

# Know Your Why: The Resilience of Positive Experienced Teachers\*

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## To cite this article

Gibson, E. B. (2025). Know your why: The resilience of positive experienced teachers. *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: Theory & Practice*, 3(1), 3-30. <https://doi.org/10.59455/qietp.34>

**Article Info:** Received: 12.11.2024

Revised: 28.01.2025

Accepted: 10.03.2025

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The problem is that it is difficult for teachers to remain committed and resilient in their school community when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. This hermeneutical phenomenological study's purpose was to examine the resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Using self-determination theory (SDT), this study links the resilience of teachers to the fulfilment of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

**Method:** This study's central research question was: What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? Triangulation of a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups provided data from the lived experiences of 15 teachers from four continents who have remained committed to their teaching practice for at least five years. The data was analysed and distilled into themes using Atlas.ti software.

**Findings:** The data revealed the themes of resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation. Teachers can continue at the same or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** Positive experienced teachers face the same stressors as all teachers while primarily relying on intrinsic motivation by frequently revisiting their reasons for teaching to overcome its difficulties and remain positive and engaged. Identifying and relying on positive experienced teachers can bolster the school environment.

## Keywords

resilience, positive, experienced, teacher, intrinsic motivation

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## Introduction

Teacher attrition has become a recognised issue hindering education at all levels in the past three decades, where up to half of all beginning teachers leave the profession in five years (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Marso & Pigge, 1997). Over this period, the teacher workforce has increased in average age, indicating that fewer younger teachers remain in the profession despite beginning teachers representing the largest percentage of teachers each year (Ingersoll et al., 2021). However, the development of teacher resilience in the school community is a relatively unexplored area in education (Lowe et al., 2019a; Mullen et al., 2021).

Teaching is a challenging profession with inveterate difficulties and potential positive outcomes (Boogren, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2021). Societies recognise the need for education but struggle to retain teachers to enact it (Gore & Rickards, 2021; Gu, 2017; Jackson, 2022; Martens & Windzio, 2022; Mullen et al., 2021; Quinn & Buchanan, 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Societal issues and political interference provide a taxing environment for teachers to bring learning and growth into their educational communities (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Teachers leaving due to the fractious conditions contribute to societal and learning costs that negatively affect students, other educators, and the entire school (Aguilar, 2018; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2021).

Attempts to explain teacher resilience have come from personal, environmental, and societal perspectives (Mansfield, 2020). Still, it is unclear how the interplay of these factors and the emotional, motivational, professional, and communal aspects of resilience combine to foster resilience in teachers (Mullen et al., 2021). Many societal issues and political platforms find their practical fulfilment in the challenging world of the classroom (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). For instance, teachers of colour traditionally have experienced more significant inherent obstacles to thriving in the teaching profession (Poku, 2022). Teachers are pulled in many directions trying to meet student needs while juggling the mandates of school administrators, society, and politicians (Bureau et al., 2022; Cuevas et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2019; Schutz et al., 2018; Smith & Firth, 2018). This multi-side tug-of-war has caused many teachers to leave the profession before they make it to their sixth year of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2022). The gap created by teacher attrition negatively affects student learning, staff cohesiveness, and school administrator longevity (Aguilar, 2018; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Moè & Katz, 2020). How the remaining teachers handle these challenges while positively contributing to their school communities is an area of deficit in the literature (Bastian et al., 2022; Prout et al., 2019).

The problem is that it is difficult for teachers to remain committed and resilient in their school community when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. Between 33-50% of all teachers who enter the profession leave within five years (Den Brok et al., 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). For those who stay, the mechanisms of resilience development to remain in teaching require clarification (Mullen et al., 2021). Knowing how they do so has practical implications for teacher preparation programs, administrators, other teachers, students, and the larger educational community.

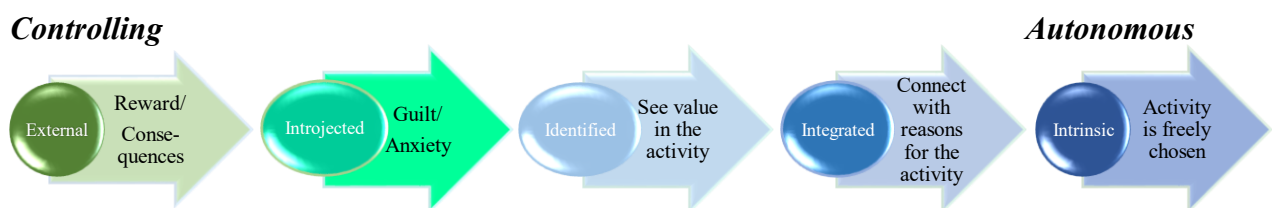
## Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) predicts why teachers leave the profession and how they can develop resilience to remain positive and engaged in their school community (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vermote et al., 2022). According to SDT developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), humans have three psychological needs necessary for self-fulfilment: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As individuals perceive their needs being met in their surroundings, they will develop intrinsic motivation and act out of their desires and interests (Deci et al., 1991, 1996). SDT explains why people engage in activities by linking psychological needs to motivational profiles (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Individuals' perceptions of the environment supporting self-determination are crucial to their internalizing motivational factors (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Providing surroundings that raise people's autonomy, competence, and relatedness leads to higher intrinsic motivation and greater involvement, commitment, and production allowing them to overcome difficulties (Chiu, 2022; Jiang et al., 2019).

