

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Doctor of Education Dissertations

School of Education

Spring 2021

The Motivation to Stay: Teacher Perceptions of Factors That Influence Teacher Retention in High-performing, High-poverty Schools

Keisha Gabriel

Gardner-Webb University, kgabriel@gardner-webb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/education-dissertations>



Part of the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gabriel, Keisha, "The Motivation to Stay: Teacher Perceptions of Factors That Influence Teacher Retention in High-performing, High-poverty Schools" (2021). *Doctor of Education Dissertations*. 32.
<https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/education-dissertations/32>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Education Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please see [Copyright and Publishing Info](#).

THE MOTIVATION TO STAY: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT
INFLUENCE TEACHER RETENTION IN HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGH-POVERTY
SCHOOLS

By
Keisha Gabriel

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2020

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Keisha Gabriel under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Phillip Rapp, EdD
Committee Chair

Date

Steve Laws, EdD
Committee Member

Date

David Shellman, EdD
Committee Member

Date

Prince Bull, PhD
Dean of the School of Education

Date

Acknowledgements

“One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it can change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world.” - *Barak Obama*

I would like to take the opportunity to thank God and the amazing individuals whose inspiring voices helped me to find my voice to advocate for change.

I wish to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Phillip Rapp, Dr. Steve Laws, Dr. David Shellman, and Dr. Prince Bull. Your guidance, support, and understanding made it possible for me to reach this goal. Special thanks to Dr. Rapp and Dr. Laws for being such great mentors and for not letting me give up.

Thank you to the teachers, administrators, and district leaders who informed this study. I appreciate your faith in me to help your voice be heard by bringing your stories to life.

I thank my friends and family for encouraging me to complete this study. To my loving husband, Shawan, and my daughters, Saniya and Aaryn, thanks for believing in me and being patient throughout this process. Without the support of Team Gabe, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

Abstract

THE MOTIVATION TO STAY: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHER RETENTION IN HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS, Gabriel, Keisha, 2020: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This is a qualitative study of teachers in high-poverty elementary schools in an urban school district. Participants who have been employed for least 5 years in a high-needs school responded to surveys tracking their perceptions of their school environment. Follow-up interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth study to gain further insight into why these teachers chose to work in Title I schools, despite the numerous challenges. Teachers reflected on how the following factors encouraged them to remain employed in the high-needs school setting: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, professional development, and commitment. Findings will inform school leader decisions on how to best support high-quality teachers in the schools that need them the most.

Keywords: teacher retention, teacher turnover, motivation factors, high need schools

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background of the Problem: Occupational Trends	2
Statement of the Problem	4
Statement of Purpose	15
Research Questions	16
Significance of the Study	16
Theoretical Framework	17
Overview of the Study	18
Definitions of Terms	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review	21
Working Conditions/Job Satisfaction	21
Intrinsic Motivation	25
Commitment	30
Extrinsic Motivation	32
Professional Development	35
Chapter 3: Methodology	39
Setting	39
Participant Selection	40
Research Design	43
Instrumentation	45
Procedures	46
Data Collection	47
Data Analysis	48
Limitations of the Study	48
Chapter 4: Results	50
Response Rate	50
Demographics	51
Findings	53
Intrinsic Motivation Factors	53
Extrinsic Motivation Factors	75
Commitment Factors	96
Professional Development	109
Chapter 5: Discussion	126
Introduction	126
Answer Research Questions	126
Conclusions and Recommendations	128
Recommendations for Further Study	137
Limitations	138
Summary	139
References	140
Appendices	
A Teacher Survey Instrument	158
B Email to Principals in Participating Schools	163
C Recruitment Email to Study Participants	165

D	Interview Questions for Follow-Up Conversation with Participants.....	167
Tables		
1	EVAAS Growth of Participating Schools.....	41
2	Demographics of Students in Participating Schools.....	42
3	Demographics of Teachers in Participating Schools	42
4	Study Participants	51
5	Participant Demographics.....	52
6	Results from Survey for Intrinsic Motivation Factors	54
7	Results from Survey for Extrinsic Motivation Factors	75
8	Results from Survey for Commitment Motivation Factors	97
9	Results from Survey for Professional Development Motivation Factors	109
Figures		
1	Growth of Teachers and Students Over Time.....	3
2	Percentage of Teachers in Various Levels of Experience Leaving the Field	6
3	Teacher Attrition Rates by Years of Experience	7

