UPBEAT

Teacher Retention Research

A National Problem

Each year, school districts pay upwards of $2.2 billion dollars to compensate for the revolving door of teachers leaving the classroom (Ingersoll, 2014). The issue is even starker in low-income communities. In high-poverty areas, schools lose around 1/5 of their teachers each year (Ingersoll, 2004). The lack of teacher retention causes students to constantly learn from inexperienced teachers without adequate mentors or support. Schools with poor organizational climates for employees are contributing to teacher turnover, which also leads to lower student achievement (Klein, Marinelli, Lee, 2016). In schools with high levels of turnover, other faculty members are often forced to assume different teaching assignments, a process that weakens their curriculum offered because it is often newly constructed (Ginn, 2004). For teachers who leave their school, less than 30 percent do so for personal reasons out of the school's control (Wu, 2012).

Predictors of Teacher Turnover

1. Teacher Influence in School Administration
"The Schools Teachers Leave" a research study conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute in 2009 reported the following findings on the impact of teacher influence on teacher retention:

"Most important for teacher stability is the degree to which teachers feel they

have influence over school decisions. In both elementary and high schools, stability rates were at least five percentage points higher in schools with substantial teacher influence, compared to schools where teachers had little influence over their work environment (p. 26)."

Gaining teachers' support for programs and other initiatives is an important strategy for retaining teachers. In high-poverty schools, teachers readily grant their principals the authority they need to lead school improvement—but only if they perceive that the principal will listen to their ideas and engage them as partners in the process (Bryk et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013; Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011).

Inclusive governance is important to teachers in all schools, but it may be especially important for minority teachers. In their study exploring the minority teacher shortage, Ingersoll and May (2011) document that, on average, more minority teachers leave the profession each year than join it. When asked why they depart, the most common explanations involved feeling dissatisfied about the level of collective decision-making and influence granted to teachers and, similarly, the small degree of autonomy they could exercise within their classroom.

Richard Ingersoll has been researching teacher turnover for over a decade and found several factors relating to teacher influence that contribute to teacher turnover. In 2001, Ingersoll discovered in his research that school organizational factors relating to administrative support, teacher input in decision-making, salary, and aspects of school culture (especially, student discipline) were associated with higher rates of turnover—even when controlling for school location, school level, and demographic characteristics of teachers and students.

2. <u>Positive and Trusting Relationships Between Teachers & Parent/</u>
<u>3. Teacher Communication and Trust</u>

Schools are able to keep their teachers when able to foster strong and collaborative relationships between teachers as well as parents and teachers. The Research Alliance for New York City Schools (Marinell & Coca, 2013) drew on ten years of administrative data from the nation's largest district and found that collegiality (defined as "support, rapport, trust and respect" among teachers) was also associated with lower rates of turnover (p. 27).

In their study of professional culture, Kardos and colleagues (2001) considered how norms of collaboration might influence teacher satisfaction and retention. In schools with an "integrated professional culture" (p. 250), teachers' work responsibilities were "deliberately arranged to intersect" (p. 277) through exchanges that drew on both the new ideas of novices and the wisdom of veterans. Consequently, teachers viewed themselves as being part of a collective with joint responsibility for each other, their students, and the school community. Teachers benefiting from an integrated professional culture reported greater satisfaction with their schools than did teachers in schools where the professional culture was exclusively oriented towards the concerns of novices or veterans.

Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) analyzed the survey data of Mass TeLLS, a statewide survey of teachers in Massachusetts to make conclusions on the importance of certain working conditions in teacher turnover. They reported that the working conditions that mattered most to teachers were the principal's leadership, collegial relationships, and the school's organizational culture, defined as "the extent to which the school environment is characterized by mutual trust, respect, openness. and commitment to student achievement" (p. 14). These factors were found to be predictive of teacher satisfaction and their career choices.

Recently, Charner-Laird and colleagues (2013) interviewed teachers in six high-poverty urban schools and concluded that teachers found their work on teams valuable when it was congruent with their individual needs as classroom teachers and with a larger, meaningful agenda for improvement within their program or school.

The following is another excerpt on the importance of collegiality on turnover from "The Schools Teachers Leave" a research study conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute:

> Teachers' perceptions of other teachers in the school are strongly tied to turnover. Teachers are more likely to stay where they believe their colleagues take responsibility for the whole school and are willing to work to make the school work better. Teachers stay when they see themselves as a part of a team that is working towards making their school better; they leave when they view their colleagues as uncooperative and resistant to change. This suggests that the expectations for

teachers need to go beyond their individual classroom doors. Teachers who are viewed by colleagues as not supporting broader efforts in the school do not just isolate themselves—they lead their colleagues to become dissatisfied and to move out of the school. Especially in high schools, where teachers are less likely to collaborate and more likely to simply focus on their content area, it is important to foster a sense of teamwork and shared responsibility among teachers.

Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do found that the presence of "positive, trusting, working relationships" (p. 25) was most influential. In schools where teachers reported "a strong sense of collective responsibility—where there is a shared commitment among the faculty to improve the school so that all students can learn" (p. 25), one year stability rates were 4-5 percentage points higher than in other schools with comparable demographics.

Another research report conducted by Nicole Simon and Susan Moore Johnson in 2013, found the following information on the importance of a teachers' relationships with parents on predicting and influencing teacher retention:

> A school's ongoing relationships with parents also contribute to teachers' satisfaction with working conditions (Allensworth et al., 2009; Loeb et al., 2005). Parents influence teachers' commitment to their school (Henkin & Holliman, 2009) and predict turnover at all school levels (Allensworth et al., 2009). At a minimum, teachers count on parents to ensure that their children attend school, ready to learn, each day (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk et al., 2010; Kraft et al., 2013). Teachers also expect parents to engage in "joint problem solving" about student behavior (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 58). Importantly, this type of parent teacher interaction is far more predictive of teacher retention than are other forms of parent engagement, such as helping with their child's schoolwork (Allensworth et al., 2009) (Simon and Johnson, 2013).

