theorem.

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) - The key objectives of Boal's TO practices are to educate people that they can act in cooperative, democratic ways to engage in conversation and take action. Boal based his practices off the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* framework of Paulo Freire. Freire and Boal use the term "oppression" to directly discuss the economic conditions of Brazil; however, their larger claim centers on the belief that all people suffer from some kind of oppression be it material or ideological. In fact, Boal suggests that the significant oppression is internal. Lastly, in TO the conflict is not resolved within the timeframe of the plot or performance; instead, the conflict must be resolved in real life.

Image Theatre - A facet of TO that explores the essential truths about society without the spoken word. Sometimes referred to as tableau theatre this technique calls on the actors to provide still images to create a scene. Image Theatre requires the audience, and performers, to become aware of how we interpret what we see and to challenge our assumptions of this knowledge.

Furthermore, this method avoids the, even unintentional, favoritism given to those who are better public speakers or are not native speakers of the language.

Forum Theatre - The troupe presents a situation based on oppression creating an emotional response from the audience. Then, the audience works for a more satisfactory outcome than the one presented onstage. A member of the audience tells the actors to freeze and joins the scene providing a possible outcome. Again, this is not meant merely for a conflict resolution on the stage but should be implemented in real life.

Invisible Theatre - This TO facet works in a public space where the actors provoke an honest discussion about a topic by creating the scene. Other actors react to the provoked scene, deciding to take sides, which engages the audience in engaging their opinions about the subject matter.

Rainbow of Desire - This is a TO facet that could possibly yield the most compelling results when considering the educator mindset. Techniques include *Cop in the Head*, in which the inner sensors are made manifest, and *Rainbow of Desire*, which presents more overtly the conflicts among the different desires and concerns that paralyze the freedom to act.

Legislative Theatre - A branch of Forum Theatre where the result is proposing actual laws. There are some compelling ideas in this TO branch regarding school decisions.

Participative Inquiry/Embodied Cognition - For these purposes, participative inquiry and embodied cognition refer to the shift in instructional practices, professional development, and colleague interactions from traditional methods to a more enactive practice. There have been several movements in different academic disciplines to engage in enactive methods; however, it seems that adopting TO practices could benefit the educator mindset. In usual circumstances, these terms refer to the connection between learning and the body positing that the physicalized body can lead to deepened knowledge retention.

Retention - The level of educators remaining in the field.

Attrition - The level of educators leaving the field.

Methodology

The study presented a distinction between a depersonalization of an educator paired with the empowerment of the educator regarding the multi-faceted nature of teacher attrition and retention. However, the issue is presented through Drama Theory and TO because acting strategically combines analytical capabilities of strategic thinking and management to engage in action through character interactions. Ultimately, this study will explore the experiences of in-service educators and the extent their intentions to remain in the field are linked to feelings of depersonalization and isolation. Additionally, Drama Theory and TO concern participants with the task of analyzing the subtext and the cooperation/conflict points to propose resolutions. As such, this study uses the play format to explore these principles in general. The following is a brief overview of how the play will explore these themes:

1. 15 Minute Scene - A series of monologues delivered to explore the facets leading to teacher attrition including unsupportive administration, lack of student relationships, and teacher depersonalization. The first monologue is delivered as the teacher with each character then showing their point of view for the same fifteen minutes of a class period.
2. Audience Plays a Character - The Boal and Freire frameworks provide compelling discussion opportunities even within the one-person show. A few audience members will be given a script to follow along and state their lines when it is time in the script. The one-person actor engages in the dialogue with the audience member. The characters will play various student types, play parent roles, as well as other teachers/administrators.

3. Technology Characters - To give the actors a break, there will be moments where the action will be broken up by news clips, projected news articles, recorded monologues, and other potential characters. This is a moment to explore some of the outside contributing factors for attrition. For example, extreme workload by a plethora of e-mails while the teacher is on prep or lunch.

Additionally, a central problem within teacher attrition is the financial strain. As a result, this will be represented by two fundraising tally thermometers. On stage left, it will be one that shows the increasing cost of teacher attrition. On stage right, it will be symbolic of teacher morale. By show's end, the one signaling the financial impact will be full whereas the teacher morale thermometer will be emptied. The two tally thermometers are not referenced until toward the end of the show because it should be something in plain sight the entire show, but the audience may not recognize the change.

Given the significant resources dedicated to this issue, there remains an opportunity to discuss, analyze, and explore this topic. This study contends that the empirical data has shown the significance of the issue, but narrative ethics and theatre methods will show the impact of the issue through storytelling. Further, Drama Theory proposes symptoms (the complaints or what needs to be relieved), the concepts that organize these experiences (issues, characters, options, doubts), and the types of prescription for action or further investigation (dilemma elimination, guidance on emotional tenor). In essence, Drama Theory poses the following questions:

1. Who is involved or concerned about the situation?
2. What are the key issues over which they are united or in contention?
3. What power do they possess to influence these issues? What choices are available?

4. How would they each like to see those involved act with respect to each issue? What would they do if everyone were to act according to their own interests?
5. What can each do to manage the pressures that they and others experience as a result of being caught up in the situation? (Bryant, 2016, p. 301).

Within the Drama Theory context, the characters engage in their common discussions while also supposing a potential future. This study engages in the framework of drama theory by theorizing the characters, options, positions, options board, compatibility, and intentions. Through the characters, there will be a theorized confrontation, dilemma, and implementation theorem.

Limitations of Research Design

The drama theory approach garners significant force with the total voice of theatre rather than the paraphraseable meaning or summary of other traditional and typical educational methods (King, 2010). The narrative project can produce a varied voice in the dramatized analysis rather than the arranged empirical data that presents the issue. Drama theory and narrative ethics provides an opportunity to present the policy in an immediate performance with the audience, a performance that often occurs in a collective environment (the audience, the cast, etc.) rather than an individual experience. The dramatizing experience can produce an entry point for an audience member not included in an educational stakeholder community and invite them to consider the issue more readily than a discourse laden report. In other words, the dramatizing experience expands the immediacy of the action for a person that does not know a teacher's life in a palpable, effective experience more so than a traditional research method. Given these claims, there are several limiting factors for this project.

First, the project focuses on Nevada's attrition and retention policy decisions of the past twelve years rather than attempt to present attrition policies of a wider sample size. The

characters and the plot attempt to articulate the experiences of Washoe County School District and Clark County School District employees rather than the entire Nevada teacher population.

Second, the characters and plot were created from the significant research conducted by a variety by the Clark County School District, Clark County Education Association, and the Nevada Department of Education instead of through traditional qualitative methods. To this end, the experiences are limited to my selections instead of a holistic survey response from participants.

In sum, teacher attrition remains an issue facing school districts across the nation. Nevada remains largely ineffective at retaining teachers despite recent changes to funding, mentoring, and focused decisions from the state government and local school districts. As a result, there remains a divide between what is happening and how it can be solved. This study further investigates the factors leading toward teacher attrition with a particular attention to depersonalization and the financial factors. The play, using the Freire, Boal, and Bryant as a framework, offers a unique perspective and opportunity for possible solutions. In the last chapter, the script analysis reveals the specific actions of the characters and how they add to the ongoing conversation about teacher retention and attrition. To be sure, this project diverges from a traditional empirical study; however, the theatrical and the narrative offers a different lens to critique this issue.

Chapter 2

Room 212

CHARACTERS (onstage)

Actor #1 - Mike – narrator, early career teacher

Actor #2 – Plays the following roles:

Joyce- Veteran teacher, almost to retirement

Carol – eager to please, AP caliber student

Stephen – overzealous teacher. Gossip friend.

Actor #3 – Plays the following roles:

Heather - first year teacher

Cameron – student who sleeps in class

Angry Parent

Actor #4- Plays the following roles:

Principal Victor Lee – an administrator who sometimes speaks too often in buzzwords.

Tyler – loves school but experiencing homelessness

CHARACTERS (Recorded Voices/Visuals Only)

Parents – a series of positive and negative comments from parents

School Board

Reply All Messages

News Clips – a series of clips about teachers

SETTING

The play takes place in Room 212 of a classroom that could be nearly anywhere in the United States. The set design could be realistic or implied at the discretion of the performer and director.

ROOM 212**Act One – Scene One**

(At Rise: The LIGHTS fade up on the classroom. PRINCIPAL VICTOR LEE stands at the front of a classroom. The clock on the wall loudly ticks. The impression should be that the room has been updated technology wise but leaves a bit to be desired with decorations and care. It is not worn down but also not pristine. After a moment, the door opens. HEATHER enters STAGE LEFT a little too eagerly. The sudden change should cause a disruption in the reasonably calm action to start the scene. HEATHER and PRINCIPAL VICTOR LEE nod to each other as HEATHER picks up a folder of information and takes a seat in a school desk at the front of the classroom. Louder clock ticking. After a moment, MIKE enters. Not quite eager but also not taking his time. MIKE takes a seat a row back of HEATHER. PRINCIPAL LEE checks the time and clears his throat. MIKE crosses to the front table and picks up a folder and returns to his seat. Then:)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Welcome to the new school year! I look forward to welcoming you to our family.

(PRINCIPAL LEE will walk around the room and make it seem like the audience is part of the staff as well. PRINCIPAL LEE crosses STAGE RIGHT and continues his welcome speech)

As many of you know this is a challenging time for educators. It is also a fantastic opportunity for those of us who choose this profession. We have an opportunity to implement with fidelity. We have a chance to make a difference to the student and we always put students first. But, we couldn't do this without you so make sure you take some time for your selfcare. Now, one other

point of interest is that you've found your way to this school either by our recruiting attempts or by the district bringing you in from another school. Regardless, I hope you'll enjoy the financial incentive for joining us and, if you stick around, you'll get the second part of that bonus.

(Lights shift: MIKE stands and crosses downstage. Other actors freeze in place)

MIKE

Principal Lee usually pauses here for a laugh line. You're welcome to laugh. Heather is a first year teacher. She is nervous. Excited. Eager. Who knows how long she'll stick around? People come and go through this school. I've only been here three years and I've had five principals, three assistant principals, and a revolving door of people in my PLC. Sorry. Professional learning community.

(MIKE crosses back to his seat).

Anyway, this play is about teachers. I am a narrator of sorts, so I'll talk directly to you and offer a few ideas as we proceed. All roles are played by only four actors plus some additional support given to us by recordings and projections. I only play myself. The others will play a variety of parts as you'll see in the program.

(MIKE looks at the clock on the wall).

Our fourth actor will join us...right...about...now.

(As MIKE says this, the door opens and STEPHEN enters.)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Ah, welcome!

