

5-2017

## Sustaining Millennials in Teaching Careers: A Comparison of Entering and Veteran Teacher Views: A Pilot Study

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<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2017.edu.11>

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### Recommended Citation

LeMieux, Michelle, "Sustaining Millennials in Teaching Careers: A Comparison of Entering and Veteran Teacher Views: A Pilot Study" (2017). *Graduate Master's Theses, Capstones, and Culminating Projects*. 277.  
<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2017.edu.11>

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***RUNNING HEAD: Sustaining Millennials in Education***

Sustaining Millennials in Teaching Careers:  
A Comparison of Entering and Veteran Teacher Views: A Pilot Study  
Michelle LeMieux

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling Psychology

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

December 2016

**Signature Sheet**

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the Chair of the Master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge the faculty at Dominican University of California for their incredible support of my thesis. Madalienne Peters was a supportive and knowledgeable advisor who kept a smile on my face when things got rough. I would also like to thank the faculty at Dominican who supported me during my teacher preparation program and inspired me to be the best teacher I could be. Completing my Masters is another step towards improving my craft as a teacher. This study would not have been possible without the help and effort from my colleagues. They provided me with insight and support that has enabled this me to pursue this research. Furthermore, several of my colleagues are the reason I chose this line of research. Thank you to my single subject cohort for inspiring me to look at the challenges we face as new teachers. Finally, a master's thesis takes time, energy, and attention away from loved ones. I would like to acknowledge my family for letting me focus on this important topic. Being able to discuss my work with them was crucial to maintaining my work and sanity.

## Table of Contents

Title Page .....	1
Signature Sheet .....	2
Acknowledgments.....	4
Table of Contents .....	5
Abstract .....	7
Chapter 1 Sustaining Millennials in Teaching Careers.....	8
Statement of Problem.....	9
Purpose Statement.....	9
Research Question .....	10
Theoretical Rationale .....	10
Assumptions.....	12
Background and Need.....	13
Summary .....	14
Chapter 2 Review of the Literature.....	15
Introduction.....	15
Historical Context .....	15
Teacher Motivation.....	17
Teachers With Drive.....	17
Key Motivational Factors and Beliefs about Teaching.....	19
Prospective Teachers Goal Orientation .....	19
Teacher Retention .....	20
A Comprehensive Model .....	20
How Research Can Inform.....	21
Tackling the Teacher Shortage .....	22
The Truth About Millennial Teachers .....	24
Millennial Teacher: A Storied Landscape .....	25
Summary .....	26
Chapter 3 Method .....	28
Research Approach .....	28
Ethical Standards .....	29
Access and Permissions .....	30
Data Gathering Procedures .....	30
Data Analysis Approach .....	30
Chapter 4 Findings.....	32
Description of Site .....	32
Themes.....	42
Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis .....	44
Summary of Major Findings.....	44
Comparison of Findings to the Literature.....	46
Limitations/Gaps in the Research.....	48

<b>Sustaining Millennials in Education</b>	<b>6</b>
Implications for Future Research.....	48
Overall Significance of the Study .....	48
About the Author .....	49
References .....	50
Appendix Survey Questions-Challenges Facing Teachers .....	52

### Abstract

Staffing secondary schools has become difficult in the past 10 years in conjunction with a changing and challenging economy for Millennials. Secondary school leaders have difficulty finding, employing, and retaining content specialists each school year due to the lack of trained teachers to fill positions left by large numbers of retirees. The problem is there is a need for content specialists in secondary schools and only a limited number of new teachers, which is insufficient in replacing retirees, leaving educational leaders scrambling to fill positions each year. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that are deterring Millennials in their first few years of teaching from remaining in their positions as educators and how those differ from veteran teachers who have taught for 10 or more years. A review of the literature revealed that a changing economy, coming into adulthood during a recession, lack of financial incentive, and lack of support are major deterrents for many teachers. This is a qualitative study that uses responses to surveys to gather information to explain the challenges new Millennial teachers face and the causes of the current teacher shortage. Results indicated that while teachers of all ages share many challenges, new teachers face additional challenges, which may deter them from entering or remaining in the profession.

**Keywords:** Staffing, Millennials, Secondary Schools, Retention, Deterrents, Challenges



## Chapter 1 Sustaining Millennials in Teaching Careers

It is two weeks before school is set to begin and a first year teacher is anxiously searching EdJoin.com, an educational job-posting site, for open positions. As a new social studies teacher, it was not as easy to find a full time job in Marin County or the surrounding areas, it is not a high need subject. I had taken a part time position and was excited to start my career as a high school teacher. However, full time was needed as student loan payments were looming, exorbitant rent, and basic cost of living were challenging in an expensive county. I soon came across a listing for a video production posting that would combine with the social studies job to create a full time position. I decided to reach out to the administration and offer myself for this class.

Fast-forward to two days before school starts and the administration is scrambling to fill, not only the video production class, but also Spanish, mathematics and science. They have no choice but to offer me the sections of film, citing a year “grace period” in which my credential would qualify for this content area. The Film students were fortunate to get a credentialed teacher, albeit a new social studies teacher, but still a teacher, on the first day of school. The Spanish class had a substitute for 2 months before a credentialed teacher was hired and the Math and Science classes went through 4 teachers and substitutes before they landed with an intern teacher currently enrolled in his credential program.

This was my introduction to the teaching profession. There is still a need for qualified teachers, more than ever before, but there are simply no teachers to hire. The result is a mix of unqualified and untrained teachers taking sections of classes they never thought they would teach.

My experience is one of many witnessed in secondary schools across the country at the start of the 2015-2016 school year. This leads to the question: Where are all the new, young teachers? Who is this generation that has shunned the teaching profession? Why are we lacking

qualified professionals and how do we attract people to the rewarding profession of educating today's youth?

#### Statement of Problem

The Millennial generation is a large group of young professionals and college students who will soon make up the majority of the workforce. It is this group of professionals who are quickly leaving the teaching profession, or shunning it all together, despite a plethora of job openings in key fields. For the purposes of this paper, the Millennial generation will be defined as those who were born between the years of 1980 and 2000. Millennials will be responsible for replacing many Baby Boomer's as they leave the work force and retire. Despite their numbers and education status, they are spurning the field of education in pursuit of careers with higher pay and more support. This is the generation that will drive the workforce for many years to come so it is imperative to discover the reason for their lack of interest in education and what they may need in order to be supported in this field and remain in their positions.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons for lack of Millennial interest in the teaching profession and why those who do start in the field leave in the first few years. It is important to identify key issues Millennials face in the career and the specific needs of this particular generation in order to ensure that qualified teachers are in the classroom at the start of each school year.

### Research Question

The key question driving this research is why is the Millennial generation reluctant to join or remain in teaching positions? It is also important to ask what are the specific deterrents that teachers face? As well as what are the key motivators that keep teachers in the profession?

Deterrents are those things that keep individuals from pursuing or remaining in the educational field. Motivators are those key internal and external reasons for an individual to pursue a career as a teacher. These questions guide the research addressed in the following chapters.

### Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale for this study is rooted in Maslow's Theory of Motivation (1943).

Maslow illustrates that humans are driven by a set of five goals, which he refers to as "basic needs." These five basic needs are categorized as physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow states that these are set in a hierarchy where humans prioritize physiological first and work their way to self-actualization.

Physiological needs are considered "the starting point for motivation theory" (Maslow, 1943, p. 372) as they cover the basic needs humans require to survive. This includes food, water, and specific needs determined by homeostasis. Homeostasis is the body's natural attempt to maintain a healthy balance in regards to the state of the blood stream. Maslow posits that this need must be met before humans are motivated to meet the subsequent needs.