Chapter 1: Introduction

The National Center for Children in Poverty (2019) reported that 15 million U.S. children (21% of children) live in low-income families that are not able to afford their basic living expenses. The number of children living poverty in the state of North Carolina is actually up to 46%. Studies conducted by the Southern Education Foundation (2013) confirmed that a majority of the students in the U.S. represent families with low socioeconomic status. Southern Education Foundation Vice President Steve Suitts warned that this should be a concern for all Americans:

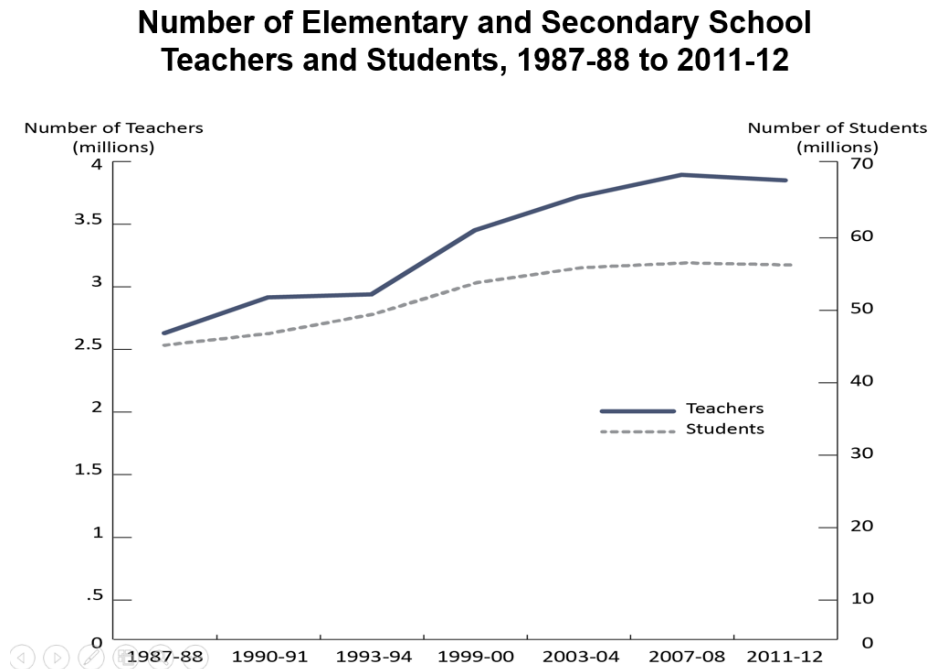
No longer can we consider the problems and needs of low-income students simply a matter of fairness.... Their success or failure in the public schools will determine the entire body of human capital and educational potential that the nation will possess in the future. Without improving the educational support that the nation provides its low income students – students with the largest needs and usually with the least support – the trends of the last decade will be prologue for a nation not at risk, but a nation in decline. (Southern Education Foundation, 2013, p. 13)

Living in poverty has marked effects on students' emotional and social outlook, their overall health and safety, and their academic performance. "A childhood spent in poverty often sets the stage for a lifetime of setbacks. Secure attachments and stable environments...are often denied to our most needy kids" (Jensen, 2009, p. 29). Reardon and Portilla (2016) confirmed the impact of poverty backgrounds on students when they found that socioeconomic status has a greater effect on the achievement gap than racial differences.

High-poverty schools depend on increased support to address their seemingly insurmountable challenges. Much of this support comes in the form of being exposed to highly qualified teachers who believe in the potential of the students. Students are more likely to be active participants in a productive economy with a quality educational background as they are more likely to attend college, earn a higher salary, and avoid teenage pregnancy (Chetty et al., 2011; Jensen, 2009). Students who demonstrate high academic achievement in school stand to earn 10-15% or \$10,600 more in yearly earnings (Hanushek, 2011).