(STEPHEN nods as he walks to the back of the seating arrangement)

STEPHEN

Continue on, oh fearless leader!

PRINCIPAL LEE

We have a word of encouragement from our superintendent.

(A message is projected on the screen from the superintendent. Something vague and welcoming.

The ACTORS freeze. MIKE takes a few steps forward.)

MIKE

These are most of our interactions with our superintendent. At a certain point, we won't even see Principal Lee too often. Admin has a way of fading into the background as the stressors of the school year build. If you believe them, they are working to make your day better. If you are cynical, you have no idea what occupies their day. On with the play:

(Lights shift. MIKE, HEATHER, and PRINCIPAL LEE exit. STEPHEN changes costume onstage to become JOYCE a veteran teacher who is close to retirement. The easiest way would be for the base costume to be something that costume pieces could go over to make this change quick. The superintendent message fades, then:)

JOYCE

I am at the point in my career where I have taught multiple generations in some families. I've been at this school for my entire career. There have been ups and downs. I've lost students. I made mistakes. I tried my best. Sometimes my best feels like enough and sometimes it doesn't feel like enough. My first five years I would often go home and cry. Not always actual tears. It was more of an emotional response. A state of mind. You hear about the struggle many students face and you wish you could ease their difficulties. This is a well-known fact. The lesser-known fact is that we teachers struggle as well. In those early years, if a student didn't have a lunch, I

would pay so they could. Sometimes, I would give them my own lunch to make sure they would eat. In those days, I didn't always have money to buy food or extra food to go around but I would make sure my kids would be taken care of before I would think about me. My kids. I'm retiring at the end of this year. It will be difficult to say goodbye.

(Lights shift. MIKE and HEATHER reenter. JOYCE changes back to STEPHEN. THEN:)

STEPHEN

I can't believe Joyce just stops coming to meetings. Did she ever tell you the van story?

HEATHER

No.

STEPHEN

Early in her career, the students made it to state speech and debate or something like that. She asked the district for a van. She never heard back but she assumed everything was in order.

MIKE

Oh, I have heard this one!

STEPHEN

So the day comes around and Joyce goes to the Mothership, sorry, the District Office, and wants to pick up her keys so she can drive the students to the event. She gets up there – and I can't believe this – she gets up there and they don't have a van.

HEATHER

What happened then?

STEPHEN

The district claims they never got the request. So they don't have a van ready for her to use. Not only that, but the vans had been scheduled out for another event. Well, the superintendent's kid

was on the team – the superintendent at the time was way better than this one we have now – anyway, so Joyce calls up the superintendent. Lets them know what is happening with this situation. And you know what happened? Miracle of miracles, a van becomes available.

MIKE

There always seems to be a way.

STEPHEN

So, I'm meeting with you two because I'm supposed to be your mentor teacher for your first few years. But, I don't know, I feel like the best way is for you to get in there and make some mistakes. You'll figure things out. Let me know if you have any questions but you'll be fine.

HEATHER

I did have a question.

STEPHEN

Okay.

MIKE

Be nice, Stephen.

STEPHEN

I'm always nice. How was I mean?

MIKE

I think you know how you were mean.

STEPHEN

Look. I'm not going to pretend to really care what you do in your classroom. Okay? You're the lord of the manor, the king of the castle. As far as I'm concerned, we should do enough to make sure we get the money.

HEATHER

I was wondering if you could tell me where the white board markers are...And, well, really any supplies.

MIKE

White board markers?

STEPHEN

Oh, honey.

HEATHER

What?

STEPHEN

You get \$150 to use for “supplies” to get started but...oh...that makes sense. Those orders are made in the Spring. So you missed it because you...

MIKE

I'll get you some stuff from my room.

(MIKE crosses to the door)

Be nice.

(MIKE exits. Awkward pause. STEPHEN clears his throat).

STEPHEN

Look. I don't want to come across as...whatever you're thinking. But here is the thing. People come and go. Initiatives come and go. Principal Lee will come in during the next staff meeting talking about something we must implement now and it will be the cure all. I am sorry if I come across as something other than what you've read in your teacher prep textbooks but this is the

truth. You might be here for a few years then move on for something else. I'll be here having this same conversation with the next eager twenty-something ready to take on the teaching field.

HEATHER

I understand.

STEPHEN

Who knows? You might be the next Joyce. Sometimes those career teachers seem like a thing of the past, though. If the burnout doesn't get you then the allure of higher pay will. Maybe you'll be the next Lindsay.

HEATHER

Who?

STEPHEN

Oh, that's right. Before your time. Lindsay. She traveled to some conference. Terrible weather so the plane was delayed in O'Hare. So, she is sitting at the gate waiting patiently with a stack of mediocre essays to grade when this guy walks up. They talk for the layover and it turns out the guy is loaded and...lonely. Lindsay quits teaching and now has a beautiful house, more money than she needs, and doesn't have the stress of this place anymore.

HEATHER

It's strange.

STEPHEN

Not all that strange. She was attractive enough and...

HEATHER

No. You talk about everyone else. You seem to have a story about everyone.

STEPHEN

Oh, I do. People think gossip and drama ends with the students but really it continues with the staff.

(MIKE enters carrying a variety of supplies including a stool.)

MIKE

Here you go. I thought you might also want a classroom warming present.

(MIKE gestures to the stool.)

HEATHER

Thank you.

(STEPHEN crosses close to HEATHER.)

STEPHEN

(whispers) That is Lindsay's old stool.

(Lights shift. STEPHEN and HEATHER exit. They will be changing costume into the students.)

MIKE

Stephen isn't wrong. As much as we want schools to be a strong foundation it can't ever always be that for everyone. Students move classes. Students move away. Teachers take new opportunities. Even the same short story takes new meanings with new students. Sometimes the fact that we are humans dealing with other humans seems to be forgotten in the era of standardized testing and closer scrutiny. The statistics show that there are a variety of reasons why teachers leave schools. Students and teachers show up carrying emotional weight and experiences.

(MIKE sits at a desk).

I remember the first student I lost. I almost left teaching then. I was leaving for the weekend and I saw the student working with another student outside my classroom. Their heads huddled together. I approached them and...he was cheating. I joked “Oh, just comparing answers, huh?”

(MIKE stands and moves to the front of the classroom.)

There was something about his response. Something that made me want to say something, but I didn't. I was thinking about going home. I would check in with him on Monday. I got a call from my principal that he was dead. I felt regret and guilt for that for a long time.

(The door opens and the actors enter as students.)

It is hard to know, though. The next section of the play is the same fifteen minutes of a class period. I'm the teacher. The other actors are playing a variety of students. And you, the audience, will add some additional voices to the class period. If you are one of these students, you were given a script on your way to your seats.

(A bell rings.)

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to class.

(CAROL sits near the front of the class. She is prepared. She has a notebook opened, poised to learn. TYLER sits near the back of the class. He puts his hood up. CAMERON enters, finds his desk and lays his head on the desk. A recorded announcement begins to play while MIKE walks.)

MIKE

I almost forgot to add one final feature to this classroom. Although we try to remain present and focused on the class at hand, we have all these other distractions in the background.

(The “backwall” of the classroom transforms into a series of screens. The screens will show a variety of different messages, news articles, and other distractions as MIKE begins teaching. The audience will contribute lines in this scene as MIKE begins teaching and the students interact.)

ANGRY PARENT (AUDIENCE)

How are you going to help my student succeed?

MIKE

Good morning, class. Please take out your notebook.

ANGRY PARENT (AUDIENCE)

So far it seems like you've done nothing. Exactly what do you do all day?

MIKE

We are continuing our discussion of short stories and literary devices.

ANGRY PARENT (AUDIENCE)

You're just a glorified babysitter anyway.

(A message from Principal Lee appears on the screen telling the staff about an active shooter drill. Another screen shows an image a series of e-mails popping into the mailbox including a series of reply all messages.)

MIKE

Yes, Carol?

CAROL

I wondered if we could talk about...

ANGRY PARENT (AUDIENCE)

My student tells me they completed this assignment that you have marked as a zero. Change this.

CAROL

...the difference in the themes of the two stories.

(A text message appears on the screen from MIKE's wife discussing the health issues of a family member. Another screen appears with a message from the superintendent that is vague and

impersonal. MIKE walks to the back of the class and nudges CAMERON awake. CAMERON knows this game. CAMERON sits upright long enough for MIKE to walk away. MIKE crosses to TYLER and slides him a granola bar and apple. MIKE stands at the front of the class)

MIKE

Now, please remember that your essays are due next week. I know it is homecoming week but that doesn't mean you are excused from the assignment. Do your best work.

(Lights shift.)

MIKE

I wish I could do more for Carol. I try and challenge her, but I feel like I fall short often. She is determined. Cameron. Tyler. Often appear the same type of student. Lethargic. They are skilled at flying under the radar. They don't cause trouble in class. They understand the impact of compliance. Sometimes we focus on those that stand out. The ones that are doing well we let do their thing. The ones that are mild mannered continue fading into the background.

(MIKE walks over to TYLER).

Did you catch it? Tyler and I have a deal. I provide a few simple snacks to make sure he has some food, but he has to keep up his work ethic and showing up for school. We lost track of him for about two weeks last semester. We found out he is living in his car.

(MIKE walks over to CAMERON).

Sometimes I think school is the only place Cameron can get some sleep. Unfortunate.

(Lights shift. Principal Lee enters and takes his place at the front of the classroom. After a while, other actors file in and take their place in the classroom. The atmosphere should feel like it is a deep into the semester and everyone is feeling tired and worn out. The overwhelming feeling is that everyone would prefer to go home instead of at the meeting. The last actor enters then:)

PRINCIPAL LEE

So, we should start with the any celebrations or news to share.

STEPHEN

Only three weeks to Christmas break.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Yes. You all should expect to not hear from me at all over break. Enjoy your time. Any other celebrations?

(Despite Principal Lee's encouragement, no one speaks. He shifts slightly then:)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Okay, then. Well in that case we'll get started. I want to thank each of you for your work to put students first. You're making a difference each day to these students and their families. We are the ones that, unknowingly, we sit at their kitchen table at night. You influence their life. Speaking of which, the Superintendent wanted to share this message about the district's plan to recruit and retain teachers to our district. I'll hand this out to you now.

(Lights shift. MIKE faces the audience.)

MIKE

The great question. How do we get people to enter this profession? How do we get them to stay? We are almost to the point of the year where teachers begin thinking about if they are wanting to stay at their school or leave. Most teachers know by Christmas break.

(Lights shift. PRINCIPAL LEE is back at the front)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Our district is working with others across the state to come up with a policy for how we can attract quality educators here. As a result, we would like your input about what supports could make your job easier. As well as, what are some positives about this job?