The next basic human need that drives human motivation is that of safety. Humans are motivated to obtain and maintain their personal safety in order to maintain their health and survival. These needs are often given similar priority in human motivation as those mentioned in

the previous paragraph, but physiological comes first as human may on occasion need to risk their safety for the sake of food or other physiological needs.

The third need is that of love. When both the physiological and safety needs have been met, human are then motivated by a desire for love. Humans will then experience “the love and affection and belongingness needs”(p. 380). People will yearn for interaction with other people and will feel the lack of a romantic partner. At this point, humans will make choices that are aimed at filling this need such as engaging in sexual behavior (p. 381). Humans will continue to seek out others in order to fulfill this basic need.

When the love need is met, humans then begin to focus on the esteem needs. “All people in our society...have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others”(p. 381). At this stage, humans seek out validation from themselves and others. This includes the quest for “reputation or prestige”(p. 382), which drives a person’s motivation in career and other life choices.

The final stage of basic human needs is that of self-actualization. If humans have reached the previous 4 stages, they then turn their motivation towards obtaining a feeling of self-worth. Maslow describes this as fulfilling the need to do what you were meant to do (p. 382). At this stage, people are driven by the need to do something that gives their life and existence meaning.

Maslow acknowledges that these needs are set up in a hierarchy that demonstrates the importance humans place on each basic need. It follows that physiological needs must be filled before safety, which must be met before love and so on. While these needs are in a specific order, Maslow does cite exceptions to the order explained above. Dependent on an individual’s culture and experience, the basic needs hierarchy may take a different structure (386). Maslow summarizes that “man is a perpetually wanting animal” (p. 395) and to understand why people

make the choices that they do, it must be understood where they are on the hierarchy of basic human needs.

Motivation theory serves as a basis for this study as a rationale for why teachers chose the profession and why others may shun teaching. Through this lens, this study seeks to understand why Millennials seek other careers before one in the field of education.

### Assumptions

As a first year teacher who has been a first hand witness to the staffing challenges faced by secondary schools I assume that there are other schools with similar situations. It would be hard to explain why one specific school in a wealthy county would be the only site with staffing issues. Media has also published that there are teacher shortages widespread throughout the United States and I expect to find evidence of this in the literature reviewed in the following section.

I also assume that, as a Millennial myself, most new teachers are also classified as Millennials. I am a young teacher entering the profession directly from college, and I fall in the middle of the Millennial generation. This means that there are teachers like me who have joined the profession in the last 10 years as Millennials and there will be teachers coming to the profession for the next 10 years or so. This leads me to believe that we are in the middle of the Millennial generation as they come into their careers and it is a key point to analyze their needs and motivations in relation to the field of education.

Finally, I assume that there are other teachers in the same site and county as myself that face similar challenges. I expect to hear about the issues of cost of living, support, time commitment, and lack of financial security. I assume that many other new teachers face these challenges while older teachers may have different views on the challenges they face. I assume

that older teachers are more financially secure, have fewer student loans, and are more likely to have purchased a home in the surrounding area using their teachers salary and no support from family or government assistance programs.

### Background and Need

In looking at the incoming working class made of primarily Millennial citizens, it is important to understand the need behind the study presented in this paper. Goldhaber, DeArmond, & Deburgomaster (2011) presented a policy paper aimed at highlighting the need for teachers in American schools. Their study specifically addresses the needs for content specialists in the areas of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and Special Education (SPED). They acknowledge that improving the teacher workforce is a national priority, but cite that there has been little to no improvement in increasing the number of individuals who enter teacher preparation programs (p. 1).

The study also includes data to demonstrate the percentage of difficulty in filling teacher vacancies over the last 2 decades. The data shows that since 1990, school administrators had at least a 20% difficulty in hiring SPED teachers and it has spiked as high as 37% (p. 2). Despite the fact that people who pursue these careers are a beneficial job market, there is still a lack of candidates entering credential programs.

Some issues presented by this study include the salary schedule used by a majority of school districts which does not reflect the need for specific credentials such as STEM and SPED. Goldhaber, et al. (2011) conclude by stating that removing the traditional salary schedule and creating financial incentives will likely attract more people to credentialing programs and careers in the classroom.

Another source that highlights the need for classroom teachers published by District Administration (2015) cites that enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 53% in the past 5 years in the state of California alone (p. 1). The claims that teacher's salaries and school funding are too low are discussed at length in this article. Bill McDiarmed, dean of the University of North Carolina School of Education is quoted as saying "It's a crisis...I don't know who will be teaching kids in the future" (District Administration, 2015, p 1).

These studies and data serve to demonstrate the dire need for teachers in American schools throughout the country. It is imperative that the needs of new teachers are identified and the education system adjusts in order to ensure that the Millennial generation views the teaching profession with desire and passion.

### Summary

Addressed in this chapter are the issues surrounding teacher employment in the field of public education and the reason for pursuing the research questions. Through the theoretical framework of Motivation Theory, this paper examines why Millennials are leaving their teaching jobs or forgoing them all together. There is a pressing need for this research based on studies such as Goldhaber et al. (2014) focus on teacher shortages in STEM and SPED fields, as well as statistics that show teacher preparation program's enrollment is at a disturbing low. In the following chapter the pertinent literature will be reviewed to better understand the context of this study.

## Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

### Introduction

There are many important concepts that must be addressed prior to completing a study on Millennial teachers. This section is an examination of the research literature on the challenges secondary schools face in staffing highly qualified and the needs of Millennials entering the teaching profession. Information was gathered from academic library searches using online resources. Research information is organized in the following categories: Historical Context, Teacher Motivation, Teacher Retention, Teacher Shortage, and the Millennial Workforce.

### Historical Context

In order to understand the context of the research within this paper, it is essential that we understand the historical perspective of generations, teacher shortages, and the evolution of the teaching career as a whole. Each generation of employees has unique traits, skills, and needs as they enter and participate in the workforce (Smith, 2006). In a paper published by Next Generation Initiatives, Smith categorizes the last three major generations, and their traits as follows:

- 1) Baby Boom-regards work as a constant in their otherwise unsettled lives
- 2) Baby Bust (Gen X)- Ambitious, desires advancement and good salaries. Enjoys work but also prioritizes a work/life balance.



- 3) Echo Boom (Millennial)- Adaptable and flexible and realistic about their own expectations. Generally open and willing to share in the work environment and heavily dependent on technology.

The last generation noted above are those born between 1980 and 2000 with the shared experience of the 2008 Great Recession as a marker of their young adult life (Smith, 2006).

Generations are defined as a group of people who fall within a birth date range and share a key life event that serves to shape the way they perceive the world and make individual choices (Smith, 2006).

In addition to understanding the importance of generations, the paper also requires an understanding of the background in teacher shortages. While the current teacher shortage is a rising concern nationwide, needs for teachers have always existed (Strauss, 2015). In an article by Strauss data were collected from a variety of states in the United States and compares district reported needs from 15 years ago to those in 2015. Data were specifically collected from the U.S. Department of Education and local districts. The conclusion of the article is that while teacher shortages have been an issue in the last 15 years, the growing trend now indicates there may be greater issues surrounding staffing schools and looking at the change in the educational system may indicate why fewer people are pursuing the career.

Strauss also addresses a shift in teacher's perceptions citing that there has been an increasing trend in teachers claiming greater dissatisfaction and disillusionment in their careers. Once again, the article points to the changes in the education field that may have turned people away and have made current teacher's work more difficult.

In a timeline published by Public Broadcasting Service (n.d.), the evolution of the teaching career can be traced from as far back as the 1700s. The teaching profession has evolved over the last 3 decades to include more teachers, greater equity in education, and greater control over schools from a state and national perspective (PBS.org, n.d.). Educators in the 1700s and for about a century and a half after, worked in small classrooms built around the schedule of working families and their needs. As education grew and the ideas of Horace Mann were disseminated, schooling became a larger affair, where all children were included in schools and offered a greater education. With this growth came a need for more teachers. Soon women joined the ranks of teachers and schools grew larger. Soon schools were in need of regulation and standardization which resulted in wide spread assessments and teaching standards that all teachers must teach to. The evolution of teaching in the United States shows the growth of the profession and increased demands placed on teachers as a result.