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), individuals must be internally motivated and believe their actions will bring about their desired outcomes to effectively influence their surroundings. People require their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to be met to fully develop intrinsic motivation and experience well-being and growth in a school setting (Allen & Sims, 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). As people's actions reveal their beliefs, there is a spectrum of motivation ranging from no motivation to operating wholly out of independence (Deci et al., 1991, 1996, 2017; Moran et al., 2012). Why individuals choose to engage ultimately determines their placement on this continuum in the school environment (Bureau et al., 2022; Cuevas et al., 2018; Escriva-Boulley et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021; See Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### *Motivation Continuum*



(Deci et al., 1991, 2017; Moran et al., 2012)

SDT explains educational situations and outcomes related to resilience in the school community (Deci et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). The perception of psychological need fulfilment among school leaders, teachers, and students explains motivational engagement and ensuing results (Chiu, 2022). SDT predicts teacher engagement in the school setting based on the perceived meeting of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Bureau et al., 2022; Smith & Firth, 2018). When these settings meet the needs of individuals to operate out of their initiative and interests, this leads to higher engagement and learning outcomes (Patall et al., 2018). Need satisfaction is noticeable in its impact on the school environment and retention of teachers (Jiang et al., 2019; Matthews et al., 2022).

## Literature Review

Teaching is a demanding profession with a broad scope that deals with complex ethical, creative, mental, and emotional aspects of personhood for students and teachers (Boogren, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2021). These exigencies often expose teachers to multiple stressors and can impact their emotional, physical, and psychological health, leading to an exit from the field (Ebersold et al., 2019; Poku, 2022). Teacher's attrition rate is high compared to other stressful public service professions (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Between 30-50% of teachers leave the teaching field within their first five years of teaching (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Reducing teacher attrition by 50% would eliminate the shortage of teachers in the United States, creating a larger pool of qualified teachers that benefits school communities (Sutcher et al., 2019). Thus, the challenging educational environment has created the need for resilient teachers who can continue despite the difficulties.

### *Teaching Challenges and Burnout*

The most sizable numbers of teachers exiting the field are beginning teachers and those at the end of their careers, resulting in a U-shaped curve (Admiraal et al., 2019). However, retiring teachers currently account for only 14% of those leaving teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Around 10% of teachers in the profession are in their first or second year of teaching (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Beginning teachers' first years in the occupation significantly impact their future (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2022). Beginning teachers considered leaving because they resented long working hours, large class sizes, and the feeling of being taken advantage of by school leaders who had control over the renewal of their contract for the following year (Gallant & Riley, 2017). Consequently, the constant entering and exit of beginning teachers create difficulties for the educational system and for remaining teachers.

Attrition leads to teacher shortages and a higher percentage of inexperienced teachers, resulting in educational costs (Sutcher et al., 2019). In 2017-18, the largest single group of teachers were beginning teachers in their first year of teaching, while 44% of teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Poor handling of teacher shortfalls increases the burden on an already strained system, leading to inexperienced or ill-trained teachers in subjects for which they have no preparation, resulting in lower student learning outcomes (Wiggan et al., 2020). Schools with more significant numbers of teachers leaving each year face difficulties with consistency and effective student learning (Aguilar, 2018; DeMatthews et al., 2022). Teachers who taught in controlling environments were more likely to reflect this in their teaching styles, leading to lower learning outcomes, student motivation, and teacher burnout (Beymer et al., 2022; Moè & Katz, 2020; Vermote et al., 2022). Teachers carry their stress into the classroom, which students can sense (Philibert et al., 2020). Antagonistic reactions from teachers interrupt the learning process (McTighe & Willis, 2019). Many inexperienced teachers may not have the skills to handle these challenges which explains why learning suffers and young teachers become frustrated. Several causes contribute to this cascade.

A combination of external and internal factors usually pushes teachers away from their vocation. Teachers experience more stress than other professions (Carroll et al., 2022). Stress results when expectations exceed the resources provided. Some reasons teachers gave for

exiting teaching include poor support and pay, lack of professional development and ability to influence outcomes at the school, struggle to meet the demands of the profession and make connections with other teachers, and an increased emphasis on accountability through standardizing testing (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Arviv Elyashiv & Navon, 2021; Beck et al., 2020; Den Brok et al., 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017). Sustained stress wears on the individual teacher and compounds into the teaching and school environment.

The strains of teaching with its various classroom stressors increase the risk of attrition (Li et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018). Finding physical, mental, and emotional space to process these difficulties is often challenging. In a two-year study, Bieler (2018) found that high school teachers had five separate student interactions every minute in the classroom. Teachers, in general, face a decision regarding educational practice every 15 seconds during every school day (Boogren, 2021). The sheer volume is exhausting and leads to difficulty in making constructive choices (Lee et al., 2023). Despite the significant increase in teachers at the elementary level over the past 30 years, teacher workloads for secondary teachers have increased due to larger class sizes and more weekly instructional hours while teaching more classes (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2021; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). Teachers entering the profession face heavy expectations as novices to understand the learning abilities of their students, their subject matter, and how best to connect those two to promote student learning and development (Luke & Gourd, 2018). The heavy workload and significant, constant student queries and interactions could prove overwhelming and exhausting.

Additional extrinsic causes contribute to higher attrition among educators including administrative deficiencies and lack of support. Poor administrative support was a frequently given reason for teachers leaving the field (Beck et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). Support from school leadership, or its lack thereof, was a more accurate indicator of teachers remaining in the profession than the student makeup of a school (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Van Eycken et al., 2022). Teaching is often a solitary undertaking (Ortogero et al., 2022; Philibert et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). Teachers are less likely to stay at their school without receiving support from others (Arviv Elyashiv & Navon, 2021; Beck et al., 2020; Beymer et al., 2022). A school atmosphere lacking support correlates to attrition more than student body composition (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Van Eycken et al., 2022). When teachers' need for connectedness was unmet, teachers lost perspective on their worth and moved toward burnout (Moè & Katz, 2020).

