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*Brigham Young University*

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Teacher Recruitment: High School Students' and Parents'  
Perceptions of the Teaching Profession

Steven Scot Christensen

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

### Teacher Recruitment: High School Students' and Parents' Perceptions of the Teaching Profession

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Doctor of Philosophy

Concern over teacher shortages has become a perplexing and persistent problem in schools. Teachers are constantly leaving the profession and new entrants into the teaching profession have decreased in recent years, creating a need for recruiting qualified individuals to become teachers and to retain those who are already in classrooms. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that best predict whether high school students are considering teaching as a career and factors that predict whether students' parents would encourage their children to become teachers.

A review of the literature revealed potentially influential factors on teacher recruitment and a survey instrument was developed using those factors. All 41 school districts in Utah were invited to participate, with 9 giving permission to administer surveys to parents and juniors and seniors in high school. In all, 285 high school juniors and seniors and 495 parent surveys were analyzed.

The survey of high school juniors and seniors focused on two research questions: 1) which factors predict whether high school students are willing to consider teaching as a career and 2) which factors predict whether high school students feel teaching is the best career option for them? Results indicated that high school students were more likely to consider teaching when they had confidence in their ability to be good teachers, when family members and others outside their families encouraged them to become teachers, and when they felt their community supported teachers.

The survey of parents addressed two research questions: 1) what factors predict whether parents will encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher, and 2) which factors predict whether parents believe teaching would be the best career option for their children? The results of the analysis indicated 4 factors that are statistically predictive of a parent's willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching. Parents are more likely to encourage their children to become teachers when people outside the family had encouraged the children to teach, if the parents believed their child would be a good teacher, and if parents thought that expectations placed on teachers were reasonable. Results also showed, however, that when considering other professions, parents were much less likely to encourage their children to become teachers in favor of other professions.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher recruitment, teacher profession, teacher shortage, high school students, career choice

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH AGENDA AND STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION.....	xii
Article Structure and Summaries .....	xiii
Article 1 .....	xiv
Article 2 .....	xiv
Article 3 .....	xv
Conclusion and Appendices.....	xvi
ARTICLE 1: Perceptions on the Teaching Profession: A Review of Literature .....	1
Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Literature Selection.....	5
Teacher Recruitment Challenges .....	7
Wages.....	8
Teaching Compared to Other Professions .....	9
Disrespectful Students .....	10
Unsupportive Parents .....	11

Working Conditions.....	12
Teacher Recruitment Opportunities.....	14
Conclusion .....	15
Implications for Future Research.....	17
References.....	19
ARTICLE 2: Teacher Recruitment: Factors that Predict High School Students' Willingness	
to Become Teachers .....	25
Abstract.....	26
Introduction.....	27
Review of Teacher Recruitment Literature.....	28
Methodology.....	29
Participants.....	30
Procedure .....	31
Data Analysis.....	31
Results and Discussion .....	31
Students' Perception of Teaching.....	32
Factors Predicting Student Career Decisions for Teaching .....	34
Analysis of Highly Influential Factors Predicting Students' Decisions.....	36
Self-Efficacy .....	36
Encouragement from Others.....	37
Academic Success.....	40
Gender.....	41
Altruistic Beliefs .....	42

Analysis of Other Influential Factors Predicting Students' Decisions .....	44
Conclusions.....	45
References.....	48
<b>ARTICLE 3: Parental Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: Factors That Predict Parental</b>	
Encouragement of Students to Enter the Teaching Profession.....	52
Abstract.....	53
Introduction.....	54
Summary of Parental Encouragement Research.....	55
Description of Potential Influential Factors.....	57
Respect for Teachers.....	57
Teacher Compensation.....	58
Gender.....	58
Self-Efficacy.....	58
Teacher's Lifestyle.....	59
Working Conditions.....	59
Encouragement from Others.....	59
Teaching-Related Issues Proposed by the Authors.....	60
Previous Teaching Experience.....	60
Parent's Education Level.....	60
Methodology.....	60
Data Collection Instrument.....	61
Participants.....	61
Analytic Approach.....	62

Results.....	63
CFA Results.....	63
Multiple Regression Analysis Results .....	66
Discussion.....	68
Significant Factors That Predict Parental Encouragement to Consider Teaching.....	68
Encouragement from Others .....	69
Parent Perceptions of Their Children’s Ability to Teach.....	69
Teacher Expectations .....	69
Items Not Found to Be Statistically Significant .....	70
Factors That Influence Parents Belief That Their Children Have Better Career Options .....	71
Parent Perceptions on Their Children’s Ability to Teach.....	72
Encouragement from Others to Consider Teaching.....	72
Teacher Expectations .....	72
Respect for Teachers.....	73
Items Not Found to Be Significant .....	73
Conclusions and Implications.....	74
References.....	77
DISSERTATION CONCLUSION.....	85
DISSERTATION REFERENCES.....	87
APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter.....	88
APPENDIX B: Teacher Retention Study 2018 – Parents Survey .....	90
APPENDIX C: Teacher Retention Study 2018 – Student Survey.....	93



## LIST OF TABLES

**Article 2**

Table 1	<i>General Factors Included in This Analysis Believed to Influence Teacher Recruitment.....</i>	29
Table 2	<i>Students Considering Teaching vs. Those Perceiving it as the Best Career Option for Them.....</i>	32
Table 3	<i>Students' Beliefs About Teaching and the Importance of These Individual Factors to Students in Considering Teaching as a Career.....</i>	33
Table 4	<i>Factors Predictive of Students Considering Teaching as a Career.....</i>	35
Table 5	<i>Factors Predictive of Students' Belief That They Had Better Career Options Than Teaching.....</i>	35
Table 6	<i>Factors Found not to be Highly Predictive in Any of the Regressions.....</i>	36
Table 7	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They Would Be Good Teachers by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching.....</i>	37
Table 8	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They Would Be Good Teachers by their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option.....</i>	37
Table 9	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Family Encouragement by Their Willingness to Consider.....</i>	38
Table 10	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Other Encouragement by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching.....</i>	39
Table 11	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Family Encouragement by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option.....</i>	39

Table 12	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Other Encouragement by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option .....</i>	39
Table 13	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They are a Good Student by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching .....</i>	41
Table 14	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They are a Good Student by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option.....</i>	41
Table 15	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Gender by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching.....</i>	42
Table 16	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Gender by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option .....</i>	42
Table 17	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Altruistic Feeling Toward Teaching by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching .....</i>	43
Table 18	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Altruistic Feeling Toward Teaching by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option .....</i>	44
Table 19	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief About Teacher Compensation by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching .....</i>	45
Table 20	<i>Disaggregation of Students' Belief About Teacher Compensation by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option .....</i>	45
<b>Article 3</b>		
Table 1	<i>General Teaching-Related Factors Included in This Analysis Believed to Influence Parental Encouragement of Children to Teach .....</i>	57
Table 2	<i>CFA Item Loading for the Respect Factor .....</i>	64
Table 3	<i>CFA Item Loading for the Teacher Expectations Factor .....</i>	65

Table 4	<i>Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Dependent Variable “I Have Encouraged my Children to Become Teachers,”</i> ( $R^2=39.400\%$ , $n=495$ ) .....67
Table 5	<i>Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Dependent Variable “I Believe my Children Would be Better off in a Different Career,”</i> ( $R^2=25.100\%$ , $n=495$ ).....68

## LIST OF FIGURES

**Article 3**

Figure 1 *Standardized Parameter Estimates for the Factor Structure of the Survey* .....66

## DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH AGENDA AND STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The topic of research for this dissertation addresses issues related to the current teacher shortage and the recruitment of new teachers into the teaching profession. Enrollments in college and university teacher preparation programs has declined by 30% between 2020 and 2014 (Barth et al., 2016), resulting in fewer qualified individuals who are becoming licensed teachers. Nationally, 8% of current teachers are leaving the profession (Goldring et al., 2014). To make matters worse, K-12 student enrollments are increasing, resulting in an even greater need for more teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The teacher shortage is a complex and multi-faceted problem. One part of the solution involves making necessary changes to reduce teacher attrition. Another partial solution is to entice qualified teachers who have left to come back. A third angle, and the focus of this dissertation, is recruiting new students into teacher preparation programs. Findings from previous research identified several factors that influence decisions related to considering and persisting in the teaching profession. Those factors were used to develop two survey instruments, one administered to juniors and seniors in high school, and one to parents of school-aged children. While most of the research literature simply identifies factors that may influence recruitment, this dissertation moves beyond simple identification and attempts to pinpoint factors that could predict whether a student would consider teaching and whether a parent would encourage their child to become a teacher.

The survey of high school juniors and seniors focused on two research questions:

1. Which factors predict whether high school students are willing to consider teaching as a career?

2. Which factors predict whether high school students feel teaching is the best career option for them?

Results indicated that high school students were more likely to consider teaching when they had confidence in their ability to be good teachers, when family members and other encouraged them to become teachers, and when they felt their community supported teachers.

The survey of parents addressed two research questions:

1. What factors predict whether parents will encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher?
2. Which factors predict whether parents believe teaching would be the best career option for their children?

The results of the analysis indicated four factors that are statistically predictive of a parent's willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching. Parents are more likely to encourage their children to become teachers when people outside the family had encouraged the children to teach, if the parents believed their child would be a good teacher, and if parents thought that expectations placed on teachers were reasonable. Results also showed, however, that when considering other professions, parents were much less likely to encourage their children to become teachers in favor of other professions.

### **Article Structure and Summaries**

This dissertation follows the article-format option for dissertations. It is derived from the traditional dissertation format but organizes the dissertation into three distinct articles with journal publication formatting. This dissertation was based on a literature review and two studies. The first study, an extended literature review, was conducted to identify factors that affect teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition. The results from the second study examined

high school juniors' and seniors' perceptions on teaching to determine which factors best predict whether a high school student would consider teaching as a career. The last study explored factors that best predict whether parents would encourage their children to consider the teaching profession.

### **Article 1**

The first article, *Perceptions on the Teaching Profession: A Review of Literature*, is an extended review of literature and explored the perceptions of the teaching profession. The goal of the review was to gain an understanding of how the teaching profession is perceived and how those perceptions contribute to teacher shortages in public schools. The extended literature review contributed to the creation of the survey instruments.

The perceptions of teaching found in the literature were used to identify factors that could potentially influence high school students' choices about becoming teachers and parents' willingness to encourage their children to become teachers. Factors that were identified include teacher's wages, difficult students and parents, diminished prestige of the profession, and challenging working conditions (Han et al., 2018). The literature also showed that teachers who choose to stay in the profession had high levels of personal satisfaction as they contribute to society (Johnson et al., 2005).

### **Article 2**

The second article, *Teacher Recruitment: Factors That Predict High School Students' Willingness to Become Teachers*, was completed and published in Education Sciences on November 28, 2019. Education Sciences is an international, open access journal and is published online by Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI). A slightly modified version

free from minor copy errors of the published article is presented in this document. The published version of the article can be found at <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/9/4/282>.

This study examines factors that influence high school students' willingness to consider teaching as a career. Using predictive modeling, we identified five factors that are highly predictive of both a students' willingness to consider teaching and their belief that teaching was their best career option. Results indicated that high school students were more likely to consider teaching when they had confidence in their ability to be good teachers, when family members and others encouraged them to become teachers, and when they felt their community supported teachers. Most of those who considered teaching thought of themselves average students. Less impactful factors included gender and pay. The study additionally found students less likely to consider work conditions for teachers when making career choices.

### **Article 3**

The third article for this dissertation is titled *Parental Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: Factors That Predict Parental Encouragement of Students to Enter the Teaching Profession*. This study examines factors that influence parents' willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching as a career. Using structural equation modeling, we identified four factors that are highly predictive of parents' willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching and their belief that teaching would be their best career option. Results indicated that parents were more likely to encourage their children to become teachers when people outside the family had encouraged the children to teach, if the parents believed their child would be a good teacher, and if parents thought that expectations placed on teachers were reasonable. Results also showed, however, that when considering other professions, parents were much less likely to encourage their children to become teachers in favor of other professions.



