Principal Leadership Practices Influence on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard-to-Staff Schools

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ABSTRACT

Teacher retention is a growing issue that plagues schools across America (Grissom, 2011). Consequently, urban high poverty, high minority schools face even greater challenges as they expect to lose approximately 50% of their teachers within their first five years on the job. According to Grissom (2011), school working conditions explain both teacher turnover and teacher satisfaction, and principal effectiveness has a significant positive impact on teacher retention, especially in disadvantaged schools. The purpose of this study was to examine leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools. A basic qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of how school climate and culture, instructional leadership, school mission and vision, and teacher development impact teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools.

Data collection included individual and focus group interview data from five principals and 17 teachers with longevity in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools in Southeastern Virginia. An analysis of the data indicated that administrative support, principal-teacher relationships, shared leadership, clear expectations and instructional leadership are essential to teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. The results of this study may impact the recruitment and development of school leaders by both districts and school leadership programs.
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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Teacher turnover is a growing problem plaguing school systems across the country, especially in high minority, high poverty schools. Much of the present research focuses on why teachers leave the field, but there is little research on the why teachers choose to remain in an urban, hard-to-staff school and whether their decision is influenced by the leadership practices of the school principal. The purpose of this study was to examine leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools. Qualitative research methods including individual interviews and focus groups enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of how school climate and culture, instructional leadership, school mission and vision, and teacher development impact teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools.

Data collection included individual and focus group interview data from five principals and 17 teachers with longevity in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools in Southeastern Virginia. An analysis of the data indicated that administrative support, principal-teacher relationships, shared leadership, clear expectations and instructional leadership are essential to teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. The results of this study may impact the recruitment and development of school leaders by both districts and school leadership programs.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

There is a clear and undeniable link between quality teachers and student achievement yet retaining quality teachers is a recurring issue across the United States (Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2007). Despite the many technological advances in the 21st century classroom, effective teacher instruction continues to be the most essential influence on student learning compared to all other initiatives including technology, new programs, and other innovations. (Schmoker, 2011). In our nation’s high-poverty, high-minority, urban schools, the importance of effective teachers is even greater. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) found that the negative effects of teacher turnover on academic achievement are greater for low-performing minority students than their non-minority peers. While student demographic characteristics such as poverty, language background, and minority status are often considered when comparing student outcomes, they are less influential in predicting achievement levels than the quality of the teaching force (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In fact, research shows that in schools serving disadvantaged populations, it matters more which teacher a child receives than it does in high socio-economic schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2009). Effective teachers are necessary for student success (Stronge et al., 2007).

Richard Ingersoll’s research has shown that instructional expertise is vital to the success of all students, yet teacher turnover continues to plague schools, especially in high-poverty, high-minority urban areas (Ingersoll, 2001). About one-third of new teachers leave the profession within five years, and these rates increase to approximately 50% higher in high-poverty schools (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). As higher skilled teachers move to openings in lower poverty, suburban schools, urban schools face the dilemma of how to meet rigorous local, state, and national targets for student achievement while dealing with high numbers of new, unqualified teachers and the challenges associated with children in disadvantaged schools (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007).

Factors such as student and teacher characteristics, inadequate compensation, and accountability systems have been identified as influences on teacher turnover (Feng, 2009; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Tye & O’Brien, 2002); however, a number of studies have pointed to the working conditions of a school, particularly in urban areas, to explain the high percentages of teachers moving to other schools or leaving the profession (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak,
Among the strongest predictors of teacher turnover are working conditions related to administrative support, quality professional development, instructional leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture and climate (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Greenlee & Brown, 2009; Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer, 2011). Research has defined administrative support as the school leader’s “effectiveness in assisting teachers with issues such as student discipline, instructional methods, curriculum, and adjusting to the school environment” (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p.380). Studies have also found it is a significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction and a strong predictor of teachers’ intent to stay in teaching (Tickle, Chang & Kim, 2011). All teachers, regardless of their years of experience, highly value school leaders who are able to model instructional expectations, communicate school and district initiatives that support student learning, and motivate teachers by helping them to see the purpose and meaning behind their work (Walker & Slear, 2011). Studies conclude that such principal behaviors positively impact teacher satisfaction and commitment (Bogler, 2001; Davis & Wilson, 2000).

Overview of the Study

This qualitative case study was proposed to examine the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff middle schools. Five Southeastern Virginia urban high-poverty, high-minority middle schools were studied. Principal and teacher perceptions of principal leadership practices that impact teacher retention will be examined. Specifically, this study investigated the similarities and differences between the principal and teacher perceptions of essential leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay more than five years in an urban, hard-to-staff school. Data were generated from principals’ and teachers’ responses to open-ended questions posed during individual and focus group interviews.

Historical Perspective

Massey, Warrington and Holmes (2014) noted that urban schools have been classified not only by their physical location in large, heavily populated cities across the United States but also by the large populations of minority and disadvantaged students. As early as the 1960s, middle-class predominately White families moved out of America’s cities and into suburban areas. As a result, urban schools became predominantly populated by large numbers of minority students, mostly African American and Latino (Massey et al., 2014). Across the nation, especially in
urban schools, limited economic resources coupled with underpaid, inexperienced teachers working in poor conditions affected student achievement and triggered an examination of public schools in the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk”. In this report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education examined the quality of education in the United States and found an immediate need for reform. Rapidly declining test scores, inadequate teaching salaries and poor teacher training programs led to a high turnover rate among educators (Gardner, 1983). These findings resulted in follow-up 1986 report, “A Nation Prepared”, which called for changes in teacher education programs and national teaching standards in an effort to raise student achievement and create a professional environment in which teachers had a voice in how they would meet state and district goals (A Nation Prepared, 1986).

The retention of quality teachers continues to be a persistent problem across U.S. public schools (Jacob, 2007). Approximately 30% of public school teachers leave within their first five years of teaching (Hanushek, et al, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Studies show that teachers report issues such as a lack of administrative support, low salaries, poor facilities, and increased accountability measures as key factors in their decisions to leave schools or the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Tye & O’Brien, 2002;). This challenge is intensified in schools serving large populations of low-income students of color where teachers leave at an increased rate of approximately 50% (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004), the mass exodus of teachers in urban schools is a result of “teachers systematically favoring higher-achieving, non-minority, non-low-income students”, (p.337). High rates of teacher attrition from high poverty to more wealthier schools creates a challenge to attract and develop effective teachers in urban schools and, as a result, disadvantaged students who attend these schools are typically taught by the least experienced teachers (Grissom, 2011).

Some studies have shown that teacher turnover in disadvantaged schools is often associated with student characteristics (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, Atkins, & Bonner, 2011; Shrunk & Robinson, 2006). This research suggests that some teachers in urban schools are challenged by the differences in social identity, racial/ethnic background, socio-economic status, and culture from their students which may lead to job dissatisfaction, lessened commitment, and increased turnover. According to Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf and Spencer (2011), the work overload, intense behavioral and academic student needs, and inadequate parental support in urban schools produce high levels of occupational stress for teachers. Many
teachers who enter the profession feel ill-equipped to work with high-needs populations (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002).

The “culture shock” teachers in urban schools encounter may be a crucial factor in their decisions to leave these schools, but an emerging body of research has identified the working conditions of the school such as school leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture as strong predictors of job satisfaction for teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011; Johnson, Craft, & Papay, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Grissom (2011) reported that teachers’ overall job satisfaction and perceptions of leader effectiveness are directly linked to leadership behaviors. Furthermore, other studies have indicated that the principal is a key factor when examining how working conditions impact teacher turnover (Grissom, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2015; Tickle, Chang & Kim, 2011). Walker and Slear (2011) studied the impact of principal leadership behaviors on teachers and found that all teachers, regardless of their years of experience, highly value principals who model instructional expectations, communicate school and district initiatives that support student learning, and motivate teachers by creating a positive school culture and climate. Additionally, teachers report higher levels of commitment when their job provided opportunities for professional development and decision-making (Bogler, 2001). When principals include staff in decision-making, planning and problem-solving, they promote better communication, greater mutual trust and collaboration (Griffith, 2004). Principal behaviors directly impact teacher job satisfaction and commitment (Davis & Wilson, 2000).

**Statement of the Problem**

School districts are searching for creative solutions to reduce high teacher turnover rates yet the problem of retaining quality teachers in schools continues, especially in high-minority, high-poverty schools, (Simon & Johnson, 2015). The answer may be found by examining leadership practices within each school. One of the most significant influences on a teacher’s decision to remain in a school is the level of administrative support (Bogler, 2001; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007; Walker & Slear, 2011). The literature is rich with examples of how the quality of school leadership is found to influence teachers’ job satisfaction and decision to remain in schools (Bogler, 2001; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Walker & Slear, 2011;), however, these studies do not closely analyze what practices of the school leader matter most to teacher retention. The lack of the research limits how educational programs and districts develop school
leaders, especially in our most disadvantaged schools (Grissom, 2011). Furthermore, the question remains to whether effective principal leadership is enough to keep quality teachers in our high-minority, high-poverty, urban schools that face challenges of high student discipline, low academic achievement, and a lack of parental involvement. The principal’s effectiveness as a school manager, instructional leader, and change agent must be examined when considering the factors that may influence quality teachers to remain in our nation’s toughest schools (Johnson et al., 2012).

A concentrated effort on teacher recruitment as a solution to staffing problems in high-poverty, high-minority schools has yielded little to no results and elevated teacher turnover rates continue to challenge schools serving our neediest students (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). As a result of the escalating numbers of teacher vacancies in urban, disadvantaged schools, a disproportionate large number of novice teachers are hired and compromise the instructional effectiveness of the schools. Studies have found that constant teacher turnover produces a negative impact on the academic achievement of low-income, minority students as compared to their non-minority peers. (Allensworth et al, 2009; Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). In fact, students in high-poverty schools are more likely than their peers in wealthier schools to be taught by less experienced teachers and impacted by inconsistent staffing from one year to the next (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Additionally, high teacher turnover rates impact student achievement especially in low income schools by incurring large costs on districts struggling to repeatedly recruit, hire, induct, and develop new teachers. As a result, classroom resources are diverted from the classroom widening the gap between high poverty and more affluent schools (Grissom, 2011).

Over the past decade national education accountability measures have generated additional challenges for many high-poverty, urban schools. For those deemed chronically failing, a variety of sanctions or improvement strategies have been introduced as a part of the “turnaround” process. Central to the transformation of disadvantaged schools is the belief that effective leadership is critical for school improvement (Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, Leithwood (2006) concluded that the principal’s role in instructional leadership, organizational management, and teacher development significantly impacts the success of a school. Given that many urban schools battle frequent teacher turnover as a result of student discipline issues, low
student achievement, inexperienced staff, or a lack of appropriate professional development, a closer examination of how principals lead schools is necessary.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this research is that it investigates the principal behaviors that influence teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools by providing guidance for professional development, continuous school improvement, and the selection of principals for urban, hard to staff schools. First, this research may aid in developing school leaders who are skilled at the most effective leadership practices needed to retain a quality teaching force. The failure of many urban schools to retain effective teachers to serve their disadvantaged populations continues to be one of the most persistent problems in U.S. public education (Johnson, Reinhorn, Charner-Laird, Kraft, Ng, & Papay, 2011). In fact, public schools serving America’s neediest students expect to lose over half of their teaching staff every five years (Allensworth, 2009). Such schools typically enroll large populations of minority students, including students with special needs or identified as English language learners. Challenges associated with poverty, low student achievement, lack of parental involvement, discipline issues, and poor working conditions generally plague these schools, especially for the multitude of inexperienced teachers who often fill the vacant positions (Hanushek, et al., 2004; Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf & Spencer, 2011; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). Teachers in high poverty schools say they seek “effective management, fair and encouraging leadership, instructional support, and inclusive decision-making” (Simon & Johnson, 2015, p. 27); therefore, an examination of actions of the school principal is essential in determining how to improve the retention of teachers in high-poverty, urban schools.

Secondly, the examination of principal behaviors that impact teacher retention may reinforce the critical leadership practices needed for the continuous school improvement that most urban, low-income, high-minority schools require (Simon & Johnson, 2015). The mass exodus of approximately 50% of teachers from high-poverty, high-minority schools create extreme challenges for sustained school improvement across the nation. According to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), low-performing schools in urban high-poverty communities across Virginia have lower attendance rates, lower test scores and are less likely to be fully accredited as measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments. Furthermore, extreme poverty in Virginia is highly concentrated in the southeastern part of the
state’s urban areas where the most poverty stricken students account for 60% to all of the schools’ populations. Sustained school improvement for schools challenged by low attendance and achievement rates is exacerbated by an inadequate number of effective, committed teachers and the uneven use of recommended instructional practices (JLARC, 2014).

Attracting and retaining committed, effective teachers is critical to the academic success of high-poverty schools across the nation (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007). The JLARC report “Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities” ascertained that “effective teachers are among the most important elements for strong academic performance in schools” (p.13). Additionally, the report acknowledged that “a strong principal to recruit and guide the teachers is also critical” (p. 13). The JLARC data show that staff turnover at three of the five higher performing urban Virginia schools was relatively low and teachers showed a strong commitment to using effective instructional practices. Overall, the principals in these schools demonstrated instructional leadership through the facilitation of on-going professional development, teacher coaching, meaningful feedback from classroom observations, and effective staff management (JLARC, 2014). If districts aim to accelerate sustained improvement in underperforming urban schools and retain quality teachers, they must have a far better understanding than is now evident of how principals lead change in schools (Johnson et al., 2014).

Finally, research about the impact of principal leadership practices could provide district leaders direction on how to recruit and select principals who have the ability to implement these practices in our neediest schools (Grissom, 2011). The principal, long identified as the key leader of school change (Leithwood, 2006), has been the focus of many school reform efforts, yet few studies show a consistent practice of districts relocating their best principals into the neediest environments.

Moreover, the influence of principal on instructional leadership, organizational management, school culture and climate is key to the retention of quality teachers, (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012). Given that Joseph Murphy’s (2008) study on leadership in turnaround schools reports that successful leaders in turnaround schools are action-oriented; this research is significant in providing state and district leaders the leadership qualities and actions to consider when selecting principals to build productive working environments for teachers and students in challenging schools.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Specifically, this study will examine the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. Emergent themes derived from the study may suggest professional development content that may be considered as a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention.

Justification of the Study

An investigation into how principal behaviors reduce teacher attrition in disadvantaged schools could lead to how districts train principals and provide school administrators successful leadership practices that sustain quality teachers. The rising percentages of teacher turnover in urban schools push districts to closely examine school leadership behaviors and its influence on maintaining a stable workforce (Grissom, 2011). A vast amount of the research on teacher turnover has studied the reasons teachers choose to leave urban, hard-to-staff schools, yet questions remain regarding why some teachers choose to stay in the nation’s toughest schools. Does leadership matter? Further exploration of whether principal leadership practices influence lower teacher turnover would allow districts and educational leadership programs to focus on developing effective practices in its school leaders.

Research Questions/Guiding Questions

The research questions that follow will guide this study.

1. What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?
2. What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?
3. How do principals' perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?
a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

**Conceptual Framework**

The intent of the study is to examine principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Current research indicates that there are several influences such as salary, teacher efficacy and teacher preparation contributing to teachers’ decisions to remain in urban, hard-to-staff schools. This study, however, focuses exclusively on the principal leadership behaviors.
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for factors that influence teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools provides an overview for this study’s focus on administrative support.
**Definition of Key Terms**

Key terms will be used throughout this study and are defined to facilitate understanding.

**Accountability.** *Accountability* can be defined as standards set by national and state departments of education outlining what should be learned in each grade and subject, and these standards are linked to assessments of student performance. Additionally, states develop rating systems for student performance and link the results to individual schools (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005).

**Administrative Support.** *Administrative support* refers to the extent to which school leaders make teachers’ work easier and assist in making improvements to their teaching (Boyd et al., 2011).

**Climate.** *Climate* refers to the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school’s environment. It includes the physical, social, and academic dimensions of a school (Loukas, 2007).

**Culture.** *Culture* can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2003).

**Hard-to-Staff Schools.** *Hard-to-staff schools* are schools primarily high-poverty, inner-city schools or rural schools who have difficulty finding and retaining teachers as a result of their location in a low socio-economic area. Typically, these schools have high rates of teacher turnover which makes it difficult for the schools to maintain a strong organization in support of student learning (VDOE, 2011).

**Instructional Leadership.** *Instructional leadership* refers to integration of professional development, direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, and student progress monitoring (Blasé & Blasé, 2000).

**Professional Development.** *Professional development* is instructionally focused activities that promote teachers’ use of data, effective teaching strategies and collaboration (Sanzo & Clayton, 2011).

**Teacher Attrition.** *Teacher attrition* refers to the movement of teachers out away from the teaching profession due to retirement or moving to another profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Teacher Turnover.** *Teacher turnover* is the movement of teachers away from the teaching profession or teachers who transfer to teaching jobs in other schools (Ingersoll, 2001).
Teacher Retention. Teacher retention is the act of teachers remaining in teaching at their current schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

Urban Schools. Urban schools are schools located in large central cities and the communities they serve are often characterized by high percentages of low socio-economic and high minority students (Massey, Warrington, & Holmes, 2014).

Working Conditions. Working conditions refer to a school’s culture, the principal’s leadership, and the teachers’ relationships with their colleagues. These conditions shape the social context of teaching and learning. (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

Limitations

This study investigated the impact of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. The following limitations of which the researcher did not have control when determining the boundaries of the study:

1. A potential bias exists on the part of the researcher, as she is employed by the urban school division in Virginia where the subjects of the study are located.
2. An additional potential bias exists on the part of the researcher, as she serves as a school principal and has worked predominantly in urban middle schools.
3. The researcher assumes that the participants in this study will answer all of the interview questions openly and honestly.

Delimitations

The following were delimitations of which the researcher had control when determining the boundaries of this study:

1. Only one school division will be selected to participate in this study.
2. Elementary, middle and high school teachers and principals from high minority, high poverty schools will be selected for participation in this study.
3. This study will focus on perceptions of principal practices that influence teacher retention in urban schools but will not investigate other potential factors that impact teacher retention.
4. This study is limited to the perceptions of middle school teachers with five or more years of experience in an urban public school.
Organization of the Study

The crisis of teacher turnover in urban schools plagues districts across the nation. This study analyzed the literature and examined the principal behaviors that impact teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction including background information on urban school teacher attrition, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, definition of terms, limitations, delimitations, and organization of the study. Chapter Two provides a review of current literature related to the topic of study. Chapter Two includes search procedures, historical background, the importance of highly, committed teachers, factors that impact teacher attrition in urban schools, principal leadership practices and teacher job satisfaction, and principal leadership characteristics and teacher job satisfaction. Chapter Three details the methodology proposed for this study. This chapter includes a description of the setting, participant description, instrument design, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapter Four presents and analyzes the results related to this study, and Chapter Five provides a discussion of the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Search Process

In an effort to conduct a thorough search of the literature related to principal practices that impact teacher job satisfaction in urban schools, a variety of search engines were employed. The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Library Summons search engine and Google Scholar were the primary methods used for identifying scholarly research literature for this study. Search limits to restrict for scholarly and peer-reviewed sources published from 2005 to present were applied. The online database search yielded approximately 17,000 books, dissertations, journal articles, and other sources when using the keywords “teacher retention”, “teacher job satisfaction”, and “teacher attrition”. Using the terms “teacher retention in urban schools”, “principal leadership in urban schools”, and “job satisfaction in hard to staff schools” and limiting the search to scholarly and peer-reviewed articles yielded approximately 130 remaining sources. Throughout the literature review process, research cited by other authors were assessed and utilized.

Purpose of the Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore what principal leadership practices influence teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. A review of literature investigating current issues impacting high attrition rates in urban schools was studied. The findings of empirical research regarding the factors that impact teacher job satisfaction and influence teachers’ decisions to leave or stay in a school was explored. Further exploration of the research related to whether principal practices such as instructional leadership, developing school culture and climate, and providing professional development impact a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, high poverty school was also reviewed.

The Plight of Urban, Hard to Staff Schools

The foundation of today’s educational structures are rooted in the philosophy of the John Dewey whose main objective was to educate the “whole child” by attending to the student’s physical and emotional, as well as intellectual growth (“Progressive”, n.d.). This philosophy transformed into an educational reform movement during the 1800s as diverse racial, ethnic,
religious and immigrant populations began to flood American cities. This influx of children with diverse needs, challenged both rural and urban areas (Massey, Warrington, & Holmes, 2014). As a result, Horace Mann, the nation’s leading educational reformer, led the fight to reorganize our nation’s one-room school houses into educational systems that provided support for teacher training, the grading of pupils by age and ability, and a lengthened school year. Each district was tasked to provide a common school for all children, regardless of religion or social class. This method proved so successful that it quickly became the norm in public education across the country. Another innovation by Mann was the standardization of public school curricula which ensured that children could expect the same high-quality education from any school, district-wide (“Public”, n.d.).

Mann’s initiative was the precursor to today's public school. Education that was once private, religious, and reserved for wealthy families evolved into free, non-sectarian schools that were funded primarily by taxes. As the new public schools, called Common Schools, began to develop, Mann and fellow reformers James Carter, Henry Barnard, and Catharine Beecher saw that the schools needed not only more teachers, but better teachers (“Public”, n.d). The increasing number of new schools across the country demanded greater numbers of educated teachers. In order to staff the schools, women were enlisted which ignited the feminization of the teaching profession and the domination of women in the workforce. The increasing need for qualified teachers also led to the formalization of teacher training (“Public”, n.d).