Burnout is the primary intrinsic cause of teacher attrition, often fomented by other extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Li et al., 2021; Moè & Katz, 2020; Ng et al., 2018). Burnout occurs when teachers experience long-term stress (Carroll et al., 2022). When experiencing burnout, teachers exhibit lower proficiency, an increased negative attitude, and emotional exhaustion, with the latter being the highest predictive factor of teachers' desire to leave the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Xia et al., 2023). Over the past 35 years studies linked low motivation and unrealistic expectations for teacher performance to teacher burnout and a premature exit from the profession (García-Carmona et al., 2019; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Thus, the accumulated stress eventually interferes with teachers' functioning and well-being if they do not process their emotions. The inability to handle the negative emotions of stressful school environments seems to be a primary predictor of attrition (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Li et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). However, not all teachers leave, indicating that some have developed coping



mechanisms to deal with these situations. This study aimed to discover the ways teachers have managed to do so and remain effective.

### ***Resilience***

Resilience was the largest identified intrinsic factor in teacher retention (Ellison & Woods, 2020; Hascher et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2021). While many teachers leave early into their careers, retention happens when they remain (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Internal motivation and the perceived ability to have positive and respectful relationships with students were identified as integral to teachers' continuation in the teaching vocation (Saks et al., 2021). Teachers who developed dedication and resilience in their effective practice increased their likelihood of remaining in teaching (Collie & Perry, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2019). The adeptness of teachers in navigating the difficulty of the profession had a great deal to do with the strength of their belief in their abilities and educational values, along with the support of their fellow teachers and school leaders (Gu, 2017).

Resilience is the development of skills, support, knowledge, and practices that aid individuals in overcoming adverse circumstances and lead to teacher retention (Harris, 2020; Ng et al., 2018; Smith & Firth, 2018). Internal (personality and motivational) and external (professional and relational) factors reinforce resilience for experienced teachers (Shields & Mullen, 2020). Environmental considerations were at least as necessary to teacher resilience as personal ones (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Fernandes et al. (2019) found intrinsic qualities of resilience (general sense of wellness, positive purpose, and skills to deal with difficulty) are insufficient to retain teachers. Relational support from principals, fellow teachers, and significant relationships outside the school is necessary to maintain resilience (Jefferson et al., 2022). Substantial, personal relationships in and out of the school setting aided positive experienced teachers in navigating the profession's difficulties and allowed them to maintain lives outside of teaching (Prout et al., 2019). Accordingly, the ways teachers have developed resilience through both external and internal support need clarification and were a focus of this study (Mullen et al., 2021).

Teachers' resilience increased when they saw teaching as a calling, which led to retention (Wiggin et al., 2020). Internal and altruistic motivation and a strong sense of competence were the primary reasons teachers remained in their roles (Chiong et al., 2017). A positive sense of competence and calling as a teacher contributed to maintaining their general welfare and efficacy in the classroom (Van der Want et al., 2018). This connection indicates a positive correlation between dedication and a high perception of teaching ability, attainment, and gratification in teachers' work (Admiraal et al., 2019). Teachers who redirect their energies toward developing teaching as a calling by focusing on their purposes, capabilities, and fervour for teaching can build resilience (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Mielke, 2019). Experienced teachers remained in teaching due to their purpose and passion for teaching students, their subject content, beneficial school relationships and environment, and an inviting schedule (Shields & Mullen, 2020). Teachers also found meaningful relationships with other teachers and people outside teaching, which helped them remember the importance of teaching and the need to build up students and teachers entering the profession (Prout et al., 2019). Maintaining healthy relationships and strong intrinsic motivation is thus crucial to developing resilience.

Resilience links all other retention factors together through complex development and interaction (Chen & Chi-Kin Lee, 2022). The external factors, including the support of school leadership and the educational community along with professional development, find a connection to teachers' internal equilibrium and personal motivation in resilience (Fernandes et al., 2019; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2021; Ratanasiripong et al., 2021). The connected thread of resilience to the other factors linked to teacher retention highlights its importance (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Lemon & McDonough, 2023). Resilience seeks to moderate emotions in teaching's challenging sphere, preventing the descent into burnout and eventual exit from the occupation (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Moè & Katz, 2020). It remains foundational in teacher retention and contribution (Mullen et al., 2021). Resilient teachers remain in teaching and positively influence their school environment (Carroll et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Shields & Mullen, 2020).

As this review indicates, abundant literature exists on the factors related to beginning teachers leaving the profession but very little on the dynamics encouraging the resilience of experienced teachers (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Chiong et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2019a, 2019b; Mullen et al., 2021). More research is needed to determine the factors under which teachers who experience negative pressures can remain in teaching and overcome such detractors (Shields & Mullen, 2020). The complexity of the factors involved in building resilience creates uncertainty in how it is developed in teachers (Ellison & Woods, 2020; Vallés & Clarà, 2022). How each aspect of resilience development connects to its growth in teachers and their ability to overcome teaching stresses is unclear (Hascher et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2022). Since resilience ties these retention factors together, knowing how teachers developed resilience would be helpful to struggling and beginning teachers.

## **Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to examine the resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. The resilience of positive experienced teachers will be generally defined as committed and engaged teachers who overcome the difficulties of teaching in their school communities. Positive describes teachers' attitude and approach to the profession, while experienced designates their familiarity. The purpose of this study connects to its significance for beginning and experienced teachers who seek to stay positive and engaged.

The central research question for this study was: What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? This question provides more detail on how those teachers who remain in the profession incorporate mechanisms and responses to the challenges arising from the early years of teaching. It ties directly to SDT. The connection of internal motivation to resilience comes out of this theory. This question attempts to determine how positive experienced teachers have willingly continued in their profession counter to those factors that make it difficult to do so.