## Conclusion and Appendices

A dissertation conclusion and references follow the third article and presents implications for future research. In addition, three appendices accompany the three articles. Appendix A includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB) letter of approval, Appendix B presents the survey instrument administered to parents, and the survey instrument administered to juniors and seniors is found in Appendix C.

ARTICLE 1

**Perceptions on the Teaching Profession: A Review of Literature**

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### Abstract

This literature review explores the perceptions held on the teaching profession by both teachers and students with the goal being to understand how this perception affects current teacher shortages in public schools. Perceptions on teaching include low wages, increasingly challenging working conditions, difficult students and parents, and the diminished prestige of the teaching career. Teachers who do persist in the profession report high levels of personal satisfaction and enjoyment as they contribute to society. The review concludes with a call to better understand high school students' perceptions on teaching such that recruitment efforts can be better aligned with students' interests.

*Keywords:* teacher, teaching, teacher profession, teacher recruitment, teacher education, perceptions on the teaching profession, career choice

### Introduction

A teacher shortage looms over the United States, and if current trends continue the shortage will only get worse. Currently, insufficient numbers of qualified individuals are entering the teaching profession, forcing public schools to scramble to fill vacant teaching positions. In 2018 it was anticipated that there will be a shortage of as many as 112,000 teachers, and the shortage will continue at that level for the next several years (Sutcher et al., 2016). While no current data exists, Garica and Weiss (2019) point out that even though the teacher shortage is widely recognized it poorly understood and most likely underestimated.

The shortage is caused by credentialed teachers who choose to leave the profession at a rate of approximately 8% per year, and by 35% fewer students enrolling in teacher preparation programs (Sutcher et al., 2016). To make matters worse, population projections suggest that even more teachers will be required to educate the population of school-aged children that will increase from approximately 74 million to 82 million over the next five decades (Colby & Ortman, 2014).

A teacher shortage is defined as “an inadequate quantity of qualified individuals willing to offer their services under prevailing wages and conditions” (Sutcher et al., 2016). Using the economic principle of supply and demand, the teacher shortage can be analyzed and possible solutions found. The supply of qualified teachers is affected by both current number of teachers leaving the profession and by the number of prospective teachers who earn teaching credentials and enter the profession.

Over the last several years fewer high school graduates have shown interest in pursuing a teaching education major in college. In 2010, 15% of high school students showed interest in the teaching profession compared to only 12% in 2014. Note that these figures only show student

interest, and not intent to enroll in a teacher preparation program (Aragon, 2016). This is further supported by the nation-wide 35% decrease in enrollments in teacher preparation programs from 2009 to 2014, and while qualified teachers come from many different candidate pools, the vast majority of new teachers are prepared by state university teacher education programs (Ravitch, 2016). In comparison, overall university enrollments only decreased 3% over the same time period. This suggests that students, despite some interest in the teaching profession, are choosing career paths other than teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In short, it has become increasingly challenging to entice new teachers into the profession.

Retaining currently licensed teachers is also a challenge. Many who enter the profession report overall job dissatisfaction, sufficient to drive qualified and capable teachers into other professions (Aragon, 2016). An accurate measure of teacher attrition is difficult to attain because many teachers who leave one school or district for another may be counted as leaving the profession when they merely changed positions. Others may leave the profession for one or more years, only to return to teaching, and are counted as leaving teaching. Difficult as it may be to measure, teacher turnover at the school level is prevalent and causes many issues (Raue & Gray, 2015).

While recruiting and retaining teachers comprises the supply portion of the equation, teacher demand is influenced by educational policies as well as the number of students that come into the school system. Projections show that elementary and secondary student populations will increase by 5% between 2012 and 2024 (Hussar & Bailey, 2017). State and local policies, most notably the ratio of students per teacher, also influence the demand for teachers. The argument is often made that smaller class sizes lead to better learning outcomes, but those smaller class sizes require more teachers, compounding the shortage even further.

Teacher shortages do not occur uniformly across all classrooms, school districts, or states. State-level shortages differ from state to state, with some states experiencing more severe shortages than others. Teacher shortages also occur at different levels depending on subject areas, most notably in special education, math, and sciences. High poverty areas and high-minority student populations experience disproportionate shortages (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Regardless of which lens is chosen through which to view the teacher shortage issue, the problems resulting from the shortage are the same. Schools spend resources on recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers that could be spent on other programs or services (Barnes et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). A constant turnover of teachers also undermines the sense of community within a school, which has been shown to have a negative impact on student performance (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Possible solutions to the teacher shortage can be found by increasing the supply of qualified individuals who are willing to teach, decreasing the demand for teachers, or both. Other solutions to the shortage entail retaining current teachers who have proven to be effective and enticing previous teachers to re-enter the profession. The focus of this review is to aggregate and summarize perceptions of the teaching profession and what might influence qualified individuals to consider teaching as a profession. By gaining an understanding of how students, parents, teachers, and school administrators perceive the teaching profession, recruitment efforts can be tailored to address misperceptions and leverage reality in a way that makes those efforts more successful.

### **Literature Selection**

The method for finding suitable sources for this literature review started by searching the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database. The search utilized both broad and

more focused search terms within the ERIC thesaurus: high school students, secondary school students, high school freshmen, high school seniors, high school graduate, high schools, junior high school students, and middle school students. Other phrases included in the search were career choice, career awareness, career development, career education, career exploration, career guidance, career planning, occupational aspiration, and vocational interests. The search results included peer-reviewed academic journal articles, theses and dissertations, magazines, conference reports, and educational reports related to career choices with emphasis on the teaching profession.

Date constraints were not included in the mechanics of the search, but more recently published literature was given priority because the *current* perceptions on teaching were preferable to more antiquated notions toward the profession. The results of the search indicated a paucity of literature focused specifically on high school students' perceptions of the teaching profession. More publications were found wherein college-level students and current teachers were the subject of research on the perceptions of teaching.

The final step in sorting through the results was to consider article abstracts, methods, and results in an effort to identify sources that most directly related to the perceptions on teaching. Relevancy was determined by examining each article to gain an understanding of the extent to which the content assists in describing current views on the teaching profession.

The results of the literature review indicated several reasons why qualified individuals would eschew teaching for another profession. Perhaps the most obvious, and certainly the most popular reason for not entering the teaching profession is the compensation package. Low wages appear in nearly all of the 76 publications reviewed. In addition, issues such as teacher workload,

emotional demand, unruly students and parents, and the profession's diminished prestige all account for fewer teachers.

While the reasons for not choosing teaching are compelling, the literature also describes several reasons why a qualified individual both chooses to enter the profession and persist as a teacher. Teaching is viewed as a personally rewarding and enjoyable profession where sharing knowledge and experience occurs on a regular basis and teachers are able to help young, struggling students get moving in the right direction. Teachers make a positive contribution to society, which is an appealing aspect of teaching. Some of the more prominent challenges and opportunities of the teaching profession are addressed below.

### **Teacher Recruitment Challenges**

ACT, Inc. analyzes statistics related to their test takers on an annual basis. Their analysis attempts to measure the readiness of each graduating class to succeed in college. ACT reports that in 2014 a record 57% of students graduating in the U.S. took the test. Their study found that from 2010 to 2014 the number of ACT-tested high school graduates who expressed an interest in education professions decreased by over 16%. For context, all graduates who took the ACT increased by nearly 18% (ACT, 2015).

The ACT report also indicated that interest in pursuing a teaching career is especially low among males-nearly 75% of those interested in education were female, while nearly 95% of those interested in early childhood and elementary education were female. The study also found a lack in diversity among students interested in education: seventy-one percent of ACT-tested students interested in teaching were white (ACT, 2015). While the ACT study gives compelling indications of a strong disinclination toward teaching, the study does not provide reason for the



aversion. Several reasons for why qualified individuals do not enter the teaching profession and experienced teachers do not persist in teaching are presented below.

### **Wages**

Recently, the state of West-Virginia experienced a statewide teacher strike. For nine days every public school in the state was closed. The reason? Teacher pay. In the midst of the strike the state legislature passed a pay raise of 2% for 2018-2019 school year and promised another 1% increase in 2020 and 2021 (Wamsley, 2018). The teacher's union rejected the deal and the strike continued. A new bill was proposed and passed that gave teachers a 5% pay increase, ending the strike (Levenson & Jorgensen, 2018). This is an extreme example of the low-wage plight faced by teachers across the United States and those considering teaching as a profession have taken note.

In one study, researchers interviewed 200 college students from 165 different institutions deemed to be top performers based on SAT scores of at least 1100. Of the sample, 70% were between the ages of 18 and 20. When asked, 62% of respondents indicated "low pay" as the primary downside to teaching. For comparison, the next most cited downside to teaching was "disrespectful kids," cited by 14% of respondents (Breglio, 2006).

Cooper and Alvarado (2006) discussed the importance of teacher pay by suggesting that an increase in teacher pay, by itself, will not attract qualified individuals who feel they have the "calling" to teach into the profession. However, wages sufficient to support a family and to save money for children's education are likely to keep teachers who do feel called to teach. Despite this, the researchers acknowledge that salaries can make a difference in recruitment efforts.

In yet another study the issue of wages was prominent. A survey of 1,145 people was conducted. The respondents were categorized as "youth" (those aged 12-25 years), "adults,"

(aged 26 and older), and employers (people in ownership or Human Resource roles). The results indicated that approximately 63% of respondents said they want a career that is enjoyable and pays well, while at the same time indicating that teachers are not paid enough (Hall & Langton, 2006).

A survey of 1,600 top-third college students and teachers showed that only 10%-18% of respondents said teaching offers a competitive starting salary or pays suitably for the skill and effort required. Further only one third of respondents said teaching pays enough to support a family, and more than half of the respondents thought they could earn more as a garbage collector. In summary, when it comes to wages, 62% of respondents said that other professions meet their financial goals in ways teaching would not (Auguste et al., 2010).

### **Teaching Compared to Other Professions**

While teacher wages are decidedly low, wages alone do not cause qualified individuals to eschew the teaching profession. Many view teaching as an unattractive profession for other reasons and especially in relation to other professions. For instance, Auguste et al. (2010) found that only 3% of respondents believed that a teacher who does well would get promoted. Further, only a third said their supervisors would help improve their performance.

An analysis of the teaching profession in Australia showed that the quality of the teaching profession pales in comparison to other professions such as medicine, law, accountancy, and nursing. The study reviewed professions of accountancy, dentistry, engineering, law, medicine, nursing, psychology, and social work because each of those professions were deemed similar to teaching. All of the professions reviewed were compared to teaching and found that all professions, except teaching, were subject to a regulatory authority. Further, while all other professions have licensing requirements, teaching does not. Where the other professions have

stringent continuing professional development requirements, teaching does not, nor does teaching require competency standards. When comparing teaching to other professions teaching does not appear to be a professional vocation (Ramsey, 2000). This indicates that, until relatively recently, the idea that teaching has not been comparable to other professions.

Another study conducted in Australia surveyed 1,653 students who were enrolled in a teacher education program at three different universities. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the teaching profession. The participants in the study rated teaching as a highly demanding profession because of its heavy workload and emotional demand. They also indicated that teaching requires a high degree of skill and technical knowledge, all for lower pay than most all other professions (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

When compared with other occupations, teaching is not viewed as a prestigious profession. In one study, 91% of college students said they chose a career other than teaching due to a lack of prestige and peer group appeal (Auguste et al., 2010). Compared to other professions requiring licensure and specific skills such as medicine, law, and engineering, teaching is viewed as having a much lower status (Ingersoll & Mitchell, 2011). The status of the profession is often diminished with reports of teacher incompetence, further lowering the public's perception of teaching (Block, 2008).

### **Disrespectful Students**

Student discipline and misbehavior have been identified as deterrents for those interested in entering or persisting in the teaching profession in several studies (Allensworth et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2005; Marinell & Coca, 2013). To one degree or another, many studies have shown that one of the downsides to teaching is undisciplined, disrespectful students (Breglio, 2006; Hall & Langton, 2006; Park, 2006).