## **Teacher Motivation**

### ***Teachers With Drive***

Study of the motivation that drives teachers today needs to acknowledge the concepts of mastery, purpose, and autonomy (Coggins & Diffenbaugh, 2013). Through a collection of teacher attrition data and comparisons to new programs aimed at increasing teacher motivation, the authors posit that by addressing those concepts mentioned above, teachers can increase their motivation and keep teachers in classrooms.

The main concerns addressed in the article is the results of the data which states that “half of all urban teachers in the United States leave the profession within their first three to five years” (2013, p. 42) and “half of all teachers in the top 20 percent of effectiveness leave within five

years” (2013, p.42). Pink (2009) states that “human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self determined, and connected to one another” (p. 71). The conclusion is there must be an inclusion of the three major themes, Mastery, Purpose, and Autonomy when addressing what motivates teachers.

Mastery is focused on the idea that within a profession, individuals seek to gain increasing proficiency, but within the classroom, most teachers agree that their first year of teaching requires the same as their last. As a result, inexperienced teachers feel they are not competent and lose motivation to stay in the classroom, feeling as though they have failed. For those teachers who do make it past the mastery stage, about 7 years, they lose interest as they are no longer feeling challenged.

The second key factor in motivation is that of purpose. Most new teachers cite that they choose to teach in order to have a positive effect on individuals and society (Coggins & Diffenbaugh, 2013, p. 43). However, most teachers have no ability to effect change on education policy, resulting in a lack on connection between what is supposed to be taught and those who teach it. The result is a need for an opportunity for teachers to be involved in education policy to enhance the sense of purpose in the field of teaching.

The final element of motivation is that of autonomy. Within the teaching profession, many argue that teachers have too much autonomy within their classrooms and not enough oversight. Coggins and Diffenbaugh argue that “autonomy does not necessarily mean independence” (p. 44) but rather, giving teachers choice that allows autonomy but also productive interaction with others. Therefore education must remain flexible in order to allow teachers to have choice in how they teach. Many teachers who leave the profession refer to the fact that teaching became boring due to mandated, scripted curriculum.

***Key Motivational Factors and Beliefs about Teaching***

When addressing the motivational factors associated with teachers and choosing a career in the classroom, it is important to address the specific motivators for those who are initially deciding on the career in the first place. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are interconnected in determining the motivation of prospective teachers (Thomson, 2011). In this mixed methods study, quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were collected and analyzed. All participants in the study were undergraduate students enrolled in education courses who were considering a career in education. The results showed that there were a variety of reasons for wanting to become a teacher but quantitative results indicated that altruistic reasons were dominant. Extrinsic reasons, such as salary and other job benefits were far less important to those surveyed. While these trends were apparent in the study, it was noted that each candidate had a unique set of reasons that motivated them to pursue a teaching career.

The altruistic reasons that motivated the prospective teachers in the study were cited as “desire to help children learn” (Thomson, p. 24). This was a key component that many study participants noted for why they would become a teacher.

***Prospective Teachers Goal Orientation***

Motivations that drive prospective teachers vary based on the way they perceive the career and reasons for choosing to work as a teacher (Thomson & McIntyre, 2013). In a qualitative study, Thomson and McIntyre interviewed 25 prospective teachers about their motivations and beliefs about teaching. They focused on identifying three primary cluster or typographies based on common reasons for choosing teaching as a career. The clusters are:

1. Enthusiastic-Primarily motivated by altruistic and intrinsic reasons

2. Conventional-Viewed classroom as sole site of learning.
3. Pragmatic-Primarily extrinsic such as job security and vacation time.

There is a need for greater recruitment of qualified teachers and awareness of motivating factors drawing individuals into the education field. The two clusters, enthusiastic and conventional had a closer disposition, belief system, and values to what prospective employers were looking for. However, candidates had a combination of motivational factors driving them to become teachers, but even those with primarily intrinsic motivators noted extrinsic reasons as well (p. 424). Intrinsic and extrinsic used to be viewed as distinctly separate but this study indicates that they must be seen as intertwined when it comes to understanding the motivation that drives prospective teachers to careers in the classroom.

## **Teacher Retention**

### ***A Comprehensive Model***

With nearly 50% of new teachers leaving the profession within their first five years, understanding that there is an average cost of \$14,508.86 to the district per teacher who leaves. Understanding the financial impact of teacher turnover can help districts identify the benefits of addressing the needs of such teachers

Data show that teachers are much more likely to stay till retirement if they make it past the first five years. New teachers are costly to districts as they require induction services, and the more turnover among new teachers requires hiring more new teachers each year, leading to excess spending for districts.

Understanding the patterns and causes of turnover rates can help inform districts determine viable solutions (140). The National Education Association (2003) reports that

“teachers feel overwhelmed by the scope of the job, feel unsupported and isolated, and are often unclear on the expectations of the job” (p. 141).

## **Teacher Shortage**

### ***How Research Can Inform***

Teacher shortages are predicted to increase with at least 2 million openings in the 10-year span from 2001-2011 (O’Keefe, 2001). The shortage is not consistent and targets according to geography, grade level, sector, and subject. Staffing issues are particularly difficult in inner city and rural areas where most of the poverty and diversity exists. Surveys have showed that a majority of schools have hired teachers without credentials under emergency provisions.

Low salaries and professional esteem are equally high concerns and are a direct cause of teacher attrition and according to data provided by Recruiting New Teachers Inc. (2000a). The following are common responses to the teacher shortage

1. Signing bonuses
2. Help with housing
3. Higher salaries
4. Recruiting from afar
5. Recruiting earlier in the school year
6. Incentives for advancement
7. Luring qualified substitutes and retired teachers back
8. Offering childcare

A major success has been seen in those schools, which have strong connections with local teacher preparation programs as they are able to hire directly from training or as intern status. O’Keefe concludes that schools must pay attention to the research that indicates why there are so few teachers and create incentives to bring people into the field.

### ***Tackling the Teacher Shortage***

With school districts finding it harder and harder to staff classrooms, understanding the reasons for the teacher shortage becomes a necessity (Yaffe, 2016). While fields such as science, math, and special education have always struggled, states across the country claim that their issues with finding qualified teachers is reaching a “horrific” point (p. 11).

Some districts are offering hiring incentives such as signing bonuses and housing assistance while also aiming to start recruitment earlier in the school year. Yaffe states that “the most obvious solution to shortages in such hard to fill areas...would be higher pay for teachers” (p. 13). But she cites that this rarely makes it past the bargaining table.

Some reasons cited for the shortage include

1. After the 2008 recession, the economy eventually improved and increased budgets left positions empty as individuals chose to find alternative employment.
2. Poor public image of teachers and education
3. Loss of teacher autonomy
4. Lack of support-in training and new employment.

While some state that lowering teacher candidate expectations will attract more potential teachers in the short run, it will likely hurt the profession in the long run. Keeping standards high is the best solution for improving teaching positions and education in the long run.

### **Millennial Workforce**

In a study aimed at determining the shift in work values in Millennials from pre-career to career Millennials, Kuron et. al (2015) found that there was no significant shift as Millennials transitioned to a full time career. In a quantitative study focusing on 906 Millennials born between 1980 and 1994 (p. 997), researchers studied the work value shifts to determine the work values Millennials bring to the professional world.

Work values are defined as “generalized beliefs about the relative desirability of various aspects of work (e.g. pay, autonomy, working conditions), and work related outcomes (p. 994).