Background of the Problem: Occupational Trends

Full-time public school teachers account for 3.3 million employed adults in the United States. These teachers served more than 76 million public elementary and secondary students in 2017 (Institute of Education Sciences, 2018). According to the Census Bureau, as the student enrollment increased, the teaching workforce has steadily increased in size throughout the 20th century (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Figure 1*Growth of Teachers and Students Over Time*

Ingersoll et al. (2014) attributed the 20-year increase in the number of teachers partly to reforms that created “a reduction in public school teachers’ workloads, class sizes, hours worked, or classes taught per day” (p. 4). Data also attribute increasing numbers of elementary aged students and special education students with the need for more teachers. Upper grades have seen a 50% increase in the number of needed subject-area teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Many of the teachers employed in public schools will be new to the profession. According to the 2011 data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 9% of elementary and secondary public school teachers had less than 3 years of full-time teaching experience. Thirty-three percent had 3-9 years of experience (NCES, 2013). The number of novice teachers is projected to increase 29% by 2022 (Hussar & Bailey, 2013).

Not only are education leaders charged with raising student achievement, but they are also responsible for sustaining a stable workforce of highly qualified, motivated educators to support learning needs. School and teacher education programs have utilized vast resources of instructional strategies to train teachers. This dissertation sought to explore the factors that motivate effective teachers to remain employed in the most challenging schools. As teacher motivation is connected to their effectiveness and continued growth potential, it is important for school leaders to understand and learn how to support this drive (Good & Brophy, 1994). These intrinsic and extrinsic motivators also provide valuable insight on how to recruit and retain the strongest teachers to educate our most needy students.

Statement of the Problem

Given the increased number of teachers entering the profession and the current aging teacher force, attrition is a natural and expected occurrence. According to a longitudinal survey from the National Longitudinal Survey Program in 2012, teachers “held an average of 11.3 jobs from ages 18 to 46” (para. 8). Little change was noted in 2017 with baby boomers (1957-1964) who held an average of 11.9 jobs between the ages of 18 and 50. Most of the job changes occurred when these workers were between the ages of 18 and 24 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). More recent analysis indicates that employers retain workers for an average of 4.2 years. Older workers (aged 55 to 64) maintain their tenure for 10.1 years compared to 2.8 years for younger workers aged 25 to 34 (Division of Labor Force Statistics, 2018).

This high turnover rate is evidenced in the education field as well but at a much higher rate than in private industries, posing one of the most significant problems in the

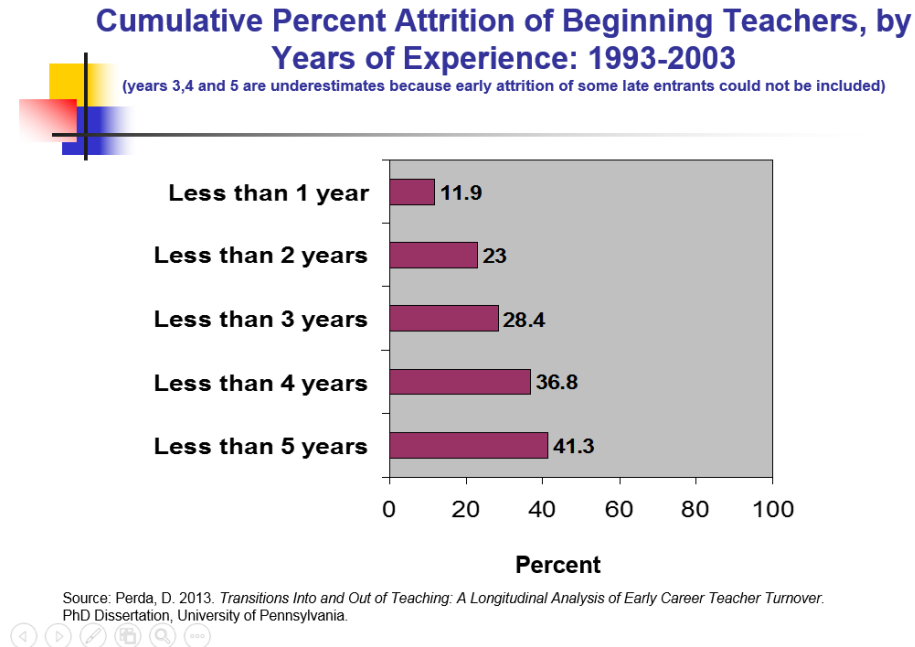
education system (Division of Labor Force Statistics, 2018; McLaurin et al., 2009).