STEPHEN

What is happening with this information?

PRINCIPAL LEE

What do you mean?

STEPHEN

So, we fill it out. We give you our honest answer. Then what?

PRINCIPAL LEE

I will give the unfiltered recommendations to our superintendent.

STEPHEN

I would prefer to leave my name off.

PRINCIPAL LEE

That is your choice.

STEPHEN

I don't want any retaliation.

(JOYCE begins filling out the survey. MIKE considers writing then decides not to write on this paper; instead, he folds the paper up, enough the audience can see, but not enough that anyone else would have noticed. MIKE puts the paper in his pocket. PRINCIPAL LEE moves closer to STEPHEN. STEPHEN begins writing on his paper. Then:)

PRINCIPAL LEE

There won't be any retaliation. The only way problems fester is if leave them not discussed. It is only through communication that we can hope to solve these important issues.

(A silence. Most people start writing. MIKE is the one who does not write. After a moment:)

STEPHEN

Joyce, how many of these have you done?

PRINCIPAL LEE

What are you trying to get at?

STEPHEN

I'm wondering how many of these we need to fill out before we see change. The state addressed this as an issue years ago and there hasn't been any true improvement.

MIKE

Just write your answers, Stephen.

STEPHEN

I will.

(Lights shift. MIKE addresses the audience:)

MIKE

They say early career teachers are the ones most likely to leave the profession. Some assume it is the pay. Our students are often what keeps us here.

(Lights shift: HEATHER began talking to PRINCIPAL LEE.)

HEATHER

I wondered if we could talk about students of concern.

PRINCIPAL LEE

You bet.

HEATHER

There is a student that is disruptive in my class. This student is argumentative toward me as soon as I walk in...

MIKE

Which student?

STEPHEN

Lots are argumentative.

HEATHER

Cameron.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Well, send his name to me again. I'll follow up with him and see if I can get some assistance in for you.

STEPHEN

Who is he in that class with?

HEATHER

No one, really. He doesn't seem to have many friends in the class.

MIKE

Which one is he? I'm having trouble picturing him.

HEATHER

Usually wears a hoodie. Usually in the back. Other than that, nothing remarkable about him. Pretty average looking teenager.

MIKE

That kid always sleeps in my class.

STEPHEN

Don't take it personal. He has been doing that for years. Remember his brother?

MIKE

Before my time.

STEPHEN

Oh, well, it must run his family. His brother slept all the time too.

PRINCIPAL LEE

We can circle back to this conversation, but I wanted to talk about some upcoming dates. We will have our fire drill and active shooter drills coming up. Be sure you review the expectations with your students. We will try to have this be minimally disruptive to you and your students. Also, the leadership class would like to do a spirit week the week before break. They will post the dress-up days. I encourage you and your students to participate. Again, we will try to make this as minimally disruptive as possible but we will also host an assembly on the final day of class before winter break. Finally, we are ending our semester the week before break this year. I will leave it up to you to decide how you would best assess the academic success of your students. Make sure it is equitable for each student. A final would look differently in wood shop versus AP. Any questions?

(Silence.)

Okay, great. The final thing is that we will send around a sign up list for our Christmas potluck. It is important for us to stop and celebrate. You do important work and I appreciate each of you. We'll have a potluck on that final early release day before break.

(Lights shift. A series of recorded parent voices providing commentary about the school, the Principal, and the teachers. This is accompanied by projections of news articles of teachers going above and beyond and news articles of teachers making professional unethical decisions. HEATHER enters and takes her place at the front of the classroom. MIKE enters. Lights shift:)

MIKE

And now, a presentation of a first-year teacher experience. If you were given a script this is the time when you'll be using it.

HEATHER

My mother and father cried. They are teachers as well. They really wanted me to join their ranks. Every family has some level of generational expectations. Some parents expect their kids to go to Harvard. Some expect them to play professional sports. Some...expect their kids to become teachers. It was never outwardly said instead it was quietly nudged in my direction. My dad would say:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

I know the pay is bad but the retirement is a good system to get into. They are fixing the pay.

HEATHER

Sounds good, dad. And my mom would say:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

You've always been so good with kids! They'll love you! You'll practice on them before you have your own!

HEATHER

Another not so subtle nudge for me to get married and have kids. I wasn't really sure about this profession but then I get here...in front of the room. Even with those empty desks I can't

describe how thrilling that feeling is of looking out and seeing all those expectant faces looking back at me. Of course, occasionally, the expectant faces are sullen. And the responses are less than ideal. One student says:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #3

Good morning!

HEATHER

Good morning! While another says:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #4

This class sucks. When am I ever going to use this?

HEATHER

To which, I honestly, don't know the precise moment they'll use this material. But, I say: okay.

This is still okay. I was warned the first year can be tough. On the first day, I organize my materials. I've prepped what I was going to say. I head to the front of the class and...a student interrupts me:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #5

Can I go to the bathroom?

HEATHER

In that moment, I need to decide if this is a compelling reason or if he is looking for a chance to walk around the school. I also realize I never decided on a bathroom policy. Do they get unlimited access? Do they have a limited number of passes? Are they rewarded if they don't use their passes? The second hand on the clock seems to tick louder. So, I say, sure. Go ahead. And I think: Okay. A brief disruption but now I'm back on track. Then:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #6

Please excuse the interruption but those students who ride bus 87 will ride home on bus 16.

Thank you.

HEATHER

For some unknown reason, this garners far more discussion than seems necessary. I look out at them and a few are looking at me still. A few have started turning around to look at other students. Heads are starting to huddle together for whispered conversation. Should I yell? Should I let them talk? Should I go over more expectations? What about a seating chart? No, not yet. I remember on the first day a student asked:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #7

Do you have a stapler?

HEATHER

I hadn't noticed until then that I didn't. Before I could answer, another student said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #8

Can I go to the library?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #9

Can I go with her?

HEATHER

I wasn't even sure where the library was or why they would need to go at this moment. Instead of asking, I simply said: Sure.

The first few weeks went pretty much like this. I would try to find a rhythm. I slowly learned people's names. It was most of the way through the semester before I learned more names of my

colleagues. On the first day, I realized I wasn't sure how to use the phones. Finally, the time came for my first observation. I stressed about it. I called my mom. She said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

You'll be great. Just don't overdo it. Be yourself.

HEATHER

Thanks, mom. My dad said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

They are only checking a box. They don't actually care what you do as long as people are still upright and breathing, you'll be fine.

HEATHER

Upright and breathing. I think I can manage that. I warned my students that someone would be joining our class and we all needed to be natural. They were there for me and not for them. They would be evaluating my teaching and not really focusing on them as students. I told them to just be themselves. I planned and planned for that lesson. I came up with something that would show how well students could be engaged. I planned a lesson that I thought students would talk about for years. It was a sure sign that I would be a solid teacher for years to come. The bell rang and students filed in, taking their place at their newly crafted seating chart. I paused.

(Silence)

I waited.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #10

Hey, can I use the bathroom?

HEATHER

No students can leave in the first ten minutes. Which was technically true. We weren't supposed to do that but I hadn't enforced it yet. I didn't want students to leave the class as the administrator came walking in to evaluate me. Ten minutes went by and...

(Silence)

Principal Lee didn't show up. After the class I checked my e-mail to see if there was a comment about missing the observation. Nothing. I talked with Mike afterward and he said:

MIKE

It happens. It shouldn't. But it does.

HEATHER

I want to know how I can get better.

MIKE

I know.

HEATHER

How do you know how you're doing with your job?

MIKE

I don't usually. I often wonder how I'm doing or if I'm doing enough. I push the boulder up the mountain and wait for it roll back down.

(MIKE exits.)

HEATHER

I saw Principal Lee later that day.

(PRINCIPAL LEE crosses from stage left to stage right. He waves. He exits.)

He just waved. No mention of the observation. Or how I'm doing. The next week I stood at the front of the class and asked what students were excited about. I decided to place instruction in the backseat and I would at least build relationships with my students. I wouldn't say they were learning in those weeks but we were getting along. After an excruciating day, I was sitting at my desk simply staring at nothing. When there was a knock at the door:

(TYLER enters.)

Oh, hi Tyler.

TYLER

Hi.

HEATHER

Can I help you with something?

TYLER

I just wanted to say...Oh, forget it.

HEATHER

Is everything okay?

TYLER

Yeah.

HEATHER

Okay.

(TYLER starts to walk away then turns back to face HEATHER.)

TYLER

I wanted to say that I'm glad you're my teacher. I think you're doing a good job.

(TYLER turns to leave. Lights shift. PROJECTION: A series of e-mails are projected on the screen. This ranges from positive e-mails to angry parents. It goes from professional learning opportunities to e-mails from the superintendent. There are a few instances where an e-mail is replied to with "k" or "got it." The projection fades out and leads to a series of short clips from angry parents. Then, a series of news clips reporting about teachers from different counties. Please note: There is a list of possibilities at the end of this document. ANGRY PARENT enters.)

ANGRY PARENT

From the moment my child walks through your door until the moment they make it home they are your responsibility. Not part of the time. Not only when in your field of vision. Always. When something happens to them, you need to know. You are accountable. I am accountable for what happens when they are home. I am accountable for who they are becoming. But you are accountable for keeping them safe. You are accountable for providing a safe environment. So how am I supposed to trust you when I repeatedly report what my daughter tells me? She tells me that she is harassed. She tells me that she doesn't feel safe. She tells me that she feels like she can't learn because the environment is unstable and the people who bully her and harass her are allowed to do it again. And again. And again. When I ask the teacher, they point the finger at you. When I ask you, you point the finger at the teacher. I don't care who is to blame. I want it fixed. I want to know that when I send my child to school that she is taken care of and loved. You are all the adults in the room.

(PRINCIPAL LEE enters.)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Thank you for your concern. We all work to be welcoming to all students and want them to feel safe and supported. I will follow up about these concerns soon.

(PRINCIPAL LEE exits. ANGRY PARENT exits. MIKE enters)

MIKE

So, what side are you on? Do you believe the teachers? Maybe the teacher is doing everything they can think of or maybe not. Do you believe the administrator? Maybe they are doing everything they can. No one wants to be in the wrong. People want to believe they are doing the best but it sometimes does not happen this way. One issue is that there are sides.

(MIKE takes a seat at a desk in the classroom. PRINCIPAL LEE enters. JOYCE enters.

HEATHER enters. PROJECTION: A new policy is presented on the projector screen. THE SCHOOL BOARD announces an idea for a new policy, then the SUPERINTENDENT announces plans for a new system for credit recovery that will be implemented starting second semester. PRINCIPAL LEE tries to talk about each of these but the story is slightly different from each.)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Thank you for being here on time. We'll try and make this quick. So, as you saw, there will be a new policy for next semester.