A phenomenological study was conducted on five second-year teachers from the same school to discover their levels and causes of frustration in the classroom. The study consisted of an initial interview of each teacher, a focus group discussion and, three months later, a second interview. While the study is lacking in sample size and generalizability, the results are telling. The results showed that the students caused the most frustration. Every teacher agreed that getting students to complete work was a “constant chore.” The teachers also felt frustrated by student apathy and by students not caring about their work. In addition, attempts to show students how the education will be needed in the future were resisted by students (Kutcy & Schulz, 2006).

Another study entailed interviewing six current and former special education teachers in two districts. The interview consisted of 11 open-ended questions, with one being “What part(s) of your job do you enjoy the least?” Responses to this question included several related to student behavior. One teacher indicated the beginnings of burnout dealing with so many behavior issues while other teachers said that dealing with behavior issues encroached heavily on time that would otherwise be spent on instruction (Katkus, 2007). This study also had few participants, which makes generalizability a challenge, but the pervasiveness of poor student behavior is worth mentioning.

### **Unsupportive Parents**

While students do cause prospective and current teachers to re-think the teaching profession, unsupportive parents can also contribute to negative perceptions on teaching, according to several studies (Breglio, 2006; Hall & Langton, 2006). In one study, researchers mailed a survey to 900 graduates of a California university who also earned their teaching credentials. An important facet of the study was the goal of surveying teachers who had

presumably taught for 6-10 years. Of the 900 surveys sent, only 114 responded, but their responses were indicative of how much influence parental support can have over someone's decision to pursue teaching. They found that 49% of respondents were not working as teachers. Those who were no longer teaching listed "no parent support" as the fourth reason for leaving teaching. Those who were still teaching but would consider leaving listed parental support as the seventh reason to consider quitting. "A good many" of the respondents said that not only were parents loath to give support, many parents adopted an adversarial attitude toward teachers. One teacher was surprised at how quick parents were to criticize teaching. Another said that while dealing with student discipline was difficult, it was nothing in comparison to the harassment from parents (Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

### **Working Conditions**

Working conditions within the teaching profession tend to impact qualified individuals' decisions to become teachers and have been cited as a reason for current teachers that either consider leaving or actually left the profession. Teacher influence over school policies, opportunities for professional development and advancement, teacher collaboration, and autonomy within the classroom have all been identified as key working conditions that have an effect on teacher persistence (Boyd et al., 2011).

Burke et al. (2013) conducted a mixed methods investigation of why some teachers remain in the profession while others leave. Teachers new to the profession (n=42) were interviewed in an effort to gain an understanding of their challenges and to obtain a narrative of their experiences as new teachers. The themes that emerged were compared to an analysis of the literature and the result were factors that contributed to a teacher remaining in the profession and factors that contributed to a teacher leaving. The factors were used to create a survey which was

administered to 1,700 teachers, with 258 completing the survey. Teachers who indicated intentions to leave the profession placed greater value on sharing resources, collaboration, discussions about classroom management, and programming with mentors. By comparison, teachers with intentions of persisting indicated that assistance from more experienced teachers was largely the reason for continuing. This study is further evidence that the day-to-day working conditions faced by teachers is a strong influence in their decisions to remain in the profession. In addition, high school students, their parents, and the general public, having been exposed to teachers and the teaching profession everyday tend to have at least some idea of what the conditions are like, which would influence their perceptions of teaching.

In another study researchers conducted an annual survey of teachers over the course of six years. The survey consisted of 34 items of interest and the teachers were asked to rank those items. After a rigorous factor analysis, the results indicated four distinct measures of working conditions: teachers' ability to focus on teaching, the nature of the physical environment, teacher empowerment and school leadership, and teacher professional development. The extent to which each of the four factors meet teacher needs and expectations influence the working conditions within the schools and could enhance the ability of the schools to retain quality teachers (Burkhauser, 2017).

Breglio (2006) surveyed two cohorts of teachers, one with 5 or less years of classroom experience and one with 15 or more years of experience. Each sample was made up of 200 respondents, for a total of 400. Key findings from the study showed that too many demands are placed on teachers. Duties such as paperwork, meetings, and additional certification were all required at the expense of teaching. Bureaucracy, politics, lack of parental support, classroom

discipline, and problems with student behavior and motivation were also cited as things that make teaching difficult.

### **Teacher Recruitment Opportunities**

After reviewing the many and complex reasons an individual might avoid becoming a teacher, it may seem as though a perpetual teacher shortage will exist. However, many studies have shown that, just as with any profession, there are appealing and beneficial aspects within the teaching profession. For instance, Burke et al. (2013) found that new teachers who created a high level of student involvement in the classroom were more likely to not only persist in the teaching profession but enjoy it as well.

Richardson and Watt (2006) created a scale to be used to measure motivations for choosing teaching as a career and administered the instrument to 1,653 students enrolled in teacher education programs in three Australian universities. Motivations were separated into categories such as intrinsic values; personal values such as job security, family time, and job transferability; social values, such as the ability to work with children and make social contributions; self-perceptions of teaching ability; and the extent to which teaching might be considered as a contingency career. Of the different factors from the scale, perceived teaching ability, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to contribute to society were rated as the highest motivations for choosing teaching.

In a study conducted by Breglio (2006), two random national samples of current teachers were interviewed; one sample consisted of 200 teachers with five or less years of teaching experience while the other sample was made up of 200 teachers who had at least 15 years of teaching experience. The results indicated that 45% of experienced teachers and 58% of new teachers said the best thing about teaching is “seeing children learn, grow, and progress.”

Interacting and working with children was identified by 51% of experienced teachers and 39% of new teachers as being one of the best things about teaching. Other positive elements of the teaching profession identified by the teachers in the study included impacting students' lives, having an enjoyable career, and having time off.

Another reason many qualified individuals choose and persist in a teaching career is the idea that they feel a sense of calling. The call has been described as “the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self” (Palmer, 1998, p. 79). Inservice teachers were asked about their thoughts on being called to teach, with 147 responses. Out of a maximum rating of 16, the teachers scored an average of 13.92 when asked if they felt “called” to teach (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012).

The results of a survey of 1,537 high school students indicated that 36.1% of respondents were either very interested or somewhat interested in teaching. Knowledge and skill in the subject to be taught was selected by 84.5% of those interested in teaching as the primary influence on their interest. The desire to work with children or young adults was chosen by 74.1% of those interested in teaching (Summerhill et al., 1998). These data do not necessarily mean that the students who exhibit interest in teaching will ultimately choose teaching as a career, but recruitment efforts could foster their expressed interest.

### **Conclusion**

With a worsening teacher shortage comes undesirable consequences. The demand for teachers is increasing while the supply is decreasing, leading to an undesirable educational setting. School administrators employ a variety of strategies for filling the shortage, including the use of substitutes, increasing the load of existing teachers, hiring unqualified teachers, cancelling certain school subjects, and increasing the number of students per class (Ingersoll, 1999). While



those strategies work as a stop-gap for teacher shortages, and are budget friendly, when it comes to the student educational experience they are not as desirable as employing qualified, full-time teachers.

Teacher turnover comes with high costs, both financially and organizationally. As noted by Haycock (1998) and Barth (2000), teacher turnover results in the underachieving schools recruiting and retaining the least qualified teachers. In other words, due to teacher turnover the schools with the greatest need for quality teachers face difficulty in filling that need. The result is a comparatively sub-par education for the students and negative effects on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher turnover has also proven detrimental to the school's ability to function as an organization. High rates of turnover negatively affect any efforts to build organizational culture and maintain staff cohesion (Guin, 2004; Hanselman et al., 2014). Further, in 2007 the cost to replace an out-going teacher in the U.S. was as much as \$17,900 (Carroll, 2007) and increases annually, while overall expenditures directly related to teacher turnover in the U.S. are approaching \$2 billion (Haynes, 2014).

In an effort to reduce teacher turnover and maintain a sufficient supply of qualified teachers, the teacher supply pipeline should be considered. The pipeline, in its most basic form, begins with high school students and their aspirations, or lack thereof, to teach. Next, the students enroll in college with the intent to matriculate in a teacher education program. A bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate is earned and, finally, the students become K-12 public school teachers. Each point in the process presents an opportunity to increase teacher supply. For instance, to recruit better in high schools, a better understanding of high school student aspirations could assist recruitment efforts.

Recruitment efforts at the university level could also be improved by better understanding college freshmen and sophomore attitudes toward teaching. Exploring student attitudes toward teaching at this level can inform teacher education program administrators of any misconceptions student hold, related to teaching in general and specific notions held about the program. Interests in teaching could be fostered while myths and other inaccuracies dispelled. In addition, each year at least some incoming freshmen start taking courses despite not declaring major course of study. A recruitment strategy could include ideas to help undeclared students identify and foster a love of teaching and provide information about the teaching education program, including how to enroll, secure available scholarship monies, and be successful in the program. University teacher education programs could also develop strong partnerships with nearby school districts such that students could foster professional relationships with current teachers and administrators. This familiarity with a local school could help students make the adjustment from studying to being a practicing teacher much easier. A strong partnership would be advantageous for the local districts due to their familiarity with the prospective teachers.

### **Implications for Future Research**

With so many options for growing and maintain the teacher pipeline, where do we start? When children become teenagers, they begin to more carefully evaluate their professional future. As discussed above, evidence suggests that recruitment efforts should focus on students starting at age 15 and that the students continually refine their career aspirations from age 15 until age 19 and beyond (Swanson, 2009). The recruitment effort could also focus on those who enroll in and attend a college or university. Last, once qualified individuals enter the teaching profession it is important to retain them. These three facets are all areas of interest when attempting to influence the supply of teachers.

While some research exists at each point in the pipeline, there is much to be learned. One long-term solution to the teacher shortage could focus on the beginning of the process: high school students' professional aspirations and perceptions of the teaching profession. An analysis of high school students' perceptions of the teaching profession could provide insights that might better inform recruitment strategies at the initial stages of the teacher pipeline. A clear understanding of how high school students view the teaching profession could provide informed opportunities to encourage students to seriously consider teaching. The same efforts could be applied at the university level to further entice students into teaching, thus increasing the supply of teachers.

Increasing the numbers of high school and university students who choose teaching as their profession will result in a steady stream of qualified individuals at the beginning of the teacher pipeline, but in order to reduce the teacher shortage it is important that those individuals remain in the profession. By gaining an understanding of working conditions and other factors that cause some teachers to leave the profession and others to remain in the profession, research could inform school policies and procedures that could work to stem the tide of teacher attrition, further maintaining adequate teacher supply.

Last, as the literature has shown, many qualified, experienced teachers have left teaching to pursue other interests. Researchers and policy makers could devise ways to entice the qualified teachers to return to teaching. Experienced teachers bring with them many desirable attributes that could be leveraged to assist the new teachers, which would further strengthen the supply of quality, qualified, teachers.

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ARTICLE 2

**Teacher Recruitment: Factors that Predict High School Students'**

**Willingness to Become Teachers**

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### Abstract

This study examines factors that influence high school students' willingness to consider teaching as a career. Using predictive modeling, we identified five factors that are highly predictive of both a students' willingness to consider teaching and their belief that teaching was their best career option. Results indicated that high school students were more likely to consider teaching when they had confidence in their ability to be good teachers, when family members and others encouraged them to become teachers, and when they felt their community supported teachers. Most of those who considered teaching thought of themselves average students. Less impactful factors included gender and pay. The study additionally found students less likely to consider work conditions for teachers when making career choices.

*Keywords:* teacher education, teacher recruitment, teacher profession, teacher shortage, perceptions on the teaching profession, career choice, high school students, teaching aspirations, self-efficacy

### Introduction

For some time now, schools in the United States have struggled to keep teachers in classrooms (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Various attrition estimates suggest that 20 to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of service; with approximately 10% of all teachers leaving the profession each year (Gray & Taie, 2015; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Rinke, 2014). Currently, few teachers stay in the profession until retirement (Glazer, 2018).

Complicating the issue is the fact that student enrollments continue to increase and the number of individuals entering the teaching profession has decreased (Sutcher et al., 2016). As a result, many researchers anticipate that the teacher shortage in the United States will continue for some time (Colby & Ortman, 2014; Hussar & Baily, 2017).