Teachers are deciding to change schools or leave the profession altogether at an increasingly high rate. From 1988 to 2009, annual attrition from the teaching force increased from 6.4% to 9%, a 41% increase (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) reported that of the estimated 500,000 teachers who decide to leave teaching assignments, retirement only accounts for 16% of the turnover. The remaining 84% decided to transfer to another school or abandon the profession altogether (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

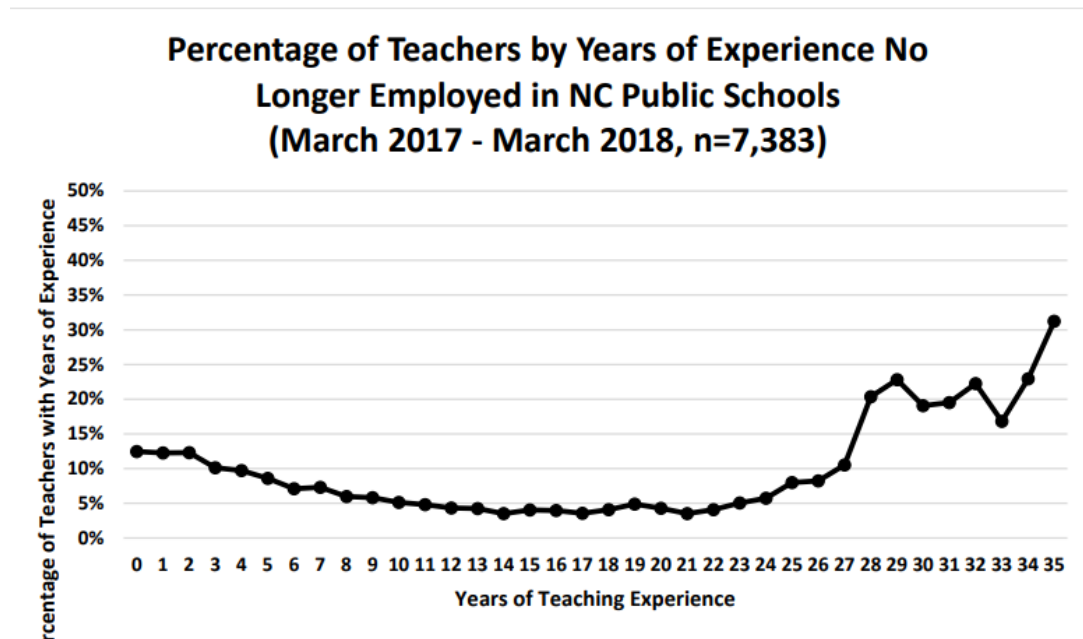
Numerous studies have found that new teachers are particularly susceptible to pressures associated with attrition. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), the rate of teachers leaving the profession has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. In 1992, 5.1% left the public school system. By 2005, the attrition rate had risen to 8.4%. This turnover rate continues to rest at approximately 8%. “In addition to the 8% of teachers who leave the profession each year, about 8% shift schools. Thus, the overall turnover rate is currently about 16%” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 4). The rates of high teacher turnover plague American schools with 30-50% of all new teachers leaving the profession in the first 5 years (Ingersoll, 2001, 2002b, 2003). Kearney’s (2008) statistical analysis estimated that half of the nation’s new teachers abandon the teaching profession within their first 5 years of employment. The rate of teacher turnover has grown significantly over time with approximately 6,000 first-year teachers quitting after the 1987-1988 school year and 25,000 leaving the profession after the 2007-2008 school year (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Perda (2013) more recently found that over 41% of new teachers fail to return to teaching after their introductory 5-year period.