MIKE

Why starting next semester?

PRINCIPAL LEE

Well, we find it best that we want to get this started to make sure we have time to fine tune it. The two big ones are the school board would like us to consider revising our curriculum in English and Science. They put the recommendations out. I gave you a copy of them for your ease. Take a few minutes to talk with a partner about these.

MIKE

Data-driven teaching, social emotional learning. SEL, individualized, synchronous.

PRINCIPAL LEE

The second is our attempt at helping students earn credit through credit recovery.

MIKE

Differentiation, scaffolding, metacognition, student centered, manipulatives, tier 1,2 and 3. ILP individualized literacy plan, IEP individualized education plan, SLG student learning goal, MAP measure of academic progress, PLC professional learning community, SEL social emotional learning, NVACS Nevada academic content standards, NEPF Nevada education performance framework, SIP school improvement plan, GATE gifted and talented education, STEM science technology engineering and math, IC instructional consultation and infinite campus, SBAC smarter balances assessment consortium.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Our goal is to help students recapture credits that they otherwise wouldn't get. We are trying to help students graduate.

MIKE

Stakeholders. Gatekeeper. Student Voice. Inclusive. Trauma-informed pedagogy.

PRINCIPAL LEE

As you know, we need to take care of our stakeholders and think about the student voice. They show up with their own issues and things happen. Our goal is to be as inclusive as we can as we develop their plans to graduate.

HEATHER

What are the guidelines for joining the credit recovery?

JOYCE

Who is going to facilitate the credit recovery?

PRINCIPAL LEE

I think we should start with 9th grade and possibly our seniors to make sure people don't get too far behind and those that are needing the credits soon should get priority. I'm mostly thinking about students who are close but need some extra push.

MIKE

No excuses, zero tolerance, school to prison pipeline, high expectations, classroom management, consequence system, restorative circle, restorative justice, merits, trauma informed, whole child, achievement gap. No Child Left Behind, empower, self-care. Mastery based grading, self-paced learning, critical thinking methodologies. Scaffolding. Intellectual routines. Project based learning. Student led classrooms. Equity.

PRINCIPAL LEE

We are trying to provide high expectations for our students while also working to build their intellectual routines and skill set. They need to be accountable, but they sometimes need a break.

MIKE

I would like to know who you envision leading this.

PRINCIPAL LEE

I am hoping that I can get a volunteer from each content to assist. Heather has already volunteered to help out. And...

JOYCE

That isn't a good idea.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Excuse me?

JOYCE

I'm sorry. But she is already overloaded with the classes and being a first-year teacher. Heather this isn't anything against you.

PRINCIPAL LEE

I asked her if she was willing and she said yes.

MIKE

Of course she did.

JOYCE

She is a first-year teacher. She wants to be supportive.

MIKE

If your principal comes and asks you, you will say yes.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Why don't we table this for now? Heather, you and I can connect.

HEATHER

Okay.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Take a few minutes and talk with a partner about which students you think could benefit from this program.

(Some time passes. A projection appears with an e-mail from the SUPERINTENDENT regarding their expectations for the new policy which is counter to what PRINCIPAL LEE outlined.)

MIKE

So, it looks like we are accepting all students.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Excuse me?

MIKE

Just got an e-mail outlining the plan.

PRINCIPAL LEE

I see.

MIKE

So which is it?

PRINCIPAL LEE

Well, I think...you know what. This is our last meeting before winter break. Have a great break.

We'll come back to this after break.

(PRINCIPAL LEE exits).

JOYCE

Heather, I'm sorry. I only want to support you.

HEATHER

I know.

JOYCE

You're getting a good footing with your classes. I don't want you to overextend yourself.

HEATHER

I understand.

JOYCE

Have a great break. Try not to think about this place once.

(JOYCE exits).

MIKE

You doing okay?

HEATHER

Of course.

MIKE

You can be honest with me.

(Silence)

HEATHER

How do you know if you should stay a teacher?

(Lights shift. End of Act One).

Act Two

Semester Two

(At rise: JOYCE sits at her desk. The fundraising thermometers have shifted to show the impending financial issues with losing teachers and teacher morale being minimal. At this point, the audience does not fully know what these thermometers represent but it should change significantly through this next act. After a moment, HEATHER enters:)

JOYCE

Ah, Heather. How is the start of second semester?

HEATHER

Okay.

JOYCE

What can I do for you?

HEATHER

I wondered if you could come in and observe my class.

JOYCE

What about next Tuesday? 1st period?

HEATHER

I was hoping you could give me some ideas about my sixth period.

JOYCE

I can ask for some release time.

HEATHER

Thanks.

JOYCE

I feel like I need to ask though. Shouldn't Stephen be helping you?

(Silence.)

HEATHER

He should.

JOYCE

But he isn't?

HEATHER

He is more hands off. He doesn't usually give me feedback. And, well, Principal Lee didn't show up to our observations so far. I'm trying to get better.

JOYCE

How about Wednesday? My students are taking a test. It will be easy for someone to oversee that class.

HEATHER

Wednesday then.

JOYCE

How are you feeling about everything else?

(Silence).

HEATHER

Okay.

(The teacher morale timeline appears on the screen.)

JOYCE

Do me a favor?

HEATHER

Yes?

JOYCE

Don't take it personally.

HEATHER

Take what personally?

JOYCE

Any of it. Principal Lee not showing up. Anything going "wrong" in your class. If your morale is low. This is a tough time for any teacher.

HEATHER

Okay.

JOYCE

We need good people. You're a good one.

HEATHER

Thanks.

JOYCE

Besides, everything I hear about you is positive. The students like you.

HEATHER

I wish they would show me that.

JOYCE

Yes. That would be nice. But, they are teenagers. Measured emotions are not always their strong suit.

(They laugh. A silence)

HEATHER

How do you know if you should stay a teacher?

(A silence)

JOYCE

I wondered if this question would come up.

HEATHER

Yes.

JOYCE

Only you know what is in your heart. I did not feel like I was solid in my career for a while. Some say the first five years. Some say ten years. The challenge is that we are human and so are the students. It is a highly emotional job despite our attempts to put it in arranged columns, charts, and graphs. It usually doesn't fit well into that system.

HEATHER

So then, what?

JOYCE

I would give yourself some time. Be around the emotions for a while. Are the things you don't like only significant in education? Or, would they exist in other career paths? The students will keep you going for a while but they can't be the only reason. Try not to be isolated.

HEATHER

How do I not feel lonely?

JOYCE

Of course. You'll spend more time with other people's families than your own. You'll spend the most time with teenagers.

HEATHER

I wish it was an easier answer.

JOYCE

You'll figure out what is best for you.

HEATHER

Thanks, Joyce.

JOYCE

Of course. I'll see you Wednesday.

(JOYCE and HEATHER exit. Lights shift. RECORDED AUDIO: The buzz of a school. Phones ring. Announcements are made. The sound of students in the halls. It should feel like the audience was plopped down in the middle of a school. After a beat, CAROL, TYLER, and CAMERON enter and take a seat at a desk like the beginning of the play. A bell rings.)

CAMERON

Did you guys finish the reading?

TYLER

We had a reading?

CAMERON

Yeah. Chapter 6.

CAROL

Yes, I finished it.

TYLER

No, I didn't. Is there a quiz?

CAMERON

Probably. We haven't had one in a while.

CAROL

He said there was going to be one.

TYLER

Damn.

CAMERON

You'll be alright.

TYLER

Yeah. I guess.

CAROL

The quiz is usually multiple choice. So, you have a chance.

TYLER

Good. You're...Carol, right?

CAROL

Yes.

TYLER

Tyler.

CAROL

I know.

CAMERON

So, which teachers you think are getting ready to leave? There is usually a few.

TYLER

I know I wouldn't want to be here anymore. I don't blame them.

(Silence.)

CAROL

I don't know. I think we have some good teachers here. I don't think we always treat them well.

TYLER

Yeah. But, we're just kids.

CAROL

It doesn't mean we should act uncontrollable toward them.

CAMERON

If they want our respect, they have to respect us.

(Silence. MIKE enters downstage. Not seen by the actors.)

TYLER

I'm tired of being reintroduced to teachers.

CAMERON

Only to have them leave.

CAROL

I thought you didn't really care.

TYLER

Of course we care. I just don't think we can we do anything.

CAMERON

We don't have any power in this.

TYLER

If they are going to leave then they are going to leave.

CAROL

That is true.

(Lights shift. MIKE walks to the front of the classroom.)

MIKE

Usually when a district or someone talks about the costs of losing teachers they talk about finances. It is not often the case that they talk about the students. For students that lack

continuity, the loss of a teacher can be impactful. For students that are striving for higher academic achievement, it can put a stop, at least momentarily, to some of that academic progress.

(Lights shift. MIKE starts writing on the board but a projection covers what he is writing. The projection shows MIKE'S actual feelings. What he wishes he could tell his students but doesn't out of protection for them or himself. Either way, the projection shows the internal struggle and the other issues he faces at this time. Lights shift again, projection out, then:)

MIKE

Good morning, all. We are starting with a pop quiz about Chapter 6. Please take out paper and a pencil.

(The three students exchange glances and do so. Lights shift. Recorded message: Please excuse the announcement. Teachers please report to Room 212 after school for an emergency meeting.)

CAROL

What is that about?

MIKE

Good question. Speaking of good questions, look at this pop quiz.

(Lights shift. News report videos of different school district attempting to pass a levy are shown. As the various clips are shown, MIKE, HEATHER, STEPHEN, and PRINCIPAL LEE stand downstage. Some possible clips are listed at the end of this document. THEN, a projection of a memo is shown on the screen. The actors read the memo to the audience)

STEPHEN

Dear Staff, Attached to this email is a districtwide seniority list.

HEATHER

The list was developed as required by the collective bargaining agreement and includes the seniority and qualifications of each certificated employee.

MIKE

Please review this document and respond within one week about your placement on the schedule.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Thank you all for your work. Sincerely, Superintendent.

(Lights shift. PRINCIPAL LEE stands at the front of the classroom. The other actors take seats.

MIKE stands downstage right and addresses the audience. The projection is off. The

thermometers have taken quite the turn as the financial risk is highest and morale is lowest)

MIKE

School districts across the country face the realization that their funding will come down to a vote. This is sometimes the difference between keeping teachers or having to make cuts. These cuts impact programs as well as teachers. These votes impact lives. Not just teachers but students.