According to Adkins (2009), 19th century educational reform was the catalyst to reorganize the responsibility of both teachers and school administrators. The early administration of schools was the responsibility of local school boards. Eventually, a principal leader was created and typically held by teachers who had expert knowledge of teaching methods, children, and the common problems in schools. During the turn of the 20th century, America evolved from a rural, agricultural society into an urban, industrialized nation. The role of the school principal once considered a leader of virtue-based instruction evolved into a manager of students’ preparation for the country’s businesses and industries (Adkins, 2009). To meet the demands of a changing nation, school principals were expected to not only manage schools but provide instructional leadership to teachers and students.

New educational structures such as the creation of high schools also began to evolve in the 1900s. This effort provided wealthy parents the option of keeping their children in school
rather than pushing them into the workforce. A consequence of this movement was the reinforcement of racial, religious, and class privilege in America’s schools (Massey, et al., 2014). By the early and mid-20th century, IQ testing became popular among school leaders, especially in large urban districts which led to educational tracking for many students of color. Consequently, students from minority or low socio-economic backgrounds were often not placed on college-preparatory tracts (Massey, et al., 2014).

Although some may classify urban schools or districts based on their physical location in large, heavily populated cities across the United States, urban schools are often defined as urban because of the characteristics associated with the school and the people in them (Massey, et al., 2014). The distinction of the racial and ethnic diversity represented in these schools has evolved the term urban education as “code” for poor, low-performing African American and Latino populations and their teachers (Watson, 2011). Beginning in the 1960s, urban areas experienced substantial loss of middle class and White families causing a change of the racial and economic dynamics of urban schools. This movement of White families to the suburbs left urban schools and districts with large populations of minority students, mostly African American and Latino. With large populations of residents with limited economic resources, urban schools were left to face multiple challenges with little support (Massey et al., 2014). The 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* depicted teachers who were unqualified, underpaid, working in poor conditions, and achieving poor results. A follow-up report in 1986, *A Nation Prepared*, laid the foundations for a new professionalism and a new standards movement. It proposed improving teacher education, restructuring the teaching force and giving teachers greater say in how they met new requirements for student achievement (Kantor & Brenzel, 1992).

Despite the shift towards school improvement over the past few decades, our nation’s urban schools have continued to be associated with underperformance, high concentrations of minority and low socio-economic students, increased discipline issues, and high teacher attrition (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). The accountability systems created by national and state policy makers to close the achievement gap and lead to greater school improvement have forced the neediest urban schools to be compared against their suburban counterparts that face far fewer challenges. Educational researchers have noted that this current culture of accountability from standardized testing and teacher evaluation have greatly influenced teachers’ decisions to seek jobs outside of urban schools (Massey et al., 2014).
The flight of qualified teachers to more affluent districts where the pressure is lower and pay and working conditions are higher have only added to the dilemma urban schools face. As a result, a pattern of inequities among schools have been perpetuated and schools with the largest percentages of high-poverty, high-minority and low performing students also have the least qualified teachers based on certification credentials and experience (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008).

**The Importance of Highly Committed and Qualified Teachers**

The current state of education is saturated with measures for accountability at the student, teacher, and school levels. Recent educational policies such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core call for more attention to student gains and the effectiveness of teachers. As a result of increased accountability, educational researchers have focused on the valuable connection between teaching and learning by examining the impact of teaching on student achievement. Overwhelming, studies have concluded that the most significant factor in determining student achievement is the quality of teacher providing instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2007). This renewed interest in the role of the teacher as the centerpiece for school improvement is highlighted in the work of educational practitioner, Michael Smoker. His book, *Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning*, suggests that elements under the teacher’s control such as instructional delivery and authentic literacy have more impact on student achievement than all other initiatives including technology, new programs, and other innovations (Schmoker, 2011).

A study conducted by Stronge, Ward, Tucker and Hindman (2007), confirmed the importance of highly qualified teachers in our schools. This study examined the instructional practices and behaviors of over 85 teachers to determine what constitutes effective teaching as defined by measured increases in student achievement. The key findings of this study indicated that effective teachers scored higher across the four domains of instruction, student assessment, classroom management, and personal qualities. Effective teachers asked a greater number of higher level questions and had fewer incidences of off-task behavior (Stronge, et al., 2007). They concluded that these practices and behaviors resulted in an “undeniable link that exists between teacher effectiveness and student learning” (Stronge, et al., 2007, p. 181). Using national schools and staffing Surveys from across 50 states, Darling-Hammond (2000) also researched the impact of quality teachers on student achievement. The findings of this study
confirmed the most consistent significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics in each year tested was the proportion of well-qualified teachers with full certifications and majors in the areas in which they taught. With consideration to challenging factors such as student demographics, this study concluded that teacher preparation and certification are the strongest correlates of student achievement. In summary, this research indicated that the “effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 32).

Teacher Turnover and Attrition

Despite the overwhelming research on the impact of quality teachers on student achievement, across the United States schools are facing increasing teacher attrition in districts. The challenge of school districts retaining effective, enthusiastic, and committed teachers is not a new problem. As early as the 1960s, teachers shared accounts of being overwhelmed by the needs of students and the school system’s inability to meet those needs (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Approximately 30% of public school teachers leave within the first five years of teaching, and the turnover rate is about 50% higher in high-poverty, urban schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher turnover increased by 28% since the early 1990s, but the turnover is not equally distributed among districts and schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). The data from the Schools and Staffing Survey showed that teachers are moving “from poor to wealthier schools, from high-minority to low-minority schools, and from urban to suburban schools” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010, p.19). There is a large body of literature that addresses why teachers may leave the profession. Reasons include a lack of administrative support, low salaries, poor facilities and the increased focus on assessment and accountability (Ingersoll, 2001; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2005; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). As a result, school districts are left with the difficult task of retaining highly qualified teachers in classrooms.

Richard Ingersoll, a leader in research on the topic of teacher retention, conducted his study, “Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools” in 2001. He used the School Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow up Survey which is the largest and most comprehensive data source available on the staffing, and to examine the occupational and organizational aspects of schools. This study analyzed teacher turnover and its role in teacher demand and school staffing problems. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to
determine the effects of teacher and school characteristics and organizational conditions on turnover. Lastly, Ingersoll reviewed the reasons teachers give for their departures. He found that staffing problems were a result of the demand for teachers caused by a “revolving door” of teachers leaving their jobs “for reasons other than retirement such as dissatisfaction with their jobs or in order to seek better jobs or career opportunities” (Ingersoll, 2001, p.523). Ingersoll (2001) discovered that the rates of attrition from individual schools and districts include the leavers plus movers who go from one school or district to another found the following:

Much of the empirical research has tended to emphasize only one component of the overall flow of teachers from schools – those who leave the occupation of teaching altogether, often (and hereafter) referred to as teacher attrition. Researchers have often de-emphasized the other major component of turnover – those who transfer or move to different teaching jobs in other schools, often (and hereafter) referred to as teacher migration (Ingersoll, 2001, p.503).

Taken together, leavers and movers affect schools, particularly those that serve poor and minority students (Ingersoll, 2001). Furthermore, he found that teachers were leaving the profession due to inadequate support, student discipline problems, and limited faculty input into school decision-making (Ingersoll, 2001, p.522).

The Greatest Challenge: Teacher Turnover in Urban Schools

One of the most daunting challenges in public education is the retention of quality teachers for America’s urban schools which serve our most disadvantaged populations of students. In addition to the factors that traditionally impact teacher turnover in public schools across America, urban school teachers face additional challenges. Stressors related to teacher efficacy in classroom management, motivation practices to promote student learning, and a lack of parental involvement are commonly expressed concerns of teachers in hard-to-staff, urban schools (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, Atkins, & Bonner, 2011). In an analysis of the impact of classroom characteristics on teacher mobility, the data show higher percentages of minority students in a school increases the risk of teachers leaving including exits to other professions, inter-district moving, and intra-district moving. A school is classified as “hard-to-staff” when both the proportion of minority students at the school exceeds the district average
and the proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch at the school are greater than the district average (Feng, 2009).

When teachers leave urban schools to teach in suburban or rural settings, it creates a “revolving door” of teachers (Ingersoll, 2000, p.501). In turn, our newest teachers are often placed in the hardest-to-staff schools situated in high-poverty, urban communities where one-third to one-half of teachers leave within their first five years (Barnes, Crowe, & Shaefer, 2007). This migration adversely affects urban schools resulting in a persistent need for new teachers each year. Oakes, Franke, Quartz, and Rogers (2002) describe the dilemma stating that “urban students who face the challenges of poverty, immigration, limited facility with English, and/or racial discrimination have the least access to a qualified teaching force” (Oakes et al., 2002, p.228). Cochran-Smith (2004) also cites evidence that teacher turnover most severely affects schools in low income, urban communities, “where students arguably deserve the best teachers and the most continuity in their schooling” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p.12). Such high-poverty schools are challenged with recruiting and hiring a large percentage of teachers each year, and many of those teachers hired are inexperienced and lack the qualifications of those who leave. According to Cochran-Smith (2004), high-poverty schools are often staffed with willing but unqualified and inexperienced teachers to the detriment of their students.

Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (2004) also investigated the impact of teacher turnover and attrition on student achievement. Using the University of Texas at Dallas Texas School Project data to study the factors that affect the probabilities that teachers switch schools or exit the public schools entirely, they concluded that teacher transition rates for schools in the bottom achievement quartiles are much higher than those in the top quartile. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) discovered that teachers in the bottom quartile schools were more likely to leave than teachers in the top quartile schools. These differences imply that “the lowest achievement students are more likely to have teachers new to the school and to the profession, and this will adversely affect achievement” (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004, p.341). In a study to determine the variation in the average attributes of teachers across schools, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) reviewed data for every teacher and administrator employed in New York City public schools for over a fifteen year period. Their findings concluded that policies such as increased educational standards, accountability and class size increase the demand for highly skilled teachers, yet these trends have the “adverse effect of reducing qualifications of teachers available
to low-performing urban schools as the higher skilled teachers move to openings in lower poverty, suburban districts” (Lankford et al., 2002, p. 55).

Factors that Influence Teacher Turnover in Urban Schools: Why Do They Leave?

Nationwide, teacher attrition has been rising and this growing problem is approximately 50% higher in urban, high-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001). The exodus of qualified teachers in our neediest schools creates challenges for the students and staff who remain. A review of research revealed a variety of factors that impact a teacher’s decision to leave high poverty, high minority schools.

Accountability systems. Efforts to improve American schools have led to standards-based reform. As a part of this reform, states have developed accountability systems that provide incentives to schools meeting the benchmark and sanctions to those that do not. Although political proponents continue to push standards-based accountability systems as a means for school improvement, the adverse effect on teacher retention could potentially sabotage school reform efforts in our lowest performing schools.

In a mixed methods study conducted by Tye and O’Brien (2002) regarding why teachers leave the profession, the pressures of increased accountability, such as high stakes testing, test preparation, and standards, was ranked by respondents who had already left teaching as the number one reason for leaving. The researchers drew conclusions that a single salary pay rate is likely to apply to all teachers with a specific level of experience and educational certifications in a district regardless of the school. Although some teachers gravitate towards teaching students with educational, social, or emotional challenges, the majority are likely to prefer assignments with a lower proportion of disadvantaged students. Advantaged students often come to school prepared and are motivated to achieve at high levels. To offset some of the adverse effects of the accountability systems on teachers and to encourage teachers to select low performing schools, this study suggested raising base salary levels in those schools (Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Diaz (2004) conducted a study in North Carolina to explore the extent to which a state’s accountability system impacts the challenges that schools serving low-performing students face in retaining and attracting high-quality teachers. They selected North Carolina because of its growth model accountability system in which student assessments were closely aligned with the state’s standards and the state’s focus on growth in test scores rather than simply test scores in evaluating the effectiveness of schools. The state defined its
growth standards as “gains in student scores in math and reading from one year to the next and performance standards which refer to the proportion of students scoring at or above grade level” (Clotfelter, et al., 2004, p.255). If students exceeded the expected gains by more than 10%, the school was deemed exemplary and teachers received financial bonuses of $1500. Schools in which 50% or more students did not meet the expected growth standards were labeled as “no recognition” or “low-performing” (p. 255).

The researchers compared two cohorts of teachers from low-performing schools to determine the system’s impact on teacher retention. One cohort was teaching in disadvantaged elementary schools two years before the first standards-based accountability system. The second cohort included teachers of disadvantaged schools with similar academic performance results during the first year of the accountability system in which their schools received the label of low-performing. The researchers compared the attrition rates of both cohorts of teachers. They found that “the labeling of low-performing apparently had the predicted effect of exacerbating the departure of teachers from labeled schools” (Clotfelter et al., 2004, p.258). North Carolina’s accountability system, although a growth model, increased the problems that low-performing schools face in retaining teachers. The study concluded that accountability systems that favor schools serving more advantaged and higher-performing students result in higher teacher attrition in schools serving low-performing students. Guarino, Brown, and Wyse (2011) add to the body of research concerning the impact of accountability measures on teacher retention. In their study investigating how school demographics affect mobility behaviors of public school teachers in North Carolina from 1995 to 2006, they found that schools that do not meet desired student achievement standards accelerate the drain of teachers, particularly those with higher certifications and characteristics, from the lowest performing schools.

**Inadequate compensation.** In response to the dilemma of teacher turnover, educators have offered a variety of compensation policies created to attract more teachers into the profession and retain those currently teaching. Higher pay, forgiveness of student loans in exchange of a commitment to teach in hard-to-staff schools, and alternative certification programs are just a few examples of recent compensation practices. Several urban school districts across the United States have piloted teacher bonus programs to compensate for some of the challenges that teachers face in high-poverty, inner-city schools.
Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd and Vigdor (2004) conducted a study to investigate the impact of financial incentives on teacher retention. Between 2001 and 2004, North Carolina gave a yearly $1800 bonus to teachers in some of its high-poverty, low-performing schools. The bonus was offered to certified teachers in hard- to-staff areas including math, science, and special education. Approximately 58% of teachers surveyed and 42% of principals reported that the offer of additional money would be a great way to retain teachers in high poverty schools, but the skepticism regarding the amount offered prevailed with over 81% agreeing that a bonus of $1800 would not be enough to retain teachers. A study of the impact of the bonus revealed that there was a reduction of the mean teacher turnover by 17% during the years in which it was offered (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2004). Despite the positive impact on lowering the teacher attrition rate in urban schools, North Carolina’s focus of increasing student achievement in math, science, and special education achievement in underperforming schools by offering monetary incentives could not be accurately measured because the short three year duration of the bonus program. Additionally, the long-term effects of teacher retention could not be measured because the most research categorizes low attrition rates by the number of teachers who remain for five or more years. Finally, teachers surveyed mentioned that “more administrative support, improving work conditions, and facilitating in teachers’ professional development” may have a greater impact on teacher retention (Clotfelter et al., 2004, p. 74).

While compensation could play an important role in a teacher’s decision to remain in a school or in the profession, studies have discovered that monetary incentives are insufficient to compensate for low-performing students, and high-poverty rates (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). In an earlier study, “Why Public Schools Lose Teachers”, Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) concluded that significant salary adjustments that many school districts cannot afford would need to be made to have an impact on urban schools’ teacher retention rates. The researchers noted that a “school with 10% more Black students would require about 10% higher salaries in order to neutralize the increased probability of leaving and 10-15% higher salaries to hold exit rates constant” (Hanushek et al., 2004, p. 350). In an analysis of the 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey data, Tickle, Chang, and Kim (2011) found that there was not a significant relationship between teachers’ satisfaction with their salary and teaching experience. Survey data from over 190 public school teachers in their study revealed that administrative support was identified as the most significant predictor of teachers’ job satisfaction (Tickle et al, 2011).
Feng (2009) studied the impact of opportunity wages on new teacher retention and attrition. The analysis of a sample of 17,935 new teachers in Florida indicated an impossible, costly adjustment for Florida school districts. The data show if teacher salaries in hard-to-staff schools were raised to be competitive with the average salaries in competing professions or competing school districts, the retention rate would increase by approximately two percentage points. To maintain the teacher retention rate in hard to staff schools at the same level as more affluent schools, a teacher in a hard to staff school would have to be paid an additional $10,000 (a 21% increase) to neutralize turnover effects associated with increasing proportions of Black and poor students (Feng, 2009).

**Teacher characteristics.** Some studies have indicated that teacher turnover in urban schools is a result of teacher characteristics (Guarino, Brown, & Wyse, 2011; Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007; Strunk & Robinson, 2006). In a meta-analysis of research on teacher retention in urban schools, Stoko et.al, (2007) found that to combat rigorous national standards, scant resources and high-poverty challenges, urban schools must attract and retain teachers that have a unique set of characteristics: teacher efficacy, persistence, flexibility, willingness to modify practices (classroom management, and instructional strategies) to improve student learning, high expectations, alignment of instruction to standards and assessment, cooperativeness, collaboration, and have a strong belief in professional development. Despite this great need, low-income, low-achieving, and minority students mostly in urban areas are taught by the newest or least skilled teachers who lack these characteristics (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002).

Additionally, in the study, “Oh, Won’t You Stay”, Strunk and Robinson (2006) researched factors that influence a teacher’s decision to leave the profession. One theory they discuss is the “opportunity wage theory”, which suggests that teachers who have greater opportunities outside the public school systems, especially in the math and science, are more likely to leave their teaching jobs for higher wages outside of the teaching profession. Their findings support the cultural competence theory that teachers are more likely to leave schools with high-minority populations. Strunk and Robinson (2006) note that this finding has less to do with racial bias and more to do with teachers being comfortable around others of similar races and ethnic backgrounds. Several studies have reported that promising teachers leave high-poverty schools to work in wealthier, White communities. These studies have discovered that teachers of color,
particularly Black and Latino teachers, are more likely to stay in teaching and at schools that serve students with similar socio-economic and racial backgrounds (Boyd, et al., 2008; Hanushek, et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001).

**Student characteristics.** A review of research on teacher turnover in urban schools connects teacher attrition to student characteristics (Boyd, et al., 2008; Hanushek, et al., 2004; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). In their study, “Oh, Won’t You Stay”, Strunk and Robinson (2006) researched factors that influence a teacher’s decision to leave the profession. Their findings support the theory that the reason teachers are more likely to leave schools with high-minority populations has less to do with racial bias and more to do with teachers being comfortable around others of similar races and ethnic backgrounds. Strunk and Robinson (2002), note that in some cases, teachers from a racial/ethnic background different from that of their students may experience a “cultural shock”, resulting in lower levels of job satisfaction. These feelings of mistrust, social identity differences, or cultural shock may all lead to job dissatisfaction, lessened commitment to the school, and increased turnover (Strunk & Robinson, 2002).

Many teachers enter the classroom unprepared to work with high-needs students. In the study “The Schools Teachers Leave” (2009) conducted in Chicago Public Schools district, teacher stability rates were 10% higher in schools with low rates of crime compared to schools in areas with high rates of crimes. This study found that while most teachers are equipped with the required teacher credentials and desire to make a positive impact on student achievement, they may not have the knowledge of the community and of the culturally relevant pedagogy that will enable them to teach effectively and work well with students in urban schools. The findings of this study reveal that students in high-needs schools often lack basic needs such as food, shelter, or clothing and have limited resources that impact home-school communication, such as computer access. Frequent incidents of community violence and fears regarding student safety often create challenges for teachers in high poverty schools (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009).

Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, and Spencer (2011) conducted a qualitative study in three low-performing elementary schools in high poverty areas to further explore the sources and impact of stress facing teachers working in urban schools. Their study highlighted the overwhelming nature of poverty and how its impact on students serves as a source of stress of teachers in high-needs schools. The study notes that schools in economically disadvantaged
communities battle overcrowding, limited resources, and high numbers of students with neglected mental health needs. Through a series of interviews, the researchers documented several teachers’ responses of feeling “worried about how poverty affected student health and well-being” (Shernoff et al., 2011, p. 65). Additionally, teachers also reported feeling stress as a result of large groups of students with varied academic levels which created the need for constant curriculum revision and academic interventions. Finally, some teachers revealed that the multiple roles that teachers in urban schools assume are overwhelming. They described the burden of effectively serving the roles of parent, nurse, social worker, mentor, disciplinarian, and teacher is unreasonable. Throughout the in-depth interviews, occupational stress regarding a work overload with the demands of teaching, intense behavioral and academic needs of students, accountability pressures, and work-setting characteristics were common themes among teacher responses. In conclusion, the researchers note that high rates of occupational stress impact the teachers’ ability to deliver instruction effectively, develop positive relationships with students, and manage difficult behaviors. Consequently, stress is known to decrease teachers’ overall job satisfaction and increase the likelihood that students will encounter a teacher who has become disengaged, withdrawn, or absent and likely to leave the profession. (Shernoff et al., 2011).

The students’ characteristics are often associated with parental involvement in the schools. American teachers place great importance on parental involvement to elevate educational outcomes, particularly among students who face disadvantages (Jeynes, 2007). Across the country, parents are more involved in schools during the elementary years. By the time they enter middle school and high school, parents are more aware of their academic and physical strengths and weaknesses and therefore become less involved in schools (Jeynes, 2007). In urban areas, the lack of parental involvement may seem more prevalent due to high rates of single parent working families and a disconnect between the school and the community. Pedro Noguera (2001) noted in his research of urban schools that the key factor in determining the impact of social conditions on a school is the relationship between the school and the community, including the parents of the children enrolled. It is typically true that teachers at most urban public schools do not reside within the communities they serve, and that social barriers related to differences in race, culture, and class contribute to tremendous barriers between school and community. Furthermore, in a study in by Tye and O’Brien (2002) “Why
Are Experienced Teachers Leaving the Profession”, teachers noted that lack of parental support
or accountability for student misbehavior coupled with critical feedback from parents created a learning environment in which teaching took a backseat to demands of classroom management.