Of the conditions contributing to the current teacher shortage in the United States, perhaps the most alarming is the decrease in the number of individuals entering teacher education programs across the country (Ravitch, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2016). Over the last decade, fewer high school graduates have shown interest in pursuing a teaching education major in college. In 2010, 15% of high school students indicated they might be interested in pursuing a career in teaching, falling to 12% in 2014 (Aragon, 2016). Nationwide, U.S. teacher preparation programs have experienced a 35% decrease in enrollments from 2009 to 2014, while overall university enrollments have declined only 3%, and students increasingly choosing other careers over teaching (Ravitch, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As the demand for teachers steadily increases, the supply of qualified teachers has decreased; making the typical solution to attrition--recruiting and hiring of new teachers--less likely to succeed (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016).

To better understand the teacher recruitment problem, this study asked which factors best predicted whether high school students would consider teaching as a career and whether they felt teaching was their best career choice. This study was a part of a larger teacher retention and recruitment study conducted with students, teachers, school administrators, and parents in a sampling of school districts in one state. The study was designed to examine factors identified from previous research that affect teacher recruitment. Two research questions were addressed:

1. Which factors predict whether high school students are willing to consider teaching as a career?
2. Which factors predict whether high school students feel teaching is the best career option for them?

### **Review of Teacher Recruitment Literature**

A plethora of research has studied why teachers leave the profession; however, less is known about why people originally choose not to go into teaching (Flores & Niklasson, 2014). The studies that do examine teacher recruitment typically focus on pre-service teachers' reflections of why they chose to teach, but not on individuals (high school students and others) who do not consider teaching as a viable career. In addition, most research attempts to identify factors individuals consider when making career choices, but not to determine which of these factors are most influential in their final choice.

In general, research studies suggest that teaching has traditionally been considered a respected profession, particularly a suitable job for women. Yet increasingly teachers are not held in such high regard (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Bennett et al., 2013). Studies have shown that those entering the teaching profession have not been the most academically motivated or accomplished students (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Vegas et al., 2001). Research has also shown that

pay and work conditions have been identified as factors that dissuade individuals from becoming teachers (Han et al., 2018). Many of those choosing to teach have been able to overlook some negative aspects like low pay and difficult work conditions because they considered teaching to be a calling, citing altruistic or social utility motivations (Bennett et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2018). Factors that research has identified as impacting whether or not an individual will enter the teaching profession are presented in Table 1. These were used in the development of the data collection instruments used in this study.

**Table 1**

*General Factors Included in This Analysis Believed to Influence Teacher Recruitment*

Factor	Sources
Gender	Azman, 2012; Fray & Gore, 2018
Altruistic motivations	Bennett et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2018
Work conditions for teachers	Han et al., 2018
Respect for teachers/profession	Fray & Gore, 2018; Azman, 2012
Self-efficacy/interest	Chong & Low, 2009
School success	Vegas et al., 2001
Encouragement from others	Ralph & MacPhail, 2015
Teacher's lifestyle	Fray & Gore, 2018
Teacher compensation	Han et al., 2018

*Note.* Multiple sources and consideration of aspects can be found for each general factor.

### Methodology

In this study we surveyed high school students to determine their perception of the teaching profession, then used a regression analysis to identify those factors that best predicted whether students were considering teaching as a career and whether they felt teaching was the best career option for them. These two dependent variables were analyzed separately using a

univariate regression analysis. Factors measured through items on the survey were used as independent variables in each regression analysis.

### **Participants**

Junior and seniors at 41 school districts across Utah were selected to participate in this study. Respectful of institutional review board (IRB) concerns for conducting research with minors and considering the political concerns of the school districts involved, we were not surprised that of the 41 school districts only nine agreed to allow us to send anonymous survey invitations through the district's email system to the junior and senior students within their care. Several school districts did allow us to survey administrators and teachers, but not parents and students. Of the nine districts that consented to have their students and parents surveyed, the smallest enrolls approximately 160 juniors and seniors at two high schools. The largest district enrolls approximately 7,870 juniors and seniors at five high schools. The nine participating districts included both rural and urban settings across Utah, providing diverse coverage of the state. After removing incomplete surveys from the 285 student respondents, we found there were 264 (93%) participants who fully completed the survey, of which 189 (72%) were females. Those who did not complete had very sparse data and non-answers appear to be random, thus we felt justified in using listwise deletion on the data and only including those who had complete data.

While the response rates might be considered low, existing research involving high school students has been conducted with smaller response groups due to IRB restrictions, parental consent issues, and students' willingness to participate (Harrell et al., 2000; Lamb et al., 2001; Pincus & Friedman, 2004). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that a sample size similar to the one we obtained can be statistically representative for populations of 6,000 or

more. The sample is of sufficient size for the statistical analysis, and we consider the results useful in understanding the teacher shortage in Utah.

### **Procedure**

In the spring of 2018 invitations to complete an anonymous online questionnaire were sent to all the juniors and seniors in the nine participating school districts by district personnel using their email system. For disaggregation purposes, the typically 6-point Likert scale was collapsed to three categories for reporting the results.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to answer the research questions (a) what factors predict whether a high school student would consider teaching as a profession and (b) students' belief that there is a better profession than teaching for them, statistical analysis was done. This involved descriptive statistics as well as univariate analyses. The independent variables used for this analysis related to items regarding students' perceptions of a teaching career and their personal experiences. The assumptions for multiple regression are: (a) linearity, (b) independence of observations, (c) normality of residuals, (c) equality of variance, and (d) multicollinearity. They are checked via residual plots, histograms of residuals, variance inflation factors (VIFs), and examining the structure of the data for independence. All statistical assumptions were met.

### **Results and Discussion**

Of the responses collected, only 59 students (22%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would consider teaching as a career—higher than Aragon's (2016) estimate of 12%. However, only 4% of students in this study indicated they felt teaching was their best career option, and of these students only 64% also indicated they would consider teaching as a career (3% overall).



So, while 57% of all responding students indicated that they might consider teaching, very few also felt that teaching was the best career option for them, as depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Students Considering Teaching vs. Those Perceiving it as the Best Career Option for Them*

Teaching is the best career option for me		<u>I would consider teaching</u>		
		Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed	(4% of all respondents)	18%	18%	64%
Maybe	(27%)	8%	39%	53%
Disagreed	(69%)	57%	35%	8%
All Respondents		43%	35%	22%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 88.3$   $p < .001$

### **Students' Perception of Teaching**

Table 3 lists students' beliefs about teaching and indicates relative importance of those beliefs in their willingness to consider teaching as a career. In general, students' perceptions of the teaching profession were somewhat ambivalent. Just over half agreed that people support teachers, but only a third felt teachers were well respected in the community. When asked about work conditions, students also tended to be somewhat neutral. Many felt that work conditions for teachers were important, but only a third agreed that work conditions for teachers were good and expectations were reasonable. It was not too surprising to find that only 9% of respondents felt that students in school were well behaved and cared about learning.

**Table 3**

*Students' Beliefs About Teaching and the Importance of These Individual Factors to Students in Considering Teaching as a Career*

Beliefs about Teaching	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Important or Very Important
Teachers are paid well.	61%	36%	3%	83%
Teacher have the resources they need to do their job.	25%	57%	18%	81%
Work conditions for teachers are good.	9%	54%	37%	81%
Teachers have a good lifestyle.	8%	47%	45%	76%
Expectations of teachers are reasonable.	15%	46%	39%	75%
Students are well behaved and care about learning.	34%	57%	9%	75%
Teachers are well respected in the community.	8%	54%	38%	63%
Most teachers I know are good teachers.	10%	45%	45%	62%
You need to have a certain personality to be a teacher.	7%	35%	58%	59%
People are very supportive of teachers.	3%	50%	57%	52%

Teacher salary was the factor that students (83%) felt was most important in their decision to be a teacher; but only 3% felt teachers are paid adequately for the job they do. We

were interested to find that 58% of respondents felt that being a good teacher requires a certain type of personality. Some might relate this to recognizing that many have an aptitude for teaching. Still, students attributed greater importance to other factors even though self-efficacy (the belief that one would be a good teacher) was the factor that most strongly predicted whether an individual would consider teaching as a career.

### **Factors Predicting Student Career Decisions for Teaching**

Using data representing students' perceptions of teaching and other factors researchers have identified as important, we conducted a predictive regression analysis to determine which factors best predicted whether students were willing to consider teaching as a career and whether they felt teaching was the best career option for them. Table 4 provides a list of the factors that were found to predict students' willingness to consider teaching as a career. Table 5 lists the factors found to be predictive of students' belief that other career options would be better for them. Table 6 lists those factors found not to be highly predictive in either regression.

Of note is the fact that pay and work conditions were not of primary concern. Self-efficacy (confidence for being a good teacher), academic history (average or slightly above average student), perceptions of community support for teachers, and the degree to which students felt they had been encouraged to consider teaching, among others, were found to be influential factors.

**Table 4***Factors Predictive of Students Considering Teaching as a Career*

Factor or Perception	Significance	Beta	Influence
Self-efficacy	< .001	.514	High
Others encourage them to be a teacher	< .001	.202	High
Family encourages them to teach	.009	.142	High
Academic success	.016	-.106	High
Student's gender	.036	.093	High
Belief that teaching is a respectable profession	.047	.104	High

**Table 5***Factors Predictive of Students' Belief That They Had Better Career Options Than Teaching*

Factor or Perception	Significance	Beta	Influence
Belief that people support teachers	.006	.203	High
Self-efficacy	.015	-.168	High
Family encouragement to teach	.026	-.162	High
Academic success	.037	.123	High

**Table 6***Factors Found not to be Highly Predictive in Any of the Regressions*

Factor or Perception	Significance	Beta	Influence
Teacher salary	.096	.084	Low/None
A member of my family is a teacher.	.096	.074	Low/None
Teachers I know are good.	.256	.056	Low/None
Expectations of teachers are reasonable.	.375	-.055	Low/None
Teachers need to have a teacher personality.	.450	.033	Low/None
Students are well behaved in the classroom.	.497	.035	Low/None
Teachers are well respected in the community.	.591	-.030	Low/None
Teachers have the needed resources to do their jobs.	.658	.023	Low/None
I've been inspired by teachers.	.828	.012	Low/None
Teachers have a good lifestyle.	.930	-.005	Low/None
Work conditions for teachers are good.	.985	-.001	Low/None

### **Analysis of Highly Influential Factors Predicting Students' Decisions**

#### **Self-Efficacy**

This factor was the most important factor students considered when deciding about teaching as a career. Students needed to believe that they would be good at teaching to both consider going into the profession and believing it to be their best option; 44% of participants felt they could be a good teacher; but only 4% felt teaching was the best career option for them.

Tables 7 and 8 present response distributions for the factor of self-efficacy disaggregated by respondents indicating whether they would consider becoming a teacher and whether they felt teaching was the best career option for them. Of those who said they definitely were not considering teaching as a career, 49% likely did so because they felt they would not be good at teaching. In contrast, 86% of those who said they were considering a teaching career reported that they felt they would do well in teaching. Yet while positive self-efficacy is important, it is

not sufficiently predictive by itself: 35% of those who did not think teaching was a good career option for them felt they would be good at teaching, and 18% percent of respondents who said teaching was their best career option did not think they would be good teachers.

**Table 7**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They Would Be Good Teachers by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career		I would be a good teacher		
		Disagree	Somewhat	Agree
Agreed	(22% of all respondents)	0	14%	86%
Maybe	(35%)	4%	40%	56%
Disagree	(43%)	49%	38%	13%
All respondents		22%	34%	44%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different ( $\chi^2(10) = 141.4$   $p < .001$ )

**Table 8**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They Would Be Good Teachers by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option		I would be a good teacher		
		Disagree	Somewhat	Agree
Agreed	(4% of all respondents)	18%	9%	73%
Maybe	(27%)	6%	31%	63%
Disagree	(69%)	29%	36%	35%
All Respondents		22%	34%	44%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different ( $\chi^2(10) = 32.9$   $p < .001$ )

### Encouragement from Others

Another indicator of students' willingness to consider teaching and belief that teaching would be their best career option involves encouragement: from family members and from other people they know. Results from these factors are disaggregated by the dependent variables in Tables 9-12, indicating the importance of encouragement. Overall, 64% of those considering teaching agreed their family had encouraged them to do so, and 41% indicated that others had

encouraged them. Of those who had not considered becoming a teacher, few had received encouragement to teach; only 20% from family and 5% from others. Similar results were found regarding the item about teaching as a best career option. Those who felt teaching was not a viable career option for them did not receive encouragement from family (39%) or others (58%). While those who felt teaching was a good career choice were more likely to agree they received encouragement from family (46%) or others (27%), as depicted in Tables 11 and 12.