## **Methods**

This hermeneutical phenomenological study examines resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Data collection

employed a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups as the vehicle to encounter teachers' lived experiences with the phenomenon. Quotes from participants inhabit the findings and discussion to give voice to their experiences. The setting for this study was anywhere positive experienced teachers exist. The recruitment methods for this study restricted teachers' locations to the United States or international schools on three continents outside of North America. The participants of this study were 15 current primary or secondary teachers with at least five years of teaching experience who met the requirements of a positive teacher (Lowe et al., 2019b).

### ***Procedures***

All interested candidates completed an inventory to determine whether they met the requirement of being a positive experienced teacher. Developed and validated by Lowe et al. (2019a, 2019b), the inventory measures participants' responses on a seven-point Likert scale in innovation, growth focus, expertise, and leadership (see Appendix A for the Positive Veteran Teacher Inventory). This inventory served as an indicator of the candidates' resilience. Those currently teaching at the primary or secondary level with at least five complete years of teaching experience who met all four criteria of a positive experienced teacher were eligible to participate in the study.

Selective recruitment of participants sought to include a variety of teaching disciplines, school types, and locations. I collected a wide range of data by recruiting candidates who met the qualifications for the study from diverse teaching backgrounds and experience. 15 participants were deemed sufficient for data saturation. I collected data from 15 individual interviews and between four and 12 participants for each of the three focus groups. All 15 participants completed the journal prompt, an interview, and participated in a focus group. Focus groups were selected based on participant locations to ensure similar teaching situations and time zones. Candidates for the study were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time and have their data destroyed. Those who agreed to participate received a copy of these rights.

Teachers were contacted via email and social media and asked to participate in the study. Those participants who agreed to said conditions provided basic biographic information and prior teaching experience. Teachers were promised confidentiality. Data collection and storage procedures for those teachers in Europe followed the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (Calder, 2020). Participants who met all the study criteria completed a journal prompt, an individual interview, and participated in a focus group (see Appendix B for the specific prompt and questions). The prompts and questions for the data collection tools in the study were prepared by me based on an extensive literature review identifying the qualities of resilience and positive teachers and my experience with the phenomenon (Carroll et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Lowe et al, 2019a, 2019b; Mullen et al., 2021; Shields & Mullen, 2020). The teachers involved were given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Participants received the opportunity to analyse the transcripts for accuracy from the data provided.

The text from these data collection methods was uploaded to Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software where coding and analysis occurred. According to Saldaña (2021), a code encapsulates the meaning of data in a word or concise phrase. Using Atlas.ti data analysis software, a second



level of coding occurred to organize the diverse codes into similar, connected words or phrases that best represented the data across all the interviews. As patterns of codes emerged across participant responses, then groups of codes were placed together. Out of these groups of codes, patterns developed as constructions of meaning. From these patterns, changes to the questions asked in the focus groups to support the data from the individual interviews were considered and implemented. I compared the themes generated from the journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups to generate findings and conclusions. The study's design, data collection, and analysis procedures followed those for hermeneutic phenomenological studies as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Van Manen (2016).

This hermeneutical phenomenological study attempted to ascertain the collective essence in many people's lived experiences of a specific occurrence or defined circumstance that is germane to researchers' backgrounds and interests (Van Manen, 2016b). Van Manen defines hermeneutical as exploring meaning in people's lives as a qualitative research approach where the researcher has personal experience with the topic. This study followed a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. This methodology applied to this study as I consider myself a positive veteran teacher and intended to explore the phenomenon of how such teachers remain committed and resilient in their school communities when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. My experience and understanding of the phenomenon allowed me to clearly define it, interact with others, and process their encounters with it. I collected and interpreted the findings but did not contribute any data to the study. This movement toward clarity involved the challenging process of isolating the aspects of the concept or event while still being conscious of its entirety (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My role as a researcher was to distill others' descriptions of the phenomenon into a coherent explanation of its fundamental nature.

### ***Participants***

This study comprised 15 participants from diverse educational backgrounds, locations, schools, and experience levels. All participants received their post-secondary education in the United States, and 11 out of 15 have experience teaching in a North American context. Four out of 15 participants' highest post-secondary education was a bachelor's degree, while 11 out of 15 earned at least one master's degree (see Table 1). The same proportions applied to participants' current teaching locations: four of the 15 participants taught in four different regions in the United States. The remainder of the participants taught in international schools located in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Nine out of 15 participants were female and six out of 15 were male. Two of the 15 participants taught in elementary schools while there were two full-time and one half-time in a middle school setting (one participant split time between the middle and high school). The remainder of the participants taught at the high school level. An average number of 20 years of teaching experience for participants came from a varied spectrum of five to 44 years in the profession in 12 different subject areas.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

| Participant | Education  | School Area         | School Location | Experience (years) | Subject Area(s)                |
|-------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Alice       | Bachelor's | Elementary          | United States   | 44                 | All                            |
| Alina       | Master's   | Elementary          | United States   | 15                 | Gifted, Math                   |
| Bryan       | Master's   | High School         | International   | 13                 | Science                        |
| David       | Bachelor's | High School         | International   | 22                 | Math, Science, Technology      |
| Grace       | Master's   | Middle School       | International   | 14                 | Social Studies, World Language |
| Hannah      | Master's   | High School         | International   | 30                 | English                        |
| Isabella    | Master's   | High School         | International   | 26                 | English                        |
| Jerome      | Master's   | Middle/ High School | International   | 22                 | Performing Arts                |
| Karl        | Master's   | Middle School       | International   | 12                 | English                        |
| Kristin     | Master's   | High School         | United States   | 29                 | Intervention                   |
| Luke        | Master's   | High School         | International   | 10                 | Visual Arts                    |
| Mila        | Master's   | High School         | United States   | 22                 | English                        |
| Phoebe      | Master's   | High School         | International   | 20                 | Social Studies                 |
| Sophia      | Bachelor's | High School         | International   | 8                  | World Language                 |
| Stephen     | Bachelor's | High School         | International   | 5                  | Bible, Science                 |