Figure 2

Percentage of Teachers in Various Levels of Experience Leaving the Field



According to data collected by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2020), North Carolina employed 94,672 teachers between March 2018 and March 2019, with an 8.1% attrition rate for the 2017-2018 school year. Of the 15,691 beginning teachers, those with less than 3 years of experience, the attrition rate was higher, 11.3%. For lateral entry teachers, the attrition rate was even higher, 91.5%. Figure 3 shows the rate of North Carolina teacher attrition based on their years of experience. As evidenced in the graph, teachers are more likely to leave in the first 5 years of their career. The trend shows that teacher turnover increases again as teachers get closer to the age that they are able to retire (NCDPI, 2020).

Figure 3*Teacher Attrition Rates by Years of Experience*

“Over the next 10 years, 1.6 million teachers will retire, and 1.6 million new teachers will be needed to take their place” (Duncan, 2011, p. 1). This “revolving door” phenomenon highlights the persistent transitions of teachers leaving the profession and others beginning their careers as teachers (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003). Ingersoll et al. (2014) put the decrease in the teacher workforce into perspective as overall statistics indicate “the teaching force increased by about 1.3 million from 1987-88 to 2007-08, but only declined by about 45,000 teachers between 2007-08 and 2011-12” (p. 7). Although this trend may not appear to raise concern, teacher attrition presents significant challenges to the local school districts, the nation, and ultimately students.

Replacing a teacher who leaves the school or the profession comes with a cost. Attrition costs can amount to \$2.2 billion when approximately 500,000 educators change schools or leave the profession each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, 2014).

Including the costs incurred by replacing teachers who transferred to other schools, the approximate turnover cost amounts to \$4.9 billion every year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). In a study of five American school districts conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the costs of teacher turnover ranged from \$4,366 to \$17,872 per teacher based on the size of the district (Darling-Hammond, 1997). More recent estimates indicate that replacing a teacher in an urban school district could cost over \$20,000 (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017). Johnson et al. (2005) categorized turnover costs in the following framework:

- Instructional costs for the learning gaps experienced in classrooms where frequent turnover results in students being educated by less-experienced teachers who are not yet competent in their practice;
- Financial costs for the school or district to recruit, hire, train, and exit teachers; and
- Potential organizational costs because turnover delays a district's ability to sustain routines that encourage academic growth, staff capacity, and relationship building.

High teacher turnover rates not only have a notable impact on the nation's finances but also on the resulting student learning outcomes. It is not only essential to have enough teachers to meet the demands of the increasing student population, but the workforce must be competent enough to increase student achievement. This country depends on retaining a high level of quality among its teaching staff in order to build upon student potential. President Barack Obama (2008) echoed these sentiments in a speech to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: "From the moment students enter a

school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it's the person standing in the front of the classroom" (para. 27). Effective teachers make the difference in whether students receive a high level of quality in their learning experiences or not. Various research studies have found that teachers are the most significant factor in determining student performance regardless of demographic variables (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Goldhaber, 2010; Hattie, 2009; Haycock, 2001; Hightower et al., 2011; Rand Corporation, 2012; Rice, 2003).

Sanders and Rivers (1996) suggested that student success can actually be predicted based on the quality of the teacher and teaching. This research analyzed value-added assessment data from elementary students in Tennessee, finding that students achieved significant academic growth (50 percentile points) after being taught by an effective teacher over a 3-year period. The research further proved that although struggling students grew the most with teachers who were highly effective, students of all ethnicities benefited. Wright et al. (1997) conducted a similar study in two major cities in Tennessee confirming that teacher effect is the most dominant indicator of student academic success. Goldhaber (2010) connected teacher quality to student achievement: "A very good teacher as opposed to a very bad one can make as much as a full year's difference in learning growth for students" (p. 1). The sense of urgency is evident to prioritize matching needy students with highly effective educators.

