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An Evaluation of Factors Influencing Teacher Retention in Title I Elementary Schools

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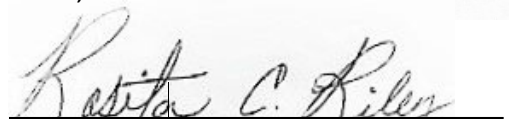
An Evaluation of Factors Influencing Teacher Retention in Title I Elementary Schools

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Date Approved

An Evaluation of Factors Influencing Teacher Retention in Title I Elementary Schools

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of
Doctor of Education
In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National Louis University
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Abstract

The goal of my study was to evaluate what factors support the decisions of teachers in Title I schools to remain at the same Title I school for multiple years. More specifically, my desired outcome for this study was to determine the factors which can be managed at a school-based level to positively affect teacher retention, thereby ensuring that students have access to fully qualified teachers on an ongoing basis. The study addressed the following research questions: 1) What factors motivated the teachers to accept employment at a Title I school? 2) What factors were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school? 3). What factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school? The context of this study included teachers from six high needs elementary schools that receive Title I funding within the same district. The outcomes included barriers to teachers working in Title I schools. The evaluation indicated a need for change. I created a change leadership plan that addresses methods to overcome barriers to teacher retention.

Preface

As a teacher within Title I schools, I saw teachers leave schools year after year. I saw several teachers leave during the school year, without completing the contracted amount of time. I became acquainted with some teachers who remained at the same school year after year. While they faced the same barriers as other teachers who decide to leave, these teachers who choose to stay employed did so for a reason. My goal as a future administrator is to determine ways to overcome the barriers that keep teachers from remaining employed in Title I schools.

Throughout my years of experience working within Title I schools I explored research concerning teacher retention. However, I have not been able to find much research specifically aimed at teacher retention within Title I or high needs schools. I specifically looked for articles, studies, and books on barriers related to support materials and resources, parental involvement, school environment, and high-pressure environment teacher autonomy.

My research design focused on teachers within one school district, which I referred to as School District 123, to look for any barriers related to teacher retention in Title I schools. I presented surveys to sixteen teachers for this study and had one-on-one interviews with two teachers. During this study, the knowledge gained helped me understand what needs to be implemented to have successful teacher retention in high needs schools. This new information will help me in my future aspiration of working as a school-based administrator.

Acknowledgments

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, The New King James Version). I give God all the honor and praise, for He gave me the strength, patience, and endurance to keep pushing through this journey.

I want to express heartfelt appreciation for my chair, Dr. Stefanie Shames, and my dissertation committee member Dr. Rosita Riley. Dr. Shames, you have been a teacher, counselor, and mentor providing me with great advice, guidance, and support throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Lorrie Butler and Dr. Sarah Lukas for being great supporters and believing in me.

To my VICE sisters, Patra, Wendy, Jasodra, Ayana, and Cindi, I am so grateful for your words of encouragement and support since we started this journey in 2019. The phone calls, emails, and messages of support have gotten me through this journey.

I could not have accomplished my goals without the love and support of my husband, Runako. Thank you for your patience, love, support, and encouragement throughout this journey. Thank you to my children, Myla, Myles, and Runako Jr., for allowing me time to complete this and being great supporters of Mommy completing her "homework". To my mother, Sarah Majors, thank you for being the best mother and a firm believer in education. To my godmother, Dr. Joe Ann Burgess, thank you for being so supportive and cheering me on. To my best sister-friend, Sarah Johnson, thank you for being my accountability partner and supporting me throughout this process. A special thanks to all encouraged me on this journey. I made it!

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Runako, who always believes in me. To my children, Myla, Myles, and Runako Jr., know that the sky is the limit and dreams do come true. You are capable of great things!

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Chapter One: Introduction

Within the United States, the responsibility of public education falls to the individual states. Within the constitution of each of the 50 states, there is a mention of public education (Parker, 2016). To receive this education, school administrators must have teachers. Teaching has significantly changed over the years. The requirements and expectations have increased. Currently, there is a shortage of teachers in the United States. Forty eight out of 50 states At least one district with teacher vacancies in the 2020-2021 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). The shortage of teachers negatively impacts public education and disproportionately affects schools with the highest needs (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act supplies financial help to schools with high numbers and percentages of students from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). In my experience, the state allocates Title I funds to the school districts, then to the schools based upon the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price meals. School leaders can use the funding to hire additional resource teachers and support staff, purchase needed resources and materials, fund tutoring programming, and purchase items for parent involvement activities.

School District 123 (pseudonym) is a large centralized public school system within a large state. It is generally is divided into learning communities based on geographic locations for elementary and middle schools and has an urban center with suburban localities surrounding it. School District 123 was the second largest employer within the county. The school district personnel service the needs of more than 200,000 students in grades prekindergarten (pre-k) through twelfth grade and postsecondary

career and technical education programs in 205 schools. There is a diverse school population with 197 countries represented and 172 languages spoken. The school district under study has a poverty average of 39.06%. Over 58,361 students are served in more than 100 schools under the Title I funding umbrella in the district.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

In my study, I aimed to evaluate the factors that determine why teachers in Title I schools within my district decide to remain employed at their current schools. Since beginning employment with 123 School District as a fifth-grade teacher at a Title I school, I have observed teacher turnover each year. This past school year, three out of the four fifth grade teachers (75%) and two out of the four fourth grade teachers (50%) were new to the school. Will (2018) noted that the teacher workforce has become less experienced than in previous years as teacher turnover rates grow, and within the first five years of teaching, 44 percent of teachers leave education. Title I schools have large concentrations (at least 40%) of low-income students and have turnover rates almost 50% higher than their counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c).

Having access to high-quality certified teachers can play an integral part in student success. Positive relationships between teachers and students could have the potential to increase academic motivation and success (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992). As a result, these positive relationships could benefit students in Title I schools by improving their academic performance.

According to the Census Bureau, over 16% of children in the United States live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Poverty shapes how students learn in school and

how school officials treat them (Milner, 2018). In the past, students within Title I schools performed lower academically when compared to their counterparts.

Historically, the Title I program included requirements for school leaders to target low-performing students to improve academic performance. With the Targeted Assistance Programs (TAPs), students were pulled out of class and worked with staff members to meet their educational needs, away from their peers. However, the reauthorization of Title I programs in 1978 allowed high-poverty school leaders flexibility with how to use the Title I funds, thus allowing schoolwide programs (SWPs) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c). With current Title I program guidelines for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the threshold to operate SWPs has been lowered. With the lowering of the threshold to have an SWP, SWPs have changed from 10% of Title I schools in 1994-1995 to 77% of Title I schools in 2014-2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c).

I hope that by gaining a better understanding of the factors which play a role in teacher retention, school leaders can develop better systems to aid in retaining high-quality teachers, therefore, bolstering student academic success. In a previous school, three out of four teachers (75%) on one grade level voluntarily left employment during the year. The school's high teacher turnover rate highlighted the importance of determining why those who choose to remain employed in Title I schools decide to do so and how to influence more teachers to stay working in Title I schools.

Rationale

As a Title I schoolteacher during the study, I was deeply passionate about finding ways to ensure that students had access to high quality teachers. After seeing multiple

teachers leave year after year, I became intrigued by the reasons some teachers decided to stay working at the same school. High quality teachers, especially during the intermediate years, help set the foundation for future student success. Providing consistent, high-quality teachers can help to close the global achievement gap between "...the quality of schooling that most middle-class kids get in America and the quality of schooling available for most poor and minority children---and the consequent disparity in results" (Wagner, 2014, p. 8).

While growing up, I attended schools where most of the students qualified for free and or reduced-price lunch, therefore, meeting the definition of low income. While teachers were present who cared about the students, some did not. As a result, I had difficulty in school because I did not feel wanted and did not like it very much. Things changed when I moved to a different city and met my fourth-grade teacher. This teacher had been at the school for many years and had a passion for teaching. She was the first teacher whom I felt genuinely believed in me. I started to truly feel like I belonged and started to like school for the first time in a long time. I started applying myself more and was accepted to one of the top schools in the country for middle and high school.

School district leaders must ensure the quality education of all students; therefore, quality teachers are needed to provide the instruction. All stakeholders would benefit from Title I school leaders retaining qualified teachers. Students need qualified and stable teachers to be successful in school. The students, especially more vulnerable ones, must have trained teachers who commit to their education. Parents send their children to school with the understanding that they will receive an adequate education that will prepare them for the future. Business leaders expect schools to produce people

who can problem solve and work collaboratively with others to provide their desired outcome. For the district leaders, retaining teachers and having more schools with better grades helps them recruit more teachers to the area. For the community, better schools help attract more companies for better jobs.

All stakeholders must work together to develop ways to retain teachers so that teachers can provide students with the skills needed to be successful members of the community. As quoted by Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Mandela, 1990, 9:19); therefore, we all need to invest in education and invest early.

Goals

The goal of my study was to evaluate what factors supported the decisions of teachers in Title I schools to remain at the same Title I school for multiple years. More specifically, my desired outcome for this study was to determine the factors which can be managed at a school-based level to positively affect teacher retention, thereby ensuring that students have access to fully qualified teachers on an ongoing basis. The findings of this study will be used to develop a recommendation for school-based administrators to implement in Title I schools to make their school more appealing to teachers wanting to stay employed in their Title I school.

Definition of Terms

For this study, important terms were defined below.

- Autonomy: independence or freedom, as of the will or one's actions (Dictionary.com, 2021).

- Instructional Personnel: certified teacher who provides direct instruction to students (citation withheld to maintain anonymity).
- Low Income: family income is less than twice the federal poverty level (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2021).
- Parental Involvement: actively being involved in child's education, such as helping in school activities and assisting with their homework (Anderson & Minke, 2007).
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA): a group of families, administrators, business owners, and teachers who work together to improve the school (National PTA, 2022).
- Professional development: activities for educators which provide “the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards” (Learning Forward, 2022)
- Retention: teachers who remain in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year (Billingsley, 2004).
- School Advisory Council (SAC): a volunteer group of stakeholders responsible for guiding school-based decisions (citation withheld to maintain anonymity)
- Schoolwide Program (SWP): may serve the needs of all students schoolwide but must target those most in need (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c).
- Target Assistance Program (TAP): focusing assistance on targeted students only (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c).
- Title I School: A school with a high percentage of students from low-income families (U. S. Department of Education. (2018a).

Research Questions

This evaluation will address questions such as:

1. What factors motivated the teachers to accept employment at a Title I school?
2. What factors were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school?
3. What factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school?

I answered the three questions with data collected from a survey of 16 teachers from six schools in School District 123. Additionally, I used feedback from two teachers who agreed to participate in an interview with me. For a copy of the survey, please see Appendix A. For a copy of the interview questions, please see Appendix B.

Conclusion

As stated previously, there is research regarding teacher retention in general related to schools. While there is research regarding why teachers leave, not much research exists regarding factors that affect teacher motivation to stay employed at Title I schools. The next chapter focuses on literature that supports the research topic. I grouped the research into the following categories: School Culture, Student Achievement, Resources and Support, Teacher Autonomy, and Professional Development.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Teacher turnover can have a negative impact on school districts, especially when that turnover happens consistently year after year. The failure of school district administrators to retain teachers can have a negative impact as far as financial concerns and declines in student learning. Under the United States Department of Education, the National Institute for Educational Statistics studied new teacher retention and found that only 74% of the beginning teachers taught at the same school as the previous year (2015). Teachers' attrition and retention rates are causing shortages in some Title I schools. While there are factors that school leaders may find hard to change regarding retaining teachers, there are some factors that they can influence.

In this study I searched for literature focused on retaining teachers. Specifically, I wanted to learn what the literature said about how to retain teachers in Title I schools. I used articles from journals and books focused on teacher retention and preparation, school culture, student achievement, resources, and support. I focused on school culture, student achievement, funding, and teacher autonomy for the literature review.

School Culture

Several articles discussed factors related to school culture and teacher retention. There seem to be multiple factors that affect why teachers decide to change schools or leave the profession (Curtis, 2012; Hammond, 2003; Holmes, Parker, & Gibson, 2019). It is known that school culture plays a significant role in teacher satisfaction at work. While there are many things that school-based administrators do not have control over regarding teacher retention, the teaching environment is one of the few areas where they have some control (Holmes, Parker, & Gibson, 2019).

Research has shown that a positive school environment helps to boost teacher morale. One way for school culture to improve is to have a robust framework in place for teacher success. When strong structures are present, such as mentoring programs, effective leadership strategies implemented by the school-based administrators, and effective professional development, the structured schools have a higher rate of teacher retention than schools that do not (Shen, 1997; Sun, 2017). Further research gathered during this study showed a relationship between positive school environments and teacher retention (Ansley et al., 2019, Dahlkamp et al., 2017).

Student Achievement

Teachers enter the field of education to impact students' lives. The goal of school leaders is to have a positive increase in student achievement. A negative correlation exists between schools with low teacher retention and student achievement. In their article, *How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement* the authors discuss how students in schools with high teacher turnover rates score lower in math and English Language than their counterparts (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). Ronfeldt et al. (2012) found that student math test scores were lower by 7.4% to 9.6% in schools with a high teacher turnover rate. Additionally, the same study indicated that students' English Language Arts scores were lower by 6% to 8.3% in schools with 100% teacher turnover rates compared to years without any teacher turnover.

Brown and Wynn, the authors of *Finding, Supporting, and Keeping: The Role of the Principal in Teacher Retention Issues* discussed the role that quality teachers play in student achievement and how principals can help (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Additionally,

they addressed the disparities between schools in low-income and higher-income areas in maintaining high-quality teachers and the associated achievement disparities.

Teacher Preparation, Resources, and Support

Wang, Straubhaar, and Ong focused on the impact of resources and support in professional development, mentoring, and coaching on retaining teachers within schools (2020). In this study, Wang et al. discussed a lack of administrative support and the quality of professional development that cause teachers to leave employment in schools. This information led me to wonder more about the training teachers receive.

Additional research by Zhang and Zeller (2016) offered insight into the preparation of alternative route certification (ARC) preparation programs for teachers. These authors studied teacher retention as it related to the type of preparation program, whether it is traditional, lateral entry, or an alternative certification program. The researchers interviewed 41 first year and 19 second-year teachers in this study. The information from this study gave me insight into the impact that factors related to teacher preparation have upon teacher retention. Teachers who are prepared using the traditional route were found to have comparable retention rates to those using alternative methods in the short-term.

Professional Development

There is a gap in the literature related to professional development and retention of teachers in high needs schools. The education of teachers does not end with the attainment of a bachelor's degree. Teachers must continue their education as part of staying knowledgeable of what is currently going on in the field of education and maintaining their license's active status. Professional development (PD) is the learning

activity for currently practicing teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2000). Professional development has changed over the years, much like education has changed. Teacher Training (2018) described the changes taking place in teacher training and professional development,

A wave of educational reform, which started in 1983 when President Ronald Reagan appointed a National Commission on Excellence in Education, has begun to affect teacher training. The commission's report, *A Nation at Risk*, combined with a predicted shortage of teachers in some fields in the late 20th century, raised national awareness of the need to attract large numbers of high-quality teacher candidates and improve their education and training. Many departments of education are currently examining and revising curricula. Several educational organizations have issued influential reports proposing sweeping changes to enhance prospective teachers' education and help keep teachers from leaving the classrooms for other jobs. (Teacher Training, 2018)

Professional development opportunities must be relevant and emphasized as crucial to school-based and district-based leadership. School and district leaders should actively encourage professional development opportunities instead of treating professional development opportunities as a mundane afterthought. Murphy (2006) discussed the attributes of effective leaders. These attributes included providing resources to fund professional development opportunities, allowing staff to choose professional development directly aligned to student achievement, and providing substitutes to cover in the teachers' absences (p. 85).