***Trustworthiness***

The fundamental aspects of credibility, transferability, and confirmability for the trustworthiness of a qualitative study come from Lincoln and Guba (1985). Van Manen (2016) used the words reliability, evidence, and generalizability to convey that a study carries applicability to the broader world beyond the study through recognized scholarship approaches that grant security and confidence in the findings. The satisfaction of these criteria is essential to the validity of the study's results. Qualitative studies necessitate this demonstration to carry equal importance to quantitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The subjection of the study to these criteria accomplished this purpose.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility relies on the authentic presentation of the findings based on the participants' meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study relied upon triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity to ensure credibility. Triangulation allowed me to confirm data and analysis through multiple means to ensure its reliability. The three methods used for triangulation in this study were a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups. Obtaining comprehensive participant explanations of the phenomenon transpired by asking unique but overlapping questions in the journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups. Employing a research journal ensured that the meaning of the data matched the participants' tone, emotions, and non-verbal expressions from interviews and focus groups. These three data collection techniques complemented one another, so the data were representative of the participants' meaning (Miles et al., 2020).

Member checking allowed me to repeat influential statements back to participants in individual interviews and focus groups to confirm the meaning of their replies (Schoeller, 2023). Participants received transcripts of their interviews and focus groups. They had the opportunity to verify that their statements in the transcript matched their recollection of what they said during those events. In addition, I used focus groups as member checking, asking questions that overlapped with the individual interviews to corroborate if similar responses arose. Finally, I asked participants to comment on my interpretation of their primary emphases from the individual interviews and focus groups (Miles et al., 2020).

Referential adequacy was the third method of ensuring credibility used in this study. The data from the individual interviews was analysed separately from that of the focus groups to compare the findings for agreement (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Similarly, the journal prompt received separate analyses from the focus groups and individual interviews. According to White and Cooper (2022), this process aids in ensuring overlap between data sources, allowing for scrutiny of possible conflicting results and comparing those differences to present a rich pool and examination of data. Along with my research journal, this intersection of data collected produced credibility in the data from the journal prompts, individual interviews, and focus groups using a separate analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Referential adequacy, member checking, and triangulation yield confidence that the data represents the phenomenon and those with lived experiences.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability describes the degree to which the research findings in this study are valid in describing the phenomenon in other corresponding populations outside the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study examined the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation. The sampling population was any teacher with more than five years of teaching experience who met the qualifications of a positive experienced teacher. Teachers who taught in multiple contexts, various subject areas, different school types and areas, and different geographic regions were interviewed and placed in focus groups for the study. The population and sampling intended to produce the diversity needed for transferability (Van Manen, 2016). The data descriptions aimed at an in-depth portrayal of the phenomenon by limiting the number of individual interviews and focus groups and giving the

themes a vivid fullness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020). The reader is the ultimate judge of the degree of transferability (Carminati, 2018; Elo et al., 2014; Hays & McKibben, 2021; Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019).

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability measures the comparative objectivity of the study's results (Miles et al., 2020). Triangulation of data collection, an audit trail, and reflexivity were three techniques chosen to produce confirmability in this study. Journal prompts, individual interviews, and focus groups were the data collection methods to ensure the data collected determined the derived themes rather than my views (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). A digital audit trail exists to verify the collection of documents and appropriate procedures for review in an external inquiry audit.

Reflexivity is the examination and disclosure of my "biases, values, and experiences" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 229) that relate to my position in the study. A reflexive journal was kept electronically as part of the research journal to express my opinions, self-observations, and personal conclusions. This procedure allowed a comparison of the coding and themes developed in the study to ensure my biases did not influence the findings (Miles et al., 2020; Van Manen, 2016). This digital document has separate sections to divide observations, my research thoughts, and conclusions during data collection.

### **Findings**

The data provided by the positive experienced teachers in the study through a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups was analysed and categorized into themes. The themes of resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation are developed and separated into sub-themes when appropriate. Quotes from participants accompany an overall picture of each theme. The means positive experienced teachers employ to remain resilient in their school community are the focus of the presented results.

#### ***Resilience Through Community***

Resilience through community emerged as an important theme from the study data. Participants identified the role that school community members play in helping teachers handle adversity and continue teaching with excellence. The community, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents, affect teacher resilience through their interactions with teachers. Isabella talked about her resilience and how to remain resilient as a teacher, "Working with other people who are as dedicated and really want excellence has been a highlight. I would say find other life-giving teachers who want to encourage you and have the same educational philosophy as you." Alice has found resilience support in parents, "I've always been in a school where the parents are so invested in their children and so thankful that they'll do anything to support their child and to help you and to support you." Study participants concurred that the school community influences teacher resilience.

### ***Personal Reflection***

Participants accentuated that personal reflection is a necessary part of practice for teachers. Developing habits of evaluation that allow for improvement and intention to grow summarizes the sub-theme of personal reflection. In her focus group, Isabella iterated the need to examine personal growth conditions in teaching, “I have to reframe the situation in a positive light. What can I learn from this and what can I do better next time? I have to reframe it as a learning experience.” Hannah explained in her interview that she uses similar practices to refine her curriculum, “Journaling after every unit, I’ll go through, ‘Okay, these are the things that worked well. Here’s the changes I’m going to make next year.’ It’s a professional journal of ‘What do I need to put in my curriculum documents?’” Luke found comfort in analysing his previous experience, “Having that knowledge makes it so that you can become more resilient so that you can be prepared to know what happens in this situation.” Participants viewed taking time from the daily pressures of teaching to engage in personal reflection as necessary to develop a growth mindset.