Kuron et al identifies four work value categories consistently used in prior research:

1. *Intrinsic Work Values*- The psychological satisfaction that comes from working i.e. interesting work.
2. *Extrinsic Work Values*- Material aspects such as pay, benefits, and job security.
3. *Social or Altruistic Work Relationship Values*- relationships with co workers and a desire to help others
4. *Prestige or Status Values*- The desire to have power, influence and status. (p. 995)

The study acknowledges that some researchers believe that each generation differs based on their developmental cycle but results of this study indicated that “Millennials placed importance value on extrinsic work values, followed by intrinsic, social/altruistic and prestige work values” (p.



1001) regardless if they had started their careers or were still in post-secondary education. Overall, the study indicated that Millennials are unique compared to other generations in that their pre-work values stayed consistent with their career values and recommends that Human Resource professionals accommodate these values in order to recruit and retain Millennial workers.

Millennials, otherwise known as Generation Y, enter the workforce with expectations and training needs that deviate from the previous generation. (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). This study was a qualitative and designed using a case study format focusing on a major employer of young people examining the training and development of Millennial employees at a fast food restaurant in England. The article collected data from the training expertise of a major employer of Millennials. Results indicated that a new generation of Millennial workers require managers and supervisors to adjust their training and engagement strategies to best support their employees.

### ***The Truth About Millennial Teachers***

School administrators need to know that Millennial educators have different strengths that include optimism, collaboration, and digital literacy as well as needs and expectations such as comprehensive induction, collaboration and value. (Barker, 2015).

Kristin Barker, reflected on her experience as a first year principal and what she learned about the needs of her six first year Millennial hires. All six of the new teachers left their position in her school for jobs in other districts after their first year and Barker identified three key needs Millennial teachers have as new educators.

1. *Induction*-More personalized than the district-wide program provided. Millennial teachers crave the “nuts and bolts” of things, which large induction programs failed to provide.
2. *Collaboration*-Millennial teachers crave working with others and are quick to bond with other new teachers while older teachers viewed this as suspicious and declined to work with the new teachers.
3. *Value*-Millennial educators will not stay in a school where they do not feel valued. New teachers are passionate about making a difference and seek opportunities to prove themselves and be recognized.

The result of Barker’s reflection is a recognized need for administrators to create school environments that will attract and retain new Millennial teachers, which will ultimately benefit the students in those schools.

### ***Millennial Teacher: A Storied Landscape***

Through a study of pre-service Millennial teachers, several recommendations are made to teacher education programs including recognizing varied diversity, understanding a shifting view of diversity, exposing individual’s diversity, and drawing upon diversity as an asset to new teachers (Rodriguez & Hallman 2013). Pre-service teachers are those who are enrolled in teacher preparation programs but are not yet credentialed. Within this group of prospective educators, Millennials make up a clear majority in programs across the United States.

This case study used a single participant to understand the unique views on diversity among Millennial educators. Rodriguez and Hallman note that the Millennial generation is generally more “open” than previous generations due to the fact that they “did not experience

racial tensions the way previous generations did and do not characterize race as a dividing line among individuals”(p. 67). Rather, prospective Millennial educators bring a different idea and value of diversity to the profession that is based more on social class and a view of globalization. In this context, globalization refers to the idea that Millennials are more likely to directly feel the effects of global, economic, and social change due to their literacy with technology and willingness to interact with those that they consider different.

The results of this case study indicate that Millennial teachers can bring a more open view of diversity with them into the classroom, which will benefit students in those schools are becoming more diverse themselves in terms of language and socio-economic status.

### Summary

In this chapter, a large portion of the existing literature on teacher retention, motivation, deterrents, and challenges has been evaluated. The research indicates that many teachers, regardless of their generation status, have similar concerns and reasons for staying or leaving the teaching profession. Many teachers claim that pay and lack of support are key reasons for not becoming teachers while current teachers cite that pay is not the biggest deterrent, but support and training are areas in which they feel are lacking.

The research also indicates that teacher shortages are not new or uncommon, but have existed for decades in key areas such as STEM and Special Education classes. Current data shows that teacher shortages are an increasing problem and will continue to grow and affect other content areas and specific regions. The research in this paper serves to enhance the needs of new teachers and the generation that they represent. By learning what millennial teachers need to be successful and how to attract more of them to teacher preparation programs, this research

will contribute to the argument for education reform and increased support and training for a new generation of teachers.

### Chapter 3 Method

#### Research Approach

This is a qualitative study in which surveys were administered and analyzed. The rationale for the survey comes from motivation theory, addressed in chapter 2. By identifying motivating factors Millennial and veteran teachers share and differ on, this study seeks to understand why new teachers are likely to leave the profession within the first several years. While motivation is an important factor in why teachers remain in their positions, challenges also provide an explanation for why new teachers are reluctant to stay in their classrooms. The survey questions used for this study were designed to identify the reasons why individuals became teachers and weigh them against the challenges they face and expectations they have for the career. Surveys were distributed to all teachers at the researcher's site through an initial email and announcements made at staff and department meetings. Teachers were then approached individually and asked to participate in order to increase the number of survey responses collected in this study. The survey was created by the researcher using the website SurveyMonkey.. Survey questions were composed by the researcher with the help of graduate advisor, Madalienne Peters Ed.D.

#### Measurement

The measurement tool is a survey comprised of questions the researcher felt were important in identifying differences in Millennial and veteran teacher views on teaching as a career. In the review of the literature the research found that teacher motivation and teacher satisfaction were important factors to retaining teachers in their careers and generally had a large impact on

whether teachers decided to stay in the profession or leave. The literature review informed the development of survey questions. Additionally the researcher's teaching experience and local knowledge of the area also served as a framework for developing questions.

### Validity

Following development of survey questions the researcher and advisor reviewed them in light of the intent of the study, a form of face validity. This is a pilot study and the questions seemed appropriate.

### Reliability

These items were developed for the purpose of this study. No information is available on the reliability of the items used to gather information from participants.

### Sample and Site

Surveys were collected from teachers located at a suburban high school located in a relatively expensive county. Teachers surveyed included male and female instructors spanning all content areas and levels of experience.

Collecting data from first year or "new teachers" versus those who have taught for at least 8 years was a focus. Teachers who fit into these definitions were approached individually as to increase the number of relevant data.

### Ethical Standards

This paper adheres to the ethical standards for protection of human subjects of the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally a research proposal was submitted and reviewed

by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved and assigned number 10460.

#### Access and Permissions

The participants in this study were all legal adults and credentialed California teachers. All participants were informed of their anonymity and their right not to participate in the study. The principal at the study site was also informed of the study prior to its implementation and has given permission.

#### Data Gathering Procedures

I met with my principal to inform and gain approval for this study prior to sending my survey to teachers at my school site. Surveys were emailed to teachers at my site and teachers who attended the same teacher preparation program as myself with a description of my study and a link to the survey. Social media was used to reach out to other educators and collect survey data. Participants accessed the survey online through a link contained in the email.

Through the website Surveymonkey.com, the researcher was able to collect all survey answers submitted by willing participants and organize data. Teachers were given access to the survey for a two-week period and completed it on their own when they had time during prep periods or non-work hours.

#### Data Analysis Approach

Using the data collected through Surveymonkey.com, the researcher was able to organize answers into two categories, teacher responses from new, millennial teachers, and those concerned veteran teachers. By sorting survey responses into these two categories, data was then

analyzed for trends and commonalities found in each group and those between them. Data was then graphed/formulated into tables.