Teacher Autonomy

Teaching is a profession in which teachers must constantly enroll in professional development training to stay abreast of current trends and ideologies related to education. Once teachers have gained up-to-date knowledge along with their already existing knowledge, leaders must trust them to be the educational experts they are. Trends in curriculum show teachers need to have more choice and autonomy when teaching (Hughes & Lewis, 2018; Wermke, 2019).

Conclusion

The research that I reviewed covered different aspects related to teacher retention. While many areas need to be addressed while seeking to make changes on a significant scale to retain teachers once hired, the authors' research within this chapter suggested offering more support and materials, relevant professional development, and teacher autonomy to retain teachers. Additionally, it is imperative to keep established and knowledgeable teachers in place to aid student academic achievement. The research that I presented in this literature review focused on the framework for creating a program to increase teacher satisfaction and retention within Title I schools.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design Overview

Patton (2008) defined program evaluation as "the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about programming, and/or increase understanding" (p. 39). This program evaluation focused on the current factors which played a role in determining why teachers in Title I schools within a district decided to remain employed at their existing schools.

Patton made a distinction between the merits of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, referencing the two methods as a methodological debate (2008). The blueprint of qualitative research finds meaning in words; the blueprint for quantitative research finds meaning in data such as statistics, equations, charts, and formulae (Patton, 2008). In this program evaluation, I used a mixed methods design to ask multiple choice questions and open-ended survey questions to evaluate factors related to teacher retention within Title I schools.

In this utilization-focused program evaluation, I analyzed what factors supported the decisions of teachers in Title I schools to remain at the same Title I school for multiple years. More specifically, the desired outcome for this study was to determine the factors which can be managed at a school-based level to positively affect teacher retention, thereby ensuring that students have access to fully qualified teachers on an ongoing basis. The findings of this study will be used to develop a recommendation for school-based administrators to implement in Title I schools to make their schools more appealing to teachers wanting to stay employed in their Title I school.

Participants

The participants in the study included current instructional personnel within Title I elementary schools in a district. The instructional personnel responded to a confidential survey. The instructional personnel who provided feedback on the confidential survey indicating interest in participating in a follow-up interview were questioned virtually using a semi-structured interview. The demographics of the participants varied in gender and race. All participants were 18 years or over in age.

Data Gathering Techniques

I used a plan that included a mixed methods qualitative and quantitative data analysis approach. The quantitative data provided insight into how current educators felt about their working climate, culture, and demands. Additionally, the qualitative data provided a snapshot of the overall picture describing why instructional personnel remain employed at their current worksite.

Surveys

I developed a survey (Appendix A) for the Title I school-based instructional personnel to complete as they were the target stakeholders for this program evaluation. At the beginning of the school year, I emailed surveys to instructional personnel at Title I schools with principals identified by school district staff as willing to participate in the study.

Interviews

The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes. The questions pertained to the factors involving the employee choosing to become employed, staying employed, and what would cause them to leave employment at their current

worksite. The questions also included the input of ideas from participating teachers on what could be done to increase teacher retention (See Appendix B).

Data Analysis Techniques

I recorded and transcribed the semi-structured interviews for accuracy with each participant's permission. The different data sets contributed to an overall understanding of the factors influencing teacher decisions to stay employed at the same Title I school for multiple years.

Ethical Considerations

I provided the informed consent form and survey questions to the teachers through electronic mail. I received the informed consent for the surveys, and the survey responses were returned anonymously through Google forms submissions. I collected qualitative data in semi-structured interviews with teachers. I conducted the semi-structured interviews via video conference (for a copy of the interview questions, see Appendix B). I completed the semi-structured interviews while I was in a room with a door to ensure privacy and confidentiality. I excluded identifying information in reporting all results to ensure the confidentiality of the state, the school district, and individual participants throughout the evaluation process.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the number of teachers who participated in my surveys, thus limiting the number of teachers who participated in the interviews. I sought participation from elementary Title 1 schools from a section of a school district. The school district officials approved ten schools to participate. Of the ten schools approved for participation, six schools had teachers who participated in the study.

Conclusion

Considering the constant need for teachers in low-socioeconomic schools, I was intrigued to collect data on and analyze this topic. Sixteen teachers from six schools participated in this study. The demographic make-up of the schools varied in race, gender, and socioeconomic factors; however, most of the students were from lower socioeconomic status, qualifying the schools for Title I funding. By understanding factors influencing teacher retention in Title I schools, school-based administrators will be able to develop a plan to retain highly effective teachers. The following section relays the findings of my surveys and interviews and explains my recommendations for those results.

Chapter Four: Results

Findings

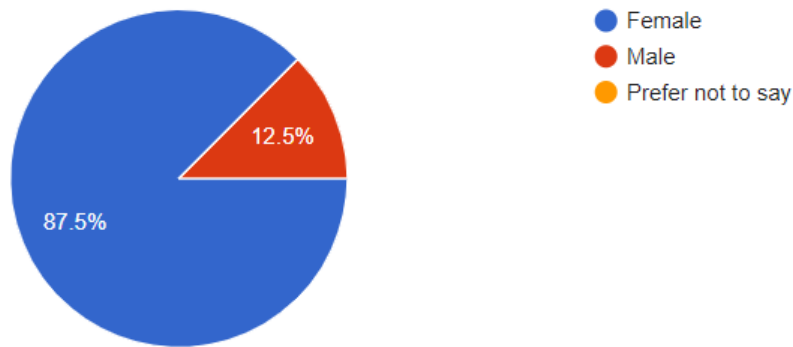
In this knowledge-focused program evaluation, I analyzed the factors that supported teachers' decisions to remain at the same Title I school for multiple years. More specifically, the desired outcome for this study was to determine the factors which can be managed at a school-based level to positively affect teacher retention, thereby ensuring that students have access to fully qualified teachers on an ongoing basis.

I developed a survey (Appendix A) for the Title I school-based instructional personnel to complete as they are the target stakeholders for this program evaluation. Voluntary participation was offered to current elementary level instructional personnel within a cluster of Title I schools within an urban school district. At the beginning of the school year, the surveys were emailed to the instructional personnel at the Title I elementary schools identified by school district officials as approved to participate in the study. Sixteen instructional personnel responded to the survey. I provided each participant with informed consent forms electronically. The questions presented within the survey consisted of open-ended questions and Likert scale questions. Some participants did not provide complete answers to all written response questions. No incentives or monetary contributions were offered to participants. The demographics of the participants varied in gender and race. All participants were 18 years or over in age.

The participants were both male and female. There were two (12.5%) male participants in the study. There were fourteen (87.5%) female participants in the study. I interpret the reasoning for more female participation in the study because traditionally, more females are in the education profession. (Figure 1)

Figure 1

Instructional Personnel Survey Participant Gender Demographic

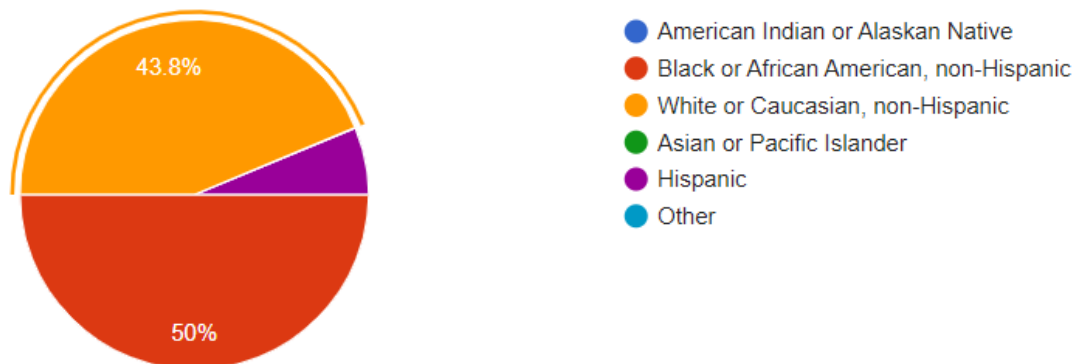


Note. N = 16

The participants in the study were from three racial demographics. Of the participants, eight (50%) were Black or African American, non-Hispanic. Of the participants, seven (43.8%) were White or Caucasian, non-Hispanic. Of the participants, one (6.3%) was Hispanic. I interpret the reasoning for the lack of additional ethnicities due to the small sample size of participants in the study. (Figure 2)

Figure 2

Instructional Personnel Survey Participant Ethnicities Demographic



Note. N = 16

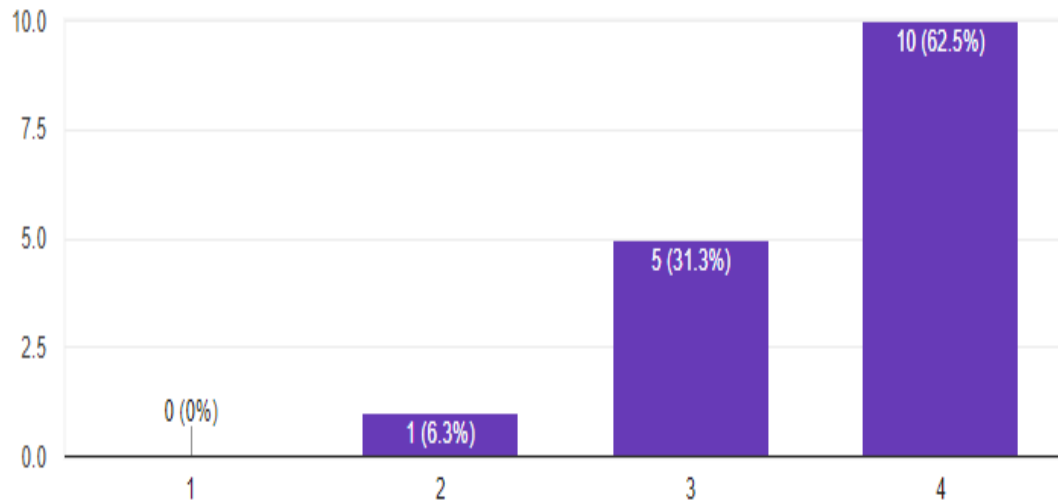
The study participants had various amounts of teaching experience at their current Title I school. Nine participants (56.3%) had 0-3 years of teaching experience at their current school. Two participants (12.5%) had 4-6 years of teaching experience at their current school. Two participants (12.5%) had 7-10 years of teaching experience at their current school. One participant (6.3%) had 11-15 years of teaching experience at the current school. Two participants (12.5%) had 16-20 years of teaching experience at their current school.

The first survey statement addressed the school-based administrative support of the instructional personnel in implementing the student code of conduct (Figure 3). All 16 instructional personnel responded to the statement. The category with the highest response was 10 instructional personnel (62.5%) who strongly agreed that their school administrator(s) enforce the school's code of conduct. The remaining categories were split with five instructional personnel (31.3%) who agreed and one instructional person (6.3%) who did not agree. The total participants who agreed or strongly agreed that their school administrator(s) enforced the school's code of conduct was 93.8%.

Figure 3

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 1: The School Administrator(S)

Enforces the School's Code of Conduct



Note. N = 16

4 = Strongly Agree
3 = Agree
2 = Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree

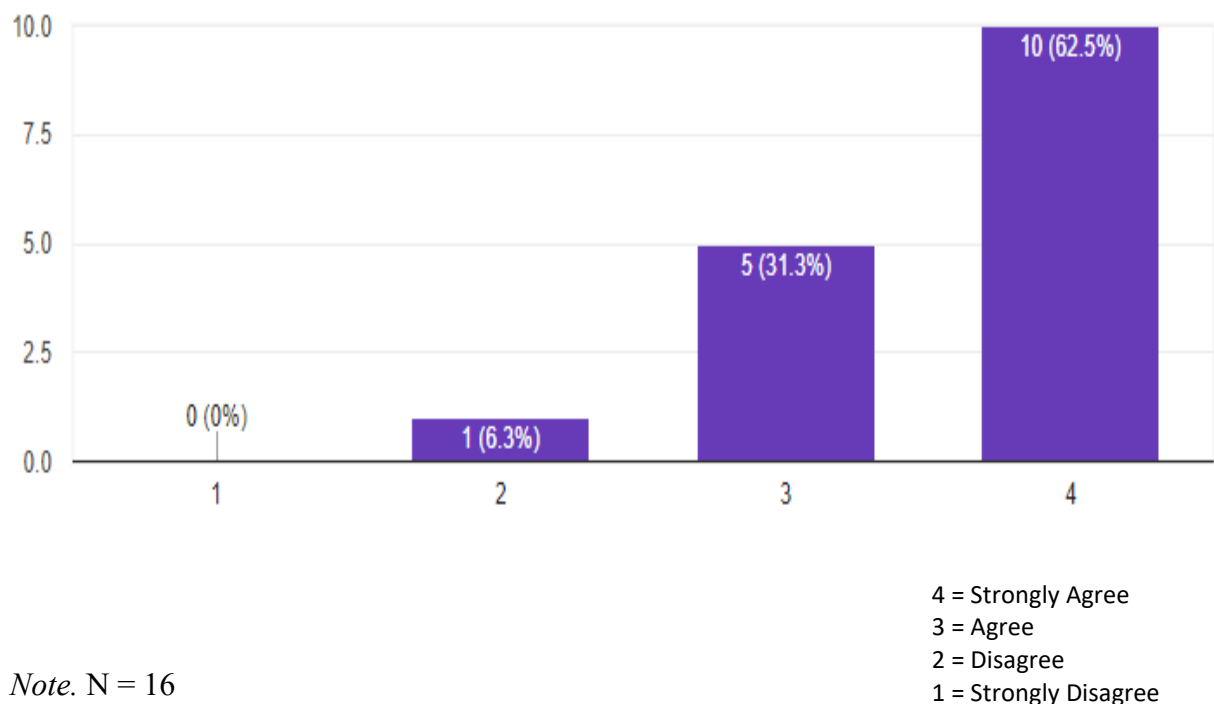
I interpreted the data to mean that most of the instructional personnel within the schools under study felt that the school-based administrators (principals and assistant principals) enforced the rules and procedures addressed within the district code of conduct. In my professional opinion, the teachers may feel support with the enforcement of the code of conduct due to the presence of a school dean within Title I schools within District 123. The dean position adds an extra layer of support for the teachers and students when enforcing the code of conduct.