**Working conditions.** School working conditions are reported by teachers as a key factor in their decisions to leave schools (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) used the results of the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-Up Survey and the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey to determine the cause of teacher attrition to other careers. They found that more than three-fourths of the departing new teachers left due to inadequate salaries, but a higher percentage of teachers revealed that various working conditions such as student discipline problems, poor student motivation, lack of administrative support, and the lack of teacher input decision making. In a similar study, the Consortium on Chicago School Research researched Chicago Public Schools where teacher turnover is high at its mostly high-poverty, high-minority schools (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). The researchers investigated the factors that drove teachers away through analysis of teachers’ personnel data linked with students’ racial and socio-economic status, test scores, and student mobility rates. These researchers also surveyed teachers and students about the school’s learning climate, instructional leadership, and parental involvement. Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) found that working conditions such as the presence of positive working relationships, a strong sense of collective responsibility, strong instructional principal leadership, and support for novice teachers were among factors that retained teachers. Poor working conditions explained over 75% of the difference in teachers’ stability rates among elementary schools and nearly all the variation among secondary schools in this study.

More recently, Simon and Johnson (2015) completed a meta-analysis of organizational theory and emerging research on turnover in high-poverty schools. The researchers reviewed six studies analyzing turnover as a function of school context rather than a function of student demographics. Despite early research on student demographics and teacher characteristics as predictors in job turnover in urban schools, Simon and Johnson (2015) concluded that teachers who leave high-poverty schools are not leaving because of its students, but rather due to the poor working conditions that make it impossible for teaching and learning to occur.

A number of studies point towards the school principal as the driving force behind the working conditions of a school (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford & Wycoff, 2011; Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005). Although investments must be made...
in teachers’ working conditions such as teachers’ salaries, class size, teaching load and the availability of materials, of equal importance is strong, administrative support, (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Administrative support is defined as “the school’s effectiveness in assisting teachers with issues such as student discipline, instructional methods, curriculum, and adjusting to the school environment” (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p.380). As for the impact of administrative support on job satisfaction, Loeb, Darling-Hammond and Luczak (2005) surveyed survey 1, 071 California teachers to reveal that the lack administrative support was among the strongest predictors of teacher turnover. In a more recent study, Tickle, Chang and Kim (2011) concluded that administrative support was identified as the most significant predictor of teachers’ job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching. The data reveal that administrative support “mediates the effect of teaching experience, student behavior and teachers’ satisfaction with their salary on teachers’ job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching” (Tickle et al., 2011, p.347). These findings reveal a demand for “high quality professional development institutes for administrators” to increase the administrators’ knowledge of the ISLLC (Interstate School Licensure Consortium) standards and improve their ability to apply these standards to learning environments to increase teachers’ job satisfaction (Tickle et al., 2011, p. 348)

Factors that Influence Teacher Retention in Urban Schools: Why Do They Stay?

Due to the high attrition rates of teachers in urban schools, districts face a challenge for establishing a consistent teaching force for our neediest students. Despite the overwhelming rates of teacher turnover in these schools, there are highly qualified teachers who choose to begin their professions in urban schools and remain there for the duration of their careers. Research reveals that there are several factors that may positively influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. These factors of job satisfaction include teacher preparation, teacher efficacy, and principal leadership and support.

Teacher preparation. The arguments that point towards the importance of preparing teachers for urban schools by providing a set of context-specific pedagogical strategies that equip teachers to effectively work with students of color was presented by Matsko and Hammerness, (2013). Their study suggested a remedy for teacher retention in urban schools was culturally responsive professional development offerings before a teacher’s first day in the classroom. Matsko and Hammerness (2013) found that teachers in urban settings must acquire the “knowledge of how the urban classroom, school, and community all influence teaching and
learning” (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013, p. 137). The findings of their study of an urban teacher preparation program in the Midwest indicate this understanding “coupled with high-quality instructional practices, creates a context-specific design” that better prepares teachers for urban school settings (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013, p. 137). Matsko and Hammerness (2013) researched urban teacher preparation programs, such as University of California at Berkeley’s Multicultural Urban Secondary English Credential and MA Program (MUSE), University of California Los Angeles’ Center X, Project 29 and the University of Illinois in Chicago, and confirm a trend towards providing a context specific teacher preparation program for teachers bound for urban, high-poverty schools.

Specifically, Matsko and Hammerness (2013) studied the approach of the University of Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program that prepares teachers for Chicago Public Schools. Participants in the program must be committed to social justice and teaching for equity and represent undergraduate, graduate students, or career switchers. The program’s context-specific focus included the racial, economic, and cultural knowledge of the Chicago Public School students in addition to the routines, procedures, and curriculum of the school division. Individual and focus group interviews, as well as classroom observations, provided data that positively supported the practice of context-specific teacher education programs (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013). The data revealed that graduates of the U Chicago UTEP implemented high levels of instructional practices studied in the program and that “knowledge about specific features of the classroom, school, community, district and federal contexts all influence teaching and learning at the classroom level” (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014, p. 137). Matsko and Hammerness (2014) concluded that a context-specific approach to teacher preparation may better enable new teachers to access a broad spectrum of knowledge about their students and impact teaching and learning in their classroom. The researchers also indicated that urban teacher preparation provides support to teachers in a challenging context and result in higher retention rates.

In contrast to these practices, conducted by McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, and Robinson (2008) found that a context specific internship experience may not positively impact the ability for a teacher to be effective in the challenging conditions of an urban school environment. The researchers investigated whether there was a difference in the development of effective urban teacher characteristics after completing a traditional internship experience or a
Professional Development School internship experience specific to the urban environment. Comparing pre- and post-test data from 59 student interns who completed a student intern experience with or without a visible urban school environment context-specific professional development, they found that there were no significant differences in the data between the groups. This study suggested that even with a strong school-university partnership and an internship with context-specific embedded professional development and community experiences for working with urban students, these skills were not demonstrated through their classroom teaching. McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, and Robinson (2008) further hypothesized that that teacher selection of mature teachers may provide the strongest candidates for urban schools due to their personal life experiences and “ability to perform at a high conceptual level” (McKinney et al., 2008, p. 79). The question remains to whether teacher preparation programs should prepare teachers for all settings and students or take a context-specific approach and risk creating stereotypical perceptions of students in urban, high-poverty schools.

Teacher efficacy: Beliefs and practices. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) describe teacher efficacy as “the teacher’s in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran, 1998, p. 233). Quartz and the TED Research Group (2003) studied the social justice beliefs of teachers committed to transforming urban education. In this qualitative study, they reviewed new teachers’ commitments to remaining in urban schools and the need to support their decisions to stay through collegial support and professional development. The researchers found the teacher efficacy beliefs of urban teachers who were “too angry to leave” (Quartz, 2003, p.99) centered around a belief in their ability to build on the strengths of urban community resources such as churches and community centers, a craving for rigorous work, and a belief that they could execute a teaching task successfully with high poverty, low performing students. Aside from a belief of self-efficacy, Quartz, (2003) stated that the teachers surveyed also demonstrated practices aligned with their beliefs and increased their chances for success in urban schools. Researchers noted that the teachers who remained in urban schools formed positive relationships with students and parents, developed youth through clubs and organizations, formed networks to promote school safety, utilized the resources within the urban community, and sought out ways to build and extend their professional knowledge.
(Quartz, 2003). The interview data derived from this study presented perspectives of teachers who were committed to teaching in hard to staff schools and the data confirmed their commitment as most remained in the schools for five or more years (Quartz, 2003). Further review of this study revealed that all of the teachers interviewed were graduates of the UCLA Center X Teacher Preparation Program which specialized in urban teacher preparation. Compounding factors such as the impact of the cultural education within this program, the teachers’ pre-determined choice to teach in an urban setting, and the long-term collegiality of the program’s participants may have also influenced their decisions to continue teaching in an urban school despite the challenges Quartz, (2003).

**Principal Leadership and Job Satisfaction**

What impact do principals have on teacher job satisfaction and retention? While research indicates teacher beliefs, practices, and characteristics directly impact teacher retention, another factor to be considered is school leadership. Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) found that administrative support was of more importance to “leavers” than “stayers”. Similarly, a large body of research links teacher job satisfaction and retention to principal leadership (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, & Wycoff, 2011; Grissom, 2011; Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011). In a qualitative study of the sources and impact of stress among urban teachers, teachers reported “human and material resources as most important to reducing work-related stress” (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011). School principals have the authority to provide resources to teachers and create opportunities for teachers to work and learn in collaborative school communities. The positive correlation between teacher support and low turnover rates is evident in an empirical inquiry of leadership styles of principals with low attrition rates conducted by Brown and Wynn (2009). In this qualitative study they interviewed 12 principals with high retention rates in urban schools to investigate the principal’s role in teacher retention. This study revealed several common characteristics of principals with low attrition rates in urban schools that relate to the data suggesting that teachers crave support and resources. According to Brown and Wynn (2009), the principals in the study agreed that “spending more time, providing resources and building capacity are critical components in retaining good teachers” (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p.51). Materials for teaching, technology supplies, or financial support were consistently provided to teachers consistently as a means of concrete support. A common mantra was that they had an “ask and ye shall receive” mentality as they were committed to providing
resources and materials so that teachers could focus on the important demands of meeting the students’ academic needs (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p.53). Human support was provided through visibility and accessibility of all of principals surveyed. All noted that “being available, spending time talking to people, and really listening” created an “open door, literally and figuratively,” which developed a positive school culture and climate (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p.54).

The notion that good principals matter, especially in disadvantaged schools, was further investigated in the study, “Can Good Principals Keep Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools? Linking Principal Effectiveness to Teacher Satisfaction and Turnover in Hard-to Staff Environments” (Grisson, 2011). The purpose of Grisson’s study was to examine how school working conditions impact teacher satisfaction and turnover, as well as the role of effective principals in retaining teachers in disadvantaged schools. Using survey data from the 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 2004-05 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), the researchers analyzed the relationship between teacher satisfaction, retention, and principal effectiveness. They similarly studied whether principal effectiveness mattered more or less in high-poverty schools. The results of this study indicated that teachers working in disadvantaged schools with high populations of minority and low socio-economic students had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction and higher rates of attrition. The effectiveness of the principal was the one important component of teacher working conditions considered a strong predictor of teacher job satisfaction. Furthermore, the data show that the correlations are even greater in hard- to- staff, high-poverty schools. While the data revealed that teachers’ ratings of principals in traditionally hard-to-staff schools were low, the hiring or assigning of an effective principal to a disadvantaged school, there was an even larger effect on satisfaction and turnover than in other schools.

Grisson (2011) noted that good principals impact teacher retention by increasing intangible rewards such as staff recognition or a positive school vision. Orderly work environments through high expectations for student behavior and established routines and procedures were several other factors that teachers rated principals as effective in disadvantaged schools. This research concluded that effective principals impact teacher retention in the same indirect manner in which they influence student learning. The research suggests that “effective principals promote student achievement not by influencing students directly but by helping to
create school environments that are conducive to student learning” (Grisson, 2011, p.257). Essentially, Grissom (2011) concluded that an effective principal completely mitigates teacher attrition in high-poverty schools.

A researcher on the topic of school leadership, Kenneth Leithwood (2006), summarized his key findings of empirical evidence regarding successful leadership practices. As a result of his review of literature, several strong claims about effective school leadership were crafted. First, he specified that almost all efficacious school leaders have similar best practices which include setting expectations, redesigning the organization, understanding and developing people, and managing teaching and learning. Secondly, the leaders are prescriptive in the manner in which they apply these practices based on the contexts of their schools (Leithwood, 2006). Additionally, Leithwood (2006) stated that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. His final claim asserted that several personal traits distinguish the average leader from the exceptional leader. Common themes of leadership practices that impact teachers’ job satisfaction have emerged from a review of current literature.

**Positive school climate and culture.** The quality of a teacher’s working conditions contributes to his or her decision whether to stay or leave a school (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Simon & Johnson, 2015). For example, Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) studied school culture as a predictor of teacher turnover and satisfaction. They defined school culture as “the extent to which the school environment is characterized by mutual trust, respect, openness, and commitment to student achievement” (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 10). Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) analyzed data from 25, 135 teachers from a statewide survey of school working conditions with demographic and student achievement data in Massachusetts. Based on their analysis, they concluded that although elements such as planning time, school facilities or instructional resources are commonly thought of as working conditions, the magnitudes of the effects of elements such as collegial relationships and school culture were twice as large as those of school resources or facilities. A range of working conditions are essential to teachers, but for low-income, high-minority schools, the factors that shape the school’s culture, such as collegial relationships and principal support, ranked the highest. Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012), determined that “the working conditions that mattered most
were not features that made the job of teaching easy, such as short hours, light responsibilities, but those that made effective teaching possible (Johnson et al., 2012, p.22).

Brown and Wynn (2009) found that principals who established relationships, built community, and instilled confidence through fairness, honesty and consistency had higher rates of teacher job satisfaction. In a qualitative study of 20 principals with high retention rates in high-needs schools, all of the principals described creating a school climate that emphasized relationships and an “upbeat, positive and student-focused” environment (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p.54). Some principals in this study mentioned that the climate of their school had a “family feel” and “everybody takes care of each other” (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p.54). Strategic, thoughtful, and deliberate practices of the school leaders are imperative to establish a culture that encourages creative risk taking (Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2011). Educational researcher and leading consultant on educational reform Michael Fullan wrote of the leader’s role in developing a positive school culture. In his book, The Moral Imperative Michael Fullan (2003) states, “Leading schools-as in any great organization-requires principals with the courage and capacity to build new cultures based on trusting relationships and a culture of disciplined inquiry and action” (Fullan, 2003, p. 45).

**Clear mission, vision and goals.** Fullan, also focused on the importance of a leader developing a school focus in his book Leading in a Culture of Change (2003). Collaborative culture, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things, they may end up being powerfully wrong. Moral purpose, good ideas, focusing on results, and obtaining the views of dissenters are essential, because they mean that the organization is focusing on the right things. Leadership, once again, comes to the fore. The role of the leaders is to ensure that the organization develops relationships that help produce desirable results (Fullan, 2003, p. 68).

Walker and Slear (2011) conducted a study on the impact of principal leadership behaviors on teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is an essential factor to consider because it is the measure to which a teacher is confident that he or she can effectively impact teaching and learning in a school (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). In this study, the researchers used data from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale to determine the relationships
between efficacy scores, teacher experience, and the ratings of principal behavior. The data were compiled from 366 middle school teachers from six randomly selected diverse schools from a mid-Atlantic state. The data indicate that while overwhelmingly all teachers value a principal who is able to model instructional expertise, veteran teachers of 15 years or more rank the principal’s ability to inspire group purpose as the highest priority. The results indicate that “as teachers become more proficient and comfortable with academic requirements of their job, they appear to be more interested in larger aspects of school and community working together with an important purpose” (Walker & Slear, 2011, p. 59). The data show that principals must motivate teachers by connecting the purpose and meaning behind their work, thereby inspiring them.

**Instructional leadership.** The principal serves as the instructional leader in the school. The impact of instructional leadership on teacher motivation and job satisfaction is reviewed in a study by Blasé and Blasé (2000) study entitled, *Effective instructional leadership: Teachers’ perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools.* In this quantitative study using open-ended questionnaire data from over 800 American public school teachers, responses show that a number of instructional leadership strategies, behaviors, attitudes, and goals of school principals positively influence classroom teaching and teacher motivation. The data indicate that in effective principal-teacher interactions about instruction, two major themes emerged: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth. Out of these themes, “specific instructional leadership practices were noted to have positive effects on teacher motivation, satisfaction, self-esteem, efficacy, sense of security, and feelings of support” (Blasé & Blasé, 2000, p.133). Principal practices such as talking with teachers to promote reflection, modeling, using inquiry, and soliciting advice/opinions, giving praise, promoting professional growth, and supporting collaboration were described as practices of effective instructional leaders (Blasé & Blasé, 2000).

In challenging schools, instructional leadership ranks key among factors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, & Wycoff, 2011; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012; Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Greenlee and Brown (2009) examined principal behaviors that influence a teachers’ decision to stay in a challenging school. Their findings included instructional leadership as one of the determining factors for teachers who choose to remain in a hard-to-staff school. In this study, the highest rated principal behaviors included the principal’s skill at enhancing the staff’s ability to focus energy on raising student achievement
and the principal’s professional knowledge on the best practices in teaching and learning. Additionally, the principal’s proficiency at providing opportunities for teachers to think, plan, and work together was also ranked high among teachers who chose to stay in challenging schools. Despite the positive impact of instructional leadership on teacher retention in challenging schools, the researchers noted that “principals that are able to build the capacity of teachers and improve student performance in the most disadvantaged schools are the exception not the rule. This rule implies that the leadership needed is not typically understood by universities or school districts” (Greenlee & Brown, 2009, p. 108).

Although the instructional leadership needed in disadvantaged schools is scarce, Karen Chenoweth and Christina Theokas, (2012) discovered a number of academically successful high-minority, high-poverty schools where the principals’ instructional leadership was the catalyst for each school’s achievement. Their book, Getting It Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools, is a case study of 33 principals from 24 high achieving disadvantaged schools. The researchers investigated how successful principals improved educational practices and student learning for all students and what characteristics, behaviors, and practices are shared among the principals. A common theme discovered in their study was that the principals had core beliefs about instructional leadership for high-poverty schools. The researchers describe their belief that education is seen as a path out of poverty and it is school’s job to teach all students at high levels. The data from the case study also revealed that the high performing principals surveyed ranked the highest for Personal Accountability, holding themselves accountable for student learning, even when factors were out of his/her control (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012). Another finding included the amount of time principals spend on instructional leadership. The researchers observed that most principals spent approximately 15% of their day on instruction: coaching teachers, using data to plan for afterschool activities, talking with students about learning, visiting classrooms (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012). Effective principals place instruction as a high priority and spend the majority of their time visiting classrooms and examining achievement data (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2012).

Teachers as leaders. Fullan stated in his book The Moral Imperative of School Leadership (2003), “We need principals who develop leadership in others, thereby strengthening school leadership beyond themselves” (Fullan, 2003, p. 41). While some teachers struggle to survive the challenges faced in urban schools, others actively seek opportunities to truly make a
difference. To find fulfillment in teaching and remain in the profession, they seek meaningful roles outside their classrooms. A common reason of high attrition rates cited by many teachers is a lack of involvement in the decision-making process in a school (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Tye, & O’Brien, 2002).

Davis and Wilson (2000) performed a study to determine whether there is a significant relationship between Principal Empowering Behaviors (PEB) and teacher motivation, and job satisfaction and job stress. The researchers conducted a quantitative study of principals and teachers in 44 public eastern Washington elementary schools using data from questionnaires designed to measure four variables: principal empowering behaviors, motivation, job satisfaction, and job stress. The data show that there was a significant relationship between PEB and teacher motivation. The higher the PEB score for a building, the higher teachers’ overall motivation score. The more principals participated in empowering behaviors, the greater the impact teachers felt they were able to make by fulfilling work-related tasks and the more likely they were to see that they had choices in selecting actions that will lead towards positive outcomes. Although the researchers concluded that teacher empowerment leads to motivation and job satisfaction, they also noted that further investigation is needed to understand the role that the principal plays in developing a sense of personal, intrinsic empowerment among teachers and how that relates to teachers’ working conditions.

Brown and Wynn (2009) also conducted a study to investigate job satisfaction in urban schools. They found that in schools where teachers were a part of leadership teams, interview teams or site-based management teams the attrition rates were lower. Brown and Wynn (2009) found in their study of urban schools with low attrition rates that the principal is the driving force behind teacher leadership. The principal must “share leadership, have the ability to facilitate the work of staff, and the ability to participate without dominating” (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p. 55). Furthermore, Walker and Slear (2011) found that teacher leadership is most important especially for extensively experienced teachers with 15 years or more of experience.

The most experienced teachers are looking for meaning in their work, and their efficacy is enhanced when principals promote a work environment that requires collaborative efforts and to the achievement of school and district goals for the benefit of students. Data indicate that teachers with 15 or more years of experience value their contributions
to the school and society, and they feel more efficacious with this sense of purpose is fostered by the principal (Walker & Slear, 2011, p.56).

**Professional development.** The principal’s ability to provide professional development ranks as a priority in teachers’ decisions to stay in teaching (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Klar & Brewer, 2013). In a qualitative study conducted by Yonezawa, Jones, and Singer (2011), the types of supportive environments that help to foster professional resiliency and the types of interactions teachers need to promote resiliency in hard-to-staff, urban schools were investigated. They specifically reviewed the National Writing Project professional development network and its impact on six veteran teachers who collectively had 200 years in urban, high-poverty schools. The findings of the study revealed that like many urban teacher “stayers” surveyed in prior studies, these teachers were committed to becoming change agents in their schools (Yonezawa et al., 2011). In contrast to their desires to learn and grow as urban educators, the teachers shared the professional development provided by their Chicago School District was insufficient. The components of the National Writing Project provided an interactive approach through summer institutes which allowed for teachers to form collegial teams. Through these interactions they were able to “acquire tools and strategies that allowed them to support their students” (Yonezawa et al., 2011, p.921). It was also reported that the community of learners “connected colleagues interested in improving their practice” (Yonezawa et al., 2011, p.922). Additionally, the writing project work revealed a “larger circle of colleagues” in other urban schools. This network provided “an opportunity to discuss with other educators the challenges that you face in urban schools, and also the victories that kids are making” (Yonezawa et al., 2011, p. 922). Finally, Yonezawa, Jones, and Singer (2011) found that the National Writing Project:

- Provided teachers with important time, resources and structural practices to reflect.
- Teachers in hard to staff schools rarely have to reflect, and such reflection is rarely encouraged or rewarded. The structure and culture of the Writing Project enabled teachers to reflect during professional development and, more importantly, to carry their practices of reflection back to their schools and classrooms, particularly through the practice of reflective writing (Yonezawa et al., 2011, p. 924).
While the development of teachers through professional learning communities such as the National Writing Project provided the human network of support needed in urban schools, it did not sufficiently address the cultural knowledge of students that many urban teachers lack. One remedy for teacher retention in urban schools suggested culturally responsive professional development offerings before a teacher’s first day in the classroom (Yonezawa et al., 2011).