## Chapter 4 Findings

### Description of Site

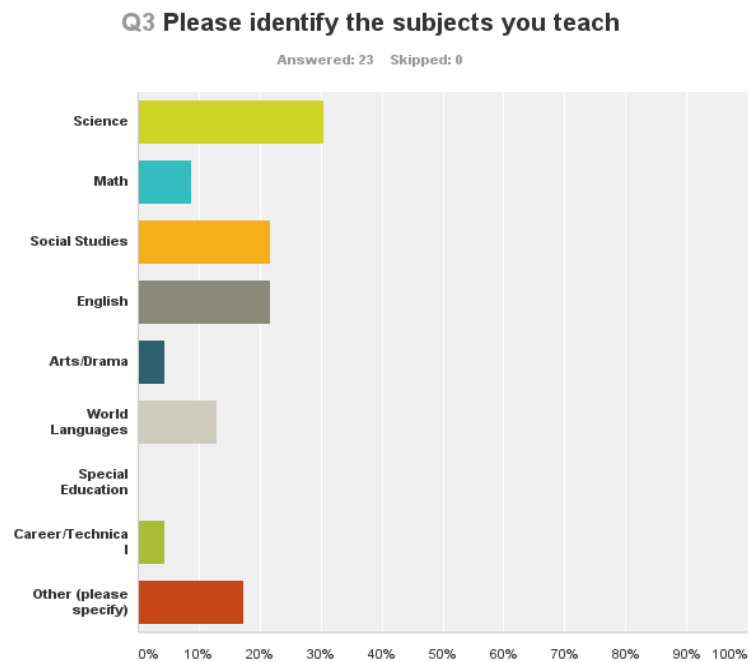
Teachers were surveyed from a public high school in a medium sized school district in Northern California. Respondents are teachers at a high school serving approximately 1100 students in grades 9-12. Full time teachers at the high school teach five sections of classes with one prep period each day. Monday, Thursday, and Fridays teachers have each class for 54 minutes. On Tuesday teachers have 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> period classes while Wednesday they have 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> periods. Each “block” period on Tuesday and Wednesday is 1 hour and 35 minutes long. On Wednesdays, teachers attend a staff meeting for an hour and a half.

### Description of Individuals

The survey was completed by high school teachers within a single school district. A total of 23 teachers from various disciplines completed the survey.

### Data

Information from the surveys was collected and organized into tables to create a visual picture of responses. Participant responses were submitted via SurveyMonkey. Charts indicating responses were generated by SurveyMonkey and the researcher and are used to describe the results, enabling the researcher to identify themes across responses.

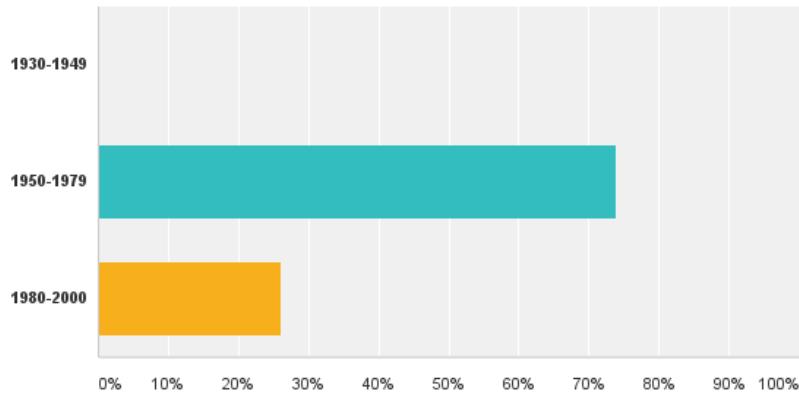


“Other” subjects included Physical Education, AVID (2), and Music. Science and Social Studies had the highest number of responses. Science is one of the larger departments at the school site and the researcher belongs to the Social Studies department and was able to ask co-workers to complete the survey during an informal staff meeting.

Of the 23 teachers surveyed, 11 were male and 12 were female. 17 of the teachers were born between 1950-1979 and 6 were born between 1980-2000. No teachers surveyed were born prior to 1950. For the purposes of this research, teachers born between 1950 and 1979 will be considered “veteran” teachers while those born between 1980 and 2000 will be considered “new” or “Millennial” teachers.

**Q1 Please identify the decade in which you were born.**

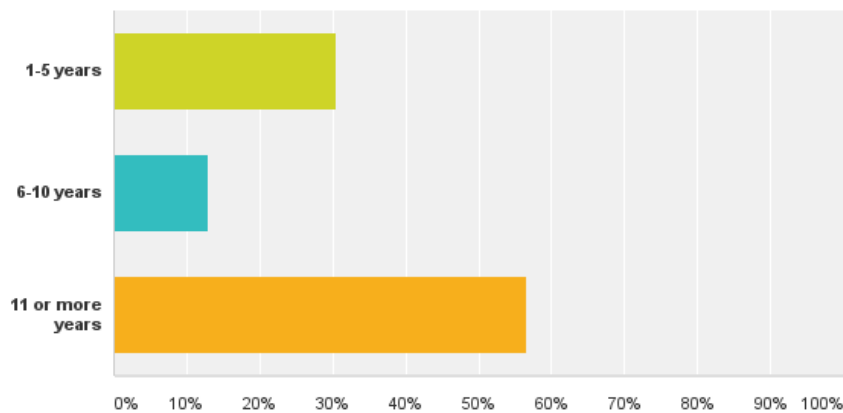
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



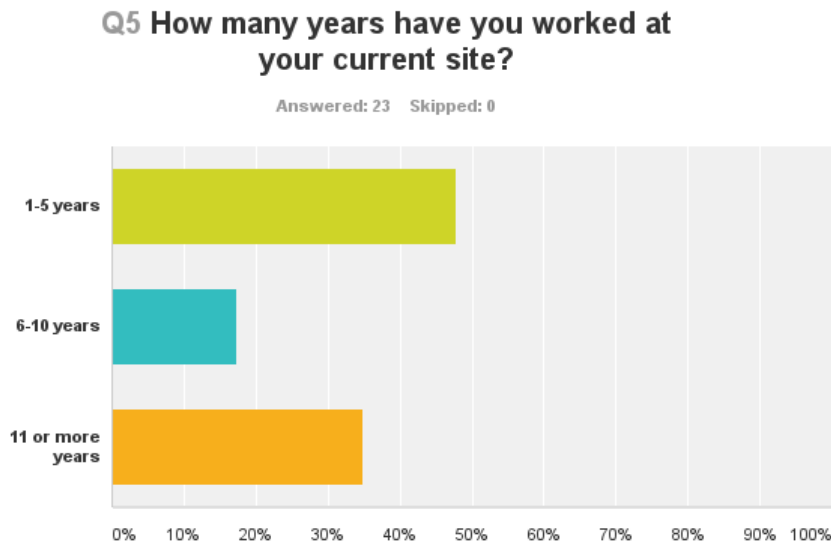
The teachers surveyed were also asked to identify how long they have been a teacher as well as the length of their position at the site where the survey was administered. Seven teachers have been in the profession for 1-5 years, three have taught between 6-10 years while the remaining 13 have been in the profession for 11 or more years.

**Q4 How many years have you been a teacher?**

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



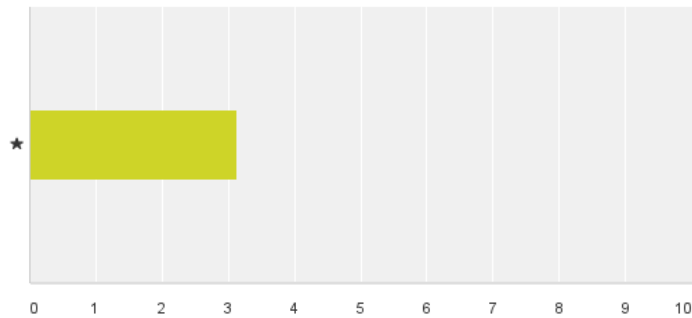
The results for the length of time teaching at the site in question varied. The data indicate that several of the teachers who have taught for 11 or more years have held teaching positions in other schools prior to be employed by the site in question.



