

Factors affecting teacher retention and attrition in rural schools

Dr. William Clark

My Background

- Former Math Educator, School Administrator
 - Franklin County Vo-Tech, St. Marys Area SD, Milton Area SD, Manheim Central SD, Warren County SD
- Director of a Non-profit
 - Barber National Institute – Bollinger Campus Adjunct Professor
- Adjunct Professor
 - Wilkes University, Lebanon Valley College, Penn State World Campus
- Current
 - Prof. of Sec. Ed. – Pitt Bradford
- Education
 - Cameron County High School
 - Bachelors Secondary Math - Penn State
 - Masters Ed Adm – Shippensburg University
 - D. Ed. Ed Adm - Penn State
- Research Areas
 - Teacher Retention and Attrition
 - Hiring Practices of the Underrepresented Populations
 - Using Theater to Teach the Holocaust
 - Adolescence to Infant Mental Health

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the study to review teachers job satisfaction for teachers who were new to the district within the last four years and their perception around factors such as job satisfaction in the areas of financial factors, district support, school culture, and school discipline.

Literature Review – Attrition

- Alignment of Teacher Induction: Wechsler et al. (2012) found that the effectiveness of the support beginning teacher receive from their mentors depends upon a variety of factors – factors difficult to control – proximity of the new teacher to the mentor, how well the two get along, and level of professional community within the school.
- Assignment of Teacher Mentors: When considering the selection of mentors, Prather-Jones (2011) stated that teachers pointed out the importance of personal characteristics which fit their personality and demands of the job.
- Teachers Mental Health: The increased workload that comes with new initiatives often leads teachers to experience high levels of exhaustion and lower self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bottiani et al., 2019).

Literature Review – Retention

- **Teacher Induction:** Ingersoll (2012) stated that schools must provide an environment where novice teachers can learn how to **teach, survive, and succeed as teachers**.
- **Establishing Relationships:** Seelig and McCabe (2021) findings showed that the **reason teachers stay in rural schools** is based upon four relationship categories: 1) the new teacher's commitment to students, 2) if the school district provides opportunities for leadership and collaboration for new teachers, 3) new teachers need to feel a connection to the community, and 4) new teachers need to develop personal relationships and ties within the school and community.
- **Administrators Role:** Kutsyurba et al. (2019) found **creating a school climate** that is inviting, supportive, and conducive for new teachers' learning, development, collaboration and connection is an important aspect of growing well-being and organizational health.

Participants

- Pennsylvania Rural and Small Schools, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, and Pennsylvania Principals Association.
- 198 teachers who were new to the district in last 4 years completed the survey
- The profile of the average participant was a white female from a rural school who was married, 26-30 years old and had 1-5 years teaching elementary.

Procedure

- Demographic data
- Likert scale
 - Job Satisfaction
- Survey conducted using Qualtrics

Instrumentation

First Section: Demographics

The eight questions were: 1) what grade level you are certified to teach, 2) area of certification, 3) years of teaching experience, 4) race/ethnicity, 5) material status, 6) age, 7) gender/sexual orientation, and 8) location of school.