Finally, Simon and Johnson (2015) analyzed an emerging line of research about teacher turnover in high-poverty schools. They used patterns regarding the factors that influence teacher departure to conclude that teachers leave high-poverty schools due to school factors rather than students. One theme that emerged from their study was that teachers want to work in schools characterized by professional collaboration among staff. Simon and Johnson (2015) reported that teachers valued opportunities to learn from their colleagues such as professional learning communities, mentoring, and induction programs and linked such learning to job satisfaction and retention. Teachers reported that they found working in collaborative teams meaningful when the work of the team was aligned with their individual classroom needs and advanced overall school improvement. In contrast, they became frustrated and chose to withdraw when the team failed to provide purposeful collaboration (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

**Principal Leadership Characteristics and Teacher Retention**

The findings that principals who utilize a variety of leadership best practices can impact teacher retention is consistent through numerous empirical studies (Bogler, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Davis and Wilson, 2000; Tye & O'Brien, 2002;). Recently, researchers have begun to question whether the characteristics of principals predict lower turnover and other positive organizational outcomes. Such research is critical in order for school districts and educational leadership programs to identify and develop principals ready to lead hard-to-staff schools. Additionally, it would provide district leaders guidance on the recruitment and selection of principals who have the capacity to lead our neediest schools (Grissom, 2011).

Joseph Murphy’s (2008) study on leadership in turnaround schools is one study that highlights the personality or traits of a leader as an indicator of success in challenging schools. This review of empirical and theoretical research concludes that leadership is a key ingredient in organizational recovery and that the traits of the leader are essential in turnaround schools. This review of literature found successful turnaround leaders were “change agents” with an “entrepreneurial instinct”, (Murphy, 2008, p. 88). Murphy (2008) also noted effective leaders...
were “optimistic, committed, tough, competitive, and positive” and had a “spirit of hope and endurance” (Murphy, 2008, p.88). In conclusion, Murphy (2008) stated that effective leaders were action-oriented and were committed to quality and achievement. Additional research on the impact of leadership traits could provide district leaders guidance on the recruitment and selection of principals who have the capacity to lead the neediest schools (Grissom, 2011).

Summary of the Literature Review

An examination of current issues in urban education confirmed that teacher turnover continues to be a rising dilemma in high-poverty, high-minority schools (Barnes et al., 2007). Current educational researchers have found that the exodus of teachers from urban schools has had an adverse effect on student achievement as the nation’s neediest students are mostly likely taught by the newest, least experienced teachers (Hanushek et al., 2004). A review of literature on factors that influence teachers’ decisions to leave urban schools include current accountability demands, inadequate compensation, student characteristics, and adverse working conditions (Allensworth et al., 2009; Guarino et al., 2011; Shernoff et al., 2011). Teachers who chose to remain in urban, hard-to-staff schools have revealed that they attributed their job satisfaction to teacher efficacy, teacher preparation, and positive working conditions (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013; Quartz et al., 2003).

A recurring theme when reviewing influences of both teacher retention and attrition in urban schools is principal leadership and support (Grissom, 2011; Boyd et al., 2011; Brown and Wynn, 2009). A variety of studies link principal leadership practices to teacher retention in disadvantaged schools; such practices include providing professional development, increasing teacher input in decision making, creating a positive culture, and climate and modeling instructional leadership (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Walker & Slear 2011; Yonezawa et al., 2011). More recently, an emerging line of research has focused on leadership characteristics. This research has placed a laser focus on specific personality traits of a leader that indicate success for in high-needs schools (Murphy 2008). Principal personality traits that may positively impact the retention of quality teachers in urban schools needs further investigation. This information could provide urban school divisions a means to identify school leaders who are prone to retain effective teachers and close the achievement gap. Additionally, much of the research regarding teacher retention in urban schools is quantitative and has focused on either elementary or high schools. There has been little investigation into teacher retention in urban middle schools.
Finally, a qualitative approach may provide a more in-depth study on the leadership practices or personality traits that influence teacher retention in urban schools.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Specifically, this study will examine the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. Emergent themes derived from the study may suggest professional development content considered as a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention.

This chapter contains a description of the research model that will be used for this study and the qualitative methods and procedures used to obtain and analyze data for this study. In-depth interviews will be conducted with five principals of urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools in Southeastern Virginia to identify leadership practices that are perceived to influence teacher retention at their current schools. Additionally, 15 teachers with five or more years in each school will be interviewed to gather data on their perceptions of leadership practices that influence teacher retention. The practices identified will be further analyzed to identify themes that arise from the administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions. Results from this study may be used to inform districts and educational leadership programs on the development of effective school leaders, especially those serving high-minority, high-poverty schools.

Research Design and Justification

A qualitative phenomenological research approach will be employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the principal leadership practices principals and teachers perceive as most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. McMillan and Wergin (2010) define phenomenology as a research approach that “describes and interprets the experience of people in order to understand the essence of the experience as perceived by those studied” and the “participant perspectives are the focus of the research” (p.90). Furthermore, Carol Roberts (2010) describes qualitative research as an approach in which the researcher focuses “on people’s experience from their perspective” and the “meanings people attach to the activities and events in their world” (p.142). This study seeks to examine viewpoints of both teachers and
principals; therefore, this methodology is most appropriate because the data collected will be
“words that describe people’s knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed
descriptions of people’s actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions” (Roberts,
2010, p. 143).

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers collect data through observations or
interviews, and analyze the data by identifying recurring themes or patterns which provides a
rich illustration of the participants ‘lived experiences’. Additionally, “to get at the essence or
basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is
the primary method of data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). In this study, the researcher
engaged principals in individual interviews and teachers in focus group discussions to seek
detailed descriptions of the reported practices, strategies, and techniques of principals in urban,
high-minority, high-poverty schools that may influence teacher retention. The participants were
chosen from five high-minority, high-poverty schools in a large school division in Southeastern
Virginia. The semi-structured interview was selected because it consists of a mix of structured
and unstructured questions with no predetermined order, and allows the researcher to explore the
topic through the viewpoints of the participants as well as respond to new ideas on the topic
(Merriam, 2009).

A triangulation of data collection methods through individual interviews, focus group
discussions, and member checking supported the reliability and validity of the study (Creswell,
2014). The data gained was analyzed and coded to determine emerging themes. From these
themes, a summary of leadership practices that principals and teachers believe influence teacher
retention was reported.

Research Questions

The research questions that follow guided this study.

1. What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in
teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

2. What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in
teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

3. How do principals' perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher
retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership
behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?
a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

**Site and Sample Selection**

Voluntary participation of teachers and principals from five schools in a large, K-12 public school division in Southeastern Virginia was sought by the researcher. Purposeful sampling was used to identify schools within the population that met specific criteria. The criteria for selection included:

1. Schools located in urban areas of Southeastern Virginia with approximately 60% or more the students are African-American or Hispanic students, and approximately 60% or more of students qualify for free and reduced lunch due to their low socio-economic status.

2. Teachers with ten or more years of experience in an urban high minority, high poverty schools.

3. Principals of urban, high minority, high poverty schools with at least three years of experience.

The district was selected because according to JLARC (2014), it is located in one of the small number of large urban areas in Virginia which account for 56% of total population of students in poverty in the state. Secondly, the data show about one-third of teachers leave the profession within five years, and teacher turnover is approximately 50% higher in high-poverty than in low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001). For this reason, teachers with 10 or more years in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools were selected which allowed the researcher to obtain information-rich experiences from individuals who have chosen to remain in disadvantaged schools for more than the average five year career span. A convenience sampling of teacher participants was used based on time, location, and the availability of respondents who meet the criteria of teaching in an urban, disadvantaged school for more than 10 years (Merriam, 2010). Finally, the third criterion suggests that each principal has had longevity at an urban school for three or more years and time to demonstrate their leadership behaviors and practices.
Data Collection Procedures

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions about people’s experiences, feelings, and opinions obtained through interviews. Data for this study was collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions with principals and teachers. The primary data collection tool chosen for this study was an original, researcher-designed semi-structured interview protocol which will be guided by questions or issues related to the topic of study to elicit participants’ viewpoints on leadership practices that influence teacher retention in disadvantaged schools (Merriam, 2009). Each interview was recorded by a digital recorder which is the most effective method for ensuring that the participants’ responses are accurately collected for analysis (Merriam, 2009). The researcher transcribed written notes in addition to digital recordings of the session. Merriam (2009) states that written notes during the interview provide the researcher with the opportunity to “record his or her reactions to something the informant says, to signal the informant of the importance of what is being said, or to pace the interview” (p.109).

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with principals who have three or more years of experience in urban schools. Subsequently, teachers with 10 or more years in urban high-minority, high-poverty schools participated in focus group interviews. To collect comparable data among principals and teachers, similar questions were asked regarding their educational background, school demographics, and perceptions about principal behaviors that influence teacher retention. The researcher has functioned as a teacher and principal in urban, hard-to-staff schools in the district participating in the study. Merriam notes that the researcher’s knowledge of the topic enhances his or her ability to “add value to the interview and…ask meaningful questions in language easily understood by the informant” (p.106); however, the researcher’s employment and experience could be a cause for a potential bias. It is important for the researcher to maintain neutrality with regard to the participants’ responses. To ensure the success of the interview, it is essential that the interviewer avoid interjecting personal viewpoints or experiences on the topic of study (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher sought to examine and compare teacher retention from the principals’ and teachers’ viewpoints to identify the most important leadership practices that may influence a teachers’ decision to remain in an urban, hard to staff school. First, in-depth individual interviews were used to investigate principals’ perspectives from their experiences. This method
of data collection was selected because the qualitative methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic of study in real-world settings (Roberts, 2010). Next, the researcher transcribed the data collected from the interview responses and identified significant responses that portray leadership practices believed to encourage teacher retention. As each subsequent interview was transcribed, emerging leadership practices were identified, noted and compared to previous transcripts and current teacher retention literature. Third, the researcher sent transcriptions of each individual interview to each principal for member checking to eliminate the possibility of misinterpretation of the meaning of the participants’ responses. Member checking is “the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do”, (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Member checking will assist the researcher in clarifying the principals’ and teachers’ perceptions as suggested by the participants.

Following the individual interviews, focus groups of teachers from the participating schools were convened in order to share the data gathered. The purpose of the focus groups was to review commonalities and differences in the interview findings and uncover new ideas regarding principal practices that were perceived to be the most important in supporting teacher retention. Creswell (2014) suggests that the focus group dynamics can generate new thinking about a topic which will result in a much more in-depth discussion. Furthermore, focus group discussions provide an opportunity for the researcher to gather additional insights and allow participants to discuss their viewpoints through conversational interactions, (Merriam, 2009). The focus group discussion was recorded digitally, and member checking of a summary of responses was employed after the discussion was transcribed to ensure accuracy of the data collected. A copy of a summary of responses was provided to each participant for review. Revisions were made according to the participants’ feedback.

**Instrument Design and Validation**

This qualitative study sought to examine the leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban schools. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers engage participants in a conversation focused on questions related to the research study. Merriam (2009) also states that interviewing is essential when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or perceptions, especially when we are interested in replicating past events; therefore, the researcher developed an interview guide consisting of semi-structured interview questions for teachers and
principals who have chosen to remain in high poverty, high minority schools. In addition, Merriam (2009) suggests that researchers ask follow up questions or probes during the interview to provide clarity, examples and elaboration on responses shared by the participants.

To establish validity of the instrument, the researcher field tested the questions with administrators and school division leaders currently enrolled in a doctoral education leadership program. Specifically, the field-test participants must have either teaching or leadership experience in urban, disadvantaged schools. Carol Roberts (2010) states that a field test group selected to test an instrument or make judgments about its validity should “not be involved in the study but should be like those in the study”, (p. 154). The researcher emailed the individual and focus group questions to the field-test group and requested that feedback be returned to the researcher. The field-test group was asked to review the instrument for “clear wording, sufficient detail, difficult sections, irrelevant questions, length, and understandable instructions” (Roberts, 2010, p. 154). In an effort to align interview questions to the research questions of this study, the researcher also created a matrix listing the research questions and interview protocol. A matrix ensures that all research variables are sufficiently covered in the instrument (Roberts, 2010).

Data Treatment

In qualitative research studies, issues relating to the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are critical (Merriam, 2009). Prospective participants must be informed of procedures and risks involved in a research study prior to agreeing to participate (Roberts, 2010). As a result, safeguards of participant confidentiality as well as the school division and individual schools was assured by the researcher. First, each participant signed an agreement to participate in the study and agreed to use a pseudonym to protect his or her confidentiality. Next, the researcher obtained permission from the participants before digital recording the interview and guaranteed the privacy and protection of each participant by assuring that no individually identifiable information will be reported in the research findings. Finally, participants were informed that they could select not to comment on or answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable and they could also choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Each interview was be coded with a pseudonym so that the researcher will have the ability to access interview notes and focus group notes when needed during the data analysis.
The identifiable information gathered was assigned a pseudonym and kept confidential. Likewise, all data and results was referenced by pseudonyms without the use of individual names, schools, or districts. Following the interview, responses was transcribed and emailed to each participant for member checking. Merriam (2009) suggests that member checks ensure internal validity in qualitative research. In this study, participants validated outcomes by providing feedback to the researcher on the findings from the interviews. The researcher made revisions if necessary based on the participants’ feedback. The accuracy of the data is essential, (Roberts, 2010); therefore, the use of respondent validation eliminated any possibility of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the participants’ responses.

**Data Management**

As a part of the requirements, a request to receive authorization from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute’s Institutional Review Board was sought. After receiving approval, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the Office of Accountability within the targeted school division. Once permission was granted, information regarding a listing of teachers with 10 or more years of experience at selected schools was requested through the school division’s Human Resource department. Finally, principals from selected schools and teachers with 10 or more years of experience within each school were invited to participate in the study via email. The email explained the objectives of the study and ensured participants that the identity of the school division used and the participants interviewed will remain private to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally, Carol Roberts (2010) suggests that participants should be informed about how the results of the study may affect the “work of the organization and its members….and ways the results of the study would benefit the organization”, (p. 37).

The researcher conducted the interviews, with permission of the principal and school division, at each school. Individual teacher focus group discussions were held in a private room at each school site. Individual principal interviews were held in each principal’s office. The interviews were scheduled for a time after school hours, and each participant was asked to sign an informed consent document prior to the interview. Participants were informed that their involvement in the research study was strictly voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Permission was also secured from the participants to audio-record, transcribe the interviews, and use quoted material in the final report when necessary. The digital
recordings were secured in a password-protected file and the transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for member checking. Once the interviewees approved the transcriptions for accuracy, the digital recordings were deleted to help maintain the confidentiality of all participants.

Methodology Summary

This qualitative study was designed to investigate the similarities and differences between the principal and teacher perceptions of essential leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. A purposeful sample of teachers with more than 10 years and principals with at least three years of experience in urban, high minority, high poverty middle schools were selected to participate in this study. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to identify principal practices believed to influence teachers’ decisions to remain teaching at their schools. The data were collected, transcribed and checked by participants for accuracy. The researcher analyzed the responses to uncover common themes. Chapter Four will present the results of this research.
Chapter 4
Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff, middle schools. Specifically, this study examined the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. The researcher conducted individual interviews with five principals from urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools in southeastern Virginia. Two elementary principals, one middle school principal, and two high school principals with three or more years of experience in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools were interviewed. Additionally, the researcher conducted four teacher focus group interviews with 17 teachers from urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools in southeastern Virginia. Seven elementary teachers, four middle school teachers and six high school teachers with 10 or more years of experience in urban, disadvantaged schools participated in the focus group interviews.

Research Questions

The investigation into the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, high minority, high-poverty schools was based on the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

Research Question 2: What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

Research Question 3: How do principals’ perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?

a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?
b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

Although results cannot be generalized, the teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of leadership practices that positively impact teacher retention in urban, disadvantaged schools may suggest professional development content considered as a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention in high-poverty, high-minority schools.

**Participant Descriptions**

The five principal participants were African-American female principals from urban elementary, middle, and high schools in southeastern Virginia. The principals interviewed had at least three years of experience in urban, disadvantaged schools. Pseudonyms were selected by the researcher. The principal participants’ selected names are: EP1, EP2, MP1, HP1, and HP2.

Participant EP1 is an African-American female with 38 years of experience in education. She has been an administrator for 15 years and a principal for 10 of those 15 years. The span of her educational career has been spent in urban, disadvantaged elementary or middle schools. She currently serves as an elementary principal of a K–5 Title I school in which approximately 75% of her 750 students are African-American and 88% of her students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Participant EP1 reported that due to the high percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, her school was awarded a grant from the National School Lunch program that provides every student free breakfast and lunch. Participant EP1 noted that there is a high number of homeless students at her school. “They occupy the hotels that go up and down the street, and we have in our zone an area that frequently floods so that displaces a lot of our families” (EP1 6-8).

Participant EP2 is an African-American female with 15 years of experience. She started her educational career in an urban school working with students with disabilities. She has worked as an elementary school teacher and special education specialist. Participant EP2 has currently served for the past three years as principal of an urban, high-minority, high-poverty, elementary school in southeastern Virginia. She describes her elementary school as a Title I school in which 420 of the 487 students enrolled are African-American. Approximately 94% of the students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Her school currently serves first through fifth grades.
Kindergarten students in the school’s zone remain in a local early childhood center to receive early school readiness skills.

Participant MP1 is an African-American female principal with 18 years in education. She started her career in education as an English teacher at a community college prior to becoming a school counselor. Participant MP1 had five years of experience as an assistant principal at an urban, disadvantaged school. She has served six years as a principal. After working several years as a principal at a suburban middle school, school district leaders requested she move to an urban, high minority, high poverty middle school. Her response was, “Absolutely, yes because I always wanted to work as a principal in an urban, high minority school. I wanted to make that change. I like to be where I am most needed” (MP1 /15-16). She continues to work at that school in which approximately 98% of her 500 students are African-American and approximately 98% of the students receive free/reduced lunch. Participant MP1 explained that due to the high percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, her school was awarded a grant from the National School Lunch program that provides free breakfast and lunch to every student.

Participant HP1 is an African-American female principal with 11 years of experience in urban, disadvantaged middle and high schools. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal and has been in her current role of the principal of an urban, high-poverty, high-minority high school in southeastern Virginia for the past three years. Of her 1,288 students, approximately 86% qualify for free/reduced lunch and 88% of her students are African-American. All students enrolled in her high school receive free breakfast and lunch as a result of a grant awarded by the National School Lunch program. Participant HP1 noted that although her school offers a magnet school available to all students within the school district, approximately 70% of the students are from a high-minority, high-poverty community within the school’s local zone.

Participant HP2 is an African-American female principal who describes herself as “educator with 36 years of experience and still smiling” (HP2 /19). She has held roles as a teacher, activities director, assistant principal and principal. Participant HP2 has been a high school principal for six years at an urban, high-poverty, high-minority high school in which 96% of her student receive free/reduced lunch. A large percentage of the students in her school reside in low-income single-parent homes in an urban community in southeastern Virginia.
Table 1 provides a summary of the principals’ race, gender, years of experience in education and years of experience as a principal.

Table 1

*Principal Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Description</th>
<th>EP1</th>
<th>EP2</th>
<th>MP1</th>
<th>HP1</th>
<th>HP2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
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<td>Years of Experience in Education</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching/Administrative Experience in an Urban School</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principals interviewed for this study were all African-American females with 15 to 38 years of experience in education. Each principal had either previous teaching or administrative experience in urban schools and has served as a principal for at least three years.

In addition to the individual principal interviews, the researcher facilitated four teacher focus groups with a total of 17 teachers from urban, high-minority, high-poverty elementary, middle, and high schools in southeastern Virginia. Pseudonyms for each participant were selected by the researcher. The elementary teacher focus group consisted of seven participants. The participants’ selected names are ET1, ET2, ET3, ET4, ET5, ET6, and ET7. There were three Caucasian females and four African-American females in the elementary teacher focus group. Four elementary teachers had between fifteen to twenty-five years of teaching experience and
three teachers had between 26 to 35 years of teaching experience. All participants had over 10 years of experience in urban schools. Table 2 provides a summary of the elementary school teacher participants’ race, gender, and years of teaching experience.

Table 2

*Elementary School Teacher Focus Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Description</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The elementary teacher focus group consisted of three Caucasian female teachers and four African-American female teachers. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 18 to 35 years.

The middle school focus group consisted of four participants. The participants selected names were MT1, MT2, MT3, and MT4. Of the four middle school teacher participants, three were female, and one was male. There were three African-American middle school teacher participants and one Caucasian middle school teacher participant. Three of the four middle school teacher participants had between 10 to 20 years of teaching experience and one participant had over 30 years of teaching experience. All middle school teachers interviewed had 10 or more years of experience in urban schools. Table 3 provides a summary of the middle school teachers’ race, gender and years of experience.
Table 3

*Middle School Teacher Focus Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Description</th>
<th>MT1</th>
<th>MT2</th>
<th>MT3</th>
<th>MT4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The middle school teacher focus group consisted of three African-Americans and one Caucasian. There were three females and one male in the middle school focus group and their years of experience in teaching ranged between 13 to 31 years.