### ***Healthy Boundaries***

Teachers in the study all named the importance of separating their identity from the role of teaching, maintaining a life outside the school, and taking appropriate responsibility at the school and in the classroom. Teaching can be all-consuming, so these teachers identified the importance of doing their role well—in their journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups—but not allowing it to expand to become who they are or all they do. Sophia proclaimed in her interview:

My identity, my work, and my value, or even my ultimate objectives as I step into education, my value and worth aren’t on how my students experience the classroom or what I feel like I’m accomplishing within the lesson plans each week. My value is created, and my purpose and my perspective are rooted in something that’s eternal and unshakable, and I have to frequently call myself back to that.

Hannah advised self-care when she said in her interview, “Make sure you’re taking care of your health. Take care of yourself and your mental health also.” These teachers advocated developing an identity and life separate from teaching while doing their best within the bounds of their role.

### ***Identity***

Avoiding tying importance and value solely to performance as a teacher emerged as a sub-theme during this study on positive experienced teachers’ resilience. Study participants advocated the importance of having an identity outside the teaching profession. Mila identified this need in her focus group, “Making sure that [students] are not my source of joy or emotional stability. I bring that to them. That’s something that I can offer to them. I’m getting that somewhere else. I come into the classroom with that.” Jerome followed up on that in his interview, saying, “There’s not a certain kind of response that I’m needing from students in order for me to value what I’m doing.” Study participants distinguished an identity developed apart from being a teacher as bringing freedom and stability.



### ***Outside Life***

Apart from having an identity, developing a life outside of teaching also came from participants as a sub-theme in healthy boundaries. The nature of teaching can take over all of teachers' free time and energy. Deliberately spending time away from teaching with life-giving people and activities originated from study participants as a means to have healthy boundaries. Alice noted in her interview:

I think sometimes we just need to take a deep breath. I think sometimes we get so busy and so maybe focus on what we have to get done that we don't just take a step back and take a deep breath and see the blessings and evaluate what's going well. What's not going well? I think we just need to give ourselves a break from the pressures of teaching sometimes. Just take that deep breath.

Alina encouraged involvement apart from the classroom, "Then just making sure that you have something else outside of school. Whatever that something else is, like if it's a church, faith community, book club, something. Something besides your students." Life-giving opportunities to gain perspective and unwind provided teachers in the study with healthy space and boundaries.

### ***Appropriate Responsibility***

Differentiating inherent and apposite responsibilities in the teaching profession from those that go beyond expectations that drain teachers and threaten their commitment to the profession clarifies this sub-theme of healthy boundaries. Educators participating in this study gave responses that clarified appropriate teacher responsibilities. Maintaining a clear focus on the essentials of the profession allows teachers to excel without a myriad of possible distractions. Grace, in her focus group, iterated, "It took building upon months and months of seeing students come through some of those adverse situations and seeing myself come through it. Whether it ended up well or not but letting go of the things I couldn't control." Phoebe spoke of her learning curve as a teacher in her interview, "Looking back on some of the decisions that I made like giving daily homework that then needed to be graded. There were other ways to hold students accountable without creating hours and hours of work for myself." Separating important duties from multiple competing responsibilities helped teachers in the study maintain healthy boundaries.

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

Teachers who clearly understand why they teach foster intrinsic motivation. This highest independent operating level infers teachers have moved beyond extrinsic motivators such as salary or praise (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). All study participants emphasized this theme throughout all three modes of data collected. David recognized the need for this in his focus group when he said:

Part of it is remembering what the prime objective is. Sometimes, education is a challenging beast to work with students towards a goal that they may or may not want to get towards. It may not be what I want to deal with, but it's a mindset that allows me to say, "I'm trying to remember the big picture, what it is that we're trying to accomplish and moving forward towards a task."

Intrinsic motivation provides teachers and students with the internal drive to continue even when difficulties occur.

### ***Basis of Resilience***

Intrinsic motivation formed the basis of resilience for study participants. Teachers noted they kept teaching because they had strong, personal reasons for doing so. Teachers who rely on their own reasons for teaching to overcome the adversity and difficulties in the profession use internal motivation as their basis of resilience. Stephen in his interview clarified, “I have systems and fundamental habits that root me. Because I am resilient, I have emotional energy to teach even if things are hard. I can be consistent in my approach regardless of the difficulties of the teaching profession.” Sophia explained her deeper motivations and how they influence her teaching during her focus group, “My entire philosophy of teaching is built around my convictions and faith, and that is why I get up every day. That’s my purpose and perspective. What does resiliency in teaching look like when that’s not at its core?” Reflecting on their motives helped study participants continue in the teaching profession.

### ***Keep Your Why Clear***

Study participants all expressed the need to not only understand their internal motivation but to refresh this awareness regularly. Frequently reviewing the substance of participants’ internal motivation for teaching helped them maintain it. Believing that teaching makes a difference and remaining clear on the reasons for this assisted those who engaged in the study to uphold their internal motivation. Kristin challenged teachers in her interview to “revisit your why always.” Karl affirmed the value of teaching and understanding your why when he said in his interview, “Just the fact that our profession matters; knowing that teaching, be it in a secular or a sacred environment, is life-changing for students. I can have a great impact and hopefully change lives for the better.” Recurrently, putting the why for teaching before teachers aided them in practicing it for their own reasons.