Welcome to our staff. If you were given a piece of paper this is where you'll come into the story.

This is when one teacher says:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #11

When will we know if we have a job?

PRINCIPAL LEE

The list showed the seniority. We have a second chance at a vote soon. So if it passes, then we won't need the list.

MIKE

If it passes?

PRINCIPAL LEE

If it passes.

HEATHER

It did just fail.

MIKE

To which another teacher said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #12

Shouldn't you know if this is going to pass or not?

PRINCIPAL LEE

Of course. We have our estimates that it will pass. It almost didn't pass before because we didn't get enough voters out.

HEATHER

How do we know the votes will come in this time?

MIKE

(to audience)

Remember the teacher morale graph? This is when some teachers start to climb out of the lowest points with their excitement for summer and the promise of next school year. But this, the levy

not passing the first vote, means that we might not have the security of next year. We might be looking for jobs, particularly, the ones that are possibly losing their jobs.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Our district is working on putting together a plan for getting the votes.

(Silence)

MIKE

This was an uncomfortable silence. Everyone seems calm but underneath people are spiraling. Then in rapid fire, several teachers respond to Principal Lee.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #13

Will we get to know the plan?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #14

We saw how well their plan worked for other things. We might as well look for a job.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #15

Do we actually get to talk to our superintendent?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #16

What are we supposed to tell our kids? What are we supposed to tell our students?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #17

I can't afford to lose this job.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #18

Why was the list published in the first place if we might not need it?

STEPHEN

Enough. It isn't like he cares anyway.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Excuse me?

STEPHEN

I said it isn't like you care anyway.

MIKE

What are you talking about?

STEPHEN

Principal Lee might be Superintendent Lee soon. He interviewed for a position.

(Silence.)

PRINCIPAL LEE

I was waiting for the right time. But since you started the conversation let me end it. Yes. I applied for a job and got an interview. I won't hide the fact that I am looking for a superintendent opportunity. One came up. But that doesn't mean that I don't care about each of you. Please. Please hear me on this one. I care about each of you.

(Silence.)

MIKE

When will you know?

PRINCIPAL LEE

They expect to make their recommendation soon.

HEATHER

I see.

MIKE

So you'll know before the vote.

PRINCIPAL LEE

Yes.

STEPHEN

And we'll be left here to pick up the pieces.

PRINCIPAL LEE

This isn't the way I wanted this to go.

STEPHEN

No. You wanted to escape. You built yourself a raft.

MIKE

Enough.

PRINCIPAL LEE

I am sorry you found out this way. Please review the seniority list. If you have comments or questions please follow the protocol. We'll meet again soon.

(Lights shift. PRINCIPAL LEE exits. MIKE exits. JOYCE and HEATHER remain onstage. A bell rings. This is another day. The pair are meeting to review notes JOYCE made about a lesson.)

HEATHER

Thank you for meeting with me.

JOYCE

Of course. Before we start, how are you handling the vote?

(Silence)

HEATHER

What if it doesn't pass?

JOYCE

It will.

HEATHER

But what if it doesn't?

JOYCE

If it doesn't, then, well, you'll put yourself out there. You'll find a job. There is always another school.

HEATHER

I thought I was just getting familiar with here. I don't want to start over.

JOYCE

I know.

HEATHER

I feel like I was connecting with students.

JOYCE

I know.

(Silence)

HEATHER

How could I give so much effort...and...

(Recorded announcement: Please excuse the interruption. Kate Johnson report to the office.)

JOYCE

No. Please don't do that. You did what you could. If it doesn't pass, I will write you a letter of recommendation. I will help you. It will be okay.

(The door opens. MIKE enters)

MIKE

Am I early?

JOYCE

Not at all.

MIKE

Okay. Good.

JOYCE

Heather. I wanted Mike to join us today because we both wanted to help support you this year.

HEATHER

Okay.

MIKE

This is often the time, even in normal years, where we start looking at other jobs. Even if it is simply to see what is out there.

JOYCE

Just know, that we are here for you. And we want to help you regardless of what happens with the vote.

MIKE

Even though Joyce is retiring, I will be here to help you.

JOYCE

You never know, I might come back for one more year.

(Recorded announcement: Please excuse the interruption. If you are riding Bus 87, you will be taking bus 42 home today. Thank you. HEATHER stands and walks around the room.)

HEATHER

It is something isn't it?

JOYCE

What is?

HEATHER

The empty desks.

(HEATHER stops at a few. This doesn't need to seem rehearsed.)

We start the year unsure of how it will go. Of who the people are that will fill these desks. How those people will change over the year. Some for good. Some for bad. We can't imagine how they will change us. Some for the better. Some for the worse. We're foolish if we think they don't impact us. And then, at the end of the year, everything returns to emptiness. ,

(HEATHER and JOYCE exit. MIKE stands downstage center stage.)

MIKE

For the final time, if you were given a script, this will be a time to pull those out.

The school year continued with the usual pace of any spring semester. The only difference was the looming vote and our principal position being opened. This provided a sizeable cloud over all proceedings. Prom happened. Our teams did well in competitions. Teachers and students settled in to make it to spring break, then, after, worked with the rapid downhill toward summer.

Also, after break, we faced the vote.

(Projection: The final results of the vote are presented on the screen.)

It passed. It wasn't a mandate. But it was more than enough to pass. To which one teacher said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #19

I know it passed. But, I don't know if I want to stay here anymore.

MIKE

To which another teacher said:

AUDIENCE MEMBER #20

I was looking if it didn't pass. Now that it did, I will still see what happens.

(STEPHEN enters.)

STEPHEN

The uncomfortable situation now is that the community knows how close we are to faltering. The teachers know how the community feels about some programs. The sides are more entrenched.

MIKE

This is fantastic opportunity to switch administrators.

(HEATHER enters.)

HEATHER

A peculiar beginning to my career.

(JOYCE enters.)

JOYCE

A good time to end my career.

(PRINCIPAL LEE enters)

PRINCIPAL LEE

Opportunity is worth seizing. That doesn't mean it was not difficult.

MIKE

Principal Lee becomes superintendent at a neighboring district. He is well-received and takes lessons he learned from this spring to help new and veteran teacher alike.

Stephen becomes entrenched in his feelings toward administrators and his service to the district. He always shows up. He does care. But the profession has allowed cynicism to creep into his daily life.

Joyce retires and enjoys traveling to visit family. She doesn't stay retired for long as she seeks employment with an area training new teachers. She and Heather remain close over the years.

Heather stays teaching for five years. She works at one other school before leaving the profession. She requests the district give Joyce the stipend for her mentorship instead of Stephen which causes quite the awkward interaction.

Carol, Tyler, and Cameron, as well as the other students, prepare for summer vacation and the series of changes that will greet them when the new school year begins. They each find success in their own ways.

(Lights shift. Each performer exits the stage.)

Then: Projection: Statistics about teacher attrition and retention for the State of Nevada and nationally. News clippings and reports about the teacher shortage.

Then, transition to the sounds of a school. A bell rings. Announcements. The sounds of students laughing and talking in the halls reaches an apex and then silence.

Recorded announcement: Welcome back to school! Students if you are not heading to class be sure to get there soon. Class begins soon. Thank you!

*Then: A printed message: "We haven't quite found a teacher for several classes yet. But, we are working hard to find highly qualified teachers to take these roles. If you know of anyone who would be interested please send me their names. Thank you for your work! Sincerely, Superintendent." Lights fade out. **End of Play***

Chapter 3

Discussion and Conclusions

Teacher retention and attrition are considered significant issues impacting school districts at an alarming rate. Nevada classrooms are struggling to fill positions with highly qualified individuals as well as retain highly qualified individuals in the classroom. Quantitative research identified central issues that explain the situation; however, this study sought to explore the humanistic moments for these teachers that might lead to retaining more teachers. The research corpus presents the impact of teacher attrition in the financial impact, the student impact, and several other metrics; however, it does not always present a holistic exploration of the experience. Most notably, the impact of the various conflict and cooperation points that may be unexpressed throughout a school year. The decision to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom is nuanced decision that requires a study that drama theory, Theatre of the Oppressed, and narrative inquiry offers.

Many professions – military and surgical professions, for example – invite theater as a training intervention yet education often resorts to isolation although there are some instances of collective work (i.e. Critical Friends Groups, instructional walks). It seems there is a disconnect between the utility of theatrical interventions in education whereas other professions and environments fundamentally use these interactions. TO and DT would suggest the cause is a significant break in trust between the facilitators and the stakeholders that needs to be repaired. It seems true at the institutional level; however, it seems important to highlight the role of the educator. Teachers often feel autonomy in their own classroom at times when they may not have empowerment in other instance within the school. As a result, many teachers are reluctant to release that control. TO and DT require authentic trust and collective action which may

counteract the feelings of depersonalization and isolation. As a result, these training interventions already at work in other fields may have stronger connections to the education practice.

In the previous chapters, there was a connection between the narrative techniques that a play could provide for the teacher attrition and retention quagmire. The principle aim of Drama Theory is to analyze real situations (Bennett, Bryant, & Howard, 2001). This aim follows the dramatic frameworks of Freire and Boal, particularly legislative theatre. Furthermore, Drama Theory poses the following questions:

1. Who is involved or concerned about the situation?
2. What are the key issues over which they are united or in contention?
3. What power do they possess to influence these issues? What choices are available?
4. How would they each like to see those involved act with respect to each issue? What would they do if everyone were to act according to their own interests?
5. What can each do to manage the pressures that they and others experience as a result of being caught up in the situation? (Bryant, 2016, p. 301).

Drama Theory closely aligns itself with game theory where there are realistic issues facing people or institutions. Boal and Freire use Legislative Theatre and Forum Theatre to present the real-life situation and allow the characters an opportunity to learn a solution. Chapter Two unfolds in a series of episodes where different characters interact to impact the action and outcome. The main characters are those directly involved: Principal Lee, Heather, Mike, Stephen, and Joyce along with realistic news clippings, announcements, and studies. Along these lines, the larger context of the play follows a usual plot structure – mirroring the academic year – with exposition, climax, and falling action until we arrive at a resolution.

Throughout the play, characters show their own views, beliefs, and aims for their experience in the episode as well as the overall storyline. *Room 212* offers a *Position* and *Moment of Truth*. Drama Theory uses position and options like the unexpressed actions in Boal's work which is the foundation of opportunities for cooperation or conflict. If this interaction between actors – in this case actors means a participant in the situation – occurs without an authentic opportunity for conversation and empowerment, then it will likely lead to a dilemma and loss of relationship. One moment occurs in the second act when Principal Lee discusses the impending levy vote that will possibly impact each character. Joyce and Heather follow this position by communicating what happens if the levy doesn't pass or if Heather does not feel supported.