Teachers were also asked about their views on Administrative support. The first question respondents answered regarded how they felt in terms of administrative support at their current site. Responses indicated that teachers felt moderately supported, averaging just over a 3 out of 5. One participant indicated no support and 5 indicated complete support. The second question asked teachers to indicate the level of support they desired in their positions which averaged a 4, indicating that the teachers polled received less support than they feel is needed in their positions.

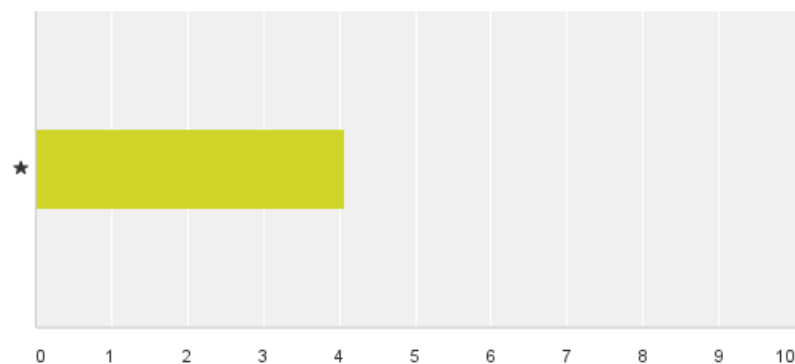
**Q6 On a scale of 1-5, 1 being no support and 5 being extremely supportive, how would you rank the level of support you experience from the administration and district?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



**Q7 On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not important and 5 being extremely important, how would you rate the importance of support in your role as an educator?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

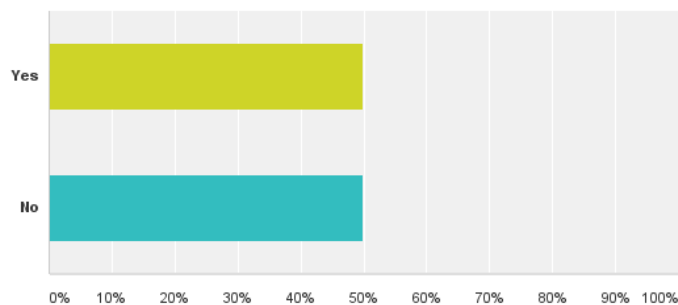


Teachers were then asked if they have ever considered leaving the profession and those who answered yes were then asked to answer a follow up question regarding their current desire to leave the profession. When asked if they had ever considered leaving, 50% of respondents

answered yes while 50% answered no. Of the 50% who answered yes, 2 (or about 12%) indicated they were currently considering leaving. Teachers were then asked to indicate how close they had come to leaving their position as a teacher. The average score was a 1.9 out of 5, with 6 being likely to leave. However, one participant indicated they he or she was likely to leave by selected a 5.

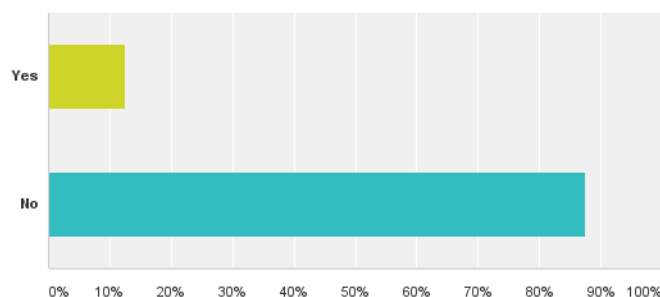
**Q8 Have you considered leaving the teaching profession?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



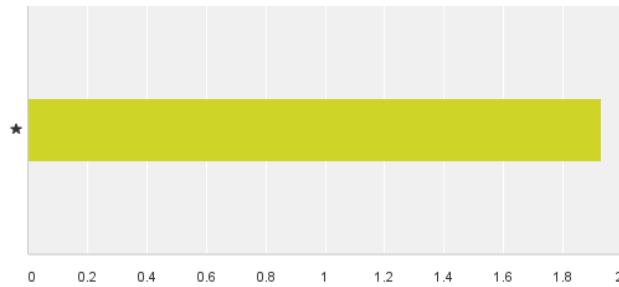
**Q9 Are you currently considering leaving the teaching profession?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



**Q10 If you answered yes to question # 8 or 9, on a scale of 1-5, how close have you come to actually leaving the profession? 1 being not close and 5 being you probably will**

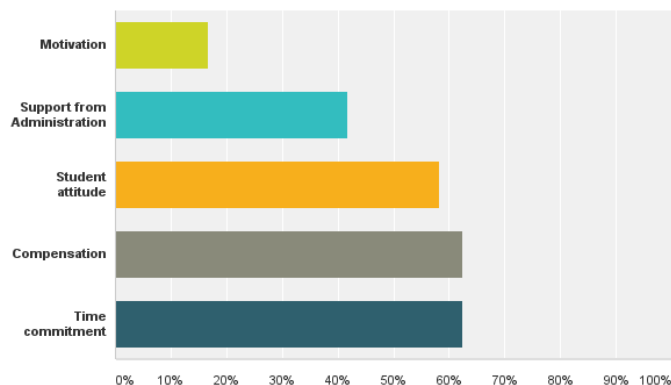
Answered: 15 Skipped: 9



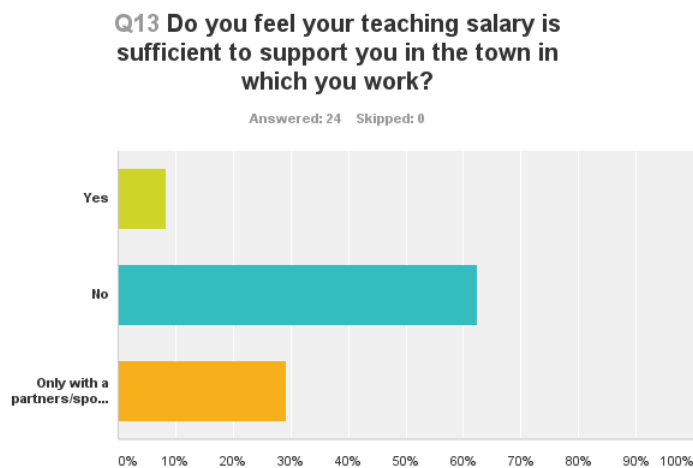
Teachers were asked to identify their top 3 challenges they face in their jobs as educators. The survey offered 5 possible challenges to choose from and offered a free response section for additional challenges. No respondent chose to add their own answer. Results indicated that Compensation and Time Commitment are the two top challenges teachers face while Student Attitude was a close 3<sup>rd</sup>. Motivation was ranked lowest as a challenge, but was still indicated by 17% of the teachers surveyed.

**Q12 Please identify the top 3 challenges you face as an educator**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



Salary and compensation is a top challenge among teachers and respondents were asked if they felt their teacher's salary is sufficient to support them in the town in which they work. Teachers had the option to indicate if the salary is or is not sufficient, as well as an option saying it was with an additional income, most likely a spouse's. The answers show that the majority of teachers do not find their salaries to be sufficient or only with an additional salary. The single respondent who answered "yes" and believes their salary is sufficient has been teaching at their current site for over 11 years.