In the second survey statement, I addressed school-based administrative support with classroom discipline. All 16 instructional personnel responded to the statement. The category with the highest response was ten instructional personnel (62.5%) who

strongly agreed that their school administrator(s) supported the teachers' efforts to maintain classroom discipline. The remaining categories were split with five instructional personnel (31.3%) who agreed and one instructional person (6.3%) who disagreed that their school administrator(s) supported the teachers' efforts to maintain classroom discipline. I interpreted the results to mean that most participants believed that the school-based administrators supported efforts to maintain classroom discipline. Responses are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 2: The School Administrator(S) Supports the Teachers' Efforts to Maintain Classroom Discipline



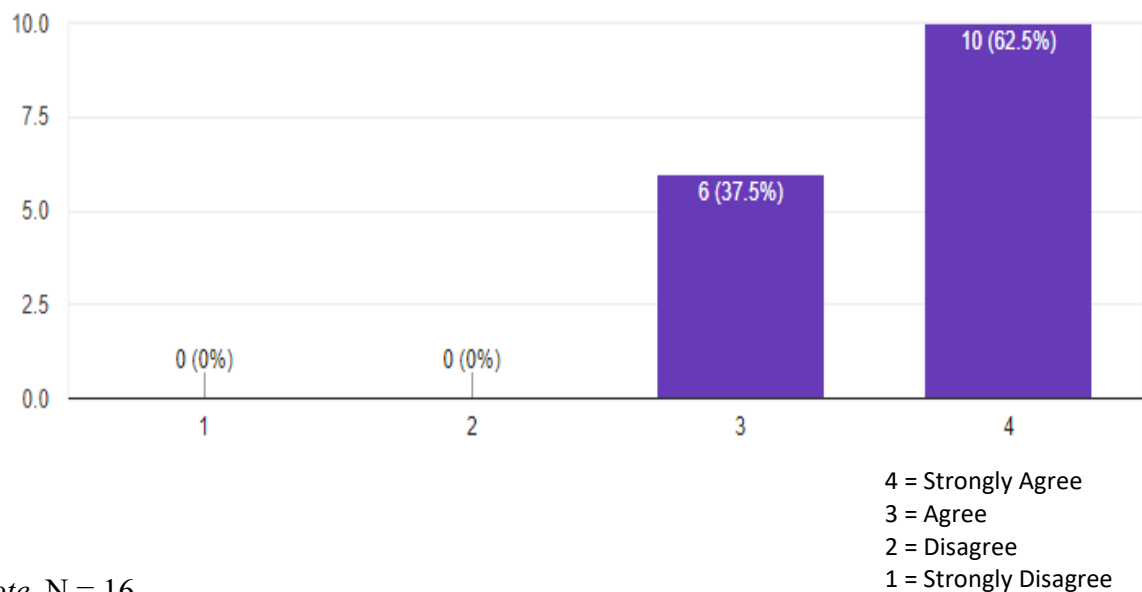
Note. N = 16

Survey statement number 3 addressed the safety of the learning environment. All 16 participants responded to the statement. The category with the highest response was 10 instructional personnel (62.5%) who strongly agreed that the school's learning

environment felt safe. The other category with a response was six instructional personnel (37.5%) who agreed that the school's learning environment felt safe. Overall, all sixteen respondents (100%) thought the learning environment was safe. Responses are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Question 3: The School's Learning Environment Feels Safe



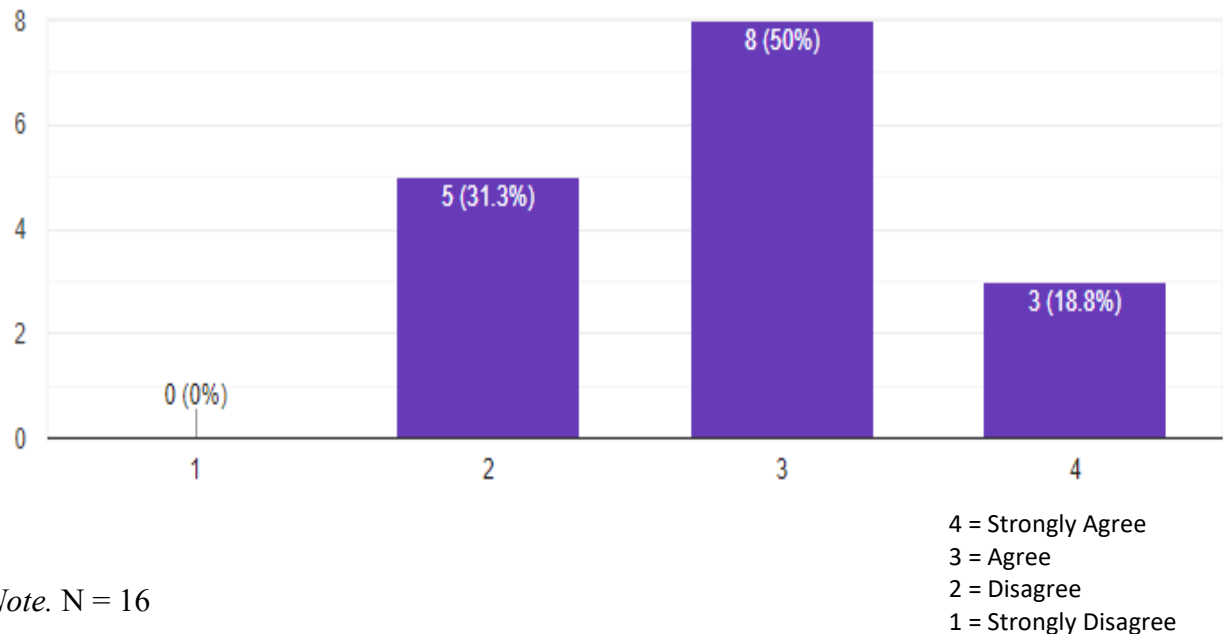
Note. N = 16

The fourth survey statement was "Teachers are recognized as educational experts." All 16 instructional personnel responded to the statement. The category with the highest response was eight instructional personnel (50%) who agreed that educators are treated as experts. The next highest response was three instructional personnel (18.8%) who strongly agreed that educators are recognized as experts. Five instructional personnel (31.3%) disagreed that educators are recognized as experts. Responses are presented in Figure 6.

Eleven instructional personnel agreed or strongly agreed that teachers are considered educational experts. As 68.8% of the instructional personnel had a positive response to the survey statement, I interpret the data to mean that the majority of the instructional personnel agree that educators are treated as experts.

Figure 6

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Question 4: Teachers are Recognized as Educational Experts



Note. N = 16

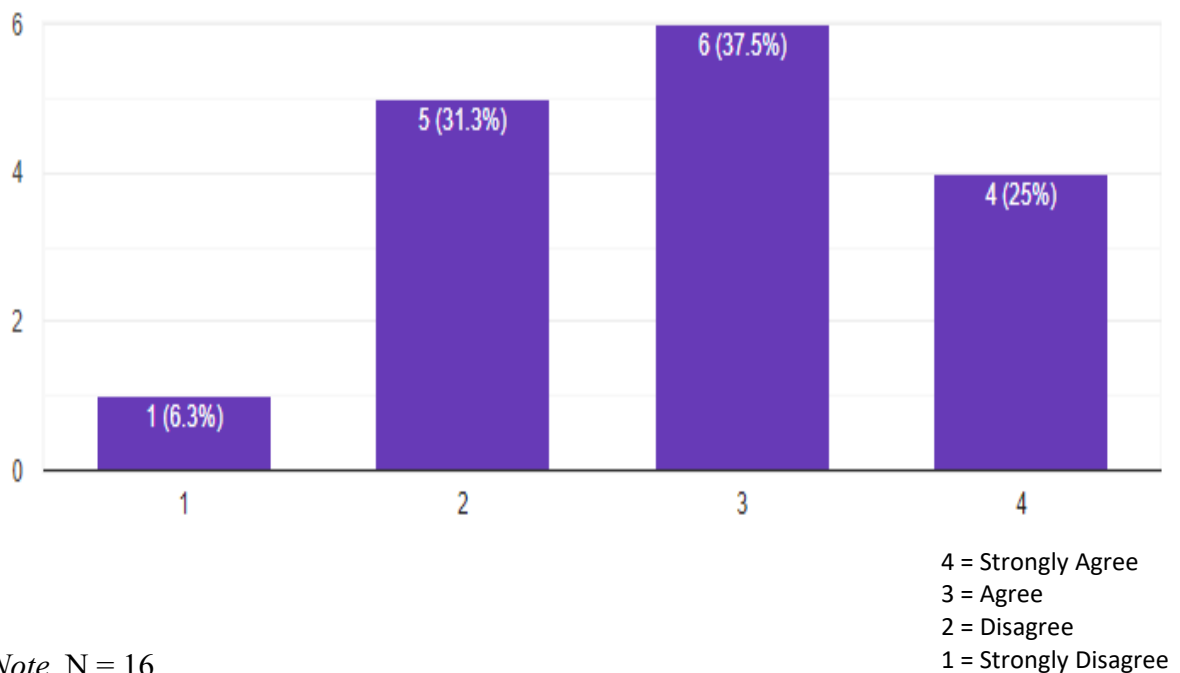
The fifth survey statement was "Teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles." All sixteen instructional personnel responded to the statement. Ten instructional personnel (62.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that educators are encouraged to take on leadership roles. The subsequent highest response was five instructional personnel (31.3%) who disagreed that educators are encouraged to take on leadership roles. One instructional personnel (6.3%) strongly disagreed that educators are encouraged to take

on leadership roles. Responses are presented in Figure 7.

Although there were only 16 respondents to this statement, 62.5% of the respondents had a positive response to this statement. I interpret the data to mean that the majority of the instructional personnel within the schools felt that the school-based administrators (principals and assistant principals) encouraged the teachers to be educational leaders within the schools.

Figure 7

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 5: Teachers are Encouraged to Take on Leadership Roles



Note. N = 16

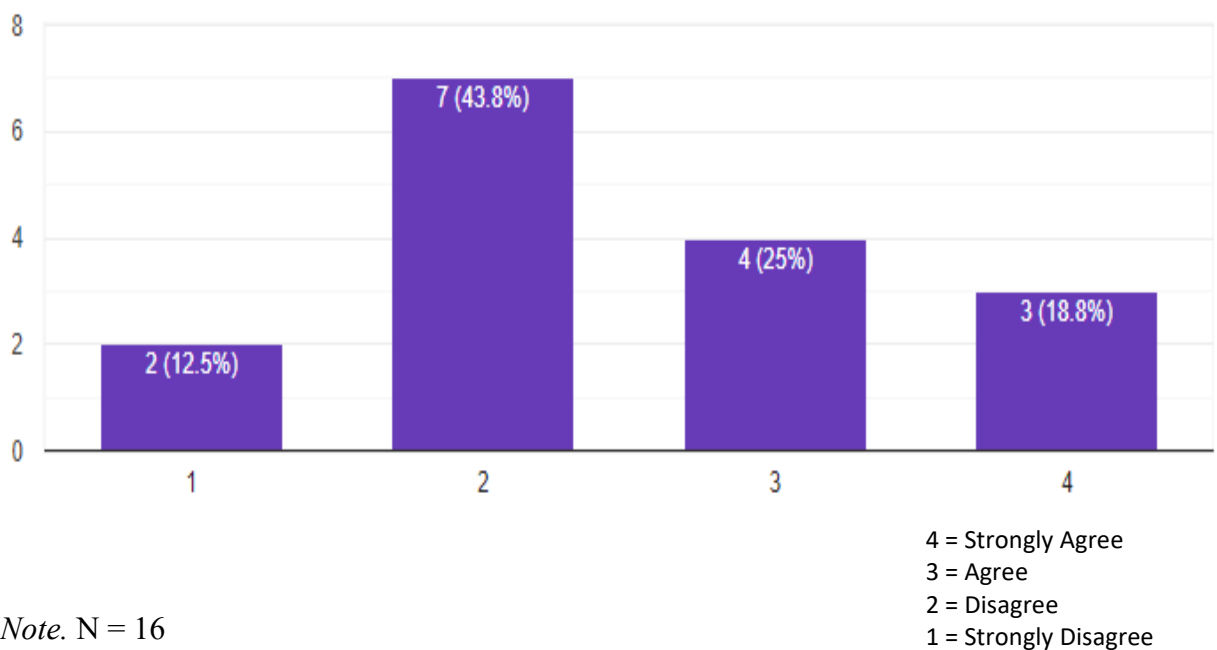
The sixth survey statement was "Autonomy is encouraged." All sixteen instructional personnel responded to the statement. Seven instructional personnel (43.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that autonomy is encouraged among educators. Seven instructional personnel (43.8%) disagreed that autonomy is encouraged among

educators. Two instructional personnel (12.5%) strongly disagreed that autonomy is encouraged among educators. Overall, 9 out of 16 respondents (56.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school leadership members encourage autonomy. Responses are presented in Figure 9.

I interpret the data to mean that most of the instructional personnel felt that the school-based administrators (principals and assistant principals) do not support teachers' efforts to make decisions about what is taught within the classrooms and lesson delivery.

Figure 8

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 6: Autonomy Is Encouraged



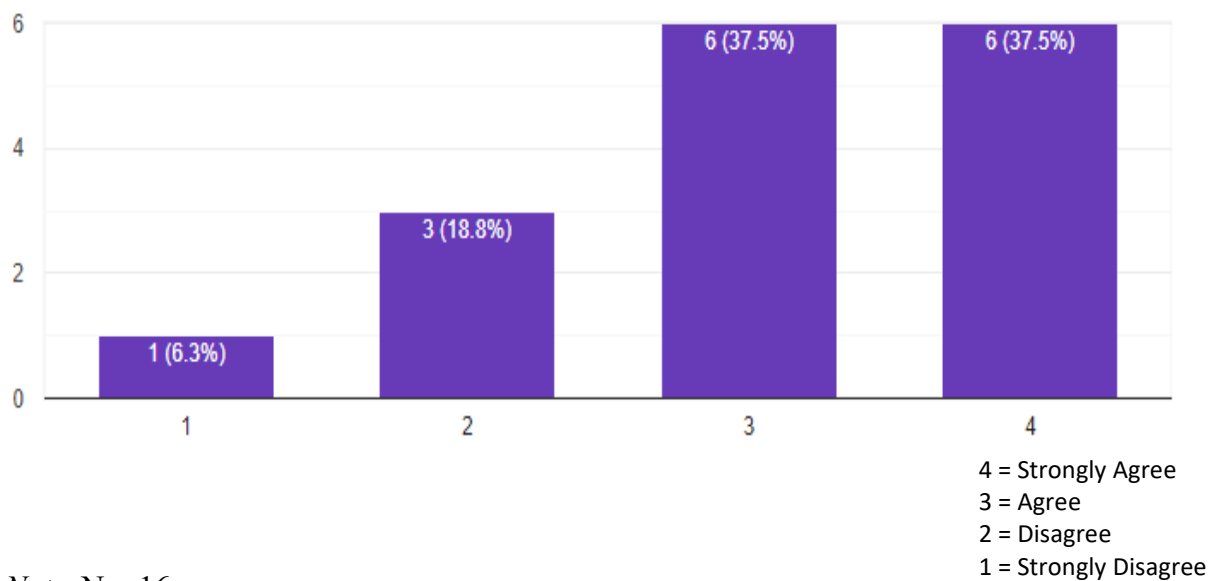
The seventh survey statement was "The school has a positive climate." All sixteen instructional personnel responded to the statement. Four of the instructional personnel (25.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school has a positive climate. Six instructional personnel (37.5%) agreed that the school has a positive

climate. Six instructional personnel (37.5%) strongly agreed that the school has a positive climate. Overall, 12 out of 16 (75%) respondents agreed that their school environment is positive. Responses are displayed in Figure 9.