Of relevance to this analysis are results from the parent portion of this study. Only 36% of the 495 parents surveyed indicated they would encourage their child to become a teacher, and just 25% of these parents felt teaching would be a good career option for their child. In addition, 45% of those parents who were or had been teachers said they would not encourage their child to consider becoming a teacher.

**Table 9**

*Disaggregation of Students' Family Encouragement by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career		Encouragement from family members		
		Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed	(22% of all respondents)	7%	29%	64%
Maybe	(35%)	24%	40%	36%
Disagree	(43%)	52%	28%	20%
All respondents		32%	32%	36%

*Note.* Response distributions were statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 67.2$   $p < .001$ .

**Table 10***Disaggregation of Students' Other Encouragement by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career	<u>Encouragement from those outside family</u>		
	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed (22% of all respondents)	10%	49%	41%
Maybe (35%)	34%	49%	17%
Disagree (43%)	73%	22%	5%
All respondents	46%	37%	17%

Note. Response distributions were not statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 88.4$   $p < .001$ .

**Table 11***Disaggregation of Students' Family Encouragement by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option	<u>Encouragement from family members</u>		
	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed (22% of all respondents)	36%	18%	46%
Maybe (35%)	14%	27%	59%
Disagree (43%)	39%	35%	25%
All respondents	32%	32%	36%

Note. Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 38.3$   $p < .001$

**Table 12***Disaggregation of Students' Other Encouragement by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option	<u>Encouragement from others</u>		
	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed (4% of all respondents)	37%	36%	27%
Maybe (27%)	15%	57%	28%
Disagree (69%)	58%	30%	12%
All respondents	46%	37%	17%

Note. Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 44.7$   $p < .001$



### Academic Success

Supporting the findings of research like that of Vegas et al. (2001), this study found that students who believed they were average students were more likely to both consider teaching as a career and believe that being a teacher was the best career option for them. While most respondents viewed themselves as average or above average students (98%), there was a greater trend for those willing to consider teaching to label themselves average students (see Table 13). So, while 74% of respondents who would definitely not consider teaching as a career viewed themselves as above average students, only 64% of students who said they would consider the teaching profession indicated they were above average. And while only 45% of those who felt teaching was the best career option for them indicated they were above average students academically, much larger percentages of self-reported above average students indicated they felt there were better career options for them than teaching—75% (see Table 14).

From this analysis we find that those who considered themselves to be high performing students were more likely to dismiss teaching as a possible career. While these data do not indicate a reason for this trend, a variety of possibilities have been suggested. Many point out that the best teachers are not always the highest academic achievers; non-academic attributes are more important. Others speculate that high achieving students might make good teachers but considering their potential and interests, many see more attractive opportunities for themselves in other careers (Goldhaber et al., 2011).

**Table 13**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They are a Good Student by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career	<u>I am a good student</u>		
	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Agreed (22% of all respondents)	2%	34%	64%
Maybe (35%)	3%	23%	74%
Disagree (43%)	2%	24%	74%
All respondents	2%	26%	72%

*Note.* Response distributions were not statistically different:  $\chi^2(4) = 3.0$   $p = .557$ .

**Table 14**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief That They are a Good Student by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option	<u>I am a good student</u>		
	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Agreed (4% of all respondents)	0	55%	45%
Maybe (27%)	1%	32%	67%
Disagree (69%)	3%	22%	75%
All respondents	4%	27%	69%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(6) = 9.2$   $p = .160$

## Gender

A student's gender was a predictive factor only for the dependent variable of whether the individual would consider teaching. When considering other career options gender became a non-significant factor. Of those who said they would definitely consider teaching as a career, 80% were female (see Table 15). In general, this finding supports the fact that most people who consider teaching are female (Ingersoll et al., 2014). As one parent put it, "I can't in good conscience encourage any of my three boys to consider teaching as a career [because it is] impossible to support a family on a teacher income. I am particularly sad about my middle son because he has a real gift for working with children and actually really likes the idea of being a

math teacher.” Table 16 extends the analysis of differences in gender, focusing on whether teaching was thought to be the best career option for the students.

**Table 15***Disaggregation of Students' Gender by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career		Male	Female
Agreed	(22% of all respondents)	20%	80%
Maybe	(35%)	23%	76%
Disagree	(43%)	36%	63%
All respondents		28%	71%

Note. Response distributions not statistically different  $\chi^2(4) = 7.2$   $p = .124$

**Table 16***Disaggregation of Students' Gender by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option		Male	Female
Agreed	(4% of all respondents)	27%	73%
Maybe	(27%)	12%	83%
Disagree	(69%)	33%	66%
All respondents		28%	71%

Note. Response distributions not statistically different:  $\chi^2(4) = 7.8$   $p = .098$

**Altruistic Beliefs**

Several studies have suggested that many people choose to teach because they see it as a calling (Bennett et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2018). These studies tend to survey only practicing teachers, but a high percentage of those in our study had altruistic beliefs about teaching as well: 73% of students, 87% of parents, and 89% of teachers. While this variable was predictive of the dependent variables separately, the results of the multivariate predictive analysis (which considers both dependent variables together) did not confirm altruistic beliefs as highly

predictive. Tables 17 and 18 present the results of this variable disaggregated by the dependent variables.

Of those who said that they would consider teaching as a career, 90% agreed that teaching is a noble profession; however, only 58% of those who said they would not consider teaching agreed. A similar but slightly diminished difference existed in the pattern of responses for the question of teaching being a student's best career option (see Table 18). We were interested to note that 2% of respondents who indicated that they would consider teaching also indicated they did not consider teaching a noble profession. Equally surprising was the finding that 18% of those who felt teaching was their best career option did not see teaching as a noble profession.

**Table 17**

*Disaggregation of Students' Altruistic Feeling Toward Teaching by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career		<u>Teaching is a noble profession</u>		
		Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed	(22% of all respondents)	2%	8%	90%
Maybe	(35%)	5%	15%	80%
Disagree	(43%)	10%	32%	58%
All respondents		6%	21%	73%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 31.4$   $p < .001$

**Table 18**

*Disaggregation of Students' Altruistic Feeling Toward Teaching by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option		<u>Teaching is a Noble Profession</u>		
		Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed	( 4% of all respondents)	18%	9%	73%
Maybe	(27%)	1%	8%	91%
Disagree	(69%)	8%	26%	66%
All respondents		6%	21%	73%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 27.8$   $p < .002$

### **Analysis of Other Influential Factors Predicting Students' Decisions**

Most teacher retention and recruitment studies have indicated that teacher compensation is an important issue (Han et al., 2018). In this sample, very few individuals thought teachers are well paid for what they do. While teacher pay showed as important in predicting whether a student would consider teaching, it was only moderately important for those indicating they thought teaching was their best career option (see Tables 19 and 20). A slightly greater proportion of students willing to consider teaching thought teachers were somewhat well paid compared to those unwilling to consider teaching as a viable career.

**Table 19**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief About Teacher Compensation by Their Willingness to Consider Teaching*

I would consider teaching as a career	<u>Teachers are paid well</u>		
	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agree (22% of all respondents)	57%	39%	4%
Maybe (35%)	52%	45%	3%
Disagree (43%)	71%	27%	2%
All respondents	60 %	37%	3%

*Note.* Response distributions were not statistically different  $\chi^2(10) = 12.5$   $p = .251$ .

**Table 20**

*Disaggregation of Students' Belief About Teacher Compensation by Their Belief That Teaching was Their Best Career Option*

Teaching is my best career option	<u>Teacher are paid well</u>		
	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Agreed (4% of all respondents)	60%	40%	0
Maybe (27%)	45%	52%	3%
Disagree (69%)	67%	30%	3%
All respondents	60%	37%	3%

*Note.* Response distributions statistically different:  $\chi^2(10) = 11.9$   $p = .293$

### Conclusions

Numerous studies have identified factors that likely affect teacher recruitment.

Recognizing that career choice for individuals is personal, based on relevant contextual factors that differ for each person, this study identified factors that appeared for the sample studied to more generally influence and predict an individual's decisions to enter the teaching profession.

Using students' willingness to consider teaching and their belief that teaching was their best career option as dependent variables, we found that students' willingness to consider teaching was not (by itself) a sufficient indicator of their likelihood of actually entering the

teaching profession. While 22% of the students in this study indicated they would consider teaching, only 4% felt teaching would be their best career option.

The primary factor individuals seemed to consider when making this career decisions was their self-efficacy for teaching: confidence they would be able to teach well. They also found it important to be encouraged by family and others to consider teaching. Two other factors—perception of their prior academic success and belief that teachers were supported by people they knew—also tended to be important. While factors like gender and salary likely were consideration, they did not seem to have as much predictive influence as the other factors.

One concern suggested by the data is that students do not seem to fully consider work conditions when choosing whether they want a career in teaching. Only a third of students felt that work conditions for teachers were good, and just 39% felt that expectations placed on teachers were reasonable. In addition, few students (9%) considered their fellow students well behaved in class. These factors did not seem to feature prominently in a student's decision to teach; however, these factors tend to be quite influential in predicting a teacher's thoughts of leaving the profession (authors, in review).

High school students consider many factors when making career decisions. While increasing teacher pay is often suggested as a potential solution to problems of both teacher recruiting and teacher retention, analysis from this study suggests that increasing teacher pay by itself will likely not solve the problem. Additional systemic issues must be addressed if a more complete and permanent solution is to be found. For recruitment, these include the need to encourage students with a propensity for teaching to teach, helping them recognize their abilities and encouraging them to follow that career path.

As encouragement is an essential component in teacher recruitment, future research on this factor is warranted. Students' tendency to downplay difficulties in teachers' job situations should also be given further consideration. Comprehensive studies on both the supply and demand of teachers could lead to long-term solutions to mitigate teacher shortages.



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ARTICLE 3

**Parental Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: Factors That Predict  
Parental Encouragement of Students to  
Enter the Teaching Profession**

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### Abstract

This study examines factors that influence parent's willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching as a career. Using structural equation modeling, we identified four factors that are highly predictive of a parent's willingness to encourage their children to consider teaching and their belief that teaching would be their best career option. Results indicated that parents were more likely to encourage their children to become teachers when people outside the family had encouraged the children to teach, if the parents believed their child would be a good teacher, and if parents thought that expectations placed on teachers were reasonable. Results also showed, however, that when considering other professions, parents were much less likely to encourage their children to become teachers in favor of other professions.

*Keywords:* teacher education, teacher recruitment, teacher profession, teacher shortage, perceptions on the teaching profession, career choice

## Introduction

Choosing a career can be difficult for some young people. Research on this topic has found that factors associated with the family context can have an important influence (Blustein, 2011; Kenny & Medvide, 2013; Krumboltz, 2009; Savickas et al., 2009; Young et al., 2002). Many of these studies have specifically explored the connection between parental support and career choice (Cross et al., 2019; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Wang et al., 2019).

The issue of career choice is especially important in the teaching profession. For some time, schools in the United States have struggled to maintain its workforce (Gray & Taie, 2015; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Rinke, 2014). The K-12 student enrollments continue to increase while, at the same time, few individuals are entering the teaching profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). Some researchers anticipate the teacher shortage to persist for the foreseeable future (Colby & Ortman, 2014; Hussar & Baily, 2017).

Further evidence of a teacher shortage is found by analyzing the enrollment trends at college and university teacher education programs as those programs prepare the majority of individuals for teaching. Enrollments in such programs has declined by 30% between 2010 and 2014 (Barth et al., 2016), resulting in fewer qualified teachers. To make matters worse, it is estimated that between a quarter and one half of teacher preparation program graduates do not end up teaching (DeMonte, 2016). In addition, education policies that are designed to lower the number of students per teacher, while well-intentioned, have the unintended consequence of increasing the demand for teachers.