Simply maintaining a stable teaching workforce is only part of the goal. Schools depend on exceptional teachers to make the difference in meeting school improvement goals. Hattie's (2009) meta-analyses uncovered the components of education that have the greatest impact on student achievement. The research has proven that not just any

teacher will produce desirable gains in student learning. The most effective teachers are considered well-trained, high-quality teachers who use appropriate teaching strategies and those who build stronger relationships with students.

Even though the goal is to equip schools with the best teachers, many schools hire and retain substandard teachers. Chait (2010) suggested that one of the reasons more ineffective teachers are not removed is because of the difficulties in hiring new teachers to fill vacancies. Under these circumstances, schools struggle to sustain school improvement efforts when the workforce is not stable (McLaurin et al., 2009). This is a persistent challenge faced by high-needs schools. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) referred to hard-to-staff schools as “places to leave, not places in which to stay” (p. 8). According to a study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, “Low performing schools rarely close the student achievement gap because they never close the teaching quality gap – they are constantly rebuilding their staff” (Barnes & Crowe, 2007, p. 2).

Various methods and certifications have been developed to judge the effectiveness of teachers. Most researchers agree that “the quality of a teacher is best judged by performance in the classroom as reflected in the gains in learning by the students” (Participant Media, 2010, p. 107). Considering that such a high number of students in urban, high-poverty districts perform below their grade level, teachers are charged with growing students beyond one grade level. Such a challenging task increases the pressures faced by teachers in the schools with the highest needs.

One of the characteristics of a high-needs school is the high concentration of minority students from high-poverty backgrounds. “Higher percentages of Hispanic

(45%), Black (45%), American Indian/Alaska Native (37%), and Pacific Islander (25%) students attended high-poverty schools than of White students (8%) in school year 2015–16” (McFarland et al., 2018, p. xxxii). This statistic correlates to the difficulty in attracting a capable teacher workforce to the nation’s most needy schools. Nearly 50% of all districts report difficulties in attracting highly qualified teachers in comparison to the challenge of 90% of high-minority districts in recruiting highly qualified candidates (American Institutes for Research, 2009). Once recruited, retaining teachers poses an additional complication. This challenge of sustaining a stable teacher workforce is intensified in high-needs schools. High-poverty public schools, especially those in urban communities, lose, on average, over one fifth of their faculty each year (Ingersoll, 2004). Darling-Hammond (2003, 2004) stated that 40-50% of teachers in highly impacted schools leave their school within the first 5 years. This turnover rate is 50% higher than experienced in low-poverty schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

Teachers in high-needs schools tend to stay for a relatively short period of time before transferring out. It is a constant challenge to keep teachers in these highly impacted schools. “The data show there is an annual asymmetric reshuffling of significant numbers of employed teachers from poor to not poor schools, from high-minority to low-minority schools, and from urban to suburban schools” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2013, p. 18). Intensive attrition studies conducted in California, Texas, New York, and Georgia between 1993 and 2001 confirmed that teachers were more likely to transfer out of a school or leave the profession if the school consisted of high numbers of Black and Hispanic students and high numbers of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch compared to schools with higher percentages of affluent White students with higher

rates of achievement (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004; Lankford et al., 2002; Scafidi et al., 2005). Data analyzed by Aud et al. (2012) confirmed that high-needs schools struggle with staffing as a result of the common migration of teachers to less needy schools. The report found that teacher turnover rates are higher in schools with a high population of minority, low-income, low-achieving students. Data collected by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) noted that turnover rates are 50% higher for teachers in Title I schools and 70% higher for teachers in schools serving the largest concentrations of students of color. These teachers are more likely to have less experience and training. Capable teachers are more likely to make this transition especially when they can earn the same salary by working in less-challenging schools (Ladd, 2009).