There were two high school teacher focus groups. Each high school teacher focus group consisted of three teachers. There were two Caucasian females and one Caucasian male in the first high school teacher focus group. There were two African-American females and one Caucasian female in the second high school teacher focus group. Of the six high school teachers interviewed, three had between 10 to 15 years of teaching experience and three had over 16 years of teaching experience. All high school teacher participants had at least 10 years of teaching experience in urban schools. Table 4 provides a summary of the high school teacher focus group participants’ race, gender, and years of experience.
Table 4

*High School Teacher Focus Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high school teacher focus groups consisted of five female and one male teacher with years of experience ranging between 10 and 18 years. There were four Caucasians and two African-Americans in the high school teacher focus groups.

In summary, seven elementary teachers, four middle school teachers, and six high school teachers with 10 or more years of experience in urban, disadvantaged schools participated in the focus group interviews. The teachers interviewed consisted of one Caucasian male, one African-American male, seven Caucasian females and eight African-American females. Twelve teachers had between 10 and 20 years of experience in education. Three teachers had between 21 and 30 years of experience and two teachers served in education for over 30 years.

**Research question 1:** What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

Question 1: What do you see as the greatest challenges for teachers who work in urban high poverty, high minority schools? What principal leadership practices do you employ to support teachers in these challenges?

Principal participants found that the difficulties faced by teachers working in disadvantaged, high-minority schools were a direct result of the extreme challenges that afflict students who live in poverty. All five of the principals interviewed reported that the social, emotional, physical, and academic deficits presented by students in high-poverty, high-minority
urban schools create the biggest challenges faced by teachers. MP1 explained that teachers only want to teach their content, yet students have so many needs that must be met first before instruction can occur. Participant MP1 further explained that the students deal with challenges that the teachers have never experienced such as homelessness, lack of parental support, and violence in the community. MP1 shared,

They are dealing with challenges in their homes and in their community. They are hearing gunshots. Their friends are getting shot and stabbed and their parents may be in jail. So those kinds of things we can’t just expect them to be ready to learn when they come in the door. We have to set the stage for them (MP1, l15-20).

Participant HP2 explained that these student challenges create a culture shock for teachers. Within a few months, a student could experience several address changes due to evictions or a relative being shot. These student tragedies result in a tendency for teachers to lower their expectations for students. HP2 explained,

I ask teachers not to go to a pity party with children. I need you to be compassionate but you still drive their education. These children are capable. They need to be pushed. They get the pity party in society. They need another type of advocate and it’s your job to do that (HP2, l16-20).

Participant EP2 stated that teachers lack a true understanding of what it means to come from an impoverished background, and therefore, lack the skills to work in settings with minority, high-poverty students. Additionally, HP1 expressed that most teachers are overachievers and struggle with teaching students who may not be the best students or have the same resources in terms of family support. As a result of the teachers’ deficits in cultural competency, some struggle with developing positive relationships with students according to HP1. “Teachers come with good intentions, but when you haven’t walked in the students’ shoes, how can you identify and build that relationship with them authentically” (HP1, l4-6)? Table 5 summarizes what principals perceive as the greatest challenges encountered by teachers in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools.
Table 5

What do you See as the Greatest Challenges for Teachers who Work in Urban, High-Poverty, High-Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Response</th>
<th>EP1</th>
<th>EP2</th>
<th>MP1</th>
<th>HP1</th>
<th>HP2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Deficits</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Relationships with Students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals perceived student deficits, student-teacher relationships and cultural competence as the greatest challenges that teachers face in urban, economically disadvantaged schools.

In addition, each principal shared a variety of leadership practices that supported teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools. Of the five principals interviewed, every principal explained that the support started with an open, honest dialogue about the challenges associated with teaching students from low socio-economic backgrounds. MP1 shared that teachers “need a leader who recognizes these challenges and doesn’t pretend that they don’t exist” (MP1, l22-23). Consequently, she started her first year at the school with a teacher survey about their belief systems. She noted that she is honest with her staff and tells them that the challenges presented by students required staff who believe that the children can achieve despite their difficult backgrounds. EP1 shared that the honest, open dialogue about challenges that her school faces is stated with teachers upfront during the hiring phase. “I’m straight up about who we are” (EP1, l50). According to HP2, “I let them know that my expectations are higher than yours, but I am here to support you through the challenges” (HP2, l36). Both EP1 and HP2 explained that these realistic conversations reveal if the teacher is the right fit for their high poverty, high minority schools. Aside from an open dialogue with teachers, HP1 regularly interviews students in an
effort to provide teachers with a realistic view of the community they serve. She asks students, “Can you tell me what teachers need to know about the kids at this school and what you need to learn best?” (HP1, l38) She uses this information to have frank conversations with teachers about understanding and teaching with diversity in mind. Furthermore, four out of the five principals interviewed mentioned that they have an open door policy for teachers and students to encourage dialogue about what works and what doesn’t at their schools.

Administrative support was also mentioned by principals as a leadership practice that supported teachers in urban schools. Each principal emphasized the value of human resources in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. For example, EP1 noted that she works to create a culture where teachers help one another, and it is a safe place to ask questions or observe each other’s classrooms. “You are always free to ask to get a sub. Sometimes it’s a request. Sometimes it’s a recommendation to go see teachers who are making it happen. Find out what they are doing” (EP1, l57-58). In addition, EP1 stated that she seeks retired teachers to serve as teacher mentors or co-teachers in classrooms where teachers need support. She recalled a new teacher who was challenged with keeping students engaged and providing rigorous lessons. The students were bright but not connected to the teacher. EP1 hired a retired teacher who was gifted at classroom management and forming positive relationships with students to serve as a co-teacher in the classroom. Participant EP1 explained,

The young lady was a good teacher. She just didn’t know how to turn that class around. When I added the retired teacher, she watched how this teacher interacted with kids and facilitated class meetings. Now my teacher is able to deliver very good instruction because she had the benefit of the model of how to turn the classroom around. People say “You hired someone to go in there when you already had a teacher?” I tell them I had a perfectly good teacher and all she needed was a classroom quiet enough to teach (EP1, l86-89).

Participant HP1 shared that she provides human resources such as co-teachers or peer observations, but she also seeks support from outside community agencies to work with staff regarding cultural diversity training and relationship building to help inform instruction in her building. Participant EP2 also discussed the use of human resources such as her school guidance counselor to providing teachers with motivational messages and strategies to work with
disadvantaged students, but she stated her practice of taking her staff on a bus trip into the community in which they serve had the most powerful impact in her school. EP2 explained that in contrast to her predominantly African-American student population, the majority of her teachers were Caucasian females. Her teachers witnessed the challenges the students faced and made it a priority to do their best to demonstrate care and love for the students. “They felt like the students weren’t receiving love and if they could love them, they would produce. We ended up loving our kids to failure” (EP2, l32-33). Participant EP2 shared that after touring the community filled with housing projects, hotels, and apartments where their students lived, teachers returned with a clearer understanding of the challenges faced by students. “There were some teachers who cried. There was a lot of self-reflection. There was a lot of “I didn’t know that” so then there was so now what, what are we going to do differently” (EP2, l51-52).

According to EP2 this experience was a springboard of a series of book studies and professional development activities for her staff specific to teaching in urban schools. In conclusion, principals shared they support the challenges teachers face in urban schools by engaging in open dialogue with teachers, providing support with resources, and facilitating professional development. Table 6 presents a summary of the principal’s responses regarding leadership practices they demonstrate to support teachers with the challenges teaching in urban, economically disadvantaged schools.
Table 6

| Principal Leadership Practices do you Employ to Support Teachers in Challenges? |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | EP1             | EP2             | MP1             | HP1             | HP2             |
| Honest, Open Dialogue with Teachers | X               | X               | X               | X               | X               |
| Administrative Support          | X               | X               |                 | X               |                 |
| Professional Development        | X               | X               |                 |                 |                 |

Question 2: What characteristics or traits do teachers value in principals who lead urban high poverty, high minority schools? How do you know?

According to the principal participants interviewed, teachers in urban schools value principals who are supportive, transparent, and collaborative. Five of the principals identified the characteristic of being supportive as a principal leadership trait important to teachers. Collectively, they agreed that support to teachers can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. For example, EP1 noted that principals who are flexible demonstrate support for teachers. She explained that teachers who choose to remain in urban schools often need change within the school environment and principals must be flexible to make changes in grade levels, courses, or interdisciplinary teams for teachers. She was firm in her response that it is the principal’s job to help teachers “get in their right seats” (EP1, l121-122). EP1 further discussed,

You have an ED teacher who is ED/LD certified. They teach ED classes year after year and they start to wear down. You ask them if they want to do LD next year. Sometimes they just need a change. You don’t have to change schools. Sometimes they need to change grades or subjects. If they need to change schools, that’s okay too. (EP1, l111-115)
MP1 added that while teachers value toughness in principals, they want a leader who is going to be understanding and supportive of their needs. Additionally, HP2 declared, “Being supportive means I fight for my teachers. I have their back. I’m a team player. My title means nothing to me” (HP2, l60-61). Participant HP2 included that support is sometimes shown by valuing teachers’ time; for example, if a teacher needs to leave the building to take care of his/her children, she says, “Go take care of your children. You take care of our children. Go take care of your own children” (HP2, l64-65).

Transparency was a characteristic valued by teachers according to three of the five principals interviewed. Collectively, principals mentioned that teachers value a principal who encourages open dialogue between teachers and administration and is honest about the challenges that urban schools face. EP1 discussed the regular upfront conversations that she has with her teachers regarding instructional planning, student discipline, and school initiatives. She explained that while urban schools are often located within communities plagued with violence and poverty, constant open and honest dialogue with teachers creates a feeling of emotional safety within the building. “They like that we talk openly about whatever it is and it’s a safe place to say your challenges. If it’s a problem for them, it’s a problem for all of us” (EP1, l103-104). Furthermore, HP1 shared that her teachers appreciate her transparency, especially with school data. “They value the openness. They don’t like it, but they value that the numbers are going to be up at the faculty meeting, and we are going to work on it as a team” (HP1, l101-102). In addition, EP2 made connections with transparency and trustworthiness. She noted, “Teachers need to value and trust who you are. It’s effective to show some level of transparency so they are always in the know with what’s critical about the work that has to get done every day” (EP2, l66-68).

Finally, four of the five principals interviewed agreed that urban school teachers value principals who are collaborative with stakeholders in their schools. Participant EP2 emphasized her opinion that principals who are not capable of collaborating with teachers, parents, students and community leaders will fail; for example, HP1 shared that her school’s accreditation hinged on increasing math scores by four points. She explained that her plan for math improvement includes not only her administrative team but her lead teachers, content teachers, and school counselors. “It ain’t a math problem, it’s a school problem” (HP1, l104). HP2 added that
principals who are team players are valued by teachers and she includes lead teachers in the majority of her decision making. She shared,

    My title means nothing to me. I don’t have a problem asking the best. My lead teachers get the ultimate respect. They are involved in 95% of the decision making in the building. They are really my backbone, right arm, and walk beside and support what we are doing (HP2, l74-78).

For the same reason, participant EP1 discussed her role in instructional planning alongside her teachers. She shared that division leaders attended one of her grade level meetings and her teachers were hesitant to discuss instructional planning concerns with the visitors. She reminded her teachers that instructional planning is a collaborative effort that includes teachers, principals and sometimes division leaders. In fact, she assured her teachers by stating

    We do not meet just to say we got together. If you say something wrong, this is the safest place to say it rather than saying it in front of children. This is where you talk it through. This is what planning is all about. If you talk and it’s wrong, this is the place to get it right (EP1, l130-133).

Table 7 summarizes the leadership characteristics principals perceive teachers value in urban school leaders.

Table 7

*What Characteristics or Traits do Teachers Value in Principals who Lead Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Responses</th>
<th>EP1</th>
<th>EP2</th>
<th>MP1</th>
<th>HP1</th>
<th>HP2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3: What role does principal leadership play in retaining teachers in an urban disadvantaged school? What specific principal leadership practices are effective in retaining teachers in this school?

Participant HP1 shared her strong belief that the principal is likely the most important factor in teacher retention in urban, disadvantaged schools. She discussed the importance of the principal-teacher relationship by sharing an experience by a teacher who left her school due to relocation. HP1 stated that the teacher shared with her,

You know I don’t even know if my new principal knows my name. When I was here, you knew my new married name. You asked me about my honeymoon. You wanted to see pictures. I like my new school, but it doesn’t feel like the family you created at this school (HP1, /111-113).

Collectively, the principal participants concluded that principal leadership plays a significant role in teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. The principals discussed the leadership practices of forming positive relationships with staff, empowering teachers, and providing resources as effective in retaining teachers in their schools.

Four of the five principals interviewed agreed that relationship building is an essential leadership practice that influences teacher retention in urban schools. Participant EP2 expressed that even when there is a sense of urgency to get the work done, she reflects on her interpersonal skills. She acknowledged that her teachers are human, and she needs to attend to their social and emotional needs. Three of the five principals interviewed shared practices of celebrating staff through themes, recognition, and rewards in an effort to form relationships and create a family environment in their schools; for example, MP1 explained, “At faculty meetings I celebrate good news. Teachers recognize their peers. We give prizes and sometimes let them wear jeans on Fridays. I try to have a little bit of fun throughout” (MP1, /49-51). Also, participant HP2 shared that her use of themes includes not only teachers, but office staff, custodians, and cafeteria workers. She went on to discuss that this practice models respect for everyone within the school and the themes build a positive culture. She stated, “It shows kids we celebrate good things. When we have celebrations, everyone is included” (HP2, /70). Moreover, participant HP1 said that the relationship building begins at the teacher interview because several teachers shared that they chose her school because of the connection they felt when she interviewed them.
Furthermore, she added that the relationship building is not only the principal’s responsibility, but it is the responsibility of the entire administrative team. According to HP1,

The key to retention is the principal because you gotta be able to keep them here. Building those relationships with staff and ensuring the administrative team (because they are a direct reflection of you) is doing the same thing. We gotta be tight with our team. We can’t have somebody on our team that’s pushing folks away (HP1, l122-125).

Administrative support was a leadership practice found to be effective in teacher retention for two out of the five principals interviewed. Participant EP2 disclosed that because of her school’s need to meet state accreditation standards, she has written grants for extended planning opportunities, professional development, and financial incentives for her teachers. She explained that the resources not only provided professional development on the challenges faced by students in poverty, but how teachers can actively engage their students. EP2 said,

Our students think quickly on their feet. They are a fast food type of gaming child. It’s not safe for them to go outside. There is no bike riding. They play games or sit in the house doing some things they shouldn’t be doing. So getting teachers to the point where they really are vested in what kids present and how they have to differentiate instruction. This takes some additional planning time for teachers (EP2, l139-144).

Participant HP2 agreed that providing resources is essential for teacher retention and explained that she provides resources for teachers to engage in peer observations, mentoring, and instructional planning. She concluded, “I have to dip into the budget to do this, but it pays off (HP2, l91)”.

Finally, of the five principals interviewed, three principals agreed that teacher empowerment was an important leadership practice that influenced teacher retention in urban schools. Participant EP1 discussed teacher expertise as a driving force behind her decision to share leadership in her building. She noted that she constantly reminds herself that the majority of her staff has educational degrees. Participant EP1 shared that while teachers may not have selected being a principal as their career choice, it does not indicate that they are not capable of sharing the leadership in the building. She concluded,
So I think that much leadership would be my loss if I don’t get them to have buy-in to what we are trying to do. Feeling empowered has a lot to do with getting people to feel like they are adding to the purpose of the school. They are not here just to teach a lesson. That’s when people feel they are not growing and people will leave. Because everyone doesn’t want to be a principal but there are many ways to be a leader (EP2, l143-147).

For that same reason, participants EP2 and HP2 find ways to empower teachers and provide shared leadership opportunities within the building. EP2 noted that this practice allows her teachers to feel more professionally competent and confident because they share a role in the decision making within the school. EP2 continued, “We have to be the change we want to see and not wanting our third graders not reading on grade level so the states can identify the needs for another prison is a very empowering position” (EP2, l148-150). Additionally, HP2 shared that many of her remediation efforts are created by teacher teams. She explained that a recent intervention plan that she created which included a rotation of teachers and a complex system of rearranging positions was altered because her teachers developed a more effective way of remediating struggling students. She revealed to the teachers, “I respect what you are doing. I see your scores and your plan will be our remediation plan” (HP2, l106-107). HP2 disclosed that empowering teachers takes trust from the principal and the willingness to take full responsibility if plans are unsuccessful. HP2 shared,

I trust them. Sometimes I trust too much. I have hit some bumps in the road but there was no harm intended. I take full responsibility for everything in this building. I tell them that it doesn’t matter. I am the principal. I will never throw them under the bus. They do too much for me (HP2, l109-111).

Table 8 presents a summary of the principals’ responses regarding effective leadership practices used in urban, disadvantaged schools.
Table 8
What Role does Principal Leadership Play in Retaining Teachers in an Urban, Disadvantaged School? What Specific Principal Practices are Effective in Retaining Teachers in this School?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Responses</th>
<th>EP1</th>
<th>EP2</th>
<th>MP1</th>
<th>HP1</th>
<th>HP2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering Teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: What would you describe as the most important principal practice that keeps teachers working at an urban, high minority, high poverty school?

Four of the five principals interviewed agreed that relationship building is the most important principal leadership practice to retain teachers in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Participant EP2 stated that teachers in urban schools face challenges associated with teaching students from impoverished communities. Often times, the students’ traumatic experiences can be debilitating for teachers as well. In one instance, a new teacher struggled with the overwhelming challenges of violence and death faced by her students and felt comfortable sharing this with her principal. Participant EP2 connected the teacher with the school’s counselor who was able to provide coping strategies for the teacher. Participant EP2 pointed out that the principal must cultivate the relationships among the staff. “People have to feel comfortable to know what you are feeling and support one another” (EP2, l78). Participant MP1 also believed that it is essential for principals to form relationships with their staff, yet she cautioned that the relationship must remain professional. “You don’t want to be so close to a teacher that you can’t tell them when you need something out of them because you have become friends’ (MP1, l74-75). For this same reason, HP1 shared that “relationships and accountability
go hand in hand” (HP1, l131). She explained that when principals form professional relationships with teachers, teachers are able to accept constructive criticism more easily. She continued,

When I say something bad about a teacher’s practice, it hurts them right here (pointing towards abdomen). But when there is a relationship, they can take a step back and realize it is professional and about the business of kids. It’s not personal. I could have a good relationship with a teacher, but I’m not moving the school forward and I’m not doing the best by kids (HP1, l133-138).

Of the five principals interviewed, three principals were in agreement that teacher empowerment was the most important principal leadership practice that influences teacher retention at urban, disadvantaged schools. Participant EP1 stated that teacher empowerment gives teachers “an investment into what’s going on. They feel like the solution and people work towards that (EP1, l152-153)”. One result of teacher empowerment is that teacher leaders often are promoted to leadership positions at other schools or at the division level. HP2 discussed that this effect can be difficult for the principal because he or she has invested time, effort and energy into the teacher to support the school’s needs. She shared,

You make them great and you know they will move on. That’s the hard part but I’m so proud of them and I want them to move on. Sometimes I have convinced them that they are the best person for the next position. They have been loyal to me, done an outstanding job, great with kids and deserve it. I want them to go on. I will love them and be beside them and support them. We hug. We cry and we move on (HP2, l126-129).

Table 9 presents the principals’ viewpoints on the most important leadership practice that influences teacher retention in high-minority, high-poverty schools.
Table 9

What would you Describe as the Most Important Principal Practice that Keeps Teachers Working at an Urban, High-Minority, High-Poverty School?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Responses</th>
<th>EP1</th>
<th>EP2</th>
<th>MP1</th>
<th>HP1</th>
<th>HP2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, principal participants responded the principal’s ability to form relationships with teachers and the principal’s ability to empower teachers through shared leadership are the most important leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban schools.

**Research question 2:** What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard to staff schools?

Question 1: What do you perceive are the greatest challenges for teachers who work in urban high-poverty, high-minority schools? What principal leadership practices support teachers in these challenges?

Teacher participants perceived student deficits, low student motivation, and making connections with students as the greatest challenges for teachers who work in urban, disadvantaged schools. Eight of the 17 teachers interviewed agreed that students in urban schools have academic, social, emotional, and physical deficits that create challenges for teachers. Participant MT4 shared that his students lack parental involvement in their education and as a result students are below grade level in many academic areas and require support. ET1 further explained that the visibility of families in the building is at a minimum. She compared her experience in a suburban school and revealed that in the suburban school parents often volunteered yet at her current school, “They are not in the building, and it’s a very different thing” (ET1, l8).

Participants ET3, ET4, MT4, and HT3 shared that low student motivation is a result of students’ deficits in learning and exposure. HT3 explained,
They don’t have the background knowledge. We have to teach them content but also about life outside. They bring the streets into the classroom and we have to teach what is socially acceptable. A lot of our students don’t have that (HT3, l30-32).

HT3 further discussed the desire for students to have more field trips to provide the experiences they lack. Participant ET6 mentioned the difficulty of engaging and motivating students when there are gaps in their learning noting that it is easier in kindergarten through second grade, but it becomes increasingly more difficult in third through fifth grades. Participant ET4 agreed that teaching students with little prior knowledge is extremely challenging for teachers. She revealed, “It makes it difficult and challenging for teachers to carry out a lesson” (ET4, l29). Additionally, teachers shared that students in poverty come to school with deficits in their basic needs such as food and clothing. ET2 stated that teachers must make sure students are “fed, clothed, slept and have their needs met before we can start the learning process” (ET2, l37).

Making connections with students was another challenge for urban school teachers noted by six of the 17 teachers interviewed. Teachers described a paradigm shift they must make when working in urban schools that serve students in poverty; for example, MT3 stated that she had to change her “middle class values and understand that just because her students had adult responsibilities, they were still children” (MT3, l29-30). She further explained that since many of her students act as adults at home, they tend see themselves equivalent to adults in the building and cross boundaries set by adults in the school. Participant MT1 revealed the difficulty of making connections with students who come from a very different background. She said, “I have never seen what they are going through in a lifetime. It is totally different from my world” (MT1, l15-16). In addition to this, participant HT5 agreed that connecting with students by attempting to understand their needs is challenging for teachers. She clarified that her students’ priorities are very different from her own and trying to balance the two is difficult.