The issues associated with teacher recruitment and retention are complex. However, one potential solution is to leverage the influence parents have over their children in order to increase the number of students entering teacher preparation programs. This study was conducted to

better understand the factors that influence a parent's willingness to encourage a child to become a teacher. This paper builds on research conducted by Christensen et al. (2019), where it was found that parental encouragement for juniors and seniors in high school was found to be predictive of whether those students would consider teaching as a career. It was found that encouragement from others, especially their parents, seems to have a direct and significant impact on the career choices made by young people.

This study is part of a larger teacher retention and recruitment study with students, teachers, school administrators, and parents in a sampling of school districts across the state of Utah. The larger study was designed to examine factors believed to have an effect on recruiting new teachers into the profession and retaining current teachers who would otherwise likely leave the profession. The research questions addressed in this paper explored the issue of parental support. They include the following:

1. What factors predict whether parents will encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher?
2. Which factors predict whether parents believe teaching would be the best career option for their children?

### **Summary of Parental Encouragement Research**

An abundance of research exists on how a student's circle of influence, especially from family members, plays a major role in decision making (Blustein, 2001; Blustein 2006; Brachter, 1982; Schultheiss, 2006; Whiston & Keller, 2004), but far less is known about the extent to which parents are actively encouraging their children to pursue a career in teaching and why. When it comes to understanding teacher recruitment and retention, most studies target current teachers, asking them questions about their decision to choose teaching as a career. There are



also several studies that have explored the general importance of parental support and its effect on career choices and self-efficacy (Cross et al., 2019; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Wang et al., 2019). For example, one study found that children's perceptions of parental support predicted self-efficacy in science (Navarro et al., 2007). Gushue and Whitson (2006), in research done on young people's perception of parental support, found that the perceived support correlated positively with career self-efficacy. Researchers also found that high school and college students who indicated that they received support and encouragement from their parents had a direct and positive impact on their career interests and choices (Meszaros et al., 2009). Few parental influence studies have been focused on the topic of teacher recruitment. However, one study conducted by Christensen et al. (2019) found that high school students were more likely to consider teaching as a career if they believed they would be good at teaching (self-efficacy).

In addition to the focus of these studies, it is important to note that most research on this topic attempts to identify factors that individuals considered when making career choices; they do not address the degree to which these factors tended to be predictive of someone's willingness to pursue a specific career. In addition, it is one thing to identify the factors a person considered when making their choices, but understanding which factors are most influential is potentially more important. For example, understanding which factors influence a parent or guardian's potential support for their child to enter teaching.

As noted, many factors have been identified in the teacher recruitment literature that individuals consider when deciding whether to enter the teaching profession. Table 1 presents a summarized list. These factors were used in the development of the survey instrument used in this study. While each topic presents one possible influence a parent might consider when choosing to encourage their child to contemplate teaching, the purpose of this study is to identify

which are more predictive of their decision to encourage (or not encourage) their children to become teachers. Many of the factors listed in Table 1 are established in the literature from several sources. Others were the result of a brainstorm by the research team due to a paucity of literature in those areas.

**Table 1**

*General Teaching-Related Factors Included in This Analysis Believed to Influence Parental Encouragement of Children to Teach*

Factor	Sources
Respect for teachers / profession	Fray & Gore, 2018; Azman, 2012
Teacher compensation	Han et al., 2018
Gender	Azman, 2012; Fray & Gore, 2018
Self-efficacy/interest	Christensen et al., 2019
Teacher's lifestyle	Fray & Gore, 2018; Hanks et al., 2019
Work conditions for teachers	Han et al., 2018
Encouragement from others	Ralph & MacPhail, 2015; Christensen et al., 2019
Parental education level	Author's Presumption
Previous Teaching Experience	Author's Presumption

Note: Multiple sources and consideration of aspects can be found for each general factor.

### **Description of Potential Influential Factors**

The following factors, which were summarized in Table 1, were used to create the parental encouragement survey instrument used in this study. Each factor was defined using a general summary of the existing research. Each has been identified as something that might influence a parent's decision to encourage their child to enter the teaching profession.

#### ***Respect for Teachers***

This issue speaks to the idea that society views teaching as a well-respected career, that teachers are valued by society. Further, the general public recognizes that the skill set required

for teaching is specialized and requires a high level of technical knowledge (Lawver & Torres, 2011).

### ***Teacher Compensation***

Compensation for teachers has been studied at length over the last several decades (Flyer & Rosen, 1997; Hanushek et al., 2004; Lankford et al., 2002; Podgursky et al., 2004). Most research concludes that compensation has been a factor in teacher recruitment and retention. An analysis of these results suggests that increases in remuneration leads to better retention of teachers. In addition, Han et al. (2018), found that teacher salaries affect the likelihood that young adults would consider teaching.

### ***Gender***

Education is a highly gender-segregated profession (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). Azman (2012) found that many females desired a career that was compatible with motherhood. Other researchers found that the stability and flexibility offered by teaching was conducive to child rearing and made for a suitable career for many women (Butt et al., 2010; Chung & Huang, 2012). In general, and whatever the reason, women are more likely than men to enter teaching (Guarino et al., 2006; Henke et al., 2000).

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Christensen et al. (2019) conducted a study of high school students to discover factors that would predict whether the students would consider the teaching profession. The results showed that the leading factor for considering teaching was whether the student felt that they would be a good teacher. It could be that a parent may consider whether they think their child would be good at teaching and might predict their willingness to encourage their child to consider teaching.

### ***Teacher's Lifestyle***

This refers to a teacher's lifestyle both outside and in the classroom. For example, several studies showed that achieving a balance between work and family commitments, being able to fit teaching into an individual's life, and having a flexible working hours and holidays are important (Aksu et al., 2010; Gu & Lai, 2012; Pop & Turner, 2009; Sinclair, 2008; Struyven et al., 2013; Weiss & Kiel, 2013).

### ***Working Conditions***

Several studies have shown that working conditions encountered by teachers have a direct effect on both recruitment and retention. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers were more likely to leave the profession if they did not receive adequate support or resources to be successful. Ingersoll (2001) found that teachers who reported greater autonomy in the classroom and stronger administrative support had lower levels of attrition. Kelly (2004) noted that the behavioral climates of the schools were at least part of the reason teachers left the profession. Mentoring and on-boarding programs for new teachers were also found to be a factor (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Issues involving job security, general working conditions, and income have been shown as factors that influence a person's decision to consider teaching and persist as a teacher (Aksu et al., 2010; Cheung & Yuen, 2016; Gu & Lai, 2012; Jungert et al., 2014; Sinclair, 2008).

### ***Encouragement from Others***

Extensive research on how those within a social circle influence career choice has been conducted (Dewar & Lawson, 1984; Matanin & Collier, 2003; O'Sullivan et al., 2009; Tsangaridou, 2006). Perhaps the most influential social circle factor these studies determined was important was a child's parents; however, other family members can also have a strong

influence. Individuals at a student's school, such as coaches and teachers, have been shown to have an influence over the student's perceptions and behaviors. A student's peers and friends can also directly influence their career choices.

### **Teaching-Related Issues Proposed by the Authors**

Two other topics were discussed by the research team conducting this study and, while no published research was found on the topics, the authors believed that these topics could have some bearing on a parent's likelihood of encouraging their children to pursue a career in the teaching profession.

#### ***Previous Teaching Experience***

The idea that a parent has previous teaching experience, is currently a teacher, or has a family member that is a teacher was thought to have some potential predictive quality. Someone who is highly experienced in the field would, theoretically, have direct experience and opinions about the profession. As such, current or previous teaching experience was added as a factor to the survey instrument.

#### ***Parent's Education Level***

Another factor that was thought might influence parents' willingness to encourage their children to teach was the parent's level of education. The theory was that the higher the education level the less likely a parent would encourage their child to consider teaching. In order to test the theory an item on highest education attained by the respondents was added to the survey instrument.

### **Methodology**

In this study we surveyed the parents of school-aged children to determine their perception of the teaching profession. Then, using structural equation modeling, we identified

which factors best predicted whether parents would encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher and whether they felt that teaching was the best career option for their children. These two questions are considered connected, but different. A parent's willingness to have their child consider teaching is not the same as feeling teaching might be the best career option for them.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Survey items were developed, tested, and refined for each of the factors listed in Table 1 following a process recommended by Creswell (2014). In the survey design process items were validated using a cognitive think aloud process then pilot testing to verify that items did in fact capture the essence of the factors of interest. A 6-point Likert scale was used to capture respondents' answers. The result was a survey instrument that could help aggregate parents' perceptions of the teaching profession and provide possible predictors of parents' willingness to encourage their children to become teachers. The final version of the survey was approved by each of the participating school districts prior to administration based on the Institutional Review Board protocols.

### **Participants**

Parents with school-aged children, at 41 K-12 school districts across the state of Utah, were selected to participate in this study. Of the 41 districts, nine agreed to allow us to send anonymous surveys to the parents within the districts. Several of the districts allowed us to survey administrators and teachers, but not parents and students. The nine participating districts came from both rural and urban settings across the state of Utah, providing diverse coverage of the state. In total, 495 parents responded to the survey, which was administered in the spring of 2018. The response rate is unknown as the schools did not make available the total number of

surveys that were sent out. Invitations to complete the anonymous online questionnaire, following Institutional Review Board approval requirements, were sent to all the parents in the nine participating school districts by district personnel using their email system.

### **Analytic Approach**

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and multiple regression analysis. The EFA was run to identify factors that are supported by the survey responses. Next, the CFA was run to test the factor structure. Where necessary, adjustments were made to attain an acceptable fit for the model. Finally, the hypothesized regression analysis was tested. For example, in order to achieve an acceptable model fit, one item, “You need to have a certain personality to be a teacher,” was excluded. The model was derived using the Mplus statistical software program. Assumptions for running the models (linearity, multivariate normality, and lack of outliers) were checked using a variety of diagnostic procedures, including histograms and scatterplots, utilizing SPSS. All assumptions were found to have been met. Missing data was examined and determined to be missing at random. Maximum likelihood estimation methods were used in each analysis.

Model fit was tested using several standardized fit statistics: the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR; Hu & Bentler, 1999). A model that has good fit is indicated by an RMSEA less than .06, a CFI at or above .90, and an SRMR that is less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Thompson, 2000). The analysis yielded a model with strong fit statistics. The RMSEA for the model was .042; less than the .06 maximum. The CFI for the model was .958, which is above the anticipated .9 requirement. The SRMR was .042; a score well below the maximum figure of .08 for good fit.

Conducting a regression analysis, and not just focusing on separate correlations, allows for an analysis of variables in the presence of other variables. For example, it may be determined that wages, alone, may lead to fewer individuals who would consider teaching. However, lower wages might be overcome by other factors such as retirement benefits, work environment, and workload. By conducting multiple regression analysis, a unique combination of variables will be considered together. One limitation of this study involves the use of a single survey item for each dependent variable. A composite of several items forming a construct is often preferable if it is believed that measurement error can be reduced. For this study, it is believed that the construct is too narrow to combine multiple items and measurement error would not change if a multiple-item construct was used.

## **Results**

### **CFA Results**

In order to answer the research questions posed in this study, the appropriateness of the survey instrument to measure the constructs of interest was established. The CFA results indicated two separate perception factors: respect for the teachers and expectations of teachers. Table 2 presents the results for the respect construct and Table 3 presents the results for the teacher expectations construct.



**Table 2***CFA Item Loading for the Respect Factor*

Item	Unstandardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Standardized Factor Loading	Communality
Teachers are well respected in the community.	1.206**	0.176	0.848	71.9%
People I know are very supportive of teachers.	1.000	NA	0.722	52.1%
I respect and support the teachers at my child's school.	0.449**	0.096	0.396	15.7%

\*\*p < .01

As depicted in Table 2, three items loaded on the first factor in the CFA results. This factor is known as the *respect factor* because the items all address issues related to a respondent's belief that teachers are well respected.