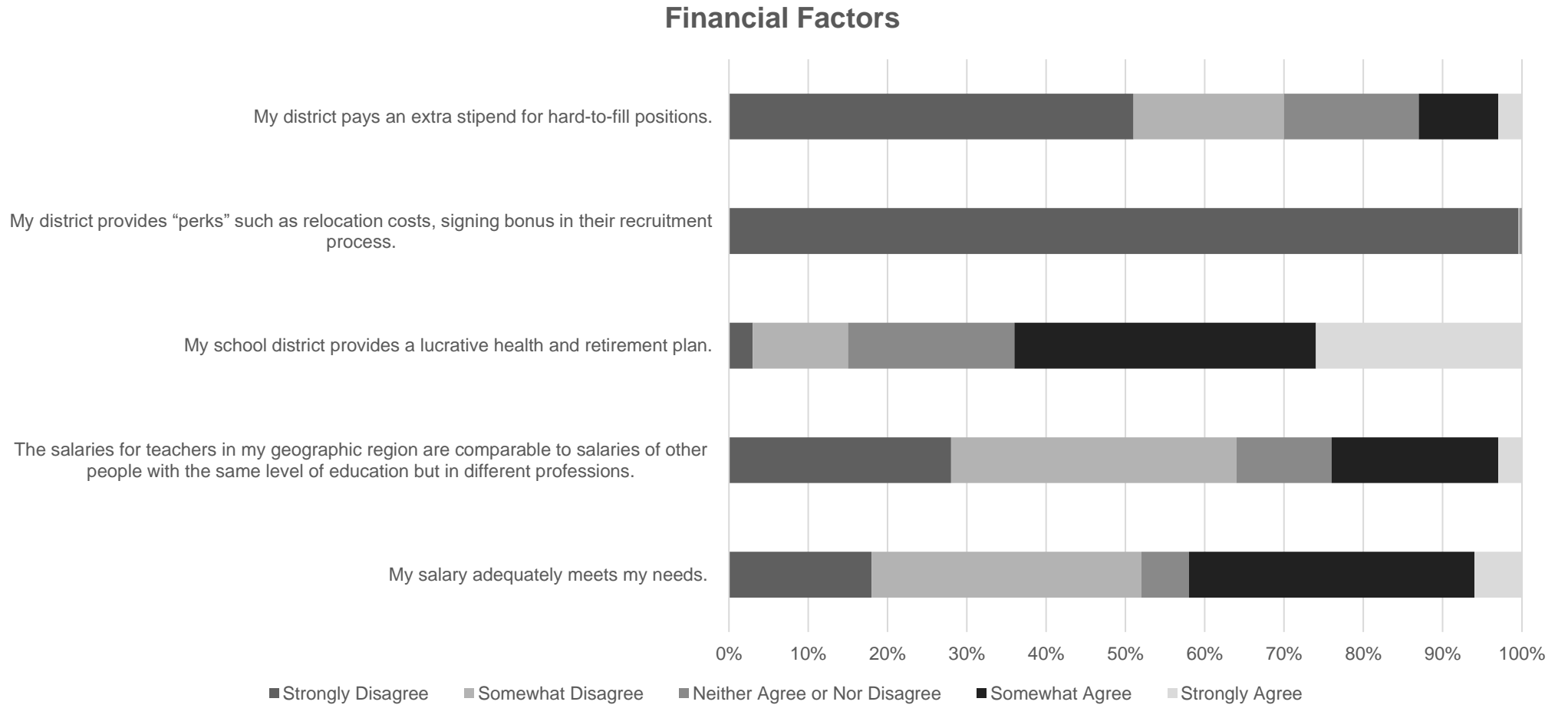
Second Section: Job Satisfaction

- financial factors - *5 questions* - my **salary** adequately meets my needs, The salaries for teachers in my geographic region are **comparable to salaries** of other people with the same level of education but in different professions, my school district provides a lucrative **health and retirement plan**, my district provides “**perks**” such as relocation costs, **signing bonus** in their recruitment process, and my district pays an extra stipend for hard-to-fill positions.
- district support - *6 questions* - I underwent an induction program when I started, there is **ongoing professional development** at my school to help teachers keep abreast with new educational updates, my district **assesses** the **professional development** needs of teachers regularly, the mentoring program at my school has been useful as it gave me the **opportunity to discuss problems** with an experienced teacher, school administrators ensure that the teachers are **not overwhelmed** with their responsibilities, and the **administration** at my school **keeps teachers** motivated.
- school culture - *4 questions* - the administration and teachers at my school **value collaboration**, the **climate** at my school allows me to execute my duties effectively, my job has very **few stressful days**, and I **feel welcomed** and included in my school)
- discipline - *3 questions* - My district deals with students who display **problem behavior effectively**, My school provides resources to equip teachers with knowledge of how to **manage difficult behaviors** (i.e. defiance, non-compliance, and/or disruptive behavior), and my school has a system in place to address and prevent the occurrence of **challenging behavior**.