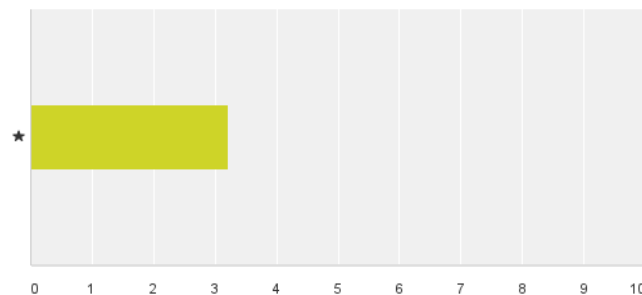


Teachers were then asked to rate their teacher preparation program in terms of how well it prepared them for their first teaching job. The average of the respondents was a 3.2 out of 5, 5 being extremely sufficient.



**Q14 On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being insufficient and 5 being extremely sufficient, how would you rate your teacher preparation program in terms of preparing you for your first job as a teacher.**

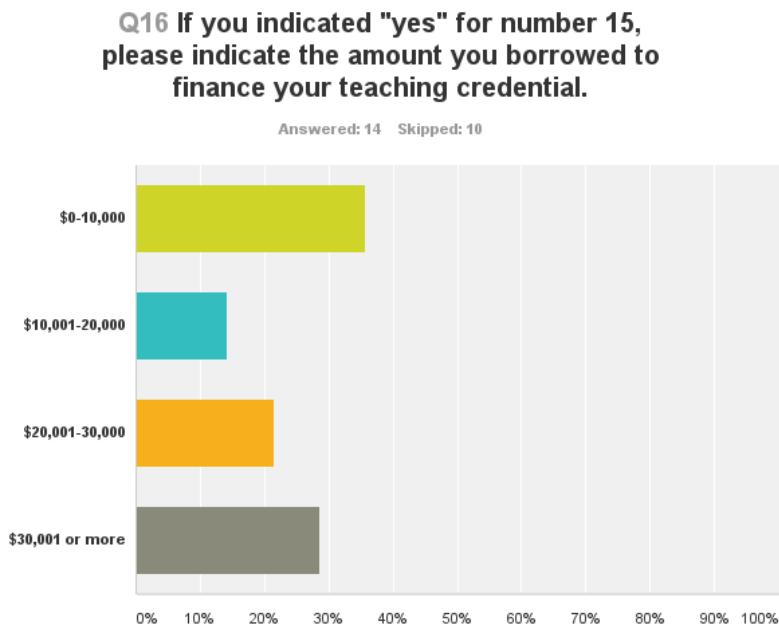
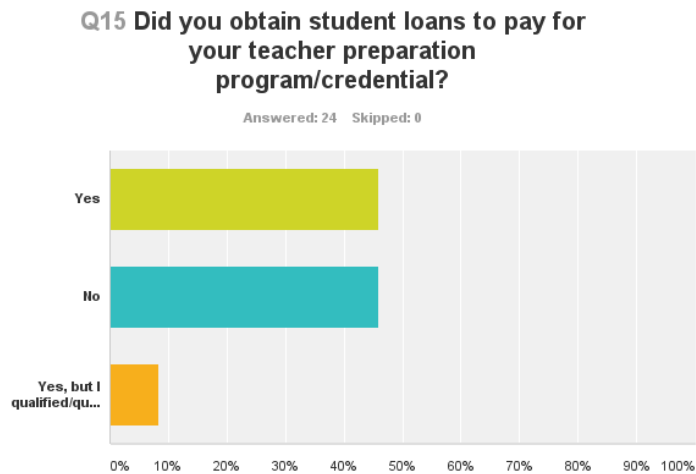
Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



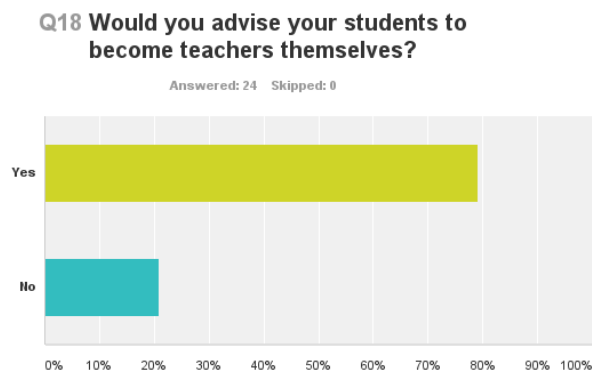
Teachers were then asked about how they financed their teacher preparation program.

Respondents were given three options, yes, no, and yes, but qualified for loan forgiveness.

Overall, more teachers indicated they took out loans, while some of those respondents qualified for loan forgiveness. The teachers who did not take out loans were more likely to be teachers who have taught for more than 11 years. All but one of the new teachers, or those who have taught less than 6 years, took out student loans and several teachers who have taught 6-10 years have taken out loans as well. The following question asked how much teachers took out in loans to finance their education. The most common amount range was 0-\$10,000 but the second most common was \$30,001 or more. All teachers who indicated \$30,001 or more have been teaching for less than 6 years.



Teachers were asked if they would advise their own students to enter the teaching profession. Despite the challenges indicated in the responses above, Eighty percent responded they would advise students to become teachers while twenty percent would not.



Two of the questions on the survey allowed respondents to write in their own answer. The first question was “What is the main/most important reason you became a teacher?” Responses varied and can be seen in the table below. Many responses began with the phrase, “I love...” and included some reference to working with students to make an impact.

The second free response question was “If you could make one change to improve the field of education for teachers in the hopes of recruiting more highly qualified teachers to the profession, what you recommend?”. Many responses centered around the idea of higher or better compensation. Other responses included how teachers and the profession are viewed by society and the culture of the profession. Additional responses can be seen in the table below.

### Themes

The data indicate many trends in teacher’s views on their careers and the challenges they face. Of the teachers surveyed, the majority have been in the profession for 6 or more years and the largest group were those teachers who have taught for 11 or more years. This indicates that there are fewer new teachers at this time at the site where the study took place. While this may be specific to the area in which the study was conducted, it seems to be indicative of a larger trend in education.

Other trends that can be seen in the data include the challenges faced by many teachers, regardless of their experience in the education profession. The majority of teachers found “compensation” and “time commitment” to be the primary challenges they face as educators. This is indicative of possible reasons why so many Millennials are reluctant to enter the teaching profession out of concern for financial stability and fair compensation for their time.

Student debt is another trend that emerged from the research. Teachers indicated the amount of student debt they had taken out in order to become a teacher and the data shows that the newer the teacher, the more debt they are likely to have. Teachers with 11 or more years of experience are far less likely to have large debt or any at all compared to teachers with 5 or fewer years. This is indicative of the change in college tuition and financing options over the last few decades. The data indicate a trend of increasing cost for young adults to become teachers, making it a less desirable career option. This is compounded by the data that indicate compensation is a major difficulty faced by teachers, showing that the payoff for taking out larger loans to become a credentialed teacher may not be considered a safe investment.

## Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

### Summary of Major Findings

The data collected through the survey administered to teachers indicated that while the majority of teachers have experience, most often 6 or more years of teaching, new teachers face different and sometimes more challenges than their senior coworkers. One major finding was that teachers who had taken out \$30,000 or more in student loans to finance their teaching credential were all new teachers with five or fewer years of experience.

Data regarding student loans show a trend indicating that becoming a teacher is likely to be more expensive in recent years. Teachers who indicated they had little or no student loans were more likely to have 6 or more years of experience, and most likely to have 11 or more years and no student loans. The data show that there are exceptions on both ends, but the overall trend indicates that new teachers are paying more for their education and are required to take out loans.

This may be a serious deterrent to young Millennials in regards to choosing the teaching field as a profession. In addition to the higher cost of training, the majority of teachers surveyed, regardless of their years of experience, indicated they did not feel their teaching salary was sufficient to live on in the town in which they work. Of the respondents that answered “No” to the question of if their salary is sufficient, most were new teachers with less than 5 years of experience. This indicates that the teachers who answered “Yes, but with a partner’s income” were more likely to be a more experienced teacher and therefore older and more likely to be married.