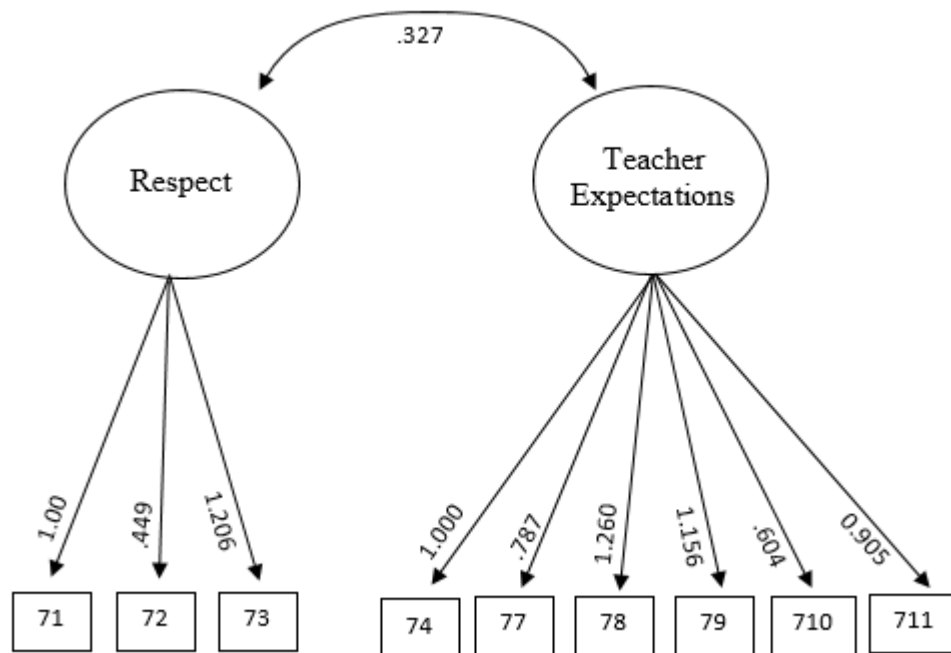
Table 3 presents the item loadings for the second construct found as a result of the CFA. Six items loaded on this factor and, collectively, were labeled as the *teacher expectations factor*. This factor gives a measure of the parents' perception of the expectations, work conditions, and lifestyle of teachers.

**Table 3***CFA Item Loading for the Teacher Expectations Factor*

Item	Unstandardized Factor Loading	Standard Error	Standardized Factor Loading	Communality
Expectations of teachers are reasonable (teaching loads, class size, etc.).	1.260**	0.069	0.855	73.1%
Working conditions for teachers are good.	1.156**	0.075	0.804	64.6%
Teachers are provided with needed resources.	1.000	NA	0.700	49.0%
Teachers are paid well.	0.905**	0.068	0.651	42.3%
Teachers have a good lifestyle (working hours, holidays, etc.).	0.787**	0.070	0.570	32.5%
Students are well behaved, respect teachers, and care about learning.	0.604**	0.064	0.490	24.0%

\*\*p < .01

Figure 1 depicts the results of the CFA analysis. Squares indicate the items from the survey and circles represent the two factors found in the CFA. The factor loadings and correlations among factors are based on a sample of 495 parents who responded to the survey. This result provide evidence that the parent's perception of these two constructs (as measured by these items) can be used with confidence in the regression analysis.

**Figure 1***Standardized Parameter Estimates for the Factor Structure of the Survey***Multiple Regression Analysis Results**

Two items were used as dependent variables for the multiple regression analysis: “I have encouraged my children to become teachers” and “I believe my children would be better off not working as teachers.” The results of the multiple regression analysis on the predictors are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4 presents the multiple regression analysis for the dependent variable “I have encouraged my children to become teachers.” All variables were included in the analysis and, in the presence of all variables, three were found to be statistically significant: the teacher expectations factor that was discovered during the CFA process, and two individual survey

items; the first being “people outside my family have encouraged my children to become teachers,” and the second, “I think teaching is something my children would be good at.”

The strongest predictor of a parent’s willingness to encourage their child to consider teaching as a career is whether they feel others also have encouraged their child to consider teaching. Based on the result presented in Table 4, for every one unit of increase in encouragement from people outside the family, the dependent variable increases by .503 units and has a standardized beta of .455. Two additional influential predictors, of parental encouragement, were whether the parents thought their children would be good at teaching and the parents’ perception of teacher expectations. This, however, is only an indicator of whether the parent would encourage their child to consider teaching not whether they felt teaching was the best career choice for their child.

**Table 4**

*Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Dependent Variable “I Have Encouraged my Children to Become Teachers,” ( $R^2=39.400\%$ ,  $n=495$ )*

Factors	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta
People outside my family have encouraged my child to become teachers.	0.505**	0.046	0.458
I think teaching is something my child would be good at.	0.263**	0.051	0.213
Teacher Expectations Construct	0.210**	0.077	0.125
Respect Construct	0.058	0.094	0.031
Previously worked as a teacher	0.008	0.124	0.003
Parent’s Gender (female)	-0.004	0.131	-0.001
Others in your family worked as a teacher	-0.019	0.107	-0.006
Highest degree you achieved in school?	-0.065	0.054	-0.050

\*\* $p < .01$

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis for the second dependent variable: I believe my child would be better off in a career other than teaching. All variables were included in the analysis and, in the presence of all variables, four were found to be

predictive of this dependent variable. Although still important, regardless of whether others have encouraged their child to consider teaching, the strongest predictor of this variable, based on the standardized beta values, was the parent's belief that their child would be a good teacher. If they did not believe their child had the aptitude for teaching, they were more likely to indicate their child had better career option than teaching. Additional factors of outside encouragement, as well as the parent's perception of teacher expectations and respect also had predictive influence for this variable.

**Table 5**

*Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Dependent Variable "I Believe my Children Would be Better off in a Different Career" ( $R^2=25.100\%$ ,  $n=495$ ).*

Factors	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta
Belief that teaching is something my child would be good at.	0.285**	0.062	0.226
Outside Encouragement for my child to become a teacher.	0.245**	0.057	0.218
Teacher Expectations Construct	0.328**	0.092	0.192
Respect Construct	0.235 *	0.114	0.123
Is anyone in your family a teacher?	0.119	0.120	0.039
Parent's Gender (Female)	0.050	0.142	0.014
Have you worked as a teacher?	-0.158	0.138	-0.053
Highest degree achieved in school?	-0.093	0.059	-0.071

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## Discussion

### Significant Factors That Predict Parental Encouragement to Consider Teaching

The following is a discussion of the results of the survey related to the first of the two research questions: Which factors predict whether parents will encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher? In general, parents are more likely to encourage their child to consider a career in teaching if others have encouraged their child to teach, they feel their child

has an aptitude to teach, and they have a positive perception regarding the expectations placed on teachers in the workplace.

### ***Encouragement from Others***

The results of the survey and statistical analysis as depicted in Table 4 show that when people outside the family encourage children to teach their parents are more likely to encourage their children to consider teaching as a career. As parents hear from others that their children might be good at teaching there appears to be some peer pressure in also assuming that their children should at least consider teaching as a potential career. Further, it seems likely that recruiting qualified individuals into the teaching profession could benefit from a concerted effort from those within students' social circles, including teachers, guidance counselors, and others, to identify potential high-quality candidates and not only encourage them to consider teaching but to also inform their parents.

### ***Parent Perceptions of Their Children's Ability to Teach***

The perception that an individual's child had an aptitude for teaching was also found to be a significant predictor of whether they would encourage their child to consider teaching. Parents who think their children would be good at teaching were more likely to encourage them to consider teaching. This result suggests that parents want their children to consider professions (in this case teaching) at which they would be successful. This also supports the research found by Christensen et al. (2019) that showed high school students were more likely to consider teaching as a career if they thought they would be good at it.

### ***Teacher Expectations***

According to the results presented in Table 4, how the parents perceive the expectations placed on teachers is a significant predictor of whether parents would encourage their children to

consider teaching. As the expectations placed on teachers by school and district administration are perceived by parents to be unreasonable, the less likely they are to encourage their children to become teachers. Things like the number of pupils per classroom, general working conditions, sufficiency of resources, teacher pay, and student behavior all contribute to a parent's willingness to encourage their child to consider entering the teaching profession. This is of concern given that even when a parent feels their child would be a good teacher, they might not encourage them to consider teaching if they believe work conditions for teachers are not adequate.

### **Items Not Found to Be Statistically Significant**

While individuals may consider many factors before making any decision, the issue of teacher respect was not found to be a significant predictor of whether a parent would encourage their children to consider becoming teachers. The standardized beta of 0.031 shows that it has a relatively small influence when compared to the other factors. Apparently, even though respect for teachers in general has declined greatly (Fray & Gore, 2018), this is not a strongly predictive factor in a parent's willingness to encourage their child to consider becoming a teacher. However, as Table 5 indicates, it does seem to have a more profound influence in predicting whether parents feel teaching would be a good career for their child, which is discussed further in the next section of this article.

Several items from the survey asked about things that were expected to significantly influence parents' behavior but, surprisingly, were not. For instance, it was expected that if a survey respondent had ever been a teacher, they would have a strong opinion on teaching and strong feelings about whether they would encourage their children to consider teaching, but this

was not the case. The survey results showed that it was equally likely that a parent with or without teaching experience would encourage their children to consider teaching.

Another assumption was that as a parent's level of education would influence their encouragement; that those with more education would want the same, or better, for their children. However, the parent's level of education did not factor into their propensity to encourage their children to consider teaching.

Lastly, it was anticipated that the gender of the parent might be a significant predictor. Teachers are predominantly female and it was thought that female parents would strongly encourage their children to teach. However, the gender of the parent did not matter as it relates to them encouraging their children to teach. One limitation of this study was not collecting data on the gender of the parent's children. As has been established in the literature, the teaching profession is predominantly female and knowing the gender of the children could have shown whether parents are more likely to encourage their daughters to teach, as opposed to their sons.

### **Factors That Influence Parents Belief That Their Children Have Better Career Options**

The previous discussion was centered on whether parents would encourage their children to consider becoming a teacher. This discussion pertains to the second research question: Which factors predict whether parents believe teaching would be the best career option for their children? Table 5 shows which factors were influential in predicting a parent's belief that there are better options than teaching for their children. Even though a parent may be willing to have their child consider teaching, they may not believe that their child should become a teacher. They may believe their child has better options. In general, a parent's belief as to whether teaching is their child's best career option is primarily influenced by their perception of the child's potential to be a good teacher and whether others have encouraged their child to become a teacher. In



addition, the parent's perception of work conditions for teachers and the respect teachers have in the community were also found to be important.

### ***Parent Perceptions on Their Children's Ability to Teach***

A parent may believe that their child would be good at teaching, but they may also think that their child would be good at, or even better at, other careers. In fact, as parents believe their children would be good at other careers, they become less likely to encourage their children to teach, even if they think their children would be good at teaching.

### ***Encouragement from Others to Consider Teaching***

Table 5 shows that when others encourage children to teach, their parents are more likely to encourage them to become teachers. When considering other career options, the opposite is true. When considering other career options beyond teaching, persons of influence become less likely to encourage young people to become teachers and are more apt to recommend other professions.

### ***Teacher Expectations***

As the perceived expectations of teachers becomes more demanding, parents were more likely to encourage their children to pursue other career options. This does not necessarily mean that parents want their children to select a less demanding profession. More likely, the parent's attitude, in general, is that there are better career options for the same amount of work involved. This suggests that, when considering other career options, compensation becomes an issue. The assumption is that parents will encourage their children to pursue more lucrative careers if it is believed that the work effort would be similar to that required of teachers.

***Respect for Teachers***

Whereas the respect factor was not a significant predictor for encouraging their child to consider teaching, it is a significant influence when considering other professions. Parents may consider teachers to be well respected, but it is possible that parents believe other professions are more respectable than teaching. In that case, parents would be inclined to encourage their children to consider other career options.

**Items Not Found to Be Significant**

When a parent thinks their child would be better off doing something other than teaching several variables were found to not have significant influence relative to the factors listed above. The gender of the parent responding to the survey did not seem to matter. As previously mentioned, the research shows that many more females than males are teachers, but the gender of the parent had no bearing on their perception that their child would be better off in a different career.