What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? Teachers can continue at the same or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching. Grace expressed this:

I think enjoying teaching has become a bedrock for me. This is a job that I like doing. I’m motivated by students, by student growth, by the mission and vision of the school, and what we’re here to do in playing this role in a student’s journey through life and through their academic journey and education.

Teachers in the study expressed they weathered the storms of the teaching profession when they had an unclouded vision why they teach and operated out of their personal satisfaction.

### **Discussion**

Several key interpretations of the data created a clear picture of positive experienced teachers’ resilience in their school communities. Positive experienced teachers are subject to the same difficulties as all teachers but chiefly rely on their reasons for teaching to remain motivated. A

love of students and a desire to see them grow and learn were the focal points for why these teachers remain in the profession.

### ***Positive Experienced Teachers Encounter the Same Stressors***

Positive experienced teachers develop resilience in the face of stressors that are common to all teachers. Study participants all cited difficulties with administration, negative teachers who refuse to grow, student needs and behaviour, difficult parent and community interactions, lack of preparation, and complex job responsibilities as sources of stress. Such strains match the ones teachers reported in the literature (Beymer et al., 2022; Boogren, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2022; Ebersold et al., 2019; Gore & Rickards, 2021; Holloweck, 2019; Philibert et al., 2020). So, it is not that the sources of discomfort for positive experienced teachers are different, it is simply that they handle these tensions in ways that allow them to continue positively contributing to their school community.

### ***Resilience Is Largely Intrinsic for Positive Experienced Teachers***

While interactions with others influence positive experienced teachers' resilience, they do not seem to be the primary factor in developing and maintaining it. Teachers cited that their relationships in and out of the school setting helped encourage them and talk through difficult situations. However, negative interactions with stakeholders in the community threatened their resilience. Thus, a cancelling effect of others' positive and negative effects on teachers' resilience seems to occur. More clearly mentioned and often cited were participants' reasons for teaching and the difference they made as a result. Every teacher in the study highlighted teaching for their own reasons and the importance of being educators for their school communities, especially in students' lives. Alice declared, "For me, it's the most rewarding thing I've ever done to be able to make a difference in children's lives." David corroborated, "I think it's a calling. I find what I do rewarding despite the challenges." Sophia followed up, "That purpose gives you hope and a firm foundation to stand on as you look forward." Identifying and maintaining clear reasons for teaching through reflection and not depending on students to meet their needs for validation indicates intrinsic motivation's valuable role in keeping positive experienced teachers resilient.

### ***Students Are the Primary Reason Positive Experienced Teachers Teach***

Students emerged as the primary reason positive experienced teachers remain in the profession. Garnering the largest number of and most extensive responses given by participants despite being the subject of one-third or less of the questions asked of participants in journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups, students were clearly teachers' favourite subject to discuss. Every educator in the study expressed a love for students and helping them learn and grow. They voiced their priorities in this direction, showing students came first over helping other teachers or interacting with administrators, parents, and other members of the school community. Hannah affirmed, "I come back every year because of the students, not because of my love for my subject." Kristin affirmed that serving students motivates her, "Making sure the students are unconditionally loved, valued, supported, seen, and growing; if you always get back to that, it

keeps you going and helps you overcome [difficult] things.” Bryan found this to be the case, “I keep coming back, and the reason I like to teach is the students.” Alina expanded, “Building the relationships with kids is just really fun. So, I think that’s what keeps me going.” The opportunity to serve students and be part of their lives is the primary motivator for positive experienced teachers to remain in the profession.

## Implications

The themes and interpretations of this study bring potential implications for the policy and practice of other school communities. Legislators, ministers of education, and school district administrators may benefit from the policy implications. School administrators, positive experienced teachers, students, educators, parents, and community members may also derive potential gain in the following implications for practice. Connecting the findings of this study to other contexts could stimulate possible growth in other school communities.

Teachers who fit the description of a positive experienced teacher should regularly consider examining their reasons for teaching, ensuring the reasons are centred around students and their growth. As study participants found such reflection beneficial to their resilience, other positive experienced teachers may likewise find it valuable. They might also benefit by developing interests outside of school and healthy boundaries that will keep the pressures of teaching from consuming all their time and energy. Teachers in the study identified finding outlets for expressing themselves creatively and prioritizing their physical and mental health as essential practices. Other positive experienced teachers could receive similar benefits from making space in their lives for taking care of themselves.

Positive experienced teachers may also gain valuable perspectives and ideas from each other through regular communication and observation. Fellow positive experienced teachers can learn from one another. Teachers in the study expressed gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on their practices and hear from other teachers about theirs. Positive experienced teachers can likewise learn from one another and continue to grow and develop as educators through reflections on their practice.

Parents and community members could seek to affirm positive experienced teachers as they encounter them through their students or other school events. Encouragement from parents and other members of the school would likely assist teachers in remaining positive and engaged and help overcome the negative voices they may encounter in their profession. Teachers in the study expressed that encouragement from the school community aided their resilience. Valuable encouragement from parents and community members may also accomplish similar gains for other positive experienced teachers.

In this study, resilience for positive experienced teachers hinged more on intrinsic motivation than external factors. This finding is a departure from the literature that claimed extrinsic elements were equal or more important in contributing to teacher resilience (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Collie & Perry, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2019; Shields & Mullen, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). This study centred around teachers with at least five years of experience who remained positive and engaged in their profession. The difference in experience and engagement could explain the difference between teachers in the study and the findings in the literature. Nevertheless, teachers in the study who maintained their internal motivation as a

cornerstone to their resilience could indicate a general shift towards intrinsic motivation on the motivation continuum for positive experienced teachers (see Figure 1).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Several recommendations for future research emerged from this study. The first came from the length of experience required for teachers participating in the study. Other studies examining positive experienced teachers placed a delimitation of 20 years of experience (Gray et al., 2021; Jefferson et al., 2022; Lowe et al., 2019a, 2019b; Prout et al., 2019). Replicating this study with teacher participants having at least 20 years of experience could bring varied results.