In Drama Theory, characters are the people involved in the situation. These characters may be individuals, groups, teams, or organizations of any size and complexity (Bryant, 2016, p. 330). The play scales up from the students toward the superintendent. For a complete analysis, it would be wise to begin with a full list including janitorial staff, teachers, paraprofessionals, school board, superintendent, teacher's union, three levels of government, parents, students, etc. to show the numerous characters that are impacted by and involved in the situation. Furthermore, confrontation analysis provides a way of structuring situations and identifying the dilemmas for different characters. As such, the main characters are described with relation to an initial position, a fallback, and a threatened future:

- Principal Lee: the position is as an administrator who may or may not be attuned to the needs of his staff. His fallback is to achieve a position elsewhere. Finally, a threatened future is the impending levy and his new position in a different district.

- Joyce: the position is as veteran teacher who works to mentor early career teachers. The fallback becomes retiring only to reenter the field as a full-time mentor for early career teachers. Her threatened future is truly teacher attrition; Joyce withstood the variety of factors that influence an educator's decision to remain in the field. She sees how the early career teachers need more pedagogical support and psychological/emotional support but has limited power to accomplish this task on a grand scale.
- Heather: position as a first-year teacher. Her fallback becomes looking for positions elsewhere because of decisions outside of her control. Her threatened future is the levy vote and her losing her job
- Stephen: position as a veteran teacher that reached cynical viewpoints. This character is likely to remain in teaching regardless of it not being in his best interest. His threatened future is a missed opportunity to become a full support for colleagues and, possibly, his students.
- Mike: position as the narrator and an early career teacher. His fallback becomes leaving the profession. His threatened future is a difficult decision to remain in the field or leave the profession which both seem to be questionable decisions.

Along these lines, there would be a possible position, fallback, and threatened future for each character within the play. In sum, the position of each character is a degree of support and a hope for personalization. Heather discusses with Mike and Joyce the feelings of depersonalization she feels from Principal Lee and from Stephen. To this end, Stephen confronts Principal Lee about a feeling of isolation when it is announced that Principal Lee interviewed for a new position. Further, the students discuss feelings of isolation in the revolving door of teachers. The episodes unfold in a series of sub-plots that focus on isolation and relationships.

Along these lines, Bryant and Drama Theory provides a template for confrontation analysis whereas Boal's work could foster relationships and the individual educator. Boal's work focuses on the empowerment of the individual body (Geisler, 2017) by promoting self-awareness and awareness of other stakeholders. Boal might argue that oppression cannot be regarded as only the experience of the other. TO brings the problem of oppression into the psyche of the student. As a result, *Room 212* attempts to bring the teacher attrition issue from the context of frightening statistics into the forum of the theatre. To this end, TO is known as an opportunity for those attending the theatrical event to propose suggestions and alternatives to the issue (Duffy & Powers, 2018), as such, *Room 212* would be better served to confront the issues by limiting Principal Lee and the Superintendent as the knowers or solver of a problem; instead, the various teachers should be at the heart of the solution. Along these lines, *Room 212* uses several Boal techniques in the ways characters interact that may or may not be replicated in a site.

Implications of *Room 212*

Drama Theory uses an options board to track the potential outcomes of any confrontation. In a similar way, TO principles allow every participant to offer symptoms of a larger issue and to offer possible resolution to those issues. The confrontation is resolved in some manner by the end of meeting. If the characters cannot do anything then they are not part of the interaction. These are actions that are referred to as options because they may or may not be carried out. For example:

- The teacher could stay at the school (or not)
- The administration could support the teachers (or not)
- The union could file a grievance (or not)

Within the play, Principal Lee missed opportunities to support teachers within the various staff meetings and within Heather's opportunity. Further, Stephen is presented with an opportunity to support Heather, or not, and chooses to focus on his own work. One could argue this was not done with malice toward Heather; instead, Stephen decided to focus on his work because he was mentored in a similar manner. Joyce and Mike step in to protect Heather when others were provided the opportunity and did not follow through.

Within the play, the characters experience moments where the options are within their control and ones where the options are outside their control. For example, the levy vote is outside of their control. The administration could publish the seniority list – or not – but they were also bound by a collective bargaining agreement. The teachers could apply for a job – or not – which would bring this option into focus. The implication of these options is that the disheartening reality of teacher attrition is that highly qualified teachers may leave the profession for nuanced, humanistic reasons that cannot be reversed by the already proposed financial incentives or empowered administration support. Given this claim, the traditional policy reports and research create a fatalistic equation that if a school site implements this certain policy, then the attrition issue will subsist. However, narrative ethics and Drama theory shows that each decision is bolstered or compromised by dilemmas and options. In other words, the traditional tactics presented through quantitative studies are unintentionally deepening depersonalization rather than building autonomy. Drama Theory and TO suggests these efforts are missing the empowerment factors and providing necessary supports for when a cooperation or conflict point arises for an educator.

A character states what it demands from others and what it proposes to do itself if they meet its demands. A position analysis could be completed for each episode, but it would be helpful to showcase a few overarching positions for each character:

- Principal Lee's position is that the teachers' work is putting the students first and sometimes does not focus on the well-being of the staff.
- Heather's position is that she wants support and reassurance.
- Mike's position is that he wants purpose, clarity, and support.
- Joyce's position is that she wants support for staff and honesty.
- Stephen's position is that he wants honesty and autonomy.

Teachers recognize the need for a strong support system and professional autonomy. *Room 212* explored the theme of depersonalization and how professional relationships impacted their daily experience as teachers. Although these characters each want similar traits in their positions the school will never fully reach cohesion and strong leadership because of the conflict points and dilemmas that arise for each character.

Along these lines, the classroom scenes provide a brief glimpse into how a teacher can impact their immediate interactions but are often interrupted by external distractions including fellow teachers, announcements, students, and – to a lesser degree – angry parents. This idea meets an important moment when Mike writes on the board and projection shows the internal thoughts and struggles – the information he wishes he could share with his students. Again, Mike shows this as a moment of depersonalization.

Throughout the play, characters experience moments of changing options. The teachers experience moments where they are active in the options and moments where they do not have any immediate options.

Drama Theory uses stated intentions as means to show what characters tell others they will do and how those stated intentions might pose a threat to others or how they might provide a basis for agreement. For example, Principal Lee states that he will observe Heather and provide feedback as part of a professional obligation. Principal Lee does not follow through with this action so this provides a threat to Heather's position of wanting support. However, Joyce and Mike step in and state they will support Heather with Joyce coming in and seeking release time to talk with Heather. Early in the play, Stephen is presented as Heather's mentor, yet they do not directly speak to each other at any other point in the play.

The action leads to the doubted actions within this play. A character could become skeptical whether another's intentions will or won't be carried out. The most egregious of these cases is the Superintendent presented as an aloof member of the school community. The Superintendent offers glib remarks communicated through memos and e-mails, but this character is never actually presented onstage. Along these lines, a character may not believe if a particular position is agreed upon that the other characters would play their part which is most notably seen in Stephen's confrontations with Principal Lee. To this end, Principal Lee tells his staff to "follow protocol" and other expectations of compliance but the teachers have little faith that Principal Lee will hold up his end of the scenario.

After looking at all the above components it can be assessed as a Conflict Point or Cooperation Point which is an opportunity for collective action or isolation. The conflict points or cooperation points in this case become the decisions for the teachers to remain at the school or to leave the school. The main conflict remains in the feelings of isolation and depersonalization instead of supported. Mike reassures Heather that no matter what happens with the levy vote that he will be there to assist her. This position is meant to be authentic; however, Mike is facing a

conflict or cooperation point himself. He ultimately decides to leave the profession because of his own internal decision making. In this way, the decision to leave had little to do with traditional assumptions for why teachers leave the profession.

Drama Theory provides six dilemmas that can be applied to an analysis after the sections have been explored. The six dilemmas are cooperation, trust, deterrence, inducement, threat, and positioning. The first two dilemmas deal with the credibility of actions whereas the middle three consider threats. Finally, the positioning dilemma considers the positions of the characters. To continue, a brief definition of each dilemma:

1. Cooperation Dilemma: Character A has the potential improvement of his own position
2. Trust Dilemma: Character B has a potential improvement from A's position
3. Deterrence Dilemma: Character B prefers the threatened future to A's position
4. Inducement Dilemma: B's position is at least as good as A in the threatened future
5. Threat Dilemma: A has a potential improvement to the threatened future
6. Positioning Dilemma: A prefers B's position to his own

In the play, characters face dilemmas considering how a threatened future may unfold because of their position. Furthermore, characters may engage in persuasion or rejection of the dilemmas. In this way, *Room 212* suggests the moments for correcting teacher attrition and retention are impacted by a series of dilemmas and options rather than a holistic solution. Principal Lee is not a villainous person; however, he is confronted with several dilemmas where he makes a human decision that does negatively impact his staff. Mike is not a villainous person; however, he decides to leave the profession based on his interactions with the other characters in the play.

Drama Theory poses the following questions:

1. Who is involved or concerned about the situation?
2. What are the key issues over which they are united or in contention?
3. What power do they possess to influence these issues? What choices are available?
4. How would they each like to see those involved act with respect to each issue? What would they do if everyone were to act according to their own interests?
5. What can each do to manage the pressures that they and others experience as a result of being caught up in the situation? (Bryant, 2016, p. 301).

These five questions are vital to further analysis of the teacher attrition and retention issue since the central aim is in collective action rather than isolation. Previous research suggested worthwhile means for stemming the teacher attrition issue; however, the systems address the issue outside an effective means. Legislative Theatre and TO address these issues by suggesting that teachers are not inactive participants in this issue; instead, teachers become active agents for change in the teacher attrition issue. To be sure, Nevada included teachers in researching the issue but TO and Drama Theory would suggest that this remains a passive interaction. A certain group of educators are proposing changes and compiling information that is not presented in an outward manner for public consumption.

Legislative Theatre and Drama Theory offer opportunities to enact change at the moments that require the most attention. *Room 212* presented significant opportunities for cooperation or conflict which are not the moments that are largely addressed by the traditional efforts to reverse the teacher attrition issue. Financial incentives may lure people to a certain district, but finances minimally assist in the daily cooperation/conflict that an educator may use as a metric for remaining in the field. The reality is many districts may not be able to offer the same financial incentives as other districts, so this remains an unsustainable solution.