Teaching experience and having a teacher in the family were not significant predictors either. Anecdotally, individuals with prior teaching experience, when asked, would often say they would never encourage one of their children to become a teacher. However, the survey showed that those with teaching experience were statistically ambivalent, suggesting that for the vocal minority of those who have had negative experiences with teaching, there are many more who are more neutral; or those with negative feelings about teaching based on their experience might overlook that given other factors. In either case, having a teacher in the family did not seem to do anything to persuade or dissuade parents from thinking their children might be better off doing something other than teaching.

Last, the parent's level of education had no statistical bearing on the results. Parents with all levels of education (high school to doctorate) responded to the survey, but their level of education was not found to be a significant predictor. It was anticipated that the parents would want their children to achieve at least the same level of education, if not more so, but that theory is not reflected in the results.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study has addressed factors that predict whether parents are likely to encourage their children to become teachers and whether parents believe teaching would be the best career option for their children. Specifically related to teaching, parents are more likely to encourage their children to consider teaching if they see that others have encouraged them to teach. In addition, this study shows that parents are more inclined to encourage their children to enter the teaching profession if they think their children would be good at it. In addition, when parents have a positive perception of the expectations of teachers, they are more likely to suggest that their children consider teaching.

When considering teaching, parents may have shown some inclination to encourage their children to become teachers, however, when asked if they thought their children had better career options, parents' perceptions changed slightly. It was shown that even though a parent may be willing to have their child consider teaching, they may not believe that their child should become a teacher; that their child has better options. A parent's belief that their child has better career options is influenced by their perception of the child's aptitude for teaching and whether others have encouraged their child to be a teacher. Working conditions and how well respected teachers are also influenced the extent to which a parent thought their child might have better career options.

When working to solve the complex issue of teacher recruitment it is important to not overlook the perceptions parents have of their children's ability to teach, the extent to which others (parents, other family members, coaches, teachers, mentors, peers, and friends) influence the career choices of young people.

While widespread encouragement of young people to consider teaching would be helpful in terms of more people entering the teaching profession, the results of this study indicate that a more focused campaign would be even more effective. It is encouraging to find that parents' first consideration for believing their child should become a teacher is the child's aptitude for the profession. However, parents need to be aware of their child's aptitude for teaching and be encouraged to consider encouraging their child to become a teacher if they would be good at it. The teaching profession does not just need more teachers, it needs good teachers. If people within a child's circle of influence believe a particular child would make a great teacher, an effective strategy would be to not only encourage that person to become a teacher but to also inform the child's parents. When parents see teaching potential in their children, they are more likely to encourage them to become teachers.

As this study has shown, a parent who believes their child might be good at teaching might not be enough to have them encourage their child to teach. That is due, in part to the parents' beliefs about the teaching profession. It might be helpful if parents would revise their thinking about the teaching profession. Parents should become informed about the quality of life teachers enjoy, the relatively good working conditions, working hours, and holidays. Then, parents should educate their children on those and other aspects of teaching, such as teacher pay, student behavior, and general expectations of teachers in their day-to-day work. All of these

facets of teaching should be learned by the parents and then explained to their children through the lens of the child's potential ability as a teacher.

Encouragement from parents and others could help to increase the numbers of children who will seriously consider teaching as a career and work towards becoming a qualified, licensed teacher. However, this alone will not solve the teacher shortage. Increasing the numbers of new high-quality teachers is just the beginning and will not be enough to ensure an adequate teaching force. The teaching profession needs to also retain teachers. Once a young person has entered the teaching profession and demonstrated an ability to teach, given the trend to disparage the teaching profession, more will need to be done change societal perceptions of the profession and take steps to improve work conditions and general respect for teachers, creating a more desirable work environment.

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## DISSERTATION CONCLUSION

From the study, which explored factors that predict high school students' willingness to become teachers, the findings show several implications that could inform the recruitment efforts of teacher education programs. The most prominent of the findings deals with the students' belief in their ability to be a good teacher. Students who thought they could be good at teaching were more likely to consider teaching as a viable career.

In addition to self-efficacy, the study showed factors such as encouragement from people both inside and outside the family, student academic success, the students' gender, and the belief that teaching is a respectable profession were all statistically predictive of whether high school students would consider teaching. Notably absent from the statistically significant predictive factors were teacher pay and teacher working conditions.

These findings could be important to recruitment efforts of teacher preparation programs. One aspect of most recruiting plans is to participate in high school career fairs, wherein the college or university sends a representative to inform high school students about their teaching program. Instead of simply informing students about the program, recruiters could spearhead a campaign that fosters students' belief that they would be good at teaching and that teaching is a respectable profession. Working with school guidance counselors, teachers, and parents in a coordinated way could help convince more students to consider teaching. This does not mean that issues of compensation should be avoided. Certainly, the perception that teachers are not well paid needs to also be addressed.

The continuation study, *Parental Perceptions of the Teaching Profession: Factors that Predict Parental Encouragement of Students to Enter the Teaching Profession*, builds on the student study, with its focus specifically on parents' perceptions. A review of the literature

showed that there is a strong connection between parental support and career choice and the first study presented in this dissertation reinforced that notion. To that end, the second study was designed to find factors that would predict whether parents would encourage their children to consider teaching as a career. The findings of the study revealed four factors that are statistically predicative, three of which are people outside the family had encouraged the children to teach, if the parents believed their child would be a good teacher, and if parents thought the expectations on teachers were reasonable. A fourth factor, parents who considered other options beyond teaching, showed that parents are much less likely to encourage their children to become teachers in favor of other professions.

Several future research opportunities related to recruiting new individuals into the teaching profession became apparent over the course of conducting the two studies. They have shown that being good at teaching and being encouraged to become a teacher are important parts of predicting whether a high school student would consider teaching as a career. More could be learned about determining whether a student has an aptitude for teaching. In addition, perceptions of total teacher compensation compared to base wages paid to teachers should be explored further. It is possible that the perception that teachers are not well paid is founded only on the base salaries paid without considering other aspects of teacher compensation, such as insurance and pension benefits. While teacher pay was not found to be a deterrent to entering the teaching profession, perhaps potential entrants could be enticed into the profession if they were better educated on total teaching compensation packages, including health and retirement benefits, and not focusing solely on wages.

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## APPENDIX A

**IRB Approval Letter****INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS****Memorandum**

To: Professor Randall Davies  
Department: IP&T  
College: EDUC

From: Sandee Aina, MPA, IRB Administrator

Bob Ridge, PhD, IRB Chair

Date: December 14, 2017

IRB#: X17469

Title: *“Understanding Utah’s Current Teacher Shortage”*

Brigham Young University’s IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as expedited, categories 6-7. The approval period is from December 14, 2017 to December 13, 2018. Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB. Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

A copy of the informed consent statement is attached. No other consent statement should be used. Each research subject must be provided with a copy or a way to access the consent statement.

Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.

All recruiting tools must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to use.

In addition, serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately, with a written report by the PI within 24 hours of the PI's becoming aware of the event. Serious adverse events are (1) death of a research participant; or (2) serious injury to a research participant.

All other non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB.

A few months before the expiration date, you will receive a continuing review form. There will be two reminders. Please complete the form in a timely manner to ensure that there is no lapse in the study approval.

## APPENDIX B

**Teacher Retention Study 2018 – Parents Survey****Q2 Please indicate your sex**

- Male       Female       Prefer not to answer

**Q3 Have you ever worked as a teacher?**

- Yes       No

**Q4 Other than yourself, Is anyone in your family a teacher?**

- Yes       No

**Q5 What is the highest degree you have achieved in school?**

- High school     2 or 4 year degree     Masters     Doctoral     None

**Q6 Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the statements below.**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

*With regards to teaching as a career:*

People outside my family have encouraged my children/child to consider becoming a teacher.

I have encouraged my children/child to consider becoming a teacher if they want to.

I believe teaching is a respectable profession.

Teachers I know inspire me.

I think teaching is something my child/children would be good at.

I believe my child/children would be better off NOT working as a teacher.

**Q7 Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of these statements.**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

People I know are very supportive of teachers.

I respect and support the teachers at my child's school.

Teachers are well respected in the community.

Teachers are provided with all the resources they need to do their job well.

You need to have a certain personality to be a good teacher.

Most the teachers I know are good teachers.

Teachers have a good lifestyle (working hours, holidays).

Expectations of teachers are reasonable (teaching loads, class sizes, and responsibilities).

Working conditions for teachers are good.

Students are well behaved, respect teachers, and care about learning.

Teachers are paid well for doing their job.

**Q8 How important are each of the following in terms of your decisions to encourage your children/child to consider teaching as a career?**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Somewhat Unimportant, Unimportant, Very Unimportant)

People I know are very supportive of teachers.

I respect and support the teachers at my child's school.

Teachers are well respected in the community

Teachers are provided with all the resources they need to do their job well.

You need to have a certain personality to be a good teacher.

Most the teachers I know are good teachers.

Teachers have a good lifestyle (working hours, holidays).

Expectations of teachers (teaching loads, class sizes, and responsibilities) are reasonable.

Working conditions for teachers are good.

Students are well behaved, respect teachers, and care about learning.

Teachers are paid well for doing their job.

**Q9 To what degree do you agree that each of the following are an issue for teachers leaving the profession? I believe teachers leave because:**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

Working conditions/expectations become overwhelming.

Their life circumstances change (move, get married, have children).

They are unwilling to do the job for what they are paid (salary and benefits).

They dislike the teaching position they are given.

They don't get along with other teachers/staff working at the school. The working environment is negative.

They find other jobs that pay better (salary and benefits).

They don't feel respected/supported by school administration.

They don't feel respected/supported by parents and the community.

They don't feel respected by students and/or find behavior problems to be overwhelming.

Other reasons.

**Q10 How common is this in terms of teacher retention?**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Very Common, Common, Somewhat Common, Somewhat Uncommon, Uncommon, Very Uncommon)

Working conditions/expectations become overwhelming.

Their life circumstances change (move, get married, have children).

They are unwilling to do the job for what they are paid (salary and benefits).

They dislike the teaching position they are given.

They don't get along with other teachers/staff working at the school. The working environment is negative.

They find other jobs that pay better (salary and benefits).

They don't feel respected/supported by school administration.

They don't feel respected/supported by parents and the community.

They don't feel respected by students and/or find behavior problems to be overwhelming.

Other reasons.

## APPENDIX C

**Teacher Retention Study 2018 – Student Survey****Q2 Please indicate your sex?**

- Male     Female     Prefer not to answer

**Q3 Are you a successful student?**

- Not Really     Below Average     About Average     Above Average     Well above average

**Q4 Is anyone in your family a teacher?**

- Yes     No

**Q5 Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the statements below. With regards to teaching as a career:**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

People outside my family have encouraged me to consider becoming a teacher.

My parents or relatives have encouraged me to consider becoming a teacher if I want to.

I believe teaching is a respectable profession.

Teachers I know inspire me.

I think teaching is something I would be good at.

I am considering becoming a teacher.

There are better career options for me than being a teacher.

**Q6 Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of these statements on perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession:**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

People I know are very supportive of teachers.

Teachers are well respected in the community.

Teachers are provided with all the resources they need to do their job well.

You need to have a certain personality to be a good teacher.

Most the teachers I know are good teachers.

Teachers have a good lifestyle (working hours, holidays).

Expectations of teachers (teaching loads, class sizes, and responsibilities) are reasonable.

Working conditions for teachers are good.

Students are well behaved, respect teachers, and care about learning.

Teachers are paid well for doing their job.

**Q7 How important is this in terms of you considering teaching as a career?**

Responses were collected using a six point Likert scale.

(Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Somewhat Unimportant, Unimportant, Very Unimportant)

People I know are very supportive of teachers.

Teachers are well respected in the community.

Teachers are provided with all the resources they need to do their job well.

You need to have a certain personality to be a good teacher.

Most the teachers I know are good teachers.

Teachers have a good lifestyle (working hours, holidays).

Expectations of teachers (teaching loads, class sizes, and responsibilities) are reasonable.

Working conditions for teachers are good.

Students are well behaved, respect teachers, and care about learning.

Teachers are paid well for doing their job.