Varying study participants' location is another recommendation to expand the results of this study. Replicating this study in a singular country with a consistent school system or in a specific district or school setting will aid in determining the transferability of this study. Solely sampling teachers educated in the country chosen for study could help determine whether positive experienced teachers can be found in any location and if they vary in their resilience.

During their focus groups, study participants wondered about the limits of resilience for positive experienced teachers. They envisioned a study examining the conditions under which those who qualified as positive experienced teachers left the profession or would consider leaving the profession. The same methodology could apply to this study, but the research questions would have a different focus. Ascertaining the conditions that would cause even positive experienced teachers to leave the profession could bring insights into the depth of resilience of this population.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to examine the resilience of positive experienced teachers with more than five years in the profession. Through the lens of self-determination theory, positive experienced teachers in the study articulated their experiences building the mechanisms they use to stay positive and resilient in their school communities in the face of challenging circumstances. The data provided by study participants was coded and grouped into four themes: resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation. Relayed through a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups, 15 teacher participants from elementary, middle, and high school from 12 different content areas and four different continents attributed their resilience largely to their internal motivation to support and provide learning environments that connect and challenge students. Teachers aiming to remain in their profession and continue growing might consider seeking out positive experienced teachers for formal or informal support.

This qualitative study collected and examined the lived experience of teachers with longer tenure in school systems to determine how they made it through their years in teaching when up to half of all beginning teachers leave the profession within five years (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Any teachers with more than five years of teaching experience who have remained positive were eligible to contribute their experiences to the study. Their lived experiences were recorded and used to develop a picture of the development of resilience of positive experienced teachers. Teachers can continue at the same



or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching. Positive experienced teachers face the same stressors as all teachers while primarily relying on intrinsic motivation by frequently revisiting their reasons for teaching to overcome its difficulties and remain positive and engaged. Identifying and relying on positive experienced teachers can bolster the school environment. While further research should be conducted, it seems clear that positive experienced teachers have valuable insights into remaining resilient and engaged in their school communities.

### **Declarations**

#### ***Acknowledgments***

The author wishes to thank Drs. Gray, Lowe, Prout, Jefferson, and Shaw for permission to use and publish their Positive Teacher Instrument (See Appendix A) in this study.

#### ***Funding***

The author declares this study received no outside funding.

#### ***Ethics Statements***

The framework for this study was approved by Liberty University's Institutional Review Board.

#### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declares no conflict of interest for this study.

#### ***Informed Consent***

The participants in this study were informed of their rights and agreed to participate of their own volition.

#### ***Data availability***

The data from this study is confidential and unavailable due to the conditions for approval by Liberty University's Institutional Review Board.

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## Appendix A: Positive Experienced Teacher Inventory

|   |                   |          |                   |                            |                      |                |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. It is important to me to incorporate change and innovation in my classroom and assessment practices      | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 2. It is important to me to be a positive role model for other teachers                                     | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 3. I feel unsettled by the expectation of regularly applying new ideas in my teaching                       | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 4. I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when actively engaged in my classroom                            | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 5. It is important to me to seek out new ideas  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 6. It is important to me to mentor young and beginning teachers   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 7. I seek out new ideas to incorporate directly into my teaching and assessment practices                   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 8. I believe my past and current teaching achievements in my workplace are undervalued.                     | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 9. I would be uncomfortable leading change and innovation to teaching practices within my school.           | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 10. I feel comfortable in myself as a respected professional.   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 11. I actively seek out new professional development opportunities to improve my teaching.                  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 12. I feel unsettled by changes to the established teaching and assessment practices I use in my classroom. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 13. I feel I am a risk-taker in my teaching practice.   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 14. I perceive myself to be a person of value in my school.   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 15. I take leadership roles to support change and innovation in my school.                                  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |
| 16. I am comfortable at incorporating new teaching and assessment practices in my classroom.                | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree agree | Strongly agree |
|   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5-6                  | 7              |

*Note.* Positive Veteran Teacher Inventory. Reprinted from Positive veteran teachers: Who are they, and where are they to be found? by Lowe, G., Gray, C., Prout, P., Jefferson, S., & Shaw, T. (2019). *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(3), 823–840.

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## **Appendix B: Data Collection Questions**

Journal Prompt: Please define the word “resilience” in your own words and explain the ways it relates to your experiences and practices as a teacher.

### Individual Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me why you decided to become a teacher.
2. Teaching is a challenging profession that has the possibility of profoundly affecting students and other members of the school community. What sticks out to you as the low points in your teaching career and of what are you most proud?
3. What difficult challenges have you encountered that threatened your commitment to teaching?
4. What allowed you to stand up to these difficulties and respond in life-giving ways?
5. What foundational elements in your life aid you in bouncing back from adverse circumstances in the teaching profession?
6. What motivates you to continue in the teaching profession?
7. What would cause you to leave the teaching profession other than retirement?
8. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give beginning teachers on navigating the first five years of teaching?

### Focus Group Questions:

1. What specifically do you, as teachers, do to recover from adverse situations?
2. What enables you, as teachers, to remain positive in the profession rather than develop a cynical, dispassionate approach?
3. What advice from your experiences would you give to teachers entering the profession about overcoming the difficulties of teaching and remaining positive?
4. This study examines experienced teachers’ resilience. Is there anything else we should discuss or ask about?