Table 10 provides a summary of the elementary teachers’ perspectives on the greatest challenges teachers encounter in urban, low-socio economic schools.
Table 10
What do you Perceive are the Greatest Challenges for Teachers who Work in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elemental School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Deficits</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Student Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Connections With Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the seven elementary teachers interviewed responded that student deficits create the greatest challenges for teachers in urban, economically disadvantaged schools. In addition, two elementary teachers viewed low student motivation as a challenge for teachers. Yet, two others perceived making connections with students as the most difficult task for urban school teachers.

Table 11 summarizes the middle school teachers’ perspectives on the greatest challenges encountered by teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools.
Table 11

*What do you Perceive are the Greatest Challenges for Teachers who Work in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>MT1</th>
<th>MT2</th>
<th>MT3</th>
<th>MT4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Deficits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Student Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making Connections With Students</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to the elementary teachers, the majority of the middle school teachers viewed making connections with students as the greatest challenge for urban school teachers. One middle school teacher responded that student deficits make it difficult to teach in urban schools, and another middle school teacher stated that low student motivation creates a challenge for urban school teachers.

Table 12 provides a summary of the high school teachers’ perspectives on the greatest challenges for teachers in urban schools.
Table 12

What do you Perceive are the Greatest Challenges for Teachers who Work in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Deficits</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Student Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Connections With Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the elementary school teachers, student deficits created the greatest challenge for high school teachers. In addition, two high school teachers named making connections with students as a difficulty for urban teachers, and one high school teacher described low student motivation as his greatest challenge.

Next, teacher participants shared a variety of principal leadership practices that support and lessen the challenges faced by teachers in urban settings. These practices include support structures for student and community outreach efforts; for example, elementary teachers described support structures such as clothing closets, free breakfasts and lunches, and daily morning meetings. ET2 detailed,

We have breakfast in the classrooms now, and this helps us start the day with a morning meeting to create a classroom community. The kids don’t have to pay for lunch; the
backpack food bags are important. Of course, if we have extra jackets, we give those out (ET2, l38).

Middle school teachers explained support structures such as school-wide discipline systems that promote positive behavior for students are an effective leadership practice in urban schools. MT3 shared, “Students want to feel safe. We have a hierarchy of offenses and steps to take before kids are suspended. It includes counseling and mentoring. We catch students doing good too” (MT3, l43-45). Furthermore, high school teachers discussed the importance of school structures that create a culture of high expectations for students, such as an enforced student dress code and visible posters that promote the school’s expectations in bathrooms, hallways, and classrooms.

Community outreach efforts were also mentioned as practices that urban school principals should employ to support teachers; for example, participant ET4 shared that her principal supported her by providing resources in the classroom from local organizations such as museums and businesses. She explained that the business partners visit the classrooms and present information to students that align with curriculum standards, and it provides the exposure that many of her students lack. Additionally, teachers described parent outreach such as phone dialer communication to families and community events as effective outreach efforts to support teachers in urban schools. MT1 explained,

I don’t live in this community so coming here and getting to know the community and the people really helped. It was a Saturday and we had the band, hotdogs, hamburgers, dunking booth, and face painting, and people around the community came and could fellowship (MT1, l21-25).

MT1 added that many of her students are not motivated by academic rewards so principals must find creative ways to motivate students.

Table 13 summarizes the elementary school teachers’ responses regarding the principal leadership practices that support for the challenges they face in urban schools.
Table 13

What Principal Leadership Practices Support Teachers in the Challenges they Face in Urban, High Minority, High Poverty Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Structures for Students</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four elementary teachers responded that student support structures such as clothes closets and free food programs are leadership practices that assist with the challenges faced in urban schools. Similarly, three additional elementary teachers stated that community outreach was a means of supporting the challenges urban school teachers encounter.

Table 14 provides a summary of the principal leadership practices middle school teachers reported as support for the challenges of teaching in an urban, economically disadvantaged school.
Table 14

*What Principal Leadership Practices Support Teachers in the Challenges they Face in Urban, High Minority, High Poverty Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>MT1</th>
<th>MT2</th>
<th>MT3</th>
<th>MT4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Structures for Students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, middle school teachers responded that developing support structures for students and creating community outreach programs were leadership practices that assisted teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools.

Table 15 summarizes the high school teachers’ responses to how principals support teachers’ challenges in urban, economically disadvantaged schools.
Table 15

What Principal Leadership Practices Support Teachers in the Challenges they Face in Urban, High Minority, High Poverty Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Support Structures</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Teacher Responses</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different from both elementary and middle school teachers’ varied responses, six out of the six high school teachers interviewed unanimously reported that school support structures such as school-wide positive discipline systems assist urban school teachers with the challenges they face in a high-minority, high-poverty school.

Question 2: What characteristics or traits do you value in principals who lead urban high-poverty, high-minority schools?

Teacher participants reported that they value principals who are supportive, collaborative, competent, and goal-oriented. Six of the 17 teachers interviewed stated that a supportive principal is valued by teachers in urban schools. Participant ET7 shared that principal support for students and teachers is important to her. “I love when a principal is supportive of your ideas concerning children and in addition to that developing not only children but teachers as well” (ET7, l56-58). Additionally, teachers value principals who are supportive when dealing with parents. According to ET3, “When I have any type of problem with a parent, I want support from the leader” (ET3 l51). Furthermore, MT2 and ET7 explained that there are a multitude of issues that affect students and teachers in urban schools, and principals must be supportive by showing compassion and empathy.
Participants MT1, MT3, and MT4 revealed that teachers value a principal who is collaborative with his or her staff by involving them in school decision making and soliciting their ideas.

You never will feel like you are working for them. You are working with them because they realize they can’t do it by themselves. Their vision is so huge; it’s going to take a community, the fellowship and everybody pulling together. And they use words like “our” students, “our” school, “our” vision, “our” progress, “our” failure (MT3, l84-88).

MT3 added that collaborative principals allow teachers to work at their best and not feel stifled. Principals who collaborate with teachers allow teachers to “work their gifts” (MT3, l101). According to MT4, collaborative principals tap into their teachers’ expertise to model the belief there is “good in everyone (MT4, l94).

Competency ranked high in valued principal leadership traits for four of the 17 teachers interviewed. Teachers discussed the importance of strong leadership in urban, disadvantaged schools. HT4 stated, “You can’t be a punk in this type of environment. You have to have a backbone. You have to bring it every day” (HT4, l42-43). HT3 noted that competency is a non-negotiable trait for principals in urban schools. He explained that a “take charge” attitude, instructional expertise, and visibility are key factors in demonstrating the ability to lead an urban, high-minority, high-poverty school. He concluded, “If they aren’t competent, I can’t live with that. I’m moving on” (HT3, l59). HT1, HT2, and HT3 agreed that principal competency comes from having classroom experience in urban schools. They shared that it is difficult to respect the principal’s directives if he or she has never taught in an urban school. Additionally, HT3 recommended a principal preparation program for leaders assigned to urban schools.

I think homegrown is good. There is going to be a culture shock if you bring in someone from a suburban district. There should be a way to pick out the brightest. There should be a pipeline. We need to teach assistant principals how to do the next job. Something like job shadowing in an urban school. In my previous job (military), we always train the guys to do your job. If you did not live it, how could you correct a teacher? (HT3, l90-95)

Finally, five teachers of the 17 interviewed reported that they value principals who set clear expectations. Teachers shared that they respect principals who have a clear mission and
vision for the school and a plan to accomplish the goals. HT6 stated that she needs to know the principal’s goals for the school so that she can ensure that her efforts are aligned with the school’s goals (HT6, l44-45). She added that it is important for principals to consistently communicate those goals to the staff and students throughout the school year so that teachers and students are clear on the school’s expectations.

Participant MT3 was firm with her response regarding her appreciation for principals who are goal-oriented.

I can’t support you if I don’t know where you are going and how we are going to get there. It’s having the foresight as to where you would like to see your school. Stephen Covey best said it, “Begin with the end in mind”. That is the best principal in the world to work with (MT3, l78-82).

Table 16 summarizes the elementary school teachers’ perspectives on the principal leadership characteristics or traits valued by teachers in urban, high minority, high poverty schools.

Table 16
What Characteristics or Traits do you Value in Principals who Lead Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary Teacher Responses</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-Oriented</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to four of the seven elementary teachers interviewed, teachers value principals who are supportive. Two elementary teachers stated that they appreciate principals who are collaborative, and one elementary teacher shared that she values school leaders who are goal-oriented.

Table 17 provides a summary of the principal leadership characteristics or traits valued by middle school teachers in urban, economically disadvantaged schools.

Table 17
*What Characteristics or Traits do you Value in Principals who Lead Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>MT1</th>
<th>MT2</th>
<th>MT3</th>
<th>MT4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-Oriented</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the four middle school principals reported that a collaborative principal is valued in urban, economically disadvantaged schools. Furthermore, the characteristics of goal-oriented and supportive were also reported as essential leadership traits of urban school principals.

Table 18 provides a summary of the high school teachers’ perspectives on the leadership characteristics or traits valued in principals of urban, high poverty, high minority schools.
Table 18

What Characteristics or Traits do you Value in Principals who Lead Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-Oriented</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In summary, competency ranked highly as a valued principal leadership trait for five of the six high school teachers interviewed. In addition, a principal who is goal-oriented and supportive was also emerged as important to urban school leadership according to the high school teacher participants.

Question 3: What role does principal leadership play in retaining teachers in an urban, disadvantaged school? What specific principal practices are effective in retaining teachers in this school?

The consensus of the teachers interviewed was that leadership matters in retaining teachers in urban schools. Teachers listed offering administrative support, recognizing teachers, developing relationships and encouraging teacher leadership opportunities as principal practices that influence teacher retention in disadvantaged schools. Twelve teachers of 17 teachers answered that administrative support is a key factor in a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. According to HT1, “It’s important that the teacher feels like the principal is in their corner” (HT1, l104-105). She recalled a situation in which an administrator was overbearing and constantly micromanaging her lesson plans. “That experience was miserable
and it made me want to go somewhere else. I can’t battle teaching kids in this school and battle administrators. It’s too much” (HT1, l105-108). In contrast, HT1 then shared an experience when she had a difficult day at the school and the principal noticed. He offered his assistance, and sent the school counselor to check on her. This gesture made her feel as though he actually cared how his teachers felt. In addition, participant MT1 shared that principals must pay close attention to what their teachers tell them.

If I’m saying I’m overwhelmed. I don’t get to plan. I don’t get to eat my lunch. I’m spending my own money here and there. A good leader tries to find those resources and relieve the teachers’ stress (MT1, l111-115).

Additionally, participants ET4 and MT4 stated that urban teachers value instructional support such as instructional mentors and co-teachers. MT4 revealed that her principal offered support by providing a co-teacher in her classroom. She shared that it was during the time when she suffered a death in her family, and her administrator noticed she was struggling in the classroom. Her principal hired someone to co-teach with her that year and “it meant the world to her” (ET4, l96-99). HT6 concluded that teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools need to feel safe, cared for, and valued in order to remain teaching at the school.

Secondly, according to four of the 17 teachers interviewed, teacher recognition is important to teachers who choose to remain in urban schools. Teachers agreed that recognition of accomplishments and birthdays by principals is both encouraging and appreciated. ET1 explained that she chose to remain in her school because her principal valued her participation and recognized her efforts. ET6 added, “We have the passion and can be overloaded with kids, but if principals acknowledge us and find some release, we are going to stay. We need recognition” (ET6, l92-95). Despite teachers’ appreciation for being recognized for their efforts, participant ET3 shared an experience in which her recognition as an effective classroom manager resulted in a yearly class roster of the most difficult students.

When a principal finds out you are able to handle children, they give you all of the challenging children. That makes it very hard on the teacher. Everyone is paid to teach. Why would you put that challenge on one teacher? That is a task that leadership needs to think about if they want to retain teachers (ET6, l79-84).
Next, the principal’s ability to develop relationships with teachers was reported by five of the 17 teachers as a deciding factor for teachers who choose to remain in an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school. Participant HT2 noted that teachers are expected to have connections with their students’ personal lives and interests, and he believed that principals should do the same for their staff. “If we get to know our students, we also want someone to do that for us. It starts at the top and goes down” (HT2, 1131-132). MT1 added that the principal forms relationships by getting to know their teachers beyond the content they teach. She explained, “If they get to know me, they will know I am a parent always running behind her kids. Get to know me as a person” (MT1, 1116-117).

Finally, shared leadership opportunities was a practice mentioned by eight teacher participants as having a positive impact on teacher retention in urban, disadvantaged schools. In fact, of the 17 teachers interviewed, eight teachers held teacher leadership positions in their schools. HT4 discussed that when principals develop relationships with their teachers, the leader is able to recognize strengths or weaknesses in staff and opportunities are afforded to those who demonstrate expertise. She shared,

When relationships are formed, principals can pull out of people what others would normally not get. I’ve been here 10 years, and I have been found. Now I am the math lead. Because leadership changed, different things were required of us, and it’s hard to hide when your leadership is always out and about. It’s hard to hide (HT4, 174-77).

Table 18 summarizes the elementary teachers’ perspectives on principal leadership practices effective in teacher retention in urban, high-poverty, high minority schools. Table 19 summarizes the elementary teachers’ perceptions of effective principal leadership practices for urban, high-poverty, high minority schools.
Table 19

*What Specific Leadership Practices are Effective at Retaining Teachers in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary Teacher Responses</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Recognition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six out of seven elementary teachers mentioned administrative support as a leadership practice effective in retaining teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools. Three elementary teacher participants said that shared leadership helps to retain teachers at urban schools. Additionally, two elementary teacher discussed teacher recognition as a leadership practice essential to teacher retention.

Table 20 provides a summary of the middle school teacher viewpoints on principal leadership practices that are effective for teacher retention in urban, low socio-economic schools.
Table 20

What Specific Leadership Practices are Effective at Retaining Teachers in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>MT1</th>
<th>MT2</th>
<th>MT3</th>
<th>MT4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Staff</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative support was equally important to middle school teachers. Four middle school teachers stated that administrative support was an effective teacher retention practice for urban school principals. In addition, two middle school teachers said shared leadership is a critical factor for teacher retention in urban schools. One middle school teacher mentioned teacher recognition efforts as an effective practice. Finally, the principal’s ability to develop relationships with staff was discussed by another middle school teacher.

Table 21 summarizes the high school principals’ perspectives on effective principal leadership practices in urban, high poverty, high minority schools.
Table 21

*What Specific Leadership Practices are Effective at Retaining Teachers in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Recognition</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships with Staff</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different from the elementary and middle school teachers’ responses, the majority of high school teacher participants discussed the principal’s ability to develop relationships with staff as an effective leadership practice in urban, disadvantaged schools. Similar to middle and elementary schools, shared leadership was described by three high school teachers as critical in a teacher’s decision to remain in an urban school. Finally, teacher recognition was mentioned by one teacher as a critical practice of urban school leaders as well as administrative support.

Question 4: Of the principal practices that you have shared, what would you describe as the most important principal leadership practice that keeps teachers working at an urban, high poverty, high minority school?

Of the 17 teachers interviewed, 12 teacher participants responded that administrative support is the most important principal leadership practice that influences teacher retention in urban schools. MT2 shared that the principal is responsible for building a community of support
and fellowship by serving as a model for the staff. She further explained her principal puts support structures in place such as mentorship, fellowship, and community building activities. She added that principals must tailor their support to meet each teacher’s needs.

The administrator must know you can’t follow a cookie cutter approach with everything. That’s what helps retain teachers because they get the support and the principal understands how to make things happen. And that comes from an understanding of the community itself (MT2, l142-146).

HT6 also agreed that individualized support is a key principal leadership practice that teachers consider when deciding to remain in an urban school; however, she insisted that principals must maintain professional respect when supporting teachers.

I don’t need to be handheld and given a script to say to my students. If I am falling off, explain in the manner that helps me see what and where I need to grow. Respect me as a professional. I don’t need to be handheld. Come in to my classroom and support me where I am weak, give suggestions, but don’t assume that I am an idiot (HT6, l89-93).

Participants HT4 and ET1 agreed that administrative support was essential to teachers but included the importance of a positive relationship between the principal and teacher so that the teacher is comfortable in asking for help, and the principal is willing to listen to identified areas of need.

In addition to administrative support, three teachers identified strong leadership as a determining factor when teachers choose to leave or remain at an urban, hard to staff school. Three of the four teachers described strong leadership as a principal who is “in charge”. Participant HT4 revealed, “Both students and teachers should have a healthy fear, not fear, a healthy respect for the principal that you don’t want to be caught slipping” (HT4, l25-26). Yet, according to HT2, “Being in charge does not mean you have to micromanage. You can be in charge in ways that do not squish the creativity of your faculty” (HT2, l39-140).

Lastly, a principal who demonstrates integrity was reported by four teacher participants as an important influence on teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. HT3 emphasized that “principals who lead with integrity are a non-negotiable for teachers in urban schools (HT3, l178)”. To illustrate, participant MT3 answered,
It means your ‘yea’ is your ‘yea’ and your ‘nay’ is your ‘nay’ and across the board I can depend on that. I can say no, I can’t get this because it can’t be done. Not, I can’t get this, but I see other teachers down the hall with the same thing I just asked for. I need integrity (MT3, l183-186).

Participant MT1 added that principals must be honest with teachers and realistic in the communicating the challenges that teachers face in urban, disadvantaged schools. She stated, “Don’t tell me a lie and expect me to look you in the face and smile. You have turned me off. Keep it real with me. Just be realistic” (MT1, l199-200). In conclusion, participant HT1 stated that he expects the principal to set the tone of the building. He noted that the school takes on the characteristics of the leader, therefore the principal needs to set the example (HT3, l166-167).

Table 22 provides a summary of the principal leadership practices that elementary teachers described as the most important influence on a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, high-minority, high-poverty school.

Table 22

*Of the Principal Practices we have Discussed, what would you Describe as the Most Important Principal Leadership Practice that Keeps Teachers Working in Urban, High-Poverty, High-Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary Teacher Responses</th>
<th>ET1</th>
<th>ET2</th>
<th>ET3</th>
<th>ET4</th>
<th>ET5</th>
<th>ET6</th>
<th>ET7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Leadership</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In Charge”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty/Integrity</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strikingly, seven elementary teacher participants responded that administrative support was the single most important principal leadership practice that keeps teachers working at urban, high poverty, high minority schools.

Table 23 summarizes the middle school teachers’ viewpoints on the most important principal leadership practice that influences a teacher’s decision to remain teaching at an urban, high poverty, high minority school.

Table 23

Of the Principal Practices we have Discussed, what would you Describe as the Most Important Principal Leadership Practice that Keeps Teachers Working in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honesty/Integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The middle school teacher participants viewed administrative support and a principal who leads with honesty and integrity as critical factors in a teacher’s decision to remain at an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school. Two teachers viewed administrative support as most important and two middle school teachers responded that an honest principal who leads with integrity is most important to urban school teachers.

Table 24 provides a summary of the high school teachers’ perspectives on the most important principal leadership practice that influences a teacher to stay at an urban, high minority, high poverty school.
Table 24

*Of the Principal Practices we have Discussed, what would you Describe as the Most Important Principal Leadership Practice that Keeps Teachers Working in Urban, High Poverty, High Minority Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Teacher Responses</th>
<th>HT1</th>
<th>HT2</th>
<th>HT3</th>
<th>HT4</th>
<th>HT5</th>
<th>HT6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Leadership “In Charge”</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty/Integrity</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Three of the six high school principal participants responded that principals who demonstrate strong leadership influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Likewise, two high school teachers considered administrative support as the most important principal leadership practice in urban schools. Finally, a principal who demonstrates honest leadership was viewed as most important by two high school teacher participants.

**Research question 3:** How do principals' perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?

a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

Overall, principals and teachers interviewed perceived administrative support, shared leadership, relationships, and the communication of clear expectations as essential practices that principals must employ to retain teachers in challenging urban schools. Four of the five principals and 10 of the 17 teachers cited administrative support as an important principal
leadership practice for teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Examples of administrative support included providing human and financial resources to support classroom instruction, as well as building a collaborative school community including community organizations and businesses that support student learning. Secondly, three principals and eight teachers shared in the opinion that teachers in urban schools should be empowered to share the leadership of the school. Principals and teachers reported personal experiences in which a teacher was given the opportunity to lead content areas, grade levels or school initiatives due to the teacher’s expertise. Teachers reported that principals who are visible in schools are able to easily recognize teachers’ ability and potential for teacher leadership positions. Next, the principal’s ability to build relationships was reported by five teachers and three principals as a critical teacher retention practice for principals in urban schools. Principals noted that they communicated open-door policies to encourage dialogue with teachers, and teachers mentioned that they valued opportunities to openly discuss ideas, questions, and concerns with their principals. Similarly, principals and teachers mentioned that principals must get to know their teachers outside of the classroom such as their interests, families and aspirations. Also, five principals and five teachers believed that principals must communicate clear expectations to students and staff in urban schools. Principals discussed that the process of communicating expectations begins at the interview and is continuously articulated throughout the school year. Additionally, teachers also shared that principals in urban schools who have a clear expectations set the tone for the building and build a school community aligned to one vision. Finally, principals and teachers shared the importance of principals who are honest and transparent with their staff regarding the difficulties teachers encounter when working in urban schools with high populations of minority, economically disadvantaged students.

b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

Administrative support was considered an important factor in teacher retention by both teachers and principals. The principals’ perceptions of support focused on instructional support in the form of teacher mentors, co-teachers, professional development, and co-teachers. Although the teachers’ perceptions aligned with these practices, they also viewed administrative support as providing resources to support the students’ deficits such as clothing, food, and
mentoring. Teachers also mentioned recognition as a means of supporting teachers’ efforts such as positive notes, staff celebrations, and other activities that provided recognition for their hard work. Second, the principals interviewed had strong opinions regarding the boundaries that must be set with teacher-principal relationships. Three out of five principals mentioned personal friendships between principals and teachers make it difficult to hold teachers accountable to the school’s expectations. Principals also discussed prioritizing providing models for teachers regarding building relationships with students. In fact, participant HP1 specifically described situations in which she purposely modeled positive interactions with the challenging students so that her teachers could learn from her. Although principals discussed support for teachers with principal-teacher relationships and student-teacher relationships as a means for encouraging teacher retention, teachers only discussed principal-teacher relationships as an influence on their decision to remain in an urban school.