Key strategies around parent engagement can be crucial in keeping teachers. More teachers stay at schools when they feel they can work with parents on student behavior (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 58). Parent-teacher relationships have been found to be dictated often by a school's policies around parent engagement, (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Allensworth et al., 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Kraft et al. (2013) "and can be increased by the concerted efforts of administration to require parent contact from teachers and events that facilitate relationships."

4. Principal Instructional Leadership
Principals set the expectations for teachers' work and shape the working

conditions in the school. Thus, schools where teachers view their principals as strong instructional leaders tend to have better relationships among teachers and higher teacher stability. The principal, who is the teacher's supervisor, can provide direct support to their practice (Allensworth et. al, p. 30).

Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where their principals recognize the many things that they, as school leaders, can do to influence instruction and invest in it by engaging in a "deliberate orchestration of people, programs, and extant resources (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 63)." Teachers want to work for principals who regularly conduct fair evaluations of their teaching practice and, in the process, provide useful suggestions for improving pedagogy (Reinhorn, 2013).

A study that looked at 30,000 teacher survey results between 2008-2012 in New York City schools and linked the survey responses with teacher turnover found the following about school leadership. "Similar to Boyd, Et. Al (2011) and Ladd (2011), we find that Leadership is the dominant predictor among our school context measures…Given the average turnover rate among middle school teachers in NYC is 15.1%, a one standard deviation increase in the quality of leadership alone is associated with approximately an 11% reduction in turnover (Kraft, 2016."

5. Principal/Teacher Trust

Research Alliance for New York City Schools (Marinell & Coca, 2013) found that teachers were more likely to remain at schools where they considered the principal "trusting and supportive of the teaching staff, a knowledgeable instructional leader, an efficient manager, and adept at forming partnerships with external organizations."

Allensworth et al. found that factors affecting "school climate and organization" (p. 25) explained over 75% of the difference in teacher stability rates among elementary schools and nearly all of the variation among high schools.

The following is a summary of the findings of Helen Ladd (2011): "by far, the dominant factor predicting both intended and actual school-level turnover was teachers' perceptions of school leadership. Teachers who viewed their school's leader positively were less likely to plan to depart than those who did not. Moreover, schools where teachers widely viewed their principals positively

experienced less actual turnover one year later than schools where teachers did not view their principals positively."

Similarly, teachers who experience autonomy and discretion in a range of decisions, from selecting texts to setting expectations for discipline within their classes, are less likely to report feeling discouraged and more likely to exert their best effort and consider teaching for the long-term (Rosenholtz, 1989; Weiss, 1999). On the other hand, when principals "interrupt, abandon, criticize and maintain control over teachers," teachers report "low motivation, feelings of being unsupported, fear and confusion, avoidance [of work] and feelings of being manipulated or abused" (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 72). Such "problematic power relations" (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011, p. 72), which are common in high-poverty schools, (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Bryk et al., 2010) often drive teachers to leave.

6. Teacher Hiring and Onboarding

Teachers want to be in schools where principals strategically hire the right people and actively retain them (Balu et al., 2009-2010; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004; Liu et al., 2008; Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools: What We Know and Can Do found that schools that offered novices support retained more teachers.

A report by Susan Headden for the Carnegie institute also shared that late hiring leads to higher rates of turnover (Headden, 2014). This same report also shares the importance of strong onboarding programs in strengthening retention across a district.

Mentors have been shown to have a strong impact in keeping teachers and this is still an underutilized tool in schools. Often, teachers don't feel that they have a trusted mentor (Glazerman et al., 2010). Several different coaching programs have been opened in places like Oakland, Rochester and Washington D.C., among other places but a longitudinal study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found that "nationally, fewer than one in five novice teachers reports working closely with a mentor, master teacher or coach."

7. Teacher Innovation

In Chicago, Allensworth and her team (2009) found that teachers prefer to work in schools where their colleagues are committed to innovation, share a "'can-do' attitude" (p. 25). When teachers see their co-workers as "uncooperative and resistant to change" (p. 30), they leave. Other scholars have documented similar findings (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2012; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

8. Meaningful Work

Over the last few years, researchers have made new discoveries regarding the relationship between employee turnover across industries and employees' sentiments on the importance of their work. A study conducted by Dr. Wesley A. Scroggins at Missouri State examined a few different survey responses and their relationship to turnover. He found meaningful work to be a predictor of turnover. "The results of this study indicate that meaningful work is a significant predictor of worker intentions to leave (Scroggins, 2008)."

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching also found that teachers who believed that their schools' were making an impact on students were more likely to stay at their schools. In a survey of 580 early career teacher in Baltimore Public Schools, they found that "teachers who felt most loyal to their schools and believed most strongly that their work contributed to their schools' successes had an 89 percent likelihood of staying in their school the following year compared to 53 percent for the quarter of teachers who felt least engaged, least satisfied and least confident in their classroom contributions (Headden, 2014)."

9. Work/Life Balance

Teachers also want to work for principals who give them an appropriate teaching load (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Johnson et al., 2005; Leukens et al., 2004). Too often, high poverty schools lose teachers when they are assigned large classes, classes that are outside their field, or assignments that span multiple subjects or grade levels. It is especially common for novice teachers in such schools to cope with several of aspects of mis-assignment simultaneously, which bears heavily on their sense of efficacy (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Ingersoll, 2002; Johnson et al., 2005) and likely affects their students.

Works Cited

*Note: Research is a summary of the following two reports:

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