As most of the participants (75%) had a positive response to the survey statement, I interpret the data to mean that most instructional personnel felt that the school climate was positive. Research has shown that a positive school climate with positive administrator strategies regarding teacher support, school culture, and work environment contribute to teacher retention (Akdemir & Shelton, 2017).

Figure 9

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 7: The School has a Positive Climate



Note. N = 16

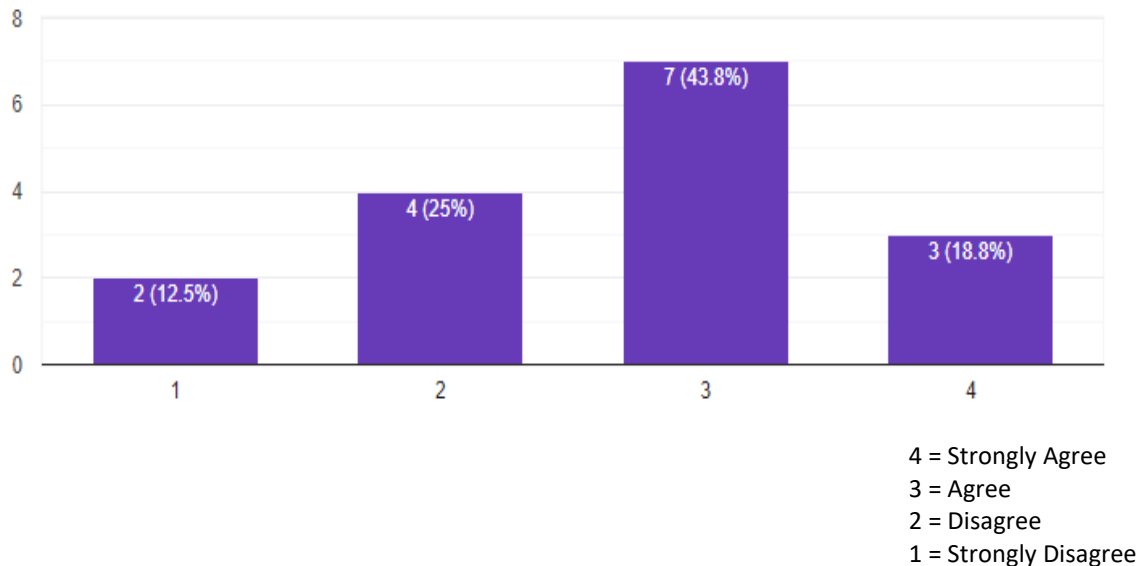
The eighth survey statement was, "There is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth." All 16 instructional personnel responded to the statement. Ten (62.5%) of the instructional personnel agreed or strongly agreed that there is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth. Six (37.5%) instructional

personnel disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth. Overall, 10 out of 16 respondents (62.5%) felt there is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth. Responses are displayed in Figure 10.

I interpret the data to mean that most of the instructional personnel felt there was an opportunity for advancement and professional growth. When looking at the data in comparison to staff taking on leadership roles, both have a positivity rate of 62.5%. Within School District 123, teachers have the opportunity to take on leadership roles, if qualified, such as being an instructional coach, resource teacher, dean, and team leader. While these roles are considered as being a leadership role within schools, they are still instructional level positions. The experience in these roles is often needed to become an assistant principal. The positivity rate of this statement is generally the same as of teachers being encouraged to take on leadership roles, meaning 62.5% of the respondents felt that teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles and there is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth.

Figure 10

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 8: There is an Opportunity for Advancement and Professional Growth



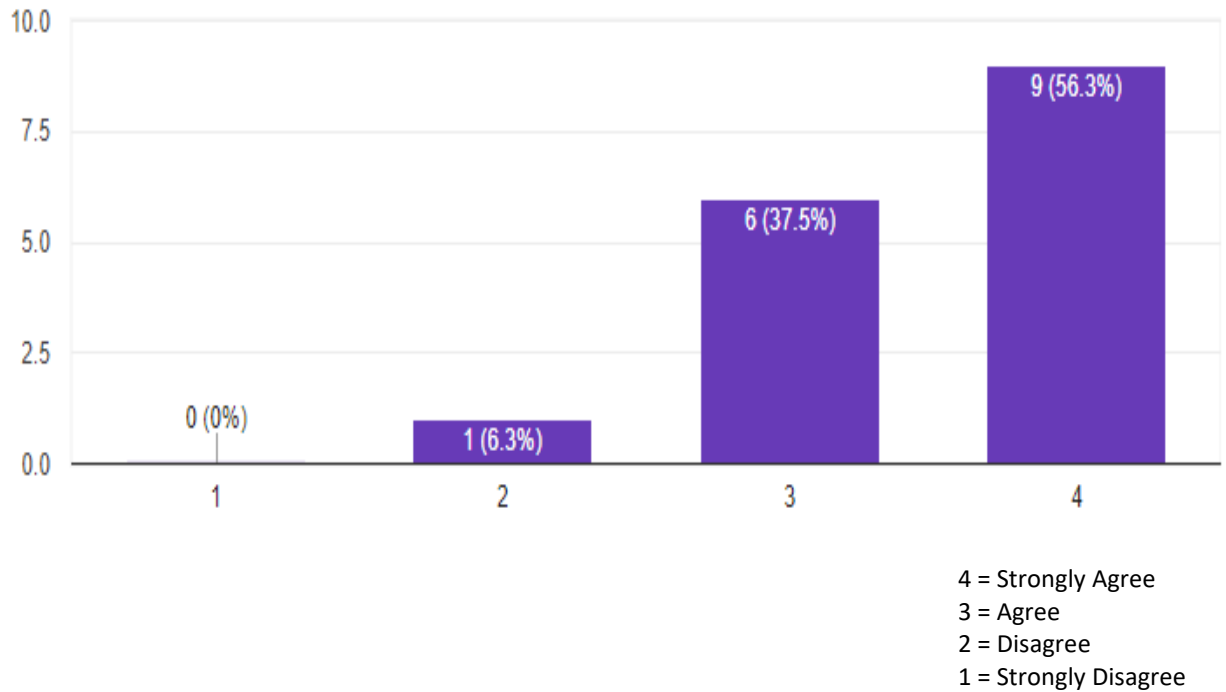
Note. N = 16

The ninth survey statement was "High expectations are held for all students." All 16 instructional personnel responded to the statement. Nine (56.3%) of the instructional personnel strongly agreed, and six (37.5%) agreed that high expectations are held for all students. One (6.3%) instructional personnel respondent disagreed that high expectations are held for all students. Overall, 15 out of 16 (%) respondents felt that high expectations were held for all students. Responses are displayed in Figure 11.

I interpret the data to mean that most of the instructional personnel feel that high expectations were held for all students. In my professional experience, expectations are high for Title I school students. As I learned in my literature review, a good school climate affects student achievement positively. Holding students accountable is a part of the school culture.

Figure 11

Instructional Personnel Responses to Survey Statement 9: High Expectations are Held for All Students



Note. N = 16

Teachers responded to three open-ended questions based on their experiences working within Title I schools. I received responses from sixteen teachers (two teachers did not note any barriers) and organized them into four recognizable themes based on the most common responses. The four themes are listed below in Table 1:

- Inadequate support, materials, and resources
- Lack of parental involvement
- High-pressure environment
- Lack of autonomy

Table 1

Themes Identified from Open-ended Statement 8: In Your Own Words, Please Describe Any Barriers That You Have Faced as a Teacher in a Title I School.

Teacher Responses Grouped into Categories by Four Recognized Themes			
Inadequate support, materials, and resources	Lack of parental involvement	High-pressure environment	Lack of autonomy
Funding is limited so resources are scarce.	I have students whose parents you never see or hear from either because they do not prioritize education or because they keeping the family afloat is all they can do.	Lack of appreciation, expected to work over contract hours without being paid	One barrier that has been common is having to be on the same page as other using same resources in lessons.
I have struggled with support for discipline in the classroom from leadership	Being able to strongly connect with parents, most of whom work and can be hard to get ahold of	Too much pressure on the teacher. Teachers carry the blame for all students' problems experienced in the school.	Autonomy is not encouraged. Lessons, planning, and instructional delivery is heavily managed.
Lack of materials	Lack of parent involvement		
There are inequities as to programs, support and materials in our school compared to schools with a higher socio economic population.			
Lack of support in some areas			
Having a supportive system with resources			

One theme noted in Table 1 was a lack of resources and materials. Funding for Title I schools cannot be used to supplement the budget of the school. Within the district under study, Title I funding can be used to supplement the school budget provided by other funding sources and not replace it (citation withheld to maintain the anonymity of School District 123). One potential reason for the respondents feeling that there is a lack of resources, materials and support could be due to the lack of parental involvement. From my professional experience, some of the students arrive to school without the

needed materials. When students arrive without needed materials, teachers must provide the materials for the students.

For Question 9, the second open-ended question, I asked teachers to list factors, if any, influenced them to return to their current school this school year. I received responses from 16 teachers (two teachers did not note any factors) and organized them into three recognizable themes based on the most common responses. The three themes are listed below in Table 2 below:

- Community
- Teammates
- School Climate

Table 2

Themes Identified from Open-ended Question 9: What Factors, If Any, Influenced Your Decision to Return to Your Current School This Year?

Teacher Responses Grouped into Categories by Recognized Themes		
Community	Teammates	School Climate
Staying with the community that I love	I love my team	The school climate is what brings me back each year.
Location of the school is one.	Coworkers	The administration and faculty are very supportive and understanding.
I felt that I was needed by the kids and their families	I have strong connections with my team.	Positive environment
	Teaching with a great team.	Have been well supported by the principal.

For Question 10, the third and final open-ended question, I asked the teachers if there was anything else for me to know. Six teachers (37.5%) responded. Some of the responses included:

- “Leadership sets the tone for the building. Leadership that fosters strong connections within the staff and allows team members to make decisions will retain more teachers. In a school where not all families support their child's learning efforts, such as many Title 1 schools.”
- “It's a challenge.”
- “Working with students who often don't have the needed support has been challenging but rewarding. I feel that the hindrances of discipline from the school environment hinders them rather than supports these students.”
- “This spirit of collaboration is crucial for teacher retention.”

When beginning this dissertation, I did not realize how crucial the school environment, parental support, and a sense of community played in teachers' decisions regarding working in Title I schools year after year. This information and the following information gained from the feedback from two interviews helped me develop a change plan to eliminate barriers to retaining teachers in Title I schools.

Interviews

Three teachers meeting the criteria for an interview expressed an interest in being interviewed. Two teachers were able to be reached and scheduled for a one-on-one virtual interview for this study. I asked the participants the same six questions focused on teacher retention in Title I schools. The questions posed further addressed their views on choosing to work at a Title I school, difficulties faced, and reasons for remaining employed.

For Question 1, I asked, "What was your initial reason for working at this school?" The first teacher stated that the location was what initially drew her to the

school. She did not want to be far from home. The second teacher indicated that the science lab special area teacher's position initially drew her to the school.

On Question 2, I asked, "What factors have led you to remain a teacher at a Title I school?" The first teacher indicated that she had previously taught in a private school. She feels that her presence is more important in a Title I school, and what she is doing is more important to the students in the Title I school than in a non-Title I school. The second teacher shared that she loves the student body and the community. She further indicated that she loves the staff and, in the beginning, the administration. I interpret this to mean that either the administrators changed, or the style of leadership changed from when she first became employed at the school.

For Question 3, I asked, "What do you find difficult in your work as a teacher at a Title I school?" The first teacher stated that the lack of support is challenging. The children are not prepared for the grade level and do not know how to be a student. The first teacher also indicated that the students lack parental requirements with motivation and behavior. The second teacher shared that she finds it difficult to make connections with parents a lot of times. She further shared that it is difficult for certain administrators to understand how to be supportive in the best way possible. In my interpretation, the respondent was referring to administrators being understanding in the difficulties faced by the teachers. I am unsure what she referred to as parental requirements as in my professional experience teachers want parental support and for administrators to understand when that support is lacking.

For Question 4, I asked, "What can the school's leadership members do to increase teacher retention?" The first teacher stated that "more support with discipline is

critical. If she has [classroom] discipline, she can help them learn.” The second teacher indicated that administrators could ask the teachers about the best ways to support them as teachers. She explained that administrators need to trust the teachers’ best judgment regarding instruction, lesson planning, and curriculum.

For Question 5, I asked, "What factors would encourage you to leave employment at a Title I school?" The first teacher stated "retirement" and explained that she believes all schools have challenges. The second teacher shared that perhaps a certain position or a push out rather than someone pulling her away. In my opinion, a push out happens when school- based leadership does action to encourage teachers to leave such as changing a teacher’s grade levels and assigning additional duties. She further shared that she would consider an innovative type of school that allowed her more freedom.

For Question 6, I asked, "Is there anything else you would like for me to know regarding factors contributing to you remaining a teacher at a Title I school?" The first teacher explained that more support is needed for discipline. She further explained that she enjoys teaching students and investing in them. The second teacher shared that in these types of schools, everything lies upon administrators or lack thereof and autonomy. In my opinion, the previous statement refers to school-based leaders requiring teachers to follow exactly what the administrators require for teaching in the classroom.

As-Is Framework

The research findings brought to light Wagner et al.'s (2006) context, culture, conditions, and competencies of factors related to teacher retention in Title I schools. Using the information gathered from my research, I organized the data into the four arenas of change for the context, culture, conditions, and competencies. I based my

categorizations on the current AS-IS status for each area in relation to teacher retention in Title I schools for School District 123. (For a complete AS-IS organizational Chart, see Appendix C).

Current Contexts

Wagner et al. (2006) referred to context as a larger organizational system that we work within, along with the demands and expectations both formally and informally (p.104). As a part of the goal of increasing student achievement, School District 123 had an objective of increasing the retention rate of instructional staff. The goal was to increase the retention rate to 92% by 2020. District 123 had a retention rate of 91.9% for the 2019-2020 school year (citation withheld to maintain the anonymity of School District 123).

Historically, the Title I program included requirements for school leaders to target low-performing students to improve academic performance. With the targeted assistance programs (TAPs), students were pulled out of class and worked with staff members to meet their educational needs, away from their peers. However, the reauthorization of Title I programs in 1978 allowed high-poverty school leaders flexibility with how to use the Title I funds, thus operating schoolwide programs (SWPs). (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c). With changes to the Title I program, due to reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the threshold to operate SWPs has changed. With the lowering of the threshold to have an SWP, SWPs have changed from 10% of Title I schools in 1994-1995 to 77% of Title I schools in 2014-2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c).

As we look at the current context, with the current global pandemic, it is even more critical that we maintain high-quality educators, especially for our already at-risk students enrolled in Title I schools. We must ensure that students have access to "high-quality educational opportunities" no matter the "race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability, it is critical for students to reach their full potential" (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 11). In my professional experience, the foundation of those quality learning environments is the teachers.

Current Culture

With a priority placed upon retaining high-quality teachers within the school district, cultural shifts would be evident within the schools. Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as "the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (p. 102). Through this study, I revealed several challenges within the culture of the Title I schools within School District 123. Challenges faced by the teachers in the Title I schools administrative support, resources, and materials. Both teachers interviewed mentioned administrators need to support them more.

The school stakeholders are the parents, students, instructional staff, administrative staff, community members, and students. These members also form the membership of other organizations, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or School Advisory Council (SAC), which help make some of the school-based decisions. A critical component of both committees mentioned above is the need for parents to participate in them actively and consistently.