There were six leadership practices or characteristics that were mentioned by principals but never discussed by teachers or vice versa; for example, teachers and principals agreed that teaching with cultural diversity is a challenge for teachers in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Principals noted several strategies such as professional development, book talks, and bus rides into the community as a leadership practice to support this challenge. Support for teachers to gain additional knowledge on cultural competence was not mentioned by teachers as a leadership practice that would influence teacher retention in urban schools. Secondly, references to accountability were mentioned by both teachers and principals; however, principals spoke to the importance of holding themselves accountable for the school’s success while teachers discussed the methods in which principals hold teachers accountable for the school’s success. Teachers specifically revealed that overbearing administrators who micromanage their classrooms reduce the probability that a teacher will remain in an urban, hard-to-staff school. Finally, teachers mentioned that a principal who is a competent instructional leader as a non-negotiable for teacher retention in urban schools. Teachers shared that principals must have instructional expertise as well as experience with teaching minority, disadvantaged students in order to lead in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Although each principal interviewed had teaching experience in urban schools, no principal made the connection that this experience was valued by their teachers. Table 25 provides a summary of the similarities and differences
between the teacher responses and the principal responses about the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, economically disadvantaged schools.

Table 25

*What Commonalities and Differences Exist Across the Principals’ Responses and the Teachers’ Responses about Principal Leadership Practices that Influence Teacher Retention in Urban, High Minority, High Poverty Schools?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
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<td>Principal with Teaching Experience in Urban Schools</td>
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Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the results from the interviews with the five principals each meeting the criteria of three or more years of experience in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools and the seventeen teachers meeting the criteria of ten or more years of experience in urban, high poverty, high minority schools. The data from the individual principal and teacher focus group interviews were disaggregated and analyzed to determine themes associated with the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban schools. The following themes were derived from an analysis of the interview data: (1) Administrative support; (2) relationships; (3) shared leadership, and (4) transparency.

Administrative support was reflected in the principals’ responses to questions 1, 3, and 4. Five principals agreed teachers in urban schools face many challenges associated with teaching students from low socio-economic, urban communities. Principals reported that these challenges include relationship building, cultural competence, and supporting students with academic, physical, social, and emotional deficits. Participant EP2 stated that teachers lack a true understanding of what it means to be disadvantaged in an urban community, and therefore lack the strategies to work in settings with minority, high-poverty students. Participant EP2 also spoke specifically about insisting that her teachers maintain high expectations for their students yet make adjustments to their approach with students. Principals offered a variety of methods in which they support teachers in these challenges such as professional development, open dialogue with teachers, and classroom mentors; for example, EP1 shared that she provided a new teacher with a retired teacher mentor who co-taught in the classroom. The veteran teacher modeled effective classroom management strategies and created a classroom community in which the new teacher could deliver instruction. Participant EP2 added that she supported her teachers through a series of professional development offerings, book studies, and extended instructional planning sessions to enhance their skill set for working with students in urban schools.

According to the teacher participant responses, urban school teachers are challenged with a lack of parental involvement, making connections with, and supporting students with academic, social, emotional, and physical deficits. Administrative support is an equally important principal leadership practice that assists teachers with the challenges of urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools according to ten teachers. Similar to the principals’ responses, teachers mentioned support in response to questions 1, 4, and 5. Teachers shared that they
appreciated human resources such as co-teachers and content experts in the classroom as well as outside resources such as counseling agencies or businesses to partner with schools to assist the academic, social and emotional needs for the students. Participant ET4 specifically mentioned the significance of local museums visiting classrooms to reinforce curriculum standards and HT2 stated that student field trips supported student deficits in real-world experiences. Moreover, teachers viewed administrative support as it relates to providing for students’ physical needs; for example, ET2 mentioned free breakfasts and lunch programs as well as weekend food backpack initiatives that provide meals to needy students. Participant MT3 discussed the importance of providing students with grooming opportunities such as free haircuts. Additionally, teachers viewed administrative support being related to the principals’ accessibility to teachers in need. Participant ET1 shared that she felt supported “when you need to talk to the principal and you can reach him or her” (ET1, l55). ET7 added, “Our voices need to be heard, valued and appreciated” (ET7, l110).

Developing relationships was discussed by principals in their responses to questions 1, 3, and 4. Three of the five principals said that some urban school teachers have challenges developing positive relationships with students. HP1 noted that one of the biggest challenges for her teachers is the ability to develop authentic relationships with students because the experiences and backgrounds are so different from her teachers. She took on responsibility daily of modeling positive interactions with students, especially the most difficult students, for her staff. Additionally, HP2 described the difference as a “culture shock” which creates a challenge for her teachers to understand their students’ diverse needs. Aside from a focus on student-teacher relationships, principals discussed relationship building with their staff. HP1 described her staff as a family. “They grind every single day and make it happen for kids because we truly are a #family. The hash tag is not a joke” (HP1, l152-153). HP1 further mentioned that teachers have told her that they notice her efforts in making personal connections even in the interview process and simple gestures such as calling each person by name and inquiring about their families makes a difference to teachers. Finally, EP2 revealed that relationship building is a priority for her. She stated, “I have to know my teachers” (EP2, l153). Five of the principals interviewed emphasized that principal-teacher relationships must remain professional so that all teachers are held accountable to the same professional standard.
In addition, teachers interviewed also said that it is important to build relationships in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools when they responded to questions 1, 3, and 4. While they mentioned the important yet challenging task of making connections with students, the primary focus of the teacher responses was related to principal-teacher relationship building. Five teachers reported that they value community-building activities that promote a positive school culture, and they seek recognition and rewards for their hard work. ET6 mentioned that she is delighted when her principal acknowledges her efforts with a smiley face or post-it note with kind words. MT3 shared that she wants to feel “respected and appreciated as though she could never be replaced” (MT3, l13-137). ET1 agreed “Principals who value their teachers and work to form positive relationships make a big difference for their teachers” (ET1, l88-89).

Of the 17 teacher participants and the five principal participants, eight teachers and three principals agreed that shared leadership is an effective principal leadership practice in urban, disadvantaged schools according to their responses to question 3. Principals discussed the importance of teacher ownership of the vision, mission and goals of the school. They shared that they include teachers on decision making such as instructional planning, remediation efforts, professional development, and school-wide discipline plans. For instance, HP2 shared she seeks out direction from her lead teachers on the majority of decisions she must make because she respects their expertise. Moreover, participant EP1 mentioned that she constantly relies on her teachers’ expertise in instructional planning sessions. Participant EP2 noted that she would not be an effective leader if she does not “grow and develop individuals” (EP2, l99). Additionally, teachers discussed the value in shared leadership in urban, disadvantaged schools; for example, HT5’s account of a personal experience that influenced her to remain at an urban school was when she was offered a leadership position within the math department at her school. She stated, “They recognized my expertise and gave me the opportunity” (HT5, l108-109). Participant ET7 shared that her principal asked her to lead the mentoring program for new teachers in the building. ET7 mentioned that her principal recognized her veteran experience of over 35 years and decided that her expertise would be suited to support novice teachers. Overall, teachers and principals reported that teacher leadership is a key factor in promoting student success of urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools.

Next, transparency was identified by three principals and six teachers as a leadership practice critical to teacher retention in urban schools. Transparency was mentioned by principals
in response to question 2, and it was mentioned by teachers’ responses to questions 2 and 4 as a leadership practice teachers value. When discussing transparency, principals spoke in terms of being transparent about school academic and discipline data as well as their expectations for teachers. EP1 discussed that she is honest about the challenges in her school when she interviews new teachers. She noted, “I am straight up about who we are” (EP1, l50). Participant EP2 added that her communication to staff must show a level of transparency so that teachers are informed about the critical work ahead. Participants HP1 stated that her teachers expect to see the school achievement and discipline data posted at every faculty meeting and she noted this practice holds everyone accountable including herself for accomplishing the school’s goals. Additionally, HP2 detailed the open, dialogue that she engages in with her teachers. For instance, she mentioned that her teachers have shared that they like her honesty. She shared that when teachers bring new ideas, she never turns them down; however, she says, “You know I am taking a risk on this one. I am going to ask a lot of questions. Don’t let that turn you off. Convince me so we can package this thing right” (HP2, l98-99).

Teachers shared that they value a principal who is transparent and communicates clear expectations. Their discussion focused on the principal’s honesty and openness with the staff and how they gained respect for leaders who are transparent about their expectations. When asked which principal leadership practice is most important in retaining teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools, five teachers responded that they valued leaders who were trustworthy and in charge. Participant HT6 discussed the importance of a strong leader who is honest about their expectations and encourages open dialogue with teachers. Participant HT3 added that a leader who takes charge and sets clear expectations is critical. HT3 explained, “I can’t bend on the trust and competence issue in education. I’m talking about administration (HT3, l49-50)”.

Chapter 5 will provide findings, implications, summary, and conclusions drawn from the data as well as recommendations for any future studies.
Chapter 5
Findings, Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Specifically, this study examined the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school. An analysis of documented teacher and principal responses to interview questions yielded four themes identified as principal leadership practices contributing to teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. A qualitative research design centered on three central questions was used to identify these practices.

Research question 1: What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

Research question 2: What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?

Research question 3: How do principals’ perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?

a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

Summary of Findings

After review and analysis of the data from the interviews conducted for this qualitative study, four findings emerged. The findings will be shared in the following section.

Finding 1: Teachers perceive administrative support as the most important leadership practice for teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Approximately 70% of teachers interviewed identified administrative support as an essential leadership practice that influences teachers’ decisions to remain in urban, disadvantaged schools.
Teachers stated students in urban, disadvantaged schools have challenging academic, social, emotional, and physical needs that require administrative support of teachers in teacher-student relationships, parental involvement, and instructional strategies. Teachers reported they value human resources such as co-teachers and content experts, as well as outside resources including counseling agencies or businesses partners to assist with the academic, social and emotional needs for the students. Participant MT3 also mentioned administrative support with classroom supplies. “In the building we need to have a tub of pencils or extra notebooks because our students aren’t getting to Target for the sale. It’s our responsibility to make sure we are removing as many excuses as possible” (MT3, l147-149). Additionally, teachers viewed administrative support as it relates to providing for students’ physical needs, namely, free breakfasts and lunch programs and weekend food backpack initiatives that provide meals to needy students. Finally, teachers viewed administrative support as related to the principals’ accessibility to teachers in need. Participant ET7 shared that she felt supported when “the principal is approachable and teachers and go to them with needs and concerns” (ET7, l67).

Brown and Wynn (2009) linked administrative support and low teacher turnover rates in an empirical inquiry of leadership styles of principals with low attrition rates. According to this study, teachers crave support and resources to reduce work-related stress. Brown and Wynn (2009) found that principals who were visible and accessible to teachers and provided classroom resources, such as supplies or human support had low teacher attrition rates.

**Finding 2: Principals perceive shared leadership and principal-teacher relationships as the most important leadership practices for teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools.** Principal participant perceptions were equally divided between shared leadership and principal-teacher relationships as the most important principal leadership practices in urban, disadvantaged schools; for example, principal participants EP1, HP1, and HP2 stated that including teachers on decision making in instructional planning, intervention efforts, and professional development are important leadership practices that increase teacher buy-in. For instance, participant HP1 mentioned that she uses her teacher expertise to lead professional development in her building.

One of the teachers here is working on a dissertation about trauma informed teaching. Her research indicated that students in high-poverty, high-minority schools also have high incidents of trauma at an early age. Whether it is witnessing a family member being
dragged off in handcuffs or the normalization of hearing gun shots, our staff needs to know how to deal with that, and we have an expert in our building. (HP1, l58-61)

According to Tye and O’Brien (2002), a common reason for high attrition rates cited by teachers is a lack of involvement in the decision making process in a school. Davis and Wilson (2000) found the more principals empowered teachers, the greater impact teachers felt they were able to make in their schools.

Secondly, approximately 50% of principals perceived developing positive relationships with students and staff as the most important leadership practice for teacher retention in urban schools. Principal participants shared their practices of modeling positive interactions with students for teachers who have difficulty developing relationships with challenging students. HP1 noted that because the students’ experiences and backgrounds are so different from her teachers, she works to demonstrate how to develop authentic relationships despite the differences. “Maybe they don’t have a connection but I can tell teachers it’s going to take this, this and that with this child knowing every child is different and you can’t prescribe one approach” (HP1, l53-55). Aside from a focus on student-teacher relationships, principals discussed the importance of relationship building with their staff. Principals shared that they start at the interview process by making connections with teachers and continue building the relationship once they are hired. Participants EP1 and HP2 specifically shared their experiences with building relationships with new teachers. HP2 explained that she works to get to know her new teachers and a part of that includes taking risks with them.

I don’t believe in putting first-year folks on a plan of action. They are already under a microscope and I am not going to shine a beaming light on them and stab them each time they make mistakes. With open dialogue and observations, I get to know their strengths and support their weaknesses. (HP2, l79-81)

Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) found that for low-income, high-minority schools, collegial relationships and principal support ranked the highest. Additionally, Fullan (2003) noted that schools require leaders who have the capacity to create a school culture grounded in trusting relationships.
Finding 3: The commonalities between teacher and principal perspectives on leadership practices that influence teacher retention are administrative support, shared leadership, relationships, and transparency. Five principal participants and 12 teacher participants perceived administrative support as a principal leadership practice essential for teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. A variety of examples of administrative support were discussed by participants. Participants EP1, EP2, and HP1 stated they facilitate professional development specific to the needs of urban students. Additionally, participants EP1, HP, and HP2 mentioned they support teachers with instructional mentors. Furthermore, three principals shared they enlist assistance from community organizations to support teachers’ efforts with disadvantaged students. Every principal discussed that they also support teachers with open dialogue about maintaining high expectations for students despite their low socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, 12 teacher participants agreed that administrative support is a principal leadership practice crucial to teacher retention in urban schools. Teachers reported support is needed to assist teachers with making connections with students and providing resources for students’ academic, social, and emotional needs. In a qualitative study of the sources and impact of stress among urban teachers, teachers reported human and material resources as most important to reducing work-related stress (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, and Spencer, 2011).

Additionally, the principal’s ability to identify the strengths of teachers and utilize those strengths to lead school efforts is a teacher retention leadership practice according to approximately 50% of teachers and 60% of principals. Participant MT3 stated, “Wise principals find something good in their teachers and allow them to work their gifts because we all make the building” (MT3, l94-95). Eight teacher participants in this study held various leadership roles within their schools such as department chair, club sponsors, and new teacher mentorship coordinators; for example, HT6 discussed her role as the school’s Student Council Association Sponsor noting that her principal gave her the autonomy to lead. HT6 shared that her principal told her, “This is your SCA. Make us proud. Do what you gotta do” (HT6, l14-115). HT6 added that she values her opportunity to lead without being micromanaged by her principal, and it demonstrates that her principal believes in her. Additionally, participant HT5 shared, “They saw my work, and they pushed me in a leadership position. They recognized my expertise and gave me the opportunity” (HT5, l108-109). According to Tye and O’Brien (2002), a common
reason for high attrition rates cited by teachers is a lack of involvement in the decision making process in a school. Davis and Wilson (2000) found the more principals empowered teachers, the greater impact teachers felt that they were able to make in their schools. Consequently, Walker and Slear (2011) found teacher leadership is most important to veteran teachers.

Next, relationship building was described by principals and teachers as a key factor in a teacher’s decision to remain at an urban, hard-to-staff school. All principals discussed leadership practices that encourage positive relationships with staff, such as staff celebrations, recognitions, and school themes. Furthermore, six teachers reported the decision to remain in an urban school hinged on their relationships with their principals. According to participant HT6, the pressures associated with working in urban schools, create a need for principals and teachers to get together for community building. She explained that she appreciated, “potluck lunch events where we can sit around and chit chat to build a caring community within the school” (HT6, l121-122). MT3 added that she understood that principals cannot make deep personal connections with every staff member in large urban schools, but they can “go to the Dollar Tree and buy 100 birthday cards and make sure it’s in everyone’s box. This provides encouragement and recognition for us” (MT3, l124-125). In addition, teachers seek principals who encourage open dialogue regarding issues concerning teachers. Participant ET3 shared an experience in which she felt ignored by her principal and was able to express her feelings to her principal during a private conference. “When you have a relationship, you can go and talk with her. We cried and she said she was sorry. We had the best relationship” (ET3, l126-128). In a study conducted by Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012), the magnitudes of the effects of collegial relationships and school culture on teacher commitment were twice as large as those of school resources or facilities.

Finally, principals who are perceived as honest and transparent are valued by teachers in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Five teachers revealed trust in their principal is a key influence on the decisions to remain in their schools. Participant MT1 said, “Don’t lie and expect me to look you in the face and smile. You have turned me off” (MT1, l199-200). MT3 added, “Your word is your bond (MT3, l188)” and teachers need to trust that principals will advocate for their students and staff and in difficult situations with parents. When asked about the most important principal practice that keeps teachers working at an urban, high-poverty, high- minority school, participant HT3 adamantly responded, “Trust” (HT3, l35). Additionally,
all principals interviewed shared they believe teachers appreciate their transparency with the challenges and successes within their schools. They noted that teachers want principals to acknowledge there are challenges with teaching in an urban school and according to MP1 not “pretend that that they are not there” (MP1, l22). Two principals shared strategies in which they fully immerse their staff into the communities from which their students live through staff bus tours of the neighborhoods and student testimonials. Three principals also shared, and six teachers agreed, that transparency with the school achievement data is an important practice that keeps teachers informed and valued members of the school community. Brown and Wynn (2009) found that principals who built community and instilled confidence through fairness, honesty, and consistency had higher rates of teacher job satisfaction.

Finding 4: Principals and teachers differ on their perspectives on instructional leadership practices that influence teacher retention. Teachers expect principals to be competent school leaders with instructional expertise that supports teaching and learning in urban schools. Six of 17 teachers interviewed believed that principals must have the ability to model best instructional practices as well as classroom management strategies for teachers. Participant HT3 explained, “Principals don’t need to know all of the details, but they need to know subject areas. There are certain things you can tell if it is a good or bad class in 30 seconds” (HT3, l63-64). Participant HT1 shared an experience in which she contemplated not returning to teach at her school because of an ineffective instructional leader. “He gave me feedback on stuff that didn’t make any sense if he actually read the lesson plans. That experience was miserable and made me want to go somewhere else” (HT1, l100-104).

In addition, teachers noted that they value principals who have teaching experience in high-minority, high-poverty urban schools. According to HT3, “You need experience in the urban classroom to become a leader. Competence is experience. They need to grow up in an urban setting” (HT3, l87-88). Furthermore, teachers mentioned that principals who have experience in the urban classroom have a realistic view of the challenges teachers face and appreciate and recognize their efforts. Participant MT3 explained, “Don’t forget what it was like when you first walked in that classroom and how intimidating and frightening it was. I think it’s easy to forget when you haven’t done it in a while” (MT3, l159-161). While teachers shared that principals must have instructional expertise as well as experience with teaching minority, disadvantaged students in order to lead in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools, no
principal connected this experience as an influence of teacher retention. In fact, all principal participants had prior teaching experience in urban schools but never discussed it as an instructional expertise valued by their teachers. Although there is a lack of research directly related to the value that teachers place on principals with teaching experience in urban schools, the impact of instructional leadership on teacher commitment is highlighted in several studies; for example, Greenlee and Brown (2009) examined principal behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in a challenging school. Their findings concluded instructional leadership as one of the determining factors for teachers who choose to remain at a hard to staff school. Furthermore, in a study of academically successful high-minority, high-poverty schools conducted by Chenoweth and Theokas (2012), teachers reported that their principals were instructional leaders who made it a priority to visit classrooms, coach teachers, analyze achievement data, and discuss learning with teachers and students.

**Implications**

The findings of this study have implications related to the impact of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. The following implications are suggestions based on the findings of this study.

**Implication 1: Educational leaders in urban schools should provide administrative support to teachers.** Finding 1 of this study indicates that administrative support is a principal leadership practice most important to teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Teachers in urban schools seek resources that support the physical, social, emotional, and academic needs of their students. According to Strunk and Robinson (2002), urban school teachers are often of a different racial and socio-economic background than their students, and they experience a “culture shock” resulting in low levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) found that teachers are ill-equipped to support the high needs of urban school students who lack basic needs such as food, and shelter and experience frequent incidents of community violence; therefore, educational leaders must work to provide resources such as instructional mentors, culturally relevant professional development, and community partnerships to support teachers in making a positive impact on students in urban, high minority, economically disadvantaged schools.