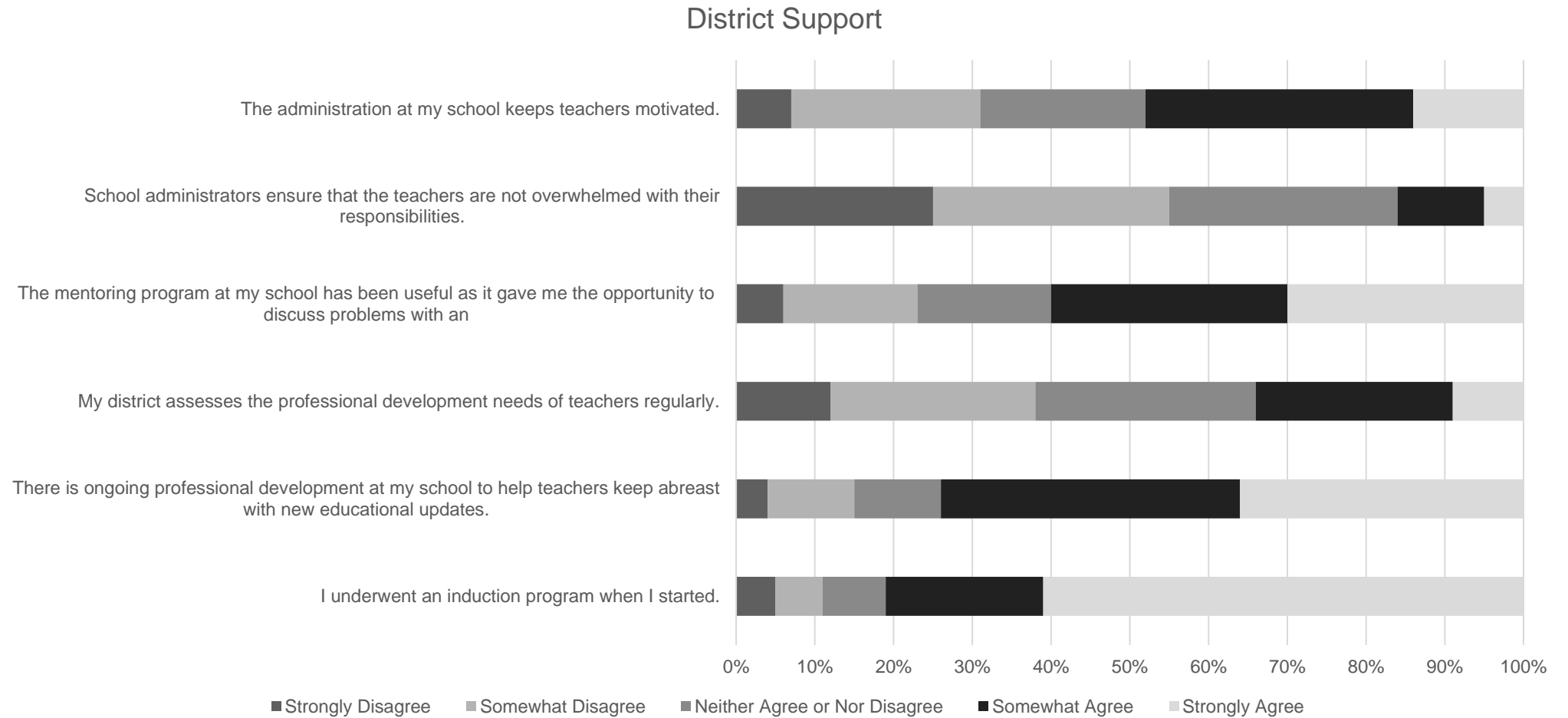
Data Analysis

- Qualtrics downloaded to Excel
- Colleague helped with the review of the data

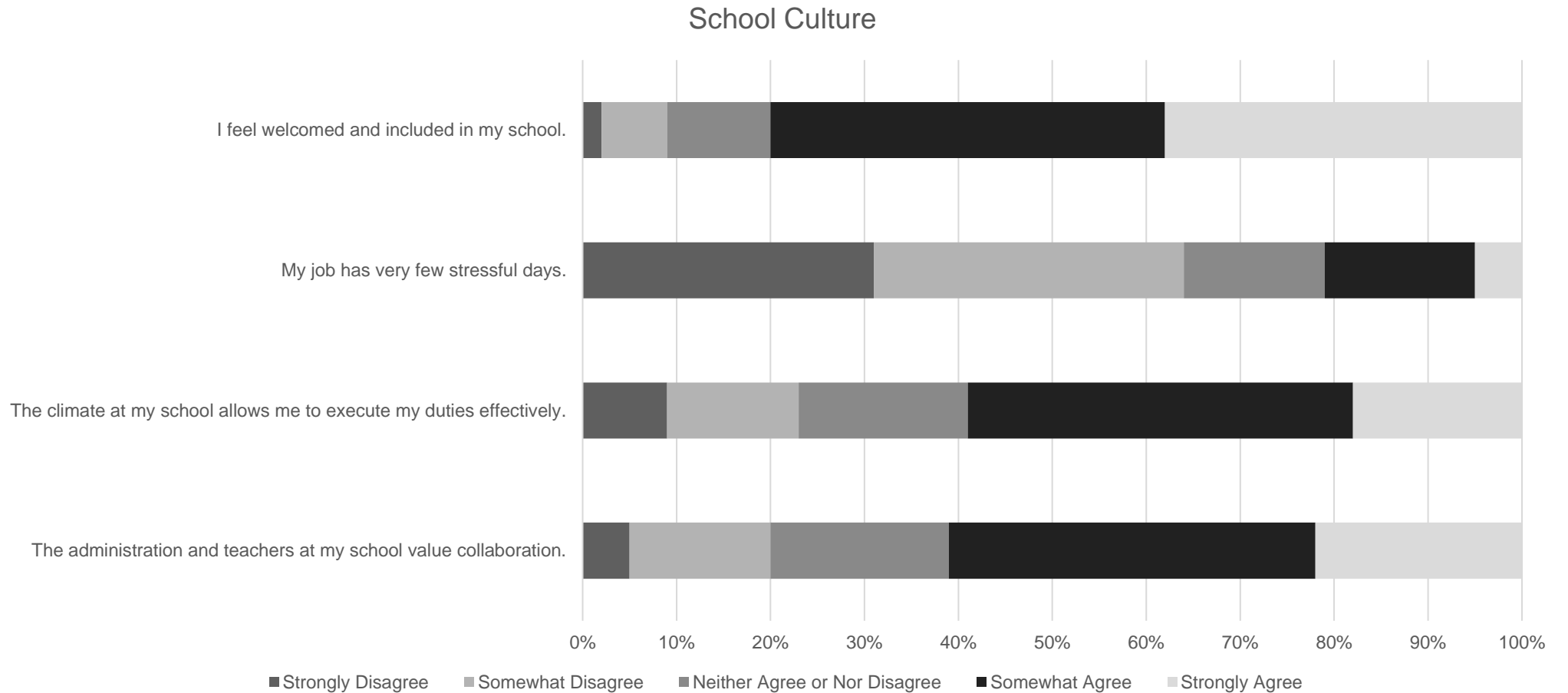
Financial Factors



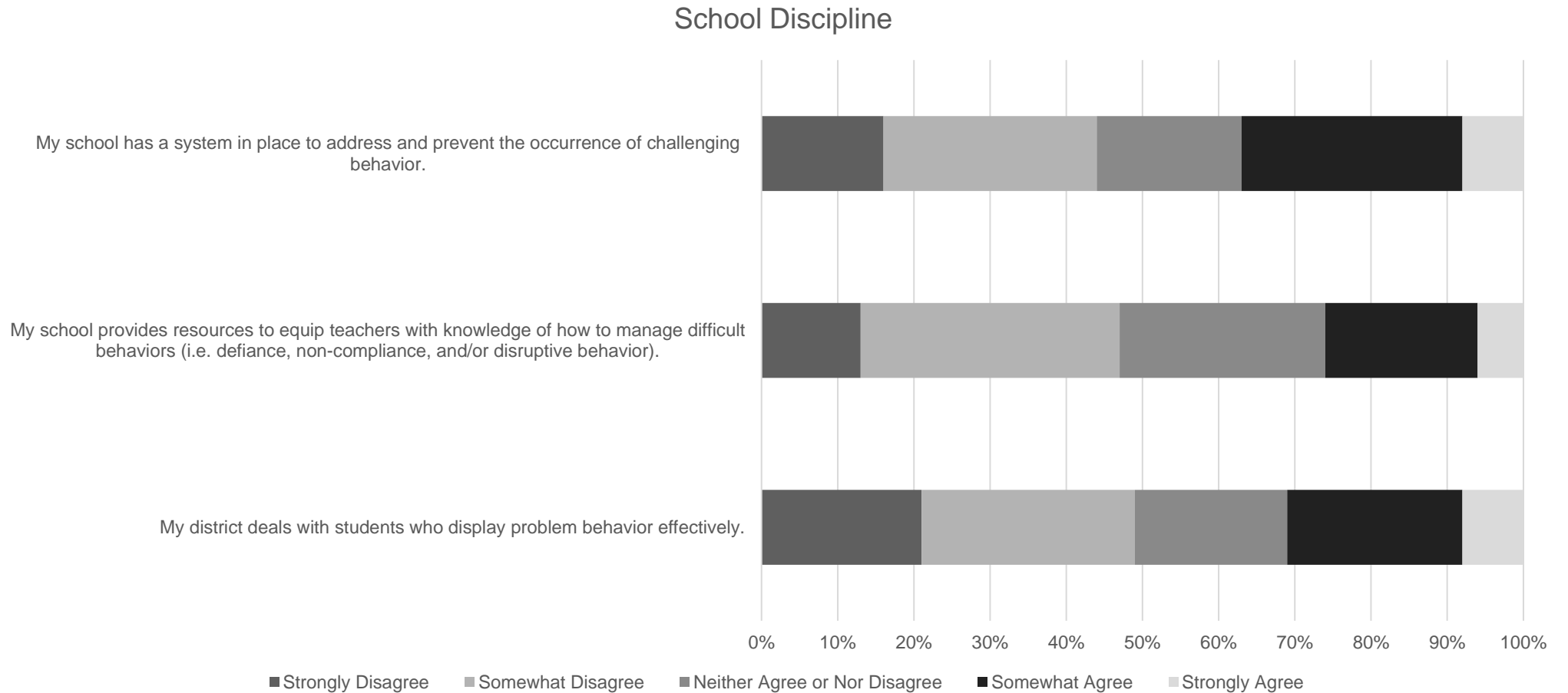
District Support



School Culture



School Discipline



Open Ended Response

*Teacher retention is a problem because staffing is hard to find, so admin hires **unqualified people on emergency certifications**, gives them no training, gives them no resources to help them learn how to do their job, then loses teachers because they aren't prepared and have no resources. Then, admin divvies out the work to the people who remain, who become overburdened, can't keep up, become stressed and disillusioned, and quit. **They add duties to people but do not take them back away** or reallocate them when they hire new people and pretend to not know the conditions upon which people were hired, going back on their word that the added duties are just a 'temporary favor.' They **hire people to fill the spots they are most desperate for regardless** of qualifications and never revisit later to match people to the positions they are most suited for, leading to an inefficient use of staff expertise and talents, and unhappy employees. This leads to more teachers quitting, which in turns feeds and perpetuates the teacher shortage problem. Burn out is exasperated by mismanagement.*

Teacher 1: High School Teacher

Limitations

1. Researchers cannot confirm surveys did meet the criteria of being hired in the last 4 years.
2. In the Demographic section the Areas of Certification did not allow participants to select all that apply.
3. Teacher sample was just teachers hired in the last four years.

Recommendations

1. Financial Factors – districts could work with local service clubs to create “perks”
2. District Support and Student Discipline – through the induction program, time should be taken to expose new hires to the district’s approach to classroom management.
3. School Culture – Time could set aside by administration to meet monthly with new hires.

Next Steps

Research Topic: Staying Power: How Human,
Social, Structural, and Psychological Capital Impact
Teacher Retention in Rural Schools

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THANK YOU