Another challenge noted by the teachers within the Title I schools was the lack of parental involvement. Study participants reported parental involvement as a challenge in the open-ended questions and the virtual interviews. One teacher said, "I have students whose parents you never see or hear from either because they do not prioritize education or because keeping the family afloat is all they can do" (Interview 1, 2020). Building connections with parents is paramount for teachers, especially within a Title I school. As mentioned by Block (2018), "Community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence" (p. 4). Within my school during the time of the study, there was a shared sense of community between some of the parents and some of the teachers. Parents representing the demographic makeup of the school community participated in these groups. There was an active PTA and SAC comprised of parents and teachers. If there are to be changes made within the school, it is essential to include the parents within that community of change.

Current Conditions

Wagner et al. (2006) refer to conditions as "the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources" (p. 101). The data collected during the study highlighted several areas affecting teacher retention in Title I schools. The items are arranged categorically by time, space, and resources for clarity.

Time. Some participants mentioned time as a needed area for the teachers. The teachers need time to plan the lessons. One teacher even specifically mentioned a barrier of administrators holding the expectation that teachers should work outside of contract hours. Teachers only have a certain amount of time dedicated to planning, grading

assignments, and other daily tasks outside of instructing the students. As a result of the many requirements and high standards that teachers are held to, at times, they become overwhelmed due to the demanding nature of the job. One teacher described a barrier as, "Too much pressure on the teacher. Teachers carry the blame for all students' problems experienced in the school." Currently, teachers are contracted to work 37.5 hours per week in the district under study. Within the hours worked per week, instructional personnel spend approximately 25.5 hours with students except for post-secondary and pre-k personnel who spend about 30 hours with students (citation withheld to maintain anonymity).

Additionally, multiple teachers shared concerns about parental involvement being a barrier. One teacher shared a barrier to teaching in a Title I school: "being able to strongly connect with parents, most of whom work and can be hard to get ahold of." With parents having to work, they may not necessarily have the time to connect with teachers during school hours. Milner (2018) stated, "parents may see themselves as a financial resource more than an academic one—to pay the bills, put food on the table, clothes on their children's back, shoes on their feet" (pp. 100-101).

Space. State education leaders and stakeholders hold teachers and school-based administrators accountable for ensuring the use of the state's educational standards within the schools. According to the state statute, "Standards must be rigorous and relevant and provide for the logical, sequential progression of core curricular content that incrementally increases a student's core content knowledge and skills over time" (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Additional barriers reported by the respondents included the lack of freedom in the development of lessons. Teachers are held accountable for covering the educational standards of the state. To fix it, the district leaders provide a scope and sequence directing teachers on when to teach the standards. When teachers are not allowed to think freely and have autonomy within their lesson design, it could negatively impact the climate of a school. Of the respondents, 56.3% responded negatively that their school encourages autonomy. One participant shared, "Autonomy is not encouraged. Lessons, planning, and instructional delivery is heavily managed." Of the respondents in the survey, 31.3% felt that teachers are recognized as educational experts. During the interview, one of the teachers shared that school administrators need to trust the teacher's best judgment regarding instruction, lesson planning, and curriculum.

Historically, schools are governed with a top-down authoritarian approach. In this model, decisions come from above, and teachers do as instructed by administrators. During this study, School District 123 used common planning time. In this model, teachers use a more collaborative approach to work together to design the lessons used with the students. In addition, during this study, schools partially shut down due to a national pandemic. School districts officials had to determine methods to maintain the continuity of education during this time. Some teachers worked from home, while others worked in the school buildings.

Additionally, some teachers working in the school buildings faced the challenge of teaching hybrid classes with both face-to-face students and virtual students simultaneously. The various teaching modes posed new challenges to teachers who needed support and additional time for planning lessons. While an attempt was made for

teachers to work collaboratively using this method, teachers were required to follow the state, district, and school-level mandates and do so within the allotted time frame provided. With the challenges faced by teachers, some chose to leave District 123 during the time of the study.

Resources. Several teachers indicated a lack of resources as a barrier. One teacher mentioned having limited funding and scarce resources. Another teacher mentioned having a lack of materials. In addition to resources, several teachers indicated a lack of support from school-based administrators. During one of the interviews, having support when dealing with classroom behavior was mentioned repeatedly. One teacher stated, "Working with students who often don't have the needed support has been challenging but rewarding. I feel that the hindrances of discipline from the school environment hinders them rather than supports these students" (Interview 1, 2020).

According to the website of the district under study, Title 1 provides supplemental funds for additional academic programs and staff, after-school tutoring, certified teachers, professional development, parental-engagement activities, instructional materials, support for families in transition, and full-day prekindergarten programs so it is unclear to me why teachers report a lack of resources (citation withheld to maintain anonymity).

Current Competencies

People carry out the changes needed within organizations. Wagner et al. (2006) define competencies as "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (p. 99). One of the challenges faced involved the lack of parental involvement in the educational needs of the students. Several of the participants included parental involvement as one of their barriers. Additionally, during one of the interviews, one

teacher indicated that a lack of parental requirements for motivation and behavior existed. In my opinion, the teacher was referring to the parents not holding the student accountable for their behavior and completing schoolwork as they should. Having parents as active members in ensuring that students are successful is key. It is essentially for teachers to get parental buy-in, understanding the important role in which they have.

A secondary challenge is the lack of autonomy in lesson planning and delivery. While teachers must follow the standards set by the state, having some ownership in the lesson planning and delivery could help the teachers feel like educational experts. One teacher stated, "One barrier that has been common is having to be on the same page as others using same resources in lessons." Another teacher discussed the need for trust from the administrators. In my experience, teachers come together and plan with school based coaches and administrators. The expectation for teachers is to complete the premade lesson plans provided by the school district teams. While teachers can make some changes, that is always not the case due to time restraints. From my professional experience, teachers are expected to teach the same lessons based upon grade level and subject.

Interpretation

When looking at the quantitative data gathered from the surveys, all teachers indicated that the learning environment felt safe. Participants also felt that school administrators enforced the school district's code of conduct and the teachers' efforts to maintain discipline within the classroom. This data showed that the teachers were satisfied with the learning environment. Additionally, I noted similar themes in the responses related to the school environment from the open-ended response questions. For

example, one respondent noted that “The school climate is what brings me back each year.” In my professional experience, the teachers may feel the support with the enforcement of the code of conduct could be due to the presence of a school dean within Title I schools within District 123. The dean position adds an extra layer of support for the teachers and students when enforcing the code of conduct. This is significant because teachers feeling safe in their teaching environment could lead to them being able to better connect with the students.

Furthermore, when looking at the quantitative data, most but not all teachers indicated they felt autonomy was not encouraged (56.3%). A significant number of teachers did not feel encouraged to take on leadership roles (37.5%), did not feel treated as educational experts (31.3%), and did not feel that opportunities existed for professional growth (37.5%). Similar themes were noted within the open-ended questions and within the interviews. For example, one response stated “Autonomy is not encouraged. Lessons, planning, and instructional delivery is heavily managed.” In my professional opinion, it is important for teachers to feel that they are working in a professional environment. This is important so that they do not feel as if their creativity and growth is being stifled. In my experience, principals and others from the leadership team come together with teachers to plan. The expectation, however, is to complete the premade plans from the school district teams. While teachers can make some changes, that is always not the case. This is significant as teachers not feeling valued could lead to them leaving the profession. The results may have happened because Title I schools are highly monitored.

Judgments

The research questions were:

- What factors motivated the teachers to accept employment at a Title I school?
- What factors were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school?
- What factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school?

The data gathered from the 16 survey participants and two interviewees provided invaluable insight into the barriers to retaining teachers in Title I schools. The teachers provided answers to barriers within the surveys. The responses included lack of autonomy, lack of resources and materials, and a lack of parental involvement. The teachers who participated in the interviews provided additional information. Although there were only two participants who were interviewed, the data gained was somewhat positive.

The responses provided answered the first question regarding what factors motivated teachers to accept employment at a Title I school. During the interviews, one teacher indicated that she chose the school based on the convenience of the location. The second teacher interviewed indicated that the position of the science lab special area teacher is what initially drew her to the school.

The second research question of what factors were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school generated responses from both interviewees. The responses to this question were positive. One teacher interviewed indicated that she previously taught in a private school. The teacher feels more important

and that what she is doing is more important to the students in the Title I school. The second teacher shared that she loves the student body and the community. She further indicated that she loves the staff and, in the beginning [of working] the administration. Having a connection to the students, staff, and administrators is a reason to consider the responses positive. This data was further supported by the responses from the survey question of what factors, if any, influenced your decision to return to your current school this year. The responses included the coworkers, the community, support of the administration, and having a positive climate.

I received additional feedback from the teachers who answered the third research question, what factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school. The first teacher stated "retirement" and explained that she believes all schools have challenges. The second teacher shared that perhaps a certain position or a push out rather than someone pulling her away. She further shared that she would consider an innovative type of school that allowed her more freedom.

When looking at the responses to the questions asked during the survey, most respondents had positive responses. The responses were positive as they shed light upon the reasoning behind teachers returning to work at the same Title I school. The study also highlighted the challenges teachers faced while working in Title I schools. I used the study data to make recommendations for better retaining teachers in District 123.

Recommendations

School-based leadership members must do what is required of them by the district-level and state-level leadership. However, school-based leaders can control how certain aspects of the roll-out of the requirements are handled at the school level. After

working in Title I schools and observing teachers leaving year after year, I decided that something needed to be done to increase teacher retention in high needs schools. I created an organizational change plan that addresses methods to overcome barriers to teacher retention.

First, school leaders must work with teachers to develop a positive school climate and culture. I recommend that school leaders work with teachers on developing school-based policies and procedures so that there is a mutual understanding of the expectations. In my professional experience, when leaders work with teachers to build a positive climate and culture within the school, teachers buy-in to the expectations of the school administrators.

I recommend that school-based leadership actively work with teacher leaders to develop a school-based plan where the teachers have more ownership of lessons taught as long as the lessons fall within the district and state requirements. In my experience, principals and others from the leadership team come together with teachers to plan. The expectation however is to complete the premade plans from the school district teams. While teachers can make some changes, that is always not the case due to time restraints and visits from district personnel. Additionally, school-based leadership could create a way to allow teachers more autonomy within the classrooms. With the majority of the teachers (56.3%) indicating that they felt autonomy was not encouraged, I recommend a revamping of the way that PLC meetings are handled. According to Dufour and Eaker (1998), “What separates a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment is guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create” (p. 25). Being mindful of the structures of PLC meetings within

schools, I recommend that school leaders help to share the vision of what they hope to achieve in the schools and allow teachers to actively participate in making the vision a reality.

Teachers are professionals who continually stay up to date with the best teaching practices through professional development trainings. The school leaders should produce a monitoring plan to ensure that teachers are doing as they should while also allowing teachers creativity and autonomy within the classroom.

An additional recommendation is for the school-based leadership to find better ways to offer support to the teachers. The teachers need help in areas of discipline, resources, and materials. School leaders can help teachers deal with discipline by training teachers to build relationships to understand the students and their behavior choices better. Additionally, school-based leaders can use Title I funding to hire an additional school monitor to help with the behavior within the school. This Title I funding could also help supply teachers with the resources necessary for class. Teachers also need support in the form of resources. School officials could supply teachers with resources such as extra time for planning and other office related tasks, money to purchase materials, extra personnel to offer support within the classroom, and relevant training. School-based leaders should actively seek local businesses to partner with to obtain additional funding and support required for the schools. As a part of the organizational plan, I also recommend for school-based leaders to actively involve the teachers to develop a formal program aimed at preventing teachers from leaving the school. As Reitman and Karge (2019) discuss, school administrators need to support teachers. In this groundbreaking study, teachers were offered 24-hour assistance when needed,

professional development, pedagogical training, and mentorship. Of the 60 individuals involved in the study, all (100%) returned to teach the next school year. (Reitman & Karge, 2019).

Conclusion

I analyzed how the teachers in my study felt about working in Title I schools through surveys and interviews. The data gathered answered the first research question of what factors motivated the teachers to accept employment at a Title I school. The data also answered the second question of what elements were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school. Finally, the information also provided insight into the third research question of what factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school. The data results proved somewhat positive. In the next chapter, the data are used to shape an ideal situation. When looking at the quantitative data gathered from the surveys, the participants (100%) indicated that the learning environment felt safe. Most participants (93.7%) but not all also felt that school administrators enforced the school district's code of conduct and the teachers' efforts to maintain discipline within the classroom. This data showed that the teachers were satisfied with the learning environment. Additionally, I noted similar themes in the responses related to the school climate from the open-ended response questions. The similar themes showed that the teachers generally felt safe with the climate of the schools.

Furthermore, when looking at the quantitative data, most but not all teachers indicated they felt autonomy was not encouraged (56.3%). A significant number of teachers did not feel encouraged to take on leadership roles (37.5%). Additionally, some

teachers did not feel treated as educational experts (31.3%). Some teachers did not feel that opportunities existed for professional growth (37.5%). It is clear to see that a need for change exists in the schools' culture within District 123.

Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

During my program evaluation, I identified several areas for improvement regarding teacher retention within Title I schools. Today a need exists for motivated and highly qualified teachers in public schools across the United States. This need is even more acute in schools where the population of students may be at a disadvantage due to their socioeconomic status. Addressing the issues opens the possibility of keeping high performing teachers in positions where they are needed to work with students who need them, thus breaking the "perpetual cycle of hiring inexperienced, and often ineffective educators in urban schools" (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020, p.1)

The data collected indicated that the teachers all stated that they were generally happy with their school's climate. Of the instructional personnel who participated in the study, three-fourths (75%) positively responded to their school's climate. While having a 75% positivity rate seems excellent, this leaves one-quarter of the teachers unsatisfied with their school's climate. In my professional opinion, this leaves far too much room for improvement when trying to keep highly qualified educators available to our highly vulnerable students. The information gained from the study indicated that study participants felt that the environment was stressful, high pressured and that school leaders did not appreciate them.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

My To-Be vision framework includes Wagner et al.'s (2006) ideal contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies (see Appendix D). In my To-Be organizational analysis, school leaders will understand the importance of supporting teachers with the needed funding resources and materials required for the classrooms. Additionally, school-

based leaders will understand the need to support teachers who need autonomy in classroom instruction decisions to the greatest extent possible. School-based leaders will implement programs to keep open the lines of communication between the teachers, school, and other stakeholders to address the needs regarding retaining teachers in Title I schools.

Future Conditions

Time. Time is something that seems there is never enough of in a day. In a highly demanding environment, such as a Title I school, time may seem as if it is even more of a hot commodity. Reeves (2009) wrote that “when teachers lack the time to implement great ideas, then those ideas remain figments of a central office fantasy rather than daily realities in the classroom” (p.108). Ideal future conditions would include support from teachers who have been retired for more than one year to become a mentor and support those still in the classroom. This support will help with planning strategies to ensure that teachers can produce lessons rigorous enough to meet the requirements of the state standards within the allotted timeframe. Ideally, these mentoring sessions and supports will occur twice per month for a full day during the school day. The funding for the teacher mentors and substitute coverage for the instructional classes will be funded by District 123.