New teachers are more likely to be younger and therefore unmarried without an additional income to support them and a family. Therefore, newer teachers are less likely to be

able to support themselves and stay in their positions as a result. Instead, leaving the profession may be an attractive option for younger, Millennial professionals who wish to live in the area where this study was conducted.

Other findings include the common challenges teachers face. Compensation and time-commitment were indicated as the top challenges faced by teachers, regardless of age and years of experience. Newer teachers were more likely to report compensation as a challenge, which may be an indication of the salary schedule system. New teachers often start at very low salaries, which grow with every year of experience and education units. New teachers face higher student loans, expensive cost of living, and lower salaries than their older counterparts.

Time commitment was also a top concern for all teachers surveyed, especially those who are newer to the profession and the school. This may be an indication of the tenure system and the feeling that new teachers often say yes to anything in order to hold good standing at their site and eventually gain permanent status and job security. Time commitment and compensation also go hand in hand. When teachers are asked to spend additional time at work, or give their time in form of grading, lesson planning, and changing curriculum standards, it brings more unpaid work upon the teachers. By indicating that time and money are top concerns, it may be relevant to say that if teachers were compensated more, the time commitment concern would go down. Teachers may find the time commitment is no longer an issue if compensation is reflective of the time teachers spend working.

A final discovery from this research is the information regarding support. Teachers were asked to indicate the level of support they feel they should receive and the amount they actually receive. Respondents indicated they would prefer a 4 out of 5 in terms of support from their administration but answered that they receive closer to a 3 out of 5. This shows that teachers feel

under supported in their positions, which may be a cause of high teacher turn over and a lack of interest in the career. Younger and newer teachers were more likely to indicate they wanted a higher level of support than older, more experienced teachers. This trend shows that younger teachers require more support, especially at the beginning of their career.

#### Comparison of Findings to the Literature

According to Maslow's theory of Motivation (1943), humans are motivated by a set of goals that are categorized in hierarchical order, which prioritizes safety and wellbeing before esteem and self-actualization. Maslow posits that humans will make decisions that will guarantee their physiological needs before anything else, such as the ability to survive and provide food, shelter, and other basic needs. Once humans have addressed this need, they move on to the next, safety, then love, esteem, and self-actualization.

Many teachers claim that the reason they teach is motivated by intrinsic desires and the love of the profession and working with students. This motivation falls within Maslow's final stage of motivation, Self Actualization. Many teachers claim they had a calling, or feel they are giving back to a community through teaching, however, challenges many teachers in the study cited include compensation and the difficulty teachers face with affording to live where they teach. The ability to house and cloth yourself falls into Maslow's first stage, physiological and safety. If humans are to prioritize safety and their wellbeing over the desire for self-actualization, then they are more likely to choose a career that allows them to provide for themselves and their families before selecting teaching as a career.

The study contained in this paper indicates that humans are more likely to choose a career that will support them financially over a job as a teacher. Data within chapter four indicate that

many humans, especially young Millennials, are more likely to shun the education profession for the sake of taking care of basic needs and security.

Another connection to the literature is the characteristics of Millennials in seeking financial security. In the Kuron, et. al study on Millennial Motivation, the research found that Millennials were more likely to prioritize extrinsic work values before intrinsic. This indicates that Millennials are more likely to choose a career that ensures their financial security and well being over a career that gives them psychological satisfaction.

The data in this study indicate that may be true within the teaching profession. Most respondents in the study had 11 or more years of experience and did not fall within the Millennial definition, being born before 1980. This research supports previous studies that point to a declining trend of Millennials entering the teaching workforce.

Other connections to the literature in chapter 2 show that teacher compensation is a common frustration among teachers. The previous research shows that many schools have had to increase pay and offer other financial incentives to hire teachers to fill classrooms. In O’Keefe’s research on the teaching shortage (2001), many schools have been seen to offer incentives such as signing bonuses, housing assistance, higher pay, childcare, and other “perks.” This trend among school districts indicates that financial struggles are a serious problem for teachers and a major deterrent for entering the profession. The research in this paper follows the same trend and shows that high compensation may improve the teacher shortage by creating a more desirable salary for new and incoming teachers.

The researcher’s assumptions were confirmed by this study. Millennials are less likely to pursue a career in education due to the lack of financial compensation and the inability to provide for oneself as a result. Millennial teachers are faced with new and different challenges



than their predecessors, such as increased tuition costs, and the difficulty that a limited salary places on a young adult to care for themselves and a family.

#### Limitations/Gaps in the Research

The survey administered for this research resulted in a limited number of responses. Therefore, results cannot be definitive, but instead, used to indicate that further research should be completed in the topic to address the issue of staffing and retaining teachers.

#### Implications for Future Research

The brief survey used for this research could be expanded and administered to a larger audience of teachers in order to get a better idea of the differences teachers face depending on their status as a “New” or “Veteran” teacher. Additional research might include interviews of new and veteran teachers in order to get an idea of the specific challenges and situations that teachers face. Potential teachers and/or college students may be included in the research to get a better idea of the deterrents to the education profession. Prospective students for teacher preparation programs would be ideal. An addition to the research may be a question regarding teacher recommendations for improvement.

#### Overall Significance of the Study

This study indicates that new, Millennial teachers are more likely to need support and better compensation for their time in order to find the education field an attractive career choice. Administrators should acknowledge that new teachers need additional support and it may be an indication that the new generation of teachers will desire continued support as they become more experienced teachers. This would correspond with the research that indicates Millennials are

more collaborative than their predecessors and want to spend more time working together in their chosen career field. Other challenges revealed in this study indicate that changes to funding and salary in terms of the time commitment made by teachers would improve the outlook for teachers and help fill the positions of classroom teachers.

#### About the Author

Michelle LeMieux is a high school teacher in a community within the Bay Area. Michelle has an A.A. in Political Science from College of Marin, a B.A. in International Studies from UC San Diego, and a Single Subject-Social Studies Credential from Dominican University. She currently teaches World History, Economics and Government, and Leadership/ASB. Michelle currently works in the same school district she attended as a student and is passionate about giving back to her community. In addition to teaching, Michelle coaches a youth swim team and is very enthusiastic about water safety and training students to become lifeguards. In the future she hopes to pursue her PhD and contribute solutions to the problems faced in the education system.

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**Appendix Survey Questions-Challenges Facing Teachers**

Part A: Demographic Information

1. Please identify the decade you were born

1930-1949

1950-1979

1980-2000

2. Please identify your gender

Female

Male

3. Please identify the subject(s) you teach

Science

Math

Social Studies

English

Arts/Drama

World Languages

Special Education

Career/Technical

4. How many years have you been a teacher?

1-5 years

6-10 years

11 or more years

5. How many years have you been teaching at your current site?

## Part B Survey Items

Please use a rating scale of 1-5. 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

1. How would you rate the level of support from the administration and district you experience at your school site?
2. How would you rate the importance of support in your role as an educator?
3. What was the main/most important reason you became a teacher?
4. Have you or are you considering leaving the profession?
5. On a scale of 1-10 how close have you been to wanting to leave this profession?
6. Please identify the top 3 challenges you face as an educator
  - a. Motivation
  - b. Support from admin
  - c. Student attitude
  - d. Compensation
  - e. Time commitment
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you feel that your teaching salary is sufficient to support you in the town in town in which your work?
8. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate your teacher preparation program?
9. Did you obtain student loans to pay for your teacher preparation program?
10. If you indicated yes for # 9, please identify the amount you owe or owed on your loan.
  - a. 0-10,000
  - b. 11,000-20,000
  - c. 21,000-30,000
  - d. 31,000+

11. Have you worked in a profession other than education prior to working at this site?
12. Would you advise your students to become teachers themselves?
13. Please comment on any other challenges or concerns that you face as a teacher.