Furthermore, salary often scores low on the rationale for a teacher leaving the profession. The Clark County School District reported that the central attrition reasons were dissatisfaction with current position (29.3%), family decisions (20.7%), and salary (15.7%). Along these lines, the dissatisfaction could be classified as inadequate support at the local and district level (too little assistance and materials provided), unreliable bureaucracy (too many meetings, insensible policies and procedures), and salary (CCSD, 2008). To be sure, salary should be considered as an area that needs to be addressed; however, the most pertinent issue is how to significantly address the issues that are fundamentally a humanistic endeavor.

Limitations

The most notable limitation of this study is the reliance on fictional events and characters to explore the teacher retention and attrition question. Different methodologies could present fact-based information; however, fiction does mirror reality. Even a more traditional drama theory or Boal framework exploration would occur with participants in a real issue, akin to a case study in more traditional research. It is a disadvantage of this study that it theorizes the real, complex issue by using imagined conversations and confrontations. In essence, this study does not examine one real school and their stakeholders; instead, this study attempts to paraphrase the experience of Nevada teachers in this hypothetical school community.

Narratives access the human qualities of these important questions; however, with this methodology there is a need to generalize where it is sometimes not advisable to reduce all teachers to these four actors. This synecdoche is a useful one if it is done with caution. These teachers could be parts to the professional question; however, it should not be made as a definitive solution.

Implications for Research

TO techniques are practiced across the globe, reportedly in sixty-four countries in a variety of settings, such as schools, social-service and nonprofit organizations, community centers, prisons, hospitals, conferences, universities, public theatres, and on the street (Fox & Leeder, 2018). This varied use of TO practices make it compelling as an option for further research in numerous fields. More specifically, TO practices offer an opportunity to fully represent an educator's experience not only in questions of attrition but also in other professional areas. These applied theatre forms may create a valuable means to address conflict, build allyship, and promote social justice in schools.

Additionally, research could turn their attention from the recruitment stage and offering financial incentives to the retaining of educators. Further research could analyze school districts that retain teachers at a higher rate and see precisely how the administrators and teachers work to promote the high retention rate. Then, are the characteristics that foster retention replicable in other sites? This study is not replicable in the same way of a quantitative study where we could test the results; however, this would lead to more credibility of the study if the factors that lead to retention is focused more on how well confrontation and cooperation are dealt with in the school.

Implications of Practice

In the past few years, researchers turned their attention to Boal and Drama Theory as they consider professional practice issues. To begin, TO techniques may positively impact preservice teachers' perceptions of both themselves as future teachers and of the students whom they will teach (Duffy & Powers, 2018). Along these lines, one study offered a supplemental and voluntary arts-based professional learning seminar that comprised six, two-hour sessions. Thirty-four student teachers participated over five semesters making use of Theater of the Oppressed and other arts-based activities to process dilemmas they faced in their student

teaching contexts. As a result, preservice student teachers worked with a dilemma, examined their assumptions, engaged in perspective-taking, and in the process explored new possibilities (Bhukhanwala, Dean, & Taylor, 2016). Although these possibilities are inviting for teacher training programs it is worthwhile to consider the implementation at a school.

Further, this implementation would be a step in the direction of closing the central aim of hiring practices and retaining teachers. The ongoing stress of filling vacant positions makes the hiring practices plausible and necessary in some cases. Financial incentives may attract candidates to apply for the position at the school; however, not supporting the hires is only continuing the institutional issues. *Room 212* highlights how financial incentives can have an indirect harmful impact on an early career teacher and a first-year teacher. Mike is outside of the normal mandated mentor programs and Heather is paired with Stephen initially which is not a fruitful exchange. As a result, *Room 212* helps us see how Drama Theory and Theatre of the Oppressed strategies may help bolster these educators in a sustained manner rather than a temporary financial boost.

Along these lines, the administrators could quickly implement Drama Theory principles into their practice as a campus leader. Drama Theory proposes symptoms (the complaints or what needs to be relieved), the concepts that organize these experiences (issues, characters, options, doubts), and the types of prescription for action or further investigation (dilemma elimination, guidance on emotional tenor). The work becomes the authentic analysis of daily symptoms and how quickly those can be resolved with a holistic approach and not simply the principal or superintendent making decisions. The usual result would be some form of building leadership team or teacher leader program; however, Boal would suggest that the participants involved should be facilitated at an open meeting.

Further, the use of TO can be practical and theoretical. The exercises enable embodied experiences and analysis of systems and individual locations; the importance of learning in community; and the use of play and joyful, creative risk-taking to discuss and reflect on serious topics related to systemic oppression. As a result, it is important to provide tools for facilitating TO opportunities and to show how TO can cultivate educators' analysis of oppression (those readers interested in facilitating TO workshops for educators and (b) to contribute to our understanding of how TO can serve to cultivate educators' analysis of oppression (Foster-Shaner, Sondel, Generett, & King, 2019). To this end, the following agenda would likely garner significant response from the participants:

- Integrating In/Hah! (Appendix A)
- Columbian Hypnosis/Good Day (Appendix B)
- Stop/Walk; Stop Think(Appendix C)
- Forum Theatre/Image Theatre (Appendix D)
- Drama Theory Analysis (Appendix E)

The integrating in step is a moment for participants to gather to focus on each other and build collective thought. The participants stand in a circle with their feet about shoulder width apart. Then, the participants, silently, make eye contact with each other and silently acknowledge each other. As they make eye contact, they slowly raise their arms above their head, pause, then lower their arms to the starting position. Next, the participants lower their head and nominate someone to be the facilitator. The participants may have their eyes open or closed but they should have soft focus. The facilitator walks around the circle and taps a participant on the shoulder then the facilitator loudly says "Hah!" then the remaining facilitators respond with "Hah!" Once a participant has been tapped on the shoulder they sit down in the circle. The facilitator continues

until each participant has been selected. The intention of these exercises is to begin any meeting with a low-stakes participatory exercise that involves every participant. If the exercise is being completed at a large gathering where participants may not know each other then this would be an opportunity to include a name and gesture game where participants are offered the opportunity to introduce themselves with their name and a gesture, then the other participants repeat the name/gesture back to the participant.

Next, the facilitator should include games like Columbian Hypnosis and Good Day (See Appendix B). These games are more advanced than the previous games; however, the participants are still not divulging personal items or risking individual commentary before they are ready. Good Day is a game that could be used as a transition point from the previous games and the walking games in the next section. Everyone must shake hands with a stranger and speak their own name: they can only let go of the other person's hand when they have grabbed another hand – to whose owner they will say their name and so on. It is possible to revise this game if a staff is working together and a “stranger” is not likely. It would be beneficial to have participants shake hands with people they do not interact with often first. The intention is to build from a low stakes opportunity to challenge our assumptions to then build up to challenging the conflict points.

Next, the facilitator begins working with moving the participants more from the mind and into the body. The facilitator first asks participants to move around the space, encouraging them to vary their directions so that they are not all moving in a circle. The facilitator mentions that moving at a level 10 is moving as quickly and safely as possible without running and a level 0 is a full stop. Additionally, the level 5 is a normal walking speed. The facilitator mentions that each participant should keep soft focus and note how other participants are moving. The goal is that

each participant is moving at the same rate but not moving in the same direction. The facilitator may add additional commands in the game like “Stop/Walk” or signaling specific participants to stop or walk. The facilitator can also choose to have one participant move at a level 10 and the other participants move at a level 3 then return to every participant moving at the same rate. The main goal of this game is to build collective creation between participants and to warm up the bodies instead of focusing on only the mind.

Once the walking exercises are completed, then the facilitator will transition to Image Theatre and Forum Theatre which will transition directly to the confrontation analysis portion of the training. Image Theatre is a primary component of the “Theatre as language” phase of TO, in which “one begins to practice theatre as a language that is living and present, not as a finished product displaying images from the past” (Boal, 1993, p. 126). The facilitator begins with having each participant respond to a prompt that requires them to consider an ideal situation and their reality. The question could be universal at this point but at some point, the facilitator will begin having the participants focus on their own cooperation and conflict. The next phase of Image Theatre is for participant groups to create an image based off the prompt. One person starts the image by taking a role and striking a pose. One at a time, without talking, others in the group join in, considering not only their characters and poses but also the impact or meaning that they have in relation to the others in the group. To be clear, the participants create one image that shows the education system or their specific school as it should be and how it is for them. Obviously, this could lead to tensions so it is vital the facilitator creates a learning space where participants feel they can be honest without fear of repercussions. The goal is to provide an opportunity of participants, regardless of their role, to have an opportunity to share the unexpressed. Boal

suggests with the help of this technique, the problem emerges more clearly, and the solution can be sought with a greater likelihood of success.

Once the problem or symptoms are more clearly expressed then this can be where the facilitator brings Drama Theory analysis into the framework to help fully analyze the cooperation and conflict points. Through the series of games, participants have an opportunity to build collective thought and to engage with the problems facing their professional experience. Further, each participant is tasked with analyzing the problem and offering a solution. The participants are empowered to create a possible solution and even if the solution is not recognized they have an opportunity to share the unexpressed issues facing their professional practice. Additionally, the participants see an issue move, even slightly, from the reality to the ideal which will impact their likelihood of remaining at their school.

Finally, this practice cannot simply be a one-day event; instead, the administration and the teachers need to implement this style of decision making into their daily practice. If each stakeholder feels there is a system in place for addressing conflict points, then they will likely feel more empowered and like their voices are heard and responded to rather than feeling the loss of identity and relationships. School cohesion does not need to be complacency. School cohesion can be a fundamental willingness to let disagreement become expressed and having a system of addressing these concerns.

Conclusions

This study largely ignores the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts this monumental event will have on the teacher retention issue. Teacher turnover became a nationwide issue that demands attention by education professions, lawmakers, and other stakeholders. There are cases where teacher attrition has slowed and even some instances where teacher turnover is at a

healthy rate. Nevertheless, there are significant areas where the teacher attrition issue is becoming more entrenched.

Room 212 used the Drama Theory framework along with the Boal/Freire framework to theorize the core principles in the various policy reports and research. This narrative offered moments to explore the nuances of the personal nature of education including a need for strong relationships among teachers, administrators, and students. Teacher attrition cannot be solved by a simple equation that if we only offer financial incentives or if we only begin a teacher mentoring program then we will retain teachers. *Room 212* theorizes the intentions and doubts that educators experience in their daily experience which shows varying degrees of success. To this end, it seems vital that educators consider job satisfaction, recruitment, mentoring, and professional support as being bolstered by authentic relationships. In essence, teachers leaving the profession are doing so because of a loss in one of the Drama Theory's six dilemmas.