Secondarily, time spent in nonurgent meetings or meetings unrelated to student achievement will be minimized. Instead of holding nonessential in-person meetings, that time will be spent collaboratively developing methods to best increase student achievement, collaborative planning, independently planning, and completing other student-centered tasks. Educators will complete surveys monthly to determine if

administrators are limiting nonessential in person meetings. The information gathered will be viewed by the faculty advisory council and discussed with school leaders if changes are needed. District-based and state-based personnel assistance will be viewed as a positive resource, fostering a positive relationship.

Resources. Numerous internal and external factors such as resources, materials, and support were reported as barriers to working within a Title I school. More than one instructional staff member referred to a lack of resources, materials, support, and parental involvement as barriers. In my ideal To-Be framework, school leaders, parents, and local businesses will form community partnerships. The community partnerships will serve multiple purposes. First, the business leaders will provide the school leaders with the resources and materials needed by the educators. Secondly, the business leaders will train and employ the community's parents. Thirdly, the school leaders will provide the business with advertisements by placing business signs on the school fence as a school partner and providing advertisement for the business as a community partner.

Materials. School leaders will secure funding to provide instructional staff with the materials to support the teachers' and students' needs within the classroom. Once the needed funding is in place, district leadership will ensure that the funds are given to the schools promptly for usage. The funding will be used to purchase needed materials. District leadership will closely monitor the materials and supplies purchased with the school leadership's budget. Furthermore, school leaders will develop a standard protocol for dispensing and tracking purchased materials. Additionally, school leaders will develop a list of basic materials based on grade level to track materials and ensure equitable distribution.

Future Culture

Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p.102). Possible barriers could be the district leaders of School District 123 continued usage of the one size fits all improvement plan the school district leaders put forth. As previously mentioned, School District 123 personnel serve a diverse population of more than 200,000 students. While maintaining the districtwide initiatives involving the business partnerships, each area of the school district would be able to develop the best way to implement a working alliance. This alliance would promote the business partners allowing the families to spend volunteer time within the school, working with the students and building a more positive relationship.

Additionally, in my To-Be vision, the school's culture will be positively impacted by allowing parents more accessibility to the schools and decision-making processes. Volunteering opportunities would be offered throughout the day in various aspects from working in the classroom, mentoring, school beautification projects, and community/school-based gardening projects. Parents are not involved in the schools in the As-Is and as reported by teachers in the district under study. As some of the students are bused into the school, the lack of involvement could be due to transportation being a problem for the parents. Housel (2020) discusses the need for having “family—school—community collaboration” by offering activities during various hours, at different locations, and even offering food and childcare (p. 194-196). School-based personnel would be encouraged to break down the traditional ideas of a school being a brick and

mortar building only by doing more community-based activities such as hosting activities at local community centers, having parent nights at community-based libraries, and bringing school-based activities outside of the school doors.

Future Competencies

Challenges to competencies noted by some teachers include having involved parents and autonomy in lesson planning. As previously mentioned, people carry out the changes needed within organizations. Wagner et al. (2006) define competencies as "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (p. 99). Ideal future competencies will include having teachers who have received training that is uniquely created for their school. In my To-Be vision, teachers will receive training related to actively involve parents and other stakeholders in school experiences. Each school's leadership team will work together to develop "in house training" directly related to school needs, demographics, and educational goals. As noted by Ahmed et al. (2014), teacher trainings can help to motivate teacher. Moreover, these trainings should be catered to the needs of the teachers. Teachers properly trained for their teaching environment will help the teachers to remain committed to their goals in meeting student needs.

Another challenge Time to properly implement newly learned teaching strategies. As previously mentioned, research has shown that "supportive leadership, time for collaboration, access to high-quality curriculum and resources, clean and safe buildings, and relevant professional development" as major factors regarding teacher working conditions (Zheng & Zeller, 2016, p. 75). In my To-Be, the narrative of how teachers are trained, developed, and supported in schools will be carefully thought out and

implemented. School-based leaders will allot time for teachers to execute the changes learned from professional developments. Additionally, teachers will have time to collaborate and make needed changes before being held accountable.

Conclusion

I revealed various barriers to teacher retention in Title I schools, including a lack of resources, materials, support, a lack of time, and a lack of parental involvement. Addressing methods to overcome these barriers will lead to a significant change in the retention of teachers in low-income, Title I schools in the future. My To-Be vision gives insight into my change leadership plan of providing students access to high-quality teachers that result in students achieving academic success. I will connect my As-Is and To-Be conceptualizations in the next chapter through various strategies and actions.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

This study will bridge the "As-Is" and the "To-Be" conceptualizations with a series of strategies and actions based on research and best practice in organizational theory, professional development, leadership strategies, and communication strategies. These strategies and actions will address specific issues identified as barriers to retaining teachers in Title I schools. This plan of action focuses on time management, collaboration, and support.

I utilized the critical areas of change from Wagner et al.'s (2006) 4C framework to visualize my "To-Be" (see Appendix D) action plan, which is based on research and strategies. I used Kotter's eight-step process (2018) to develop my Strategies and Action Chart (see Appendix E). The stages within the process include creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, forming a strategic vision, enlisting a volunteer army, enabling action by removing barriers, generating short-term wins, sustaining acceleration, and instituting change (2018, pp. 10-30). This chart helped me conceptualize my procedures for ensuring that teacher retention is a priority within Title I schools.

Step One: Create a Sense of Urgency

The first step within Kotter's eight-step process is to create a sense of urgency. People need to come together and work towards a common goal. Kotter (2018) discusses the need to "appeal to individuals heads plus hearts, and use this statement to raise a large, urgent army of volunteers" (p. 10). Creating a sense of urgency will be my first step within the school district. First, I will initiate a conversation with district-based leaders to discuss my research findings. I will meet with the school-based administrators

and district leadership personnel to further display this sense of urgency. The conversations will cover topics such as trends regarding teacher retention over the past five years, the culture and climate of the schools within the district, and research regarding teacher retention and academic achievement. Research shows that the annual teacher turnover rate has increased over previous decades and that most states within the United States lack teachers in subjects such as math and science (Kim, 2021). Once leaders have been advised of the barriers to teacher retention, they will understand the importance of forming a solution and creating a change plan. The constant need to recruit new teachers to the district will add to the sense of urgency of the district leaders to implement changes to retain teachers already employed. The district and school-based leaders will become part of the guiding coalition, which will help to lead District 123 in organizational change.

Step Two: Building a Guiding Coalition

The second step within Kotter's eight-step process is to build a guiding coalition. We can regard this step as the nerve center of the process. This step consists of stakeholders from many layers of the hierarchy, represents many roles, receives information at all levels and ranks about the organization, and synthesizes that data into new ways of working (Kotter, 2018, p. 13). Forming a guiding coalition of stakeholders is also my second step in the plan. Being developed by a diverse group of district-based leaders, school-based leaders, and teacher leaders allows for the guiding coalition to have a unique perspective and be better able to develop varied strategies and ideas to implement change.

The district-level leadership and school-based leadership teams will create a guiding coalition. The school-based leadership team will consist of school-based administrators, academic coaches, mentors, and teacher leaders. Gasper (2015) examined organizational change and determined that groups of people who create a vision and strategies together are more equipped to have long-term success in implementing change (p. 381). Guiding coalition members will develop ways to remove barriers and retain more teachers in Title I schools. Research has shown that “supportive leadership, time for collaboration, access to high-quality curriculum and resources, clean and safe buildings, and relevant professional development” as major factors regarding teacher working conditions (Zheng & Zeller, 2016, p. 75). The guiding coalition members will provide specific solutions for overarching teacher concerns and the removal of barriers.

Step Three: Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives

After building a guiding coalition, the third step is to form a strategic vision. According to Kotter (2012), the “vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future” (p. 71). Secondly, a “good vision” serves three purposes, 1) it clarifies the direction for change, 2) It encourages people to take action, and 3) It coordinates the steps taken (Kotter, 2012, p. 71). Creating strategic vision and initiatives will involve implementing district-wide policies and procedures tailored to meet the needs of each school within the learning community. As a significant part of the vision, the guiding coalition will review teacher retention data yearly, look for trends within the data, and collaborate on planning for the school year. The information will aid the teachers in creating some flexibility with time management throughout the school year.

I will also implement procedures to initiate and establish partnerships with local business and community leaders. The partnerships will serve multiple purposes as resources to the schools and the community. The business leaders will provide the school leaders with the resources and materials the educators need to help with student needs. Additionally, as a part of building more of a community atmosphere, the business leaders will actively seek, train, and employ the parents living in the community. Thirdly, the school leaders will provide the business with advertisements by placing business signs on the school fence as a school partner and being an active part of the community. The advertisements aim to promote a positive awareness of business and create extra funding for the schools without having to raise taxes for the community members. Cobanoglu (2021) notes that a transformational leader “ensures that the aims of the organization become the aims of the employees” (p. 37). As an organization's vision changes, it is essential to share the vision with all stakeholders and that the stakeholders believe in the vision.

Step Four: Enlist a Volunteer Army

The fourth step involves enlisting a volunteer army. Kotter (2018) states, “large-scale change can only occur when very significant numbers of employees amass under a common opportunity and drive in the same direction” (p. 19). My fourth step will involve the guiding coalition recruiting retired teachers to mentor current teachers, parents to actively help the school, and business and community leaders to be school-based partners and volunteers. The volunteer army will help to “communicate a change vision” (Kotter, 2012, p. 38).

Kotter (2012) discussed the need for a shared vision for future outcomes and the need to communicate those desires effectively (p. 90). The volunteer army will work in connection with the school-based administrators, coaches, and teachers to carry out the initiatives of the guiding coalition and to spread the urgency of change needed to aid in teacher retention. Recruiting the help of retired teachers, parents, and community and business leaders to be a part of the volunteer army will jumpstart the buy-in of others, thus, aiding in a smooth change process. The volunteer army and the guiding coalition members will work together to spread the vision using standard verbiage.

Step Five: Enable Action by Removing Barriers

The fifth step is to enable action by removing barriers. With that in mind, my next step will be to enable action by removing obstacles. Empowering people to believe that their ideas can make a change is key to eliminating barriers. The four obstacles which generally require attack are structures, skills, systems, and supervisors (Kotter, 2012, p. 106). Based on my research, I anticipate several barriers, such as inadequate support, materials, and resources, lack of parental involvement, and teaching in a high-pressure environment. All stakeholders must work together to identify and remove barriers hindering the successful implementation of the vision.

I will share the importance of developing a positive school climate and culture with school-based leaders. I will communicate the importance of school-based leadership to work with teacher leaders to develop a school-based plan actively. The teachers will have more ownership of lessons taught if the lessons fall within the district and state requirements. I will share the importance of supporting teachers in discipline, resources, and materials. School-based leaders will actively seek local businesses partners to obtain

additional funding and needed support for the schools. When other barriers are recognized, the guiding coalition will implement a plan to address these barriers and find possible solutions.

Step Six: Generate Short-Term Wins

The sixth step to accelerating change is to generate short-term wins (Kotter, 2018, p. 25). Successes, no matter how small, should be celebrated. Kotter (2018) states, “Wins are removing the molecules of results. They must be collected, categorized, and communicated – early and often – to track progress and energize your volunteers to drive change” (p. 25). Effort and time investments ensure that the vision is accomplished. Tanner (2021) noted that generating short-term wins is necessary for keeping organizations engaged and preventing momentum loss.

The guiding coalition and other stakeholders should recognize short-term wins as they happen. I recommend celebrating wins for School District 123 by acknowledging and supporting teachers who are an active part in keeping the strategic vision. Teachers who actively participate in planning, work collaboratively with others, and attend community outreach programs can be recognized and rewarded through displays on the school’s website, highlighted in newsletters, receiving compensatory time off, or even offered prizes. Parents who actively volunteer in school-related events can be displayed on the school’s website or social media. There can be an end of the school celebration recognizing teachers, parents, and business and community leaders.

Step Seven: Sustain Acceleration

In the seventh step, Kotter (2018) explained that the next step towards progress is to use increased credibility to improve systems, structures, and policies until the vision is

a reality (p. 27). The schools under study have a deeply rooted investment in the current organizational structure. Keeping this in mind, the school-based administrators and teacher leaders will work with the current mentors and teachers in the development of the formal systems for the school. Furthermore, this step is essential to maintain momentum after experiencing short-term wins.

First, the school-based leadership team will implement monthly structured meetings to ensure that the teachers get the support, materials, and resources needed. These meetings are a time for teachers to provide feedback regarding what is and is not working. Additionally, this is a time for teachers to work collaboratively with school-based leaders, teacher leaders, and mentors to develop solutions to problems. Mentoring sessions and support will occur twice per month for a full day during the school day. School mentors will be trained by district level leadership. School-based administrators will collect and review the mentoring logs. The mentoring records will be provided to the guiding school-based leadership and used as a tool to determine if any changes are needed. Monthly targeted stakeholder activities will include parents and business leaders on or off campus. These activities will help keep the vision relevant and not lose the momentum of the initial implementation. Finally, the collection of teacher notes, agendas, and outcomes from common planning will be sent to the guiding coalition for analysis. Communication will remain active and open to all stakeholders to ensure a positive climate and culture within the schools and maintain student academic success.

Step Eight: Institute Change

Kotter's (2018) eighth step is to institute change (p. 30). The stakeholders will need to be open to the shift to institute change. An organization's culture must be a top

priority when looking to institute change. Kotter (2012) states, “culture changes only after you have successfully altered people’s actions, after the new behavior produces some benefit for a period of time” (p. 164-165). It is essential to look at the individual needs of people and give time before a cultural shift occurs to institute change. This process of instituting change will not happen immediately. The guiding coalition will ensure all instituted changes are infused into the learning community and school culture.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined many strategies necessary to institute a change system in retaining teachers in Title I Schools. This plan included Kotter’s (2018) eight steps for accelerating change. In the next chapter, I will focus on policy recommendations to address any issues that impede teacher retention.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

School district officials will propose a new school board policy to implement a teacher retention program. School district officials will collaborate to remove the barriers hindering retaining teachers to work in underserved, high-priority schools. One means of promoting teacher retention is implementing a support system for teachers in professional practices. Teacher self-practices relate to the need for teachers to develop and maintain their knowledge, skills, and professionalism as an educator. Boles and Troen (2007) note a connection between professional practice and more collaborative school culture (p. 52). Therefore, teachers must increase their professional practices to work on changing the school culture.

Policy Statement

The school district officials must believe that all students should have access to qualified instructional personnel. Having instruction from highly qualified teachers is a requirement for receiving Title I funding. District-based and school-based leaders shall offer instructional personnel in high-needs schools various professional development opportunities. The goal of the professional development activities is to increase student achievement, enhance classroom instructional strategies, promote rigor, and prepare students to be contributors to the global workforce. Murphy (2016) discusses implementing organizational systems to support teachers, such as incorporating time-saving strategies not to burden teachers, incorporating mentors, and using collective decision-making to build instructional capacity (p. 62-63).

This policy has three sections. The first section covers incorporating time-saving strategies for educators. With the help of school-based administrators and staff, school

district officials will look at ways to reduce the amount of paperwork and outside time spent in meetings and streamline required items so that educators can devote more time actively working with students. Educators routinely devote time outside of their contracted work time to school-related tasks. West (2014) noted that teachers usually work more hours than contractually obligated (p. 233). This portion of the policy aims to ensure that educators spend only the allotted work time daily, based on their contract hours, completing work-related tasks. The aspects of this portion of the policy will be monitored by teachers and school based leaders.