**Implication 2: Educational leaders in urban schools should collaborate with teachers and seek leadership opportunities for teachers.** Strategic, thoughtful, and deliberate
practices by school leaders to facilitate a school culture that empowers teachers to take risks is the responsibility of the principal (Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2011). Finding 2 of this study indicates that educational leaders of urban schools should seek opportunities to empower teachers and create a strong sense of collective responsibility within the school. Participants reported that principals who recognized their expertise by including them in school decision making or creating teacher leadership opportunities, influenced their decisions to remain in an urban, high-minority, high-poverty school. Participant EP1 shared, “The tent is big enough for everybody (EP1, /109)” regarding the potential for teacher leadership opportunities in urban schools.

Implication 3: Educational leaders in urban schools should work to develop positive relationships with teachers and recognize teachers’ efforts. Urban school teachers are challenged with a work overload associated with the demands of teaching, intense behavioral and academic needs of students, and extreme accountability measures. As a result, teachers become disengaged, withdrawn, absent or choose to leave the profession (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2009). According to Finding 2 of this study, educational leaders must work to develop relationships with teachers to provide encouragement, recognition, and a positive school culture. Teacher participants reported that their relationship with their principals was critical in the decision to remain in a school. Participants noted that they considered leaving schools with overbearing, disconnected principals, yet the felt committed to principals who made personal connections and recognized their efforts through celebrations, rewards, and school community building activities.

Implication 4: Educational leaders in urban schools should communicate clear expectations and encourage an open, honest dialogue with teachers. According to Fullan (2003), school leadership requires principals to lead with courage and capacity based trusting relationships. Associated with Finding 3 of this study, urban school teachers value principals who are transparent and share clear goals and expectations with teachers. As a result, urban school leaders must communicate teacher and student expectations that are realistic, measurable, and attainable for students and staff. Additionally, school initiatives must clearly connect to the school’s mission, vision, and goals. Furthermore, school structures such as an “open door” policy or “think tanks” encourage an honest, open dialogue between teachers and principals. Participants reported they are more likely to remain teaching at a school if they are aware of the
expectations of the principal, have deep conversations about teaching and learning, and are able to align their actions with the goals of the school.

Implication 5: Educational leaders in urban schools should have teaching experience in urban schools or training in effective instructional strategies for teaching students in high-minority, high-poverty urban schools. According to Finding 4, teachers value principals with previous teaching experience in urban schools. School districts should work to select principals for urban schools with experience in teaching students from high minority, economically disadvantaged communities. Otherwise, administrators considering principal positions in urban schools should be assigned to a job shadowing opportunity in a school with a high-minority, high-poverty student population. Given the academic and behavioral challenges unique to high-minority, economically disadvantaged schools, teacher participants stated they value feedback on their instructional planning, instructional delivery, and classroom management from principals with previous teaching experience in similar schools.

Recommendation for Future Research

The findings of this study have several implications for further research. This section will outline suggestions for further research on the topic of Principal Leadership Practices Influence on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard-to-Staff Schools.

1. Future research should include the qualitative perspective of teachers with five or less years of experience in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. Given the fact that most teachers choose to leave urban schools within three to five years, this research would provide an investigation into the principal leadership practices needed to reduce teacher attrition during the first three to five years.

2. Future research should include the qualitative perspectives of teachers with 10 or less years of experience in comparison to the perspectives of teachers with more than 10 years of experience in urban schools. This would provide a comparative analysis of the principal leadership practices teachers value based on the teachers’ years of experience.

3. Future research using a quantitative methodology from a larger sample of elementary, middle, and high school teachers and principals in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools would provide more data to allow for wider generalization. A quantitative
study would also provide statistical data analysis to draw correlations between principal leadership practices and teacher retention.

Conclusion

Principals and teachers agree that administrative support, principal-teacher relationships, shared leadership, and transparency are essential principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools. The data showed that teachers in urban schools are challenged with relationship building, cultural competence, and supporting students with academic, physical, social, and emotional deficits. Principals reported that many teachers in high-minority, high-poverty schools lack an understanding of what it means to be disadvantaged in an urban community, and therefore lack the instructional and classroom management best practices to work with students from impoverished communities. As a result of the challenges associated with teaching in urban schools, principals stated that they offer administrative support such as professional development, open dialogue and classroom mentors. According to the teacher participants, urban school teachers are challenged with a lack of parental involvement, making connections with students, and supporting students with academic, social, emotional and physical deficits. Consequently, teachers shared that they value administrative support such as classroom mentors and co-teachers, resources to meet students’ physical needs, and accessibility of principals to assist with the challenges of teaching students in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools.

Secondly, developing relationships was an essential leadership practice according to teachers and principals. Principals reported that one of the biggest challenges for teachers is the ability to develop authentic relationships with students because of the students’ diverse experiences and needs. Principals described efforts such as modeling positive interactions with students as a leadership practice that supports teacher-student relationship building in schools. Although teachers mentioned they are at times challenged with making connections with students, the principal-teacher relationship is a deciding factor for teachers on whether they remain at a school. Participant ET1 shared that principals who value teachers and form positive relationships with them have a significant impact on their teachers. Moreover, teachers reported that they treasure principals who recognize their teachers with celebrations and awards and promote a positive school culture through community building. Additionally, principals
acknowledged the importance of forming positive connections with teachers by developing authentic yet professional relationships.

Next, both teachers and principals interviewed agreed that shared leadership is an effective principal leadership practice in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools. Principals stated they include teachers on decision making for instructional planning, remediation efforts, professional development, and school-wide discipline for teacher buy-in of the vision, mission, and goals of the school. Additionally, teachers said teacher leadership opportunities demonstrate that principals trust and value the expertise of their teachers. Overall, teachers and principals reported that teacher leadership is a key factor in promoting teacher commitment in urban, high minority, high poverty schools.

Also, teachers who choose to remain in urban, hard-to-staff schools, value principals who collaborate with teachers, demonstrate transparency, and set clear goals and expectations for students and staff. Teachers and principals reported that the challenges in urban schools require a team approach which includes principals, teachers and community members. Additionally, teachers value principals who are honest and upfront about school academic and discipline data as well as their expectations for teachers. In addition, teachers shared that they value principals who are transparent about expectations of teachers and clearly communicate their expectations to their staff. In fact, at least five teachers responded that leaders who were trustworthy and in charge demonstrate principal leadership practices most important in retaining teachers in urban, disadvantaged schools.

Finally, teachers reported that teaching experience in urban schools is a critical need for principals to be instructional leaders in high-poverty, high-minority schools. Teachers noted that students in urban schools have varied academic needs that require differentiation, and principals should have the ability to model best instructional practices as well as classroom management strategies for teachers. In addition, teachers said that principals who lacked urban classroom experience and instructional expertise were viewed as ineffective. Furthermore, teacher participants considered principals who once taught in an urban school as the most competent to lead urban schools.

**Personal Reflection**

This study was an interesting experience for me and confirmed the fact that leadership matters in urban, hard-to-staff schools. As a middle school principal with over 23 years of
experience in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools, this research solidified my commitment to providing administrative support to all teachers, especially those in urban, disadvantaged schools. Although I was not surprised to find that teacher and principal participants agreed that administrative support was the most important leadership practice that influenced teacher retention in urban school, I was intrigued that the assistance teachers reported they valued most was support for student deficits rather than student discipline. Often times, urban schools are characterized with intense student behavioral needs, yet in this study very few teachers mentioned student discipline as a challenge or focus for administrative support. Instead, teacher participants responded more frequently about the significance of teacher-student relationships rather than student behavior management in high-minority, high-poverty students. These responses confirmed my belief that teachers who choose to remain in urban schools are deeply committed to providing for their students’ social, emotional, and physical needs. Consequently, administrative support impacts not only teachers but students as well.

Additionally, teacher responses enlightened my perspective on the value of teacher mentors. Veteran teachers who choose to remain in urban schools are passionate about their students, and their expertise and experience should be used to mentor novice teachers. Teacher mentoring opportunities could provide the specialized instructional support for disadvantaged students sought by teachers, as well as promote teacher leadership within urban schools. Moreover, teacher leadership opportunities for veteran teachers to co-teach, model, and facilitate instructional planning for novice teachers may encourage teacher retention in urban schools.

Finally, I was intrigued to find that each principal selected to lead some of the most disadvantaged schools in this Southeastern Virginia School district was an African American female. Although my research did not investigate how the race and gender of the school leader may impact teacher retention in urban schools, this may represent a rich field of study. Regardless of what that potential research may yield, it is evident that commitment, support, experience and relationships are unparalleled demands of effective leaders in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools.
References


Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Training Certificate

Certificate of Completion

This certifies that

Felicia Foster Barnett

Has completed

Training in Human Subjects Protection

On the following topics:
Historical Basis for Regulating Human Subjects Research
The Belmont Report
Federal and Virginia Tech Regulatory Entities, Policies and Procedures

on

September 7, 2014

David Moore, IRB Chair
Appendix B
IRB Approval Memo

MEMORANDUM
DATE: December 22, 2016
TO: Ted S Price, Felicia Foster Barnett
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 20, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Principal Leadership Practices Influence on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard-to-Staff Schools

IRB NUMBER: 16-1137

Effective December 22, 2016, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plots to deviate from the approved protocol and supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: http://irb.vt.edu/pagess/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:
Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,8,7
Protocol Approval Date: December 22, 2016
Protocol Expiration Date: December 21, 2017
Continuing Review Due Date*: December 7, 2017

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(c), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the protocol/work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.
Appendix C
School District Approval

January 19, 2017

Ms. Barbetta

Dear Ms. Barbetta,

I am privileged to inform you that the Research Authorization Committee (SAC) has approved your research entitled the Influence of Principal Leadership Practices on Student Learning in Urban, High-Need Schools. Please include a copy of this letter in any communication with the school principals in [redacted] regarding your study. Your research involves what remains classified as the provisions outlined in your approved research request application. Authorization for additional research or changes in your current protocol must also be submitted to the SAC for review.

The SAC mandates that all researchers implement pseudonyms in place of the names of students, staff, schools, and/or school division in any document or repository from your study. The use of pseudonyms in your study must include any mention of [redacted]. This will prevent the identification of students and their school division from analyses produced from your study’s results.

As agreed, you will not contact the interviews for your research during the school day. I wish you much success in your work, and look forward to reading the results of your final study. The SAC encourages a written final summary of all research submitted to the chairperson upon completion. Please feel free to contact me at [redacted] should you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Appendix D

Teacher Recruitment Email Script

Dear Educator,

I am contacting you to request your participation in a study that I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. The study is about teacher retention in urban, hard to staff schools. Teacher retention is a growing issue that plagues schools across America, especially in urban high poverty, high minority schools. There is a great deal of research that states that school working conditions explain both teacher turnover and satisfaction, and principal effectiveness has a significant positive impact on teacher retention, especially in disadvantaged schools. The purpose of this study is to examine what leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high poverty, high minority middle schools. Specifically, the study will collect data from the perspectives of teachers and principals who have worked in urban, disadvantaged schools longer than the average three–five years. There is a vast amount of the research on teacher turnover regarding the reasons teachers choose to leave urban, hard to staff schools, yet questions remain about why some teachers choose to stay in the nation’s toughest schools. Does leadership matter? An exploration of the principal leadership practices that influence lower teacher turnover in urban high poverty, high minority schools may provide districts and educational leadership programs direction how on to recruit, select, and develop principals to lead our nation’s neediest schools.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no anticipated risks from participating in this study. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your responses will be collected through a focus group interview of approximately five teachers where I hope to capture your beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals influence teacher retention. The interview should last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. Your identity and responses will be assured of complete autonomy. No individually-identifiable data associated to your name or school will be included in the qualitative report.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to participate and I will coordinate a time for the teacher focus group to assemble that is convenient for you and the teacher participants at your school. Please email me at felicia7@vt.edu to discuss times and logistics. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Felicia Barnett
Appendix E
Principal Recruitment Email Script

Dear Principal,

I am contacting you to request your participation in a study that I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. The study is about teacher retention in urban, hard to staff schools. Teacher retention is a growing issue that plagues schools across America, especially in urban high poverty, high minority schools. There is a great deal of research that states that school working conditions explain both teacher turnover and satisfaction, and principal effectiveness has a significant positive impact on teacher retention, especially in disadvantaged schools. The purpose of this study is to examine what leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high poverty, high minority middle schools. Specifically, the study will collect data from the perspectives of teachers and principals who have worked in urban, disadvantaged schools longer than the average three–five years. There is a vast amount of the research on teacher turnover regarding the reasons teachers choose to leave urban, hard to staff schools, yet questions remain about why some teachers choose to stay in the nation’s toughest schools. Does leadership matter? An exploration of the principal leadership practices that influence lower teacher turnover in urban high poverty, high minority schools may provide districts and educational leadership programs direction how on to recruit, select, and develop principals to lead our nation’s neediest schools.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no anticipated risks from participating in this study. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your responses will be collected through an individual interview where I hope to capture your beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals influence teacher retention. The interview should last approximately forty–five minutes to one hour. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. Your identity and responses will be assured of complete autonomy. No individually-identifiable data associated to your name or school will be included in the qualitative report.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to participate and I will coordinate a time for the teacher focus group to assemble that is convenient for you and the teacher participants at your school. Please email me at felicia7@vt.edu to discuss times and logistics. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Felicia Barnett
Appendix F

Dissertation Research Principal Consent Form

The Influence of Principal Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard to Staff Schools.

You are invited to be in a research study on The Influence of Principal Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard to Staff Schools. The results of this study will be used in a dissertation and published. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a principal with three or more years of experience working in urban, disadvantaged schools. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: Felicia Barnett, a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, School of Education.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Specifically, this study will examine the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, disadvantaged school. Emergent themes derived from the study may suggest professional development content that may be considered as a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: sign a consent form, participate in an individual interview that will be audio-recorded with Felicia Barnett, which will take between forty-five minutes to an hour.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
This research has minimal risks to the participant. Discussions will relate to each participant's perspectives of general leadership practices that influence teachers to remain working in urban, high poverty, high minority schools and not specific to any particular person. There is minimal risk to study participants.

Compensation:
Participants will not be compensated for their time or participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records. The records, notes, and data from interviews will be
kept locked in a cabinet, on the researcher’s flash drive under password protection. All documents submitted to the researcher for review will have any identifying information, to include names, email addresses, school names, etc. redacted prior to publication.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the school at which you work or Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**
You have the full right to withdraw from this study, and all information will be permanently deleted or erased. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may contact me, Felicia Barnett, via email felicia7@vt.edu.

**Contacts and Questions:**
The researcher conducting this study is Felicia Barnett. You may ask any questions that you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at felicia7@vt.edu. You may also contact my supervising professor/chair, Dr. Ted Price (pted7@vt.edu), Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, School of Education.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ Please initial here if you agree to have your voice audio recorded during the interview component of this research.

Signature:______________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of Investigator:__________________________ Date: ________________
Appendix G

Dissertation Research Teacher Consent Form

The Influence of Principal Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard to Staff Schools.

You are invited to be in a research study on The Influence of Principal Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard to Staff Schools. The results of this study will be used in a dissertation and published. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a teacher with ten or more years of experience working in urban, disadvantaged schools. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: Felicia Barnett, a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, School of Education.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of principal leadership practices on teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Specifically, this study will examine the similarities and differences regarding what principals and teachers perceive to be the most important leadership practices that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, disadvantaged school. Emergent themes derived from the study may suggest professional development content that may be considered as a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: sign a consent form, participate in an individual interview that will be audio-recorded with Felicia Barnett, which will take between forty-five minutes to an hour.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
This research has minimal risks to the participant. Discussions will relate to each participant's perspectives of general leadership practices that influence teachers to remain working in urban, high poverty, high minority schools and not specific to any particular person. There is minimal risk to study participants.

Compensation:
Participants will not be compensated for their time or participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records. The records, notes, and data from interviews will be
kept locked in a cabinet, on the researcher’s flash drive under password protection. All documents submitted to the researcher for review will have any identifying information, to include names, email addresses, school names, etc. redacted prior to publication.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the school at which you work or Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**
You have the full right to withdraw from this study, and all information will be permanently deleted or erased. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may contact me, Felicia Barnett, via email felicia7@vt.edu.

**Contacts and Questions:**
The researcher conducting this study is Felicia Barnett. You may ask any questions that you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at felicia7@vt.edu. You may also contact my supervising professor/chair, Dr. Ted Price (pted7@vt.edu), Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, School of Education.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ Please initial here if you agree to have your voice audio recorded during the interview component of this research.

Signature:______________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of Investigator:__________________________ Date: ________________
Appendix H
Teacher Focus Group Interview Protocol

Research Questions
1. What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard to staff schools?
2. What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard to staff schools?
3. How do principals’ perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard to staff school?
   a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high minority, high poverty schools?
   b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high minority, high poverty schools?

Preliminary Information
1. Describe study and review assurances stated in Institutional Review Board application.
2. Request permission to audio record and take notes during interview.
3. Review and request signature on Consent Form.
4. Reinforce that participant beliefs, perceptions, and practices, both positive and negative, are valuable and will contribute to the process.
5. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on what practices principals of urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools employ that positively influence teacher retention.

Overview of Research Needed Regarding Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard-to-Staff Schools
Teacher retention is a growing issue that plagues schools across America, especially in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools. There is a great deal of research that states that school working conditions explain both teacher turnover and satisfaction, and principal effectiveness has a significant positive impact on teacher retention, especially in disadvantaged
schools. The purpose of this study is to examine what leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools. There is a vast amount of the research on teacher turnover regarding the reasons teachers choose to leave urban, hard-to-staff schools, yet questions remain about why some teachers choose to stay in the nation’s toughest schools. Does leadership matter? An exploration of the principal leadership practices that influence lower teacher turnover in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools may provide districts and educational leadership programs guidance on the recruitment, selection and development of principals to lead the nation’s neediest schools.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no anticipated risks from participating in this study. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your responses will be collected through a focus group interview to capture your beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals influence teacher retention. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. Your identity and responses will remain in complete anonymity. No individually-identifiable data associated to your name or school will be included in the qualitative report.

**Discussion Questions**

**Background Information**

1. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been teaching in this district? In this school? Were any of your other teaching positions in an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school?
2. How did you decide to teach here? Did you choose to teach here? If so, why?

**Principal Practices and Teacher Retention in Urban Schools**

1. What are the greatest challenges for teachers who work in an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school? What principal leadership practices support teachers in these challenges?
2. What characteristics or traits do you value in principals who lead urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools?
3. What role does principal leadership play in retaining teachers in an urban, disadvantaged school? What specific principal practices are effective in retaining teachers in this school?
4. What would you describe as the most important principal leadership practice that keeps teachers working at an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school?

5. Can you think of a personal experience in which the leadership practices of the principal influenced your decision to remain teaching in an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school?

6. Are there any additional comments that you would like to make?

**Conclusion**

After I transcribe this interview, I will send it to you to check for accuracy and to be sure I have captured the essence of our conversation. If I have any questions, may I contact you for clarification?
Appendix I
Principal Interview Protocol

Research Questions

1. What principal leadership practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?
2. What principal leadership practices do teachers perceive to be the most important in teacher retention in urban, hard-to-staff schools?
3. How do principals' perceptions of leadership practices that influence high teacher retention compare to what teachers identify as the most important leadership behaviors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay in an urban, hard-to-staff school?
   a) What commonalities exist across the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?
   b) What differences exist between the principals’ responses and the teachers’ responses about principal leadership practices that influence teacher retention in urban, high-minority, high-poverty schools?

Preliminary Information

1. Describe study and review assurances stated in IRB application.
2. Request permission to audio record and take notes during interview.
3. Review and ask for signing request signatures on Consent Form.
4. Reinforce that participant beliefs, perceptions and practices, both positive and negative, are valuable and will contribute to the process.
5. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on what practices principals of urban high-poverty, high-minority schools employ that positively influence teacher retention.

Overview of Research Needed Regarding Teacher Retention in Urban, Hard-to-Staff Schools

Teacher retention is a growing issue that plagues schools across America, especially in urban high poverty, high minority schools. There is a great deal of research that states that school working conditions explain both teacher turnover and satisfaction, and principal effectiveness has a significant positive impact on teacher retention, especially in disadvantaged
schools. The purpose of this study is to examine what leadership practices teachers and principals perceive to influence teacher retention in urban, high poverty, high minority schools. There is a vast amount of the research on teacher turnover regarding the reasons teachers choose to leave urban, hard to staff schools, yet questions remain about why some teachers choose to stay in the nation’s toughest schools. Does leadership matter? An exploration of the principal leadership practices that influence lower teacher turnover in urban high poverty, high minority schools may provide districts and educational leadership programs guidance on the recruitment, selection and development of principals to lead the nation’s neediest schools.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no anticipated risks from participating in this study. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your responses will be collected through a personal interview in an effort to capture your beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals influence teacher retention. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. Your identity and responses will remain in complete anonymity. No individually-identifiable data associated to your name or school will be included in the qualitative report.

Discussion Questions

Background Information
1. Please provide an overview of your school (size, student demographics, faculty size, programs).
2. How long have you been a principal? How long have you been a principal at an urban high minority, high poverty school? How long have you been a principal at this school? What other roles have you had as an educator?

Principal Practices and Teacher Retention in Urban Schools
1. What are the greatest challenges for teachers who work in urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools? What principal leadership practices do you employ to support teachers in these challenges?
2. What characteristics or traits do teachers value in principals who lead urban, high-poverty, high-minority schools? How do you know?
3. What role does principal leadership play in retaining teachers in an urban, disadvantaged school? What specific principal practices are effective in retaining teachers in this school?

4. What would you describe as the most important principal leadership practice that keeps teachers working at an urban, high-poverty, high-minority school?

5. Can you think of a personal experience that illustrates a successful practice you’ve used to influence teacher retention at your school?

6. Are there any additional comments that you would like to make?

Conclusion

After I transcribe this interview, I will send it to you to check for accuracy and to be sure I have captured the essence of our conversation. If I have any questions, may I contact you for clarification?