Throughout this process, the project sought to place someone outside education within the context of the classroom. *Room 212* worked to involve the audience and news clips to place the pressures in a findable context where a participant may not have considered that viewpoint. However, the project adapted to consider how an educator in the audience may be able to use this experience to explain the complexities of their profession and to begin a conversation. The play is not based around personal experiences; however, it was a journey out of isolation to consider other educators and their insecurities or triumphs within this field. At this point, it is a sincere hope that *Room 212* will be staged soon and begin conversations about the teacher attrition/retention issue. Further, it will be important that those conversations include all stakeholders in an education setting. The overall project was cathartic in the way it allowed a

holistic discussion about this issue; however, there are unknown consequences of recent years that his play does not address.

To this end, it will become pertinent that further study is conducted on the impacts of the six dilemmas and cooperation/conflict points for educators and how the COVID-19 pandemic may have intensified these varied issues. To be sure, administrators must identify the reasons why educators remain at their site. The rationale could be the result of being an alum or a strong connection to the community; however, it will be vital for districts to identify the rationale with authenticity. Furthermore, this study focused on K-12 education but there will likely be further study needed for higher education. Overall, it will become vital to build teacher identity and autonomy in decision making which Drama Theory and TO provides a unique ability to offer solutions accurately and effectively to these issues. Further, school districts may be inclined to research how their initial recruiting strategies have impacted their candidates as they move from new hire to, hopefully, a retained employee. TO and Drama Theory practices could be implemented in a similar manner as other frameworks present in education already, namely MTSS and other improvement efforts where there are benchmarks (30, 60, and 90 day) as well as tiered interventions based on teacher longevity, likelihood of retention, and other metrics to be assessed by the local district. Ultimately, there are instances where teacher attrition has slowed or has remained at a healthy level; however, there are unknown consequences of the current professional challenges. To this end, research should shift to implementing close analysis of the individual through Drama Theory and Theatre of the Oppressed.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Step One - Basic Overview - Integrating In:

Have students form a circle

Students make eye contact with others in the circle as they raise their arms up to the top position in unison.

The goal is to make eye contact with as many people as possible.

The game is non-verbal and based on ensemble unity, focus, and eye-contact.

General Education Connection: Prior to sensitive conversations or in depth debates this could focus the energy of the group.

Step Two - Basic Overview - Hah!

Have students form a circle.

Students look at the floor but with their eyes closed.

One person, always the teacher initially, taps a student on the shoulder. Once they are tapped they clearly state “Hah!”

The other group members respond “hah!” and the facilitator moves on.

General Education Connection: Anything where a group mind could be helpful: choir, shop, band, speech/debate.

Appendix B

Colombian hypnosis

One actor holds her hand palm forward, fingers upright who is then as if hypnotized and must keep his face constantly the same distance from the hand of the hypnotizer. The hypnotiser starts a series of movements with her hand, up and down, right and left, backwards and forwards, her hand vertical in relation to the ground, then horizontal, then diagonal, etc. The partner must follow in every way possible to keep the same distance between the face and hand. The goal is for the hypnotizer to take care of their partner but to also challenge the partner by constantly moving. After a few minutes, the two actors change, the follower and the leader. After some more time, both can extend a hypnotising right hand, becoming leaders and followers at one and the same time.

Good Day

Everyone must shake hands with a stranger and say their own name; they can only let go of the other person's hand when they have grabbed another hand – to whose owner they will say their name and so on. Note: If the staff knows each other then focus on having people interact with others they may not otherwise do on a regular basis.

Appendix C

The facilitator first asks participants to move around the space, encouraging them to vary their directions so that they are not all moving in a circle. The facilitator mentions that moving at a level 10 is moving as quickly and safely as possible without running and a level 0 is a full stop. Additionally, the level 5 is a normal walking speed. The facilitator mentions that each participant should keep soft focus and note how other participants are moving. The goal is that each participant is moving at the same rate but not moving in the same direction. The facilitator may add additional commands in the game like “Stop/Walk” or signaling specific participants to stop or walk. The facilitator can also choose to have one participant move at a level 10 and the other participants move at a level 3 then return to every participant moving at the same rate. The main goal of this game is to build collective creation between participants and to warm up the bodies instead of focusing on only the mind.

The facilitator could add the ‘Stop! Think!’ exercise, at any given moment the facilitator stops the rehearsal and shouts ‘Stop! Think!’; all the actors have to start speaking in an undertone at the same time, letting loose an interior monologue of everything that is in their characters’ minds at that particular moment. Thus all the actors talk in a continuous flow, making their thoughts explicit, until the director shouts ‘Go on’ – at which point the actors pick up the scene exactly where it stopped, without a break.

Appendix D

Image Theatre, is based on the multiple mirror of the gaze of others – a number of people looking at the same image, and offering their feelings, what is evoked for them, what their imaginations throw up around that image. Begin with a prompt for the participants to respond to that they will ultimately come up with an image for as a group. The prompt should be about an ideal situation and the real situation. This is allowing people the opportunity to express the unexpressed. One at a time, without talking, others in the group join in, considering not only their characters and poses but also the impact or meaning that they have in relation to the others in the group. Next, one at a time, each group shares their images with the rest, then a brief discussion follows as the facilitators ask for observations from the audience about what they see. It is helpful to remind participants of the difference between an observation and an interpretation. In the second phase, using the process outlined above, the same groups create and share a new image based on the prompt. In the final phase, groups are tasked with transitioning from reality to the ideal, focusing on their character's role in accomplishing this goal.

Forum Theatre Exercises

Rainbow of Desire

Identify a scene in which two participants may express conflicting fears and desires. Once this moment is identified, ask one participant to take on a still image that represents their greatest desire in the moment. Then, another participant offers to take on this shape for the protagonist. Repeat this again with a second desire and have another participant enter the scene and take on the frozen image. These two participants are now a part of the scene. Though they cannot move, they can speak and share verbal reflections of these desires. It's important that those who volunteer to enter the space are able to represent the protagonist's desires with

integrity. Repeat the above but this time identifying two of the protagonist's fears. After two fears and desires are represented ask the audience if they feel there are any fears or desires that may not be represented yet. Allow them to enter the scene as well. Once you have established the desires and fears, allow the first participant to decide on an order for each to enter the space and play out a scene. The antagonist should remain in character and maintain authentic responses to the protagonist's rainbow. You can repeat the above with the antagonist's rainbow.

Connection: This may allow an administrator to witness the conflicting desires from another perspective just as it may foster authentic conversation for any stakeholder.

Yes/ No questions

Have two participants engage in a short scene about a conflict they see in the professional practice. Freeze the action and ask a series of yes/no questions for the remaining participants to answer by raising their hands.

Some example questions:

- a. Have you ever experienced this type of conflict?
- b. Have you felt powerless in these types of situations?
- c. Have you noticed this type of conflict before?
- d. Were you aware of this type of issue occurring for folks before?
- e. Were you aware of the types of things the protagonist may have been feeling?
- f. Were you aware of the types of things the antagonist may have been feeling?

Connection: This may have a positive impact on the feelings of depersonalization and isolation. It may also give an administrator a quick snapshot of how their staff is feeling at the moment.

Shape of emotion

Freeze the action at a point of intensity and conflict. Ask the audience to come in and take on a physical representation of how they perceive the protagonist to be feeling.

You can extend this activity by doing some thought tracking and tapping students on the shoulder and asking them to speak one line that reflects that emotion in relation to the conflict in the scene. You can repeat this for the antagonist.

Advice alley

Have a participant volunteer to be the focal point and have the remaining participants form two lines facing each other. Have the protagonist walk through the alley while the audience offers advice as they walk by. Once complete, ask the protagonist if any of the advice may be helpful in this conflict, keeping in mind they should remain authentic to the protagonist's real experience. It's okay if none of the advice is realistic - discuss this. If something is useful, allow the protagonist the chance to explore the strategies that could be useful when addressing the antagonist during this conflict.

Appendix E

Drama Theory poses the following questions:

1. Who is involved or concerned about the situation?
2. What are the key issues over which they are united or in contention?
3. What power do they possess to influence these issues? What choices are available?
4. How would they each like to see those involved act with respect to each issue? What would they do if everyone were to act according to their own interests?
5. What can each do to manage the pressures that they and others experience as a result of being caught up in the situation? (Bryant, 2016, p. 301).

To this end, the facilitator should help those involved address the following terms: characters, positions, options board, intentions, doubts, conflict point, disagreement and dilemma, implications of conflict, agreement, and implementation.

CHARACTERS

In Drama Theory, characters are the people involved in the situation. These characters may be individuals, groups, teams, or organizations of any size and complexity (Bryant, 2016, 330). The main characters are described with relation to an initial position, a fallback, and a threatened future.

OPTIONS

If the characters cannot do anything then they are not part of the interaction. These are actions that are referred to as options because they may or may not be carried out.

POSITIONS

A character states what it demands from others and what it proposes to do itself if they meet its demands.

OPTIONS BOARD

The options board is a tabular summary of an interaction and shows the differences between the possible outcomes of a situation. In my initial thought it would show an interaction between a teacher, students, and administration. This leads to assessing the compatibility of the positions and options. In the case of teacher attrition, the main options board could focus on the moments of possible support versus realized support.

INTENTIONS

Drama Theory uses stated intentions as means to show what characters tell others they will do and how those stated intentions might pose a threat to others or how they might provide a basis for agreement.

DOUBTS

The action leads to the doubted actions within this play. A character could become skeptical whether another's intentions will or won't be carried out.

CONFLICT POINT

After looking at all of the above components it can be assessed at a Conflict Point or Cooperation Point.

DISAGREEMENT AND DILEMMAS

Drama Theory provides six dilemmas that can be applied to an analysis after the sections have been explored. The six dilemmas are cooperation, trust, deterrence, inducement, threat, and positioning. The first two dilemmas deal with the credibility of actions whereas the middle three consider threats. Finally, the positioning dilemma considers the positions of the characters. To continue, a brief definition of each dilemma:

1. Cooperation Dilemma: Character A has the potential improvement of his own position
2. Trust Dilemma: Character B has a potential improvement from A's position
3. Deterrence Dilemma: Character B prefers the threatened future to A's position
4. Inducement Dilemma: B's position is at least as good as A in the threatened future
5. Threat Dilemma: A has a potential improvement to the threatened future
6. Positioning Dilemma: A prefers B's position to his own

IMPLICATIONS OF CONFLICT, AGREEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION

In this stage, the facilitator and the participants assess the implication of the conflict if it remains the same and if it is resolved. There is an agreement for a path forward and if no agreement is reached it is important to revisit the previous steps. Finally, the facilitator and participants agree on a path for implementation. It is recommended that a system is put in place to allow stakeholders the ability to use the confrontation theory throughout the daily practice rather than in one session.