The second section of the policy recommendation includes incorporating retired teachers as mentors. District-based leaders will create a curriculum and train retired teachers on best practices, coaching, and other district initiatives to effectively mentor teachers. There will be a standard mentoring professional development which shall occur bi-monthly to ensure that the mentors remain consistent in their mentoring of the teachers. The mentoring sessions will have standardized district-based aspects and elements tailored to each school. All factors related to mentoring will be funded and supported by school district leadership.

The third section of the policy recommendation includes the assistance of local colleges and universities. District-based leaders will work with local colleges and universities to create a program that will generate a steady stream of education majors with internship opportunities within the school district under study. The experiences will allow the pre-service teachers to become acquainted with the experiences of working in Title I schools. School-based leaders shall give employment opportunities to the steady stream of students majoring in education having internship opportunities within the

school district under study once the pre-service students complete the requirements of becoming a teacher. The experiences allow the pre-service teachers to become acquainted with the experiences of working in Title I schools. This portion of the policy aims to build a relationship with community members and build positive school culture.

The final section of the policy recommendation involves using a collaborative approach to school-based decision-making. One way of improving the school culture is to allow the teachers to impact the educational decisions made within the school. Wright et al. (2018) found that teachers with 5-9 years of teaching experience identified lower curriculum autonomy and job satisfaction than other teachers (p. 20). Sutchter et al. (2019) concluded that the teacher stability and shared planning and collaboration of teachers improved their effectiveness. With that in mind, decision-making officials need to do what they can to retain more teachers and support teacher collaboration to improve student academic success.

Analysis of Needs

Sutchter et al. (2019) explained that high teacher turnover rates, especially at hard-to-staff schools, directly correlate to low student achievement (p. 26). Furthermore, those schools with increased teacher turnover rates must attract more teachers, many of whom are inexperienced, and train them, thus causing the remaining teachers to be overworked (Sutchter et al., 2019, p. 26). Teacher turnover rates are a concern in all schools, especially in high needs schools like Title I schools.

In the following subsections, I will analyze policy recommendations utilizing six distinct disciplinary areas to provide a deeper context of how my policy recommendations will affect stakeholders in educational, economic, social, political,

legal, moral, and ethical conditions. This analysis will allow me to understand how my policy impacts teacher retention, thereby increasing student academic achievement.

Educational Analysis

Teachers need to be recruited, hired, and trained in the best methods to educate students. Once teachers are employed, leaders should implement measures to retain those teachers within the schools. Currently, there is not a program that actively seeks to retain current teachers. Many teachers struggle to balance what needs to be done to ensure student success and follow the directives and mandates placed upon them by state and district officials. Positive outcomes in student success are associated with teacher quality and self-efficacy (Bransford et al., 2000).

As mentioned above, teacher retention is needed as it correlates to student success. With that in mind, many factors are associated with teacher retention. The need exists for resolute and purposeful actions aimed at ensuring teacher retention. While District 123 has a teacher induction program that deals with the professional development and training of new teachers, there is no active program addressing the specific needs of retaining existing teachers. According to the revolutionary report by Coleman (1966), “the quality of teachers shows a stronger relationship to pupil achievement. Furthermore, it is progressively greater at higher grades, indicating a cumulative impact of the qualities of teachers in a school on the pupil’s achievement” (p. 22). Having experienced, trained, and knowledgeable mentors to work with teachers will help achieve greater success in retaining existing teachers.

Teacher success in school can have a factor in student success in school. Consequently, stakeholders hold teachers accountable for student achievement as well.

Students' test scores play a role in teacher evaluations. Low student achievement can negatively impact teachers' observations and evaluations. Administrators pressure teachers to improve student scores. The added pressure may cause some teachers to leave the profession. The proposed policy change will help better prepare teachers to be effective in their craft and reduce the teacher attrition rate.

Economic Analysis

This policy has a positive economic impact. There is a cost to recruiting and training new teachers. The nationwide cost to replace teachers is estimated to be 2.9 billion a year and 4.9 billion each year when teachers transferring schools are included (Watlington et al., 2010, p. 27). Lowering the teacher turnover rate could save school districts money that could go to areas in the budget.

Implementing this policy requires a commitment to continued funding from school district leaders. Mentors working with the teachers need stipends; therefore, the district leaders will allocate funds to cover the cost of the mentors. Additionally, school district leaders will distribute funding to cover substitute teacher needs of the teachers while they are working with the mentors and attending professional development training. Teachers will not have to use allocated personal leave due to this policy while away from their classrooms.

In my experience as a teacher, I have noted that teachers prefer to have professional development during the day instead of during nonstudent contact times. Substitutes in high needs schools earn more money in the district under study, but due to the pandemic, there is a shortage of subs throughout the school district under study. When there are no substitutes, teachers cannot be released to attend professional

development activities. District and school leaders will make a concerted effort to schedule professional development during the school day during the academic year instead of after school or on the weekend. Additionally, school district leaders will allocate funding to supplement the teachers' work outside of contract hours if professional development occurs outside of the regularly scheduled workday.

Changing the narrative of how teachers are trained, developed, and supported in schools is necessary to increase teacher retention in Title I Schools. Stakeholders must work together to address and support the economic needs required in this policy. Having school district leaders and others work together to provide for the needed items in this policy will help increase teacher retention.

Social Analysis

The social impact of my policy implementation is multi-faceted. The impact includes increasing teacher retention, increasing the positivity of the school culture, building relationships with stakeholders, and increasing student academic achievement. Previous research shows that an increase in school culture impacts teacher retention. Mullen et al. (2021) discussed a connection between teacher retention, job satisfaction, and other positive outcomes associated with teacher and school resilience.

The proposed policy will also increase the school's administrators, staff, and student standing within the community. The relationships forged between the school leaders and business leaders within the community will help to build a reciprocal partnership, thus increasing funding and role models for the students. The businesses will provide a connection between the parents, schools members, and the community members, which will help to build a better school and community culture. Additionally,

increasing the teacher retention rate will improve student academic achievement, allowing students to become successful community members one day.

Political Analysis

The political impact of the policy will result in multiple benefits. One goal of this policy change is to increase teacher retention. Another aim of this policy is to increase student achievement due to teacher retention. School letter grades in the state under study can be associated with additional funding in the school district under study (Citation withheld for confidentiality).. School personnel can receive bonus payments based upon the school letter grade or by increasing the school letter grade. While the school letter grades can impact the teachers due to potential bonus payments and visit from district officials, the grades are also used to determine the success of the school administrator and school superintendent by being recognized positively within the community.

For policies to be successful, they must have adequate support and funding. School leaders need to ensure that teachers have the necessary funding to cover resources, materials, and other items required. One way to meet the goals of this policy is to allocate funding from the state and district levels. Once the needed funding is in place, district leadership needs to ensure that the funds are given to the schools promptly for usage. The funding will be used to purchase needed materials. District leadership needs to closely monitor the materials and supplies purchased with the school leadership's budget. Furthermore, school leaders should develop a standard protocol for dispensing and tracking purchased materials. Additionally, school leaders should develop a list of basic materials based on grade level to track materials and ensure equitable distribution. Also, of importance is strengthening the local community partnerships between the

school and local political leaders. The district leadership needs to foster these local political relationships to bridge the connection between school, home, and the community. Strong community partnerships benefit School District 123 by encouraging a positive school culture. This policy supports teacher retention by ensuring that teachers have needed resources and materials and by helping build the schools' culture.

Legal Analysis

School district leaders must consider the implications of the policy proposal change regarding teacher retention. This policy addresses many changes involving retaining teachers, such as paying stipends to teachers who attend meetings and training after hours, having substitutes to cover classrooms for teachers during student contact hours, and bringing in retired teachers as mentors.

One legal issue could arise from the teacher union. Potential questions may arise, such as: Do the retired teachers coming in as mentors need to be certified? Are the retired mentor teachers counted as teachers and receive current teachers' benefits and/or compensation? Is participation in the mentoring aspect of the program voluntary or required? These previously mentioned questions are something that the teacher union may need negotiate with School District 123 before implementation. Another possible issue involves negotiating the stipend offered to the teachers for working outside of the contract hours should they not want to miss classroom time.

Additionally, the school district leaders may need the approval of the teachers' union to use mentors for teachers. Whether a teacher can be required to work with a mentor in the proposed manner may be of issue. Teachers may seek the aid of the teachers' union in cases that they feel violated, as the role of the teacher union is to

protect the rights of the teachers, students, and the overall educational system (Mand et al., 2018).

Moral and Ethical Analysis

District level leadership members have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that policies are put in place to protect the needs of teachers, staff, and students. School-based leaders have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that there are protocols in place in their schools, ensuring that school-based leaders carry out the policies fully put into effect by the district level. Research supports the need for school leaders to support teachers with needed resources, materials, and support. Prince (2002) noted that urban, high-needs schools often have teachers with less than five years of experience and career professional teachers. Additionally, Prince (2002) discussed that teachers within urban districts who switch to other schools within that urban district look for schools with higher achievement scores and fewer minority students. The study participants from the school district under study also support the same notion. Nine out of the sixteen participants (56.3%) had 0-3 years of teaching experience at their current school. The higher turnover rate for higher needs schools can negatively impact student learning. School districts have an ethical and moral obligation to ensure that all students have access to quality teachers, thereby giving the students the best chance at an education equitable to their non-Title I school counterparts.

The added hardships associated with COVID-19 have led to many teachers leaving the field of education. These added hardships such as dealing with illness, the fear of contracting COVID-19, learning new teaching platforms to conduct distance learning have left schools lacking teachers and students lacking access to quality

educators during these times. While high needs schools already had difficulty retaining teachers, the demands of changing teaching methods with virtual teaching, dealing with the controversy of wearing masks in schools, and faced with the possible risks of acquiring Covid while conducting in-person classes possibly made attracting teachers harder. School districts already struggled with keeping qualified teachers under normal circumstances, and school leaders must do more now during the current health crisis. With the dangers associated with the present teaching conditions, school leaders have an obligation to ensure that teachers are safe while teaching in person.

While school district officials must protect teachers, they also must look out for the needs of students. The proposed policy directly impacts the retention of teachers by creating better working environments by ensuring that teachers have access to materials and resources, more support from parents, school leaders, and other stakeholders, and having help from mentors. School district leaders must balance the needs of the teachers along with the immediate needs of the students. District leaders have the ethical obligation to ensure that changes put into place do not place the teachers' needs over the needs of the students. While teachers, from my experience, do not like working outside of contract hours, school district officials must ensure that teachers do not spend too much time away from their students. Additionally, it is not fair for students to continuously lose a day of instruction while teachers are in professional development because time is precious. Thus, it is more ethical to place students' needs first and offer the stipends for working after hours to plan or during the weekends.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

School district leaders need to consider the possible negative implications of implementing the proposed policy. The policy encourages the use of retired teachers as mentors. For this portion of the policy to work, teachers must be open to allowing mentors to advise them on what to do in the classroom. Additionally, teachers must be available to allow the mentors to actively see their classrooms. The mentors and teachers work at building a rapport and developing a close relationship. They must work together to ensure that the working environment is free of hostility and negativity. This relationship will help to build a more positive school culture.

The proposed policy will have a direct impact on community relationships. The policy will actively involve community and business leaders. The relationships forged between the school and business leaders within the community will aid in building reciprocal partnerships. The businesses will provide a connection between the parents, schools, and the community, which will help to build a better school and community culture. Additionally, by increasing the teacher retention rate, student academic achievement will also increase, allowing the students to one day become successful business partners and community members.

Conclusion

School-based leaders can increase the retention rate of teachers within Title I schools by implementing the proposed policy. In the proposed policy, instructional personnel in high needs schools shall be offered the time, resources, and materials needed to promote their retention; thus, potentially increasing student achievement and better preparing students to be contributors to the global workforce. This chapter provided

insight into the implications and my policy recommendations. In the next chapter, I will provide leadership lessons learned and a culminating conclusion.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The purpose of my evaluation was to ascertain the factors that determine why teachers in Title I schools within my district decide to remain employed at their current schools. My evaluation includes my vision of how school leaders can work with other stakeholders to improve the retention rate of teachers in Title I schools. In my vision, I include addressing obstacles that keep teachers from remaining employed at Title I schools. School leaders will understand ways to support teachers with the resources and materials needed for the classrooms. Additionally, school-based leaders will understand the need to support teachers by allowing autonomy in decisions made in classroom instruction when possible. School-based leaders will implement programs to keep open the lines of communication between the teachers, school, and other stakeholders to address the needs regarding retaining teachers within Title I schools. As a Title I schoolteacher, I have seen teachers leave the school and sometimes the profession year after year. I hope that school district leaders use the information obtained to develop ways to encourage more teachers to remain employed in Title I schools, thereby increasing student achievement.

Discussion

Education leaders understand the need to retain teachers overall, including within Title I schools. From recruiting teachers from out of state to advertising on billboards on the side of the road, school leaders have attempted to attract teachers to work within the district under study. The problem district leaders face once teachers are hired teachers is keeping them within their schools. In my study, I aim to evaluate the factors that determine why teachers in Title I schools within my district decide to remain employed at

their current schools. Through surveys and semi-structured interviews, I gained insight into the participants' experiences and perspectives of working in Title I schools.

I identified research questions to guide my study. The research questions are:

- What factors motivated the teachers to accept employment at a Title I school?
- What factors were instrumental in teachers remaining in teaching positions at the same Title I school?
- What factors would encourage the teachers to leave employment at their current school?

I was able to gain insight from 16 instructional personnel from surveys. I was able to gain understanding from two teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews. By analyzing the data provided by the participants, I identified trends regarding their experiences working in Title I schools. I identified similar responses among the participants.

The initial observations which led to this study of teachers leaving employment year after year from Title I schools within District 123 were not shown in the study data. The participants in the study chose to remain at their schools for several reasons. Most of the reasons for the participants remaining at their current schools were non-quantifiable reasons. While most participants returned to the same school, they also listed barriers to their employment.

The organizational change plan addressed the issues that emerged from teachers within Title I schools during the evaluation. I developed a change leadership plan which addresses and replaces the barriers to retaining teachers. I arranged the noted barriers into the following four categories:

- Inadequate support, materials, and resources
- Lack of parental involvement
- High pressure environment
- Lack of autonomy

My change leadership plan also addresses the issues in the evaluation, and I created a list of items to implement into a teacher retention program. I created items within my change plan by following Kotter's eight step process (2018). The items within the organizational change plan include creating a sense of urgency by initiating a conversation with district-based leaders to discuss my research findings. Furthermore, the plan consists of meeting with the school-based administrators and district leadership personnel to have intentional and relevant conversations regarding the trends associated with teacher retention over the past five years, the culture and climate of the schools within the district, and research regarding teacher retention and academic achievement.

Another step in the change plan involves creating a guiding coalition of stakeholders. The guiding coalition is formed by a diverse group of district-based leaders, school-based leaders, and teacher leaders, allowing for the guiding coalition to have a unique perspective and be better able to develop varied strategies and ideas to implement change. One of the goals of the guiding coalition members is to develop ways to remove barriers and retain more teachers in Title I schools. The guiding coalition members will provide specific solutions for overarching teacher concerns.

Following the change plan will help me meet the goal of my study, which is to evaluate what factors support the decisions of teachers in Title I schools to remain at the same Title I school for multiple years. More specifically, my desired outcome for this

study is to determine the factors which can be managed at a school-based level to positively affect teacher retention, thereby ensuring that students have access to fully qualified teachers on an ongoing basis.

Leadership Lessons

One of the Principal Leadership Standards is “Effective school leaders recruit, retain and develop an effective and diverse faculty and staff” (citation withheld to maintain anonymity). School leaders can work to remove barriers to retaining teachers in Title I schools. There are many qualities of a leader. Garcia-Martinez (2018) described the qualities of being a leader in education as having “...knowledge, skills, and a strengthened construction of professional identity, according to the prevailing values in the world of work” (p. 148). As a leader, one needs to understand the needs of the people served. Understanding the needs of the teachers, students, and community can help the leadership members develop a vision and mission for a school district. One of the leadership lessons that I have learned regarding this evaluation is to know the needs of the teachers within your school and be prepared to implement the needed changes to create a positive environment conducive to encouraging teachers to return year after year. Another Principal Leadership Standard which applies to my lessons learned is “Effective school leaders employ and monitor a decision-making process that is based on vision, mission and improvement priorities using facts and data (citation withheld to maintain anonymity). The second leadership lesson learned was the importance of having a team with the same vision. As a school leader, you should be mindful of the climate of the school environment. Additionally, school leaders should take the time to get to know the people involved in the district. Get to know the staff, the educators, the parents, the

community members, and anyone in the school district. Collins (2005) states, "...no individual leader--not even the nominal chief executive--has enough structural power to make the most important decisions by himself or herself" (p. 11). Within the district under study, stakeholders receive surveys to complete about decisions at the school and district levels. In education, by listening to the stakeholders' voices, district-based leaders and school-based leaders can use their ideas further to develop the school district's vision and goals.

Of additional importance is sharing of the vision. Hannay et al. (2006) look at factors such as sharing a vision and implementing collaborative practices to create a sameness system. To have an effective team of teachers within a school, the teachers must buy into the program and the common goal of the school leaders. Nevenglosky and Aguilar (2019) stated: "Understanding the beliefs and concerns of teachers can provide insights into whether curriculum implementation will meet with success or failure" (p. 5). Those implementing the change plan regarding the teacher retention programs within a school or school district ultimately have the power to determine the program's level of success. With that in mind, it is vital to have people who are receptive to change on the team.

As a leader, it is essential to use resources effectively. Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) concluded that the resources of a school "...helps to promote or hinder high quality instruction and positive school culture, thus influencing school achievement" (p. 367). School members have access to materials and resources that school leaders can purchase with Title I funds. From personal experience, school leaders handle the disbursement of materials in different ways. Some school leaders may make materials easily accessible to

the teachers, while other school leaders may not have materials and resources easily accessible to the teachers. Within this evaluation, one noted barrier was a lack of resources and materials. Another leadership lesson learned is to create a standard protocol with the disbursement of resources and materials to make the learning environment more positive.

My last leadership lesson is to be open to change. I will be open to suggestions made by all stakeholders involved. The process of change is multi-dimensional and requires input from others. Being a leader is not a solo activity, as you must seek the approval and buy-in of others involved in the change process. It is great to celebrate the wins as they come, no matter how small the wins may be. Additionally, it is okay to stop and revamp the changes if the implemented changes are not effective.

Conclusion

All students deserve access to teachers who are knowledgeable and qualified to teach. School leadership must seek qualified teachers to help the students achieve academic success. Once school leaders find qualified teachers to teach in high needs schools, they must remove barriers preventing the teachers from remaining employed at high needs schools. By implementing policies and involving stakeholders such as parents and business and community leaders, measures can be implemented to ensure that the highest needs students have access to qualified teachers and academic success.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Survey for Title I Teachers

Appendix B: Teacher Semi-Structured Interview for Title I Teachers

Appendix C: As-Is 4C's Analysis

Appendix D: To-Be 4C's Analysis

Appendix E: Strategies and Action Chart

Appendix A

Teacher Survey for Title I Teachers

Please select the answer that best describes you.

What is your gender? *

- ☐ Female
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
 - ☐ Other: _____
-

What is your ethnicity? *

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - ☐ Black or African American, non-Hispanic •
 - ☐ White or Caucasian, non-Hispanic
 - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ Other
-

Including this year, how many years have you been at your current school? *

- ☐ 0-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21+ years

Using the categories below please indicate on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback regarding how you feel regarding to what extent each item impacted your decision to remain at your current school.

1=strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= agree 4= strongly agree

The school administrator(s) enforces the school's code of conduct. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The school administrator(s) supports the teachers' efforts to maintain classroom discipline. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The school's learning environment feels safe. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Teachers are recognized as educational experts. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Autonomy is encouraged *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The school has a positive climate. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

There is an opportunity for advancement and professional growth. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

High expectations are held for all students. *

	1	2	3	4	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Please provide a written response

In your own words, please describe any barriers that you have faced as a teacher in a Title I school. *

Your answer

What factors, if any, influenced your decision to return to your current school this year? *

Your answer

Is there anything else you would like for me to know? *

Your answer

If you are willing to complete an in person or telephone interview please leave your telephone number and best time to call below. (If selected, another informed consent form will need to be completed) *

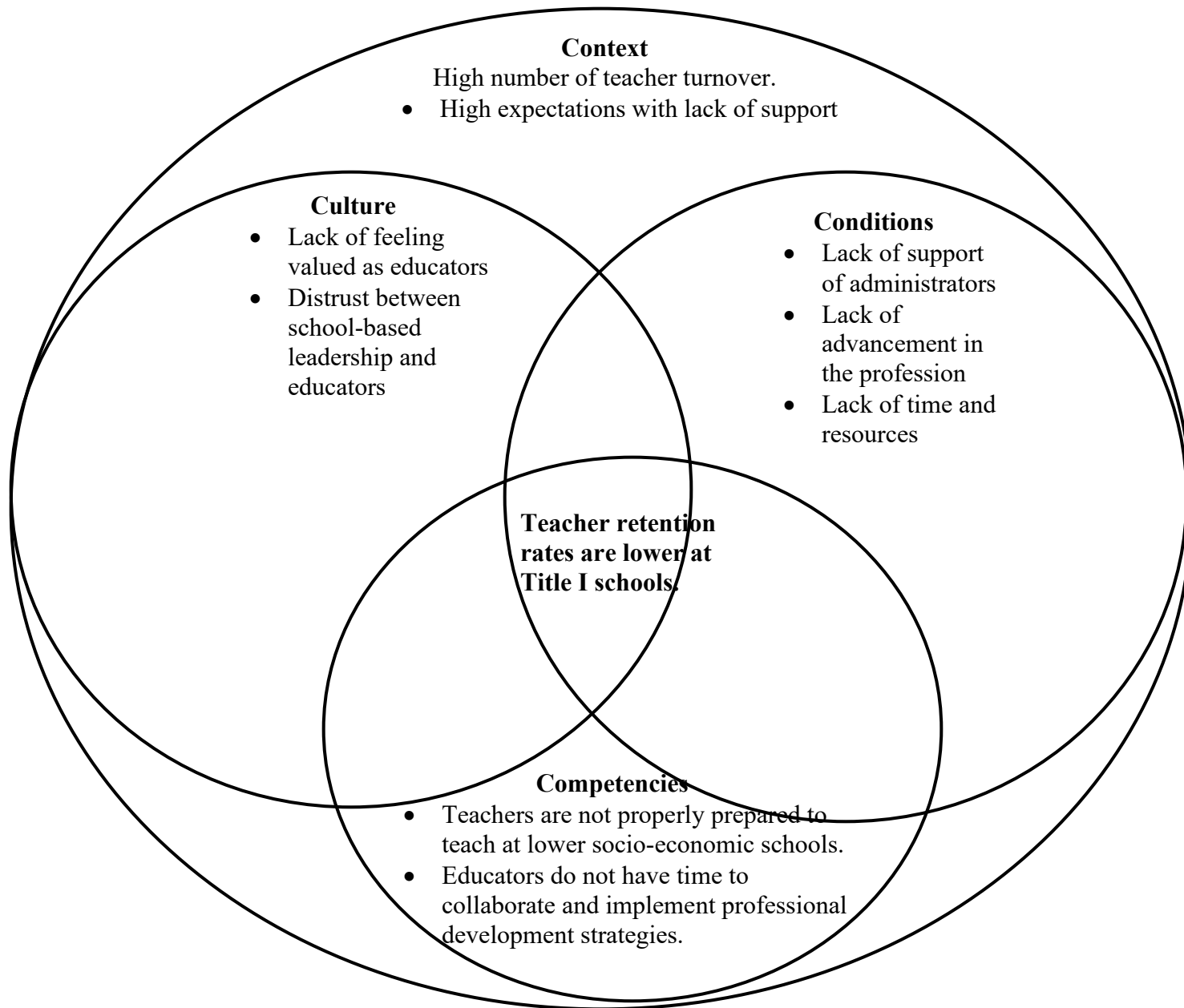
Your answer

Appendix B

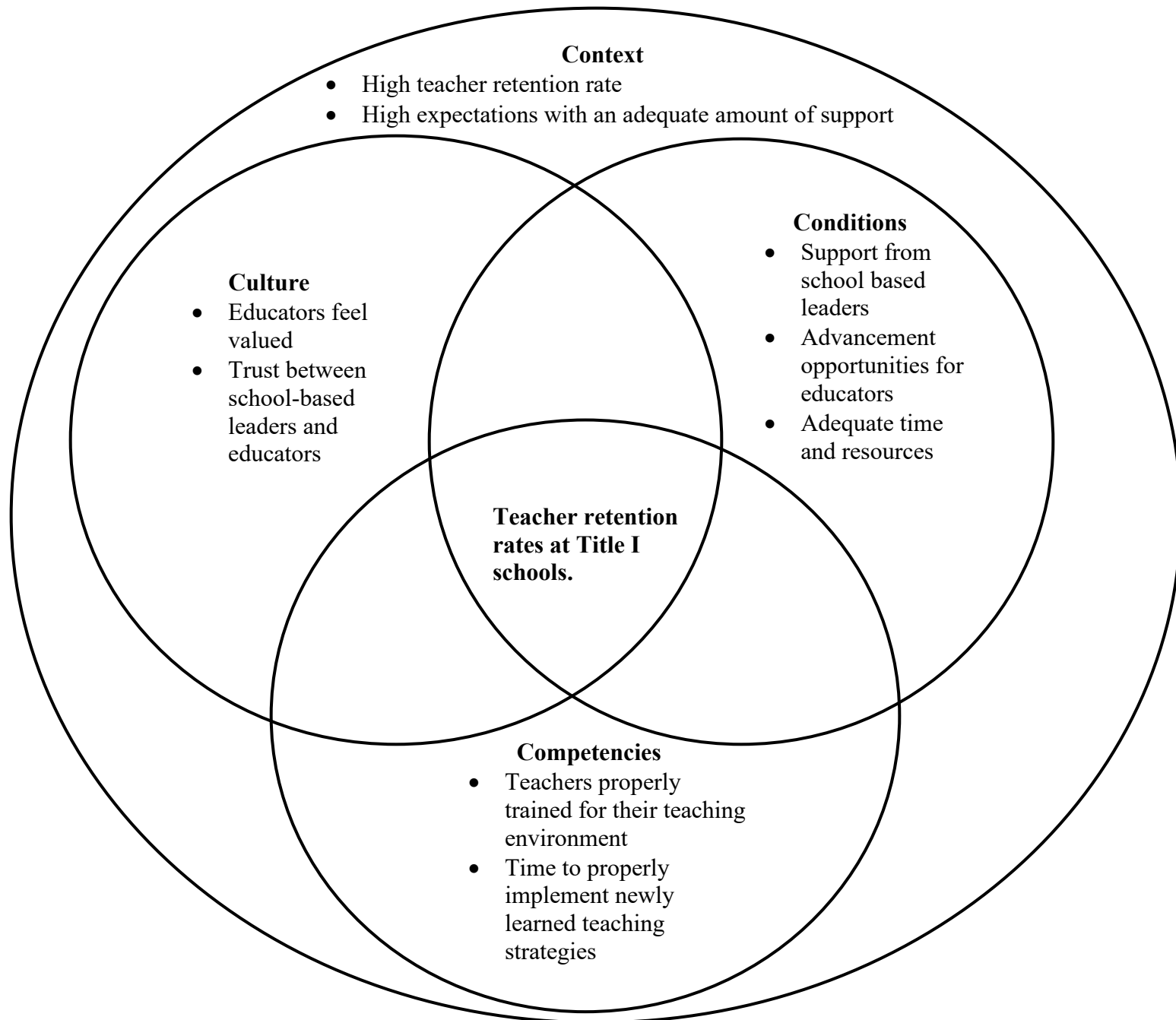
Interview Questions for Title I Teachers

- 1) What was your initial reason for choosing to work at this school?
- 2) What factors have led to you remaining a teacher at a Title I school?
- 3) What do you find difficult in your work as a teacher at a Title I school?
- 4) What can the school's leadership members do to increase teacher retention?
- 5) What factors would encourage you to leave employment at a Title I school?
- 6) Is there anything else you would like for me to know regarding factors contributing to you remaining a teacher at a Title I school?

Appendix C: “As Is” 4 C’s Analysis for An Evaluation of Factors Influencing Teacher Retention in



Appendix D: “To Be” 4 Cs Analysis for Analysis for An Evaluation of Factors



Appendix E

Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions
Establish a sense of urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with district leadership personnel (learning community personnel, human resources, professional development) • Review 5 years of data- number of teachers who started working at Title I school vs. number of teachers consistently employed • Culture and climate of the learning community and schools • Present research on teacher retention and academic achievement
Create the guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district level leadership team and the school-based leadership teams will create a guiding coalition. The school-based leadership will consist of school-based administrators, school based academic coaches, mentors, and teacher leaders. • Members will develop ways to remove barriers and retain more teachers in Title I schools. • Members will provide specific solutions for overarching teacher concerns.
Form a strategic vision and initiatives	<p>The guiding coalition will develop a strategic vision for teacher retention and implement the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor district-wide policies and procedures to meet the needs of each school within the learning community • Review teacher retention data every year • Collaborate on planning for the school year throughout the year (summer, monthly, pre-planning, and post planning) • Implement procedures to initiate and establish partnerships with local business and community leaders to build partnerships.
Enlist a volunteer army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retired teachers will mentor current teachers • Parents will be active school volunteers • Business and community leaders will be school-based partners and volunteers

Enable action by removing barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop monitoring systems to support school-based leaders to determine success with teacher retention • Develop strategies to eliminate barriers of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inadequate support, materials, and resources ○ Lack of parental involvement ○ High pressure environment ○ Lack of autonomy
Generate short-term wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition, along with other stakeholders, recognize short term wins as they happen • Recognize and celebrate teachers who remain with the same schools • Build organizational capacity.
Sustain acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly structured meetings to ensure that the teachers are getting the support, materials, and resources needed • Monthly targeted stakeholder activities to include parents and business leaders on or off campus • Collection of teacher notes, agendas, and outcomes from common planning
Institute change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will ensure all instituted changes are infused into the learning community and school culture.