According to Reardon and Portilla (2016), “racial, ethnic, and income disparities in performance on standardized tests of academic achievement are a stubborn feature of the U.S. educational landscape” (para. 1). Studies correlate high poverty levels to low academic outcomes (Rumberger, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education (NCES, 2010) analyzed statistical data of the 2007-2008 school year to create a profile of the general characteristics of students who attend high-poverty schools. These reports show stark differences between students in high-poverty public schools and those who are educated in low-poverty settings. A common trend is that African Americans and Hispanics represent a greater percentage of the student enrollment in high-poverty schools than White or Asian/Pacific Islander students. More students were classified as limited-English proficient. Crime is reported at a disproportionate rate as high-poverty schools recorded an increased occurrence of violent incidents. These highly impacted

schools maintained lower graduation rates and lower percentages of students enrolling in 4-year colleges. Academic performance suffers as indicated in overall lower scores on National Assessment of Educational Progress assessments. The Programme for International Student Assessment (2012) results indicated that disadvantaged students in the United States perform at significantly lower rates than their peers.

The presence of high-quality teachers is incredibly critical in high-poverty schools. Special care must be made in assigning more effective teachers to schools that serve a higher population of students from a lower socioeconomic status than those who serve students from more affluent backgrounds (Nye et al., 2004). As stated previously, the research of Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that average elementary-aged students achieved at 50 percentile points higher over 3 years when they were taught by high-performing teachers, as opposed to low-performing teachers. It was determined that lower achieving students benefited the most from a highly effective teacher.

Alliance for Excellent Education President Bob Wise recognized the impact of attrition on high-needs schools:

The monetary cost of teacher attrition pales in comparison to the loss of human potential associated with hard-to-staff schools that disproportionately serve low-income students and students of color. In these schools, poor learning climates and low achievement often result in students—and teachers—leaving in droves.

(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014, para. 2)

These high rates of turnover are especially detrimental given that disadvantaged minority students in more challenging schools are more likely to be taught by teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience with weaker credentials (Barton, 2004; Ladd, 2009). According

to NCES (2010), the level of educational attainment of principals and teachers in high-poverty secondary schools was lower than the level of education attained by those in low-poverty school settings. Specifically, 21% of the teachers in highly impacted schools took alternative routes to the profession, as compared to 14% in less needy school environments during the 2015-2016 school year (McFarland et al., 2018). According to a study conducted by The Education Trust (Carey, 2004), the achievement gap is related to teacher turnover as “poor students, low-performing students, and students of color are far more likely than other students to have teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified, poorly educated, and under-performing” (p. 8). Research has affirmed this occurrence and devalued the weight of experience by estimating that approximately 10% of classrooms are led by experienced but low-performing teachers (Jacob et al., 2012). Among the other challenges, the ultimate problem is that high-needs schools consisting of low-income, underachieving, minority students fail to meet standards as a result of the high rate of teacher turnover.

There are some teachers who beat the odds and continue to work in the challenging conditions that so many others flee. According to a study conducted by Jacob et al. (2012), high-quality teachers are both skilled and efficacious. These “irreplaceable” teachers succeed in challenging school environments because they work hard to perfect their craft, and they have a genuine belief that their efforts will make a positive difference. This research found that it could take 11 new hires to find another high-quality teacher to replace one who leaves a low-performing school (Jacob et al., 2012). Our nation’s success depends on our ability to keep these qualified and passionate teachers in schools that need them the most.

Low socioeconomics does not always go hand-in-hand with low performance. Haycock (1998) studied numerous high-poverty, high-performing schools, finding that teacher quality plays a more significant role in student achievement than poverty and demographics. Reeves (2000) conducted research at the Center for Performance Assessment where Milwaukee schools were successful, despite the potential challenges. These schools, referred to as “90/90/90,” met the following characteristics:

90% or more of the students were eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90% or more of the students were members of ethnic minority groups, and 90% or more of the students met the district or state academic standards in reading or another subject area. (Reeves, 2003, p. 1)

These productive schools are examples of what can be done when children with the greatest needs are assigned effective teachers. Such schools can sustain their efforts when they are not plagued with the challenges of consistent teacher turnover.

In 2013-2014, the state of North Carolina was home to 150 schools that were recognized for being low income (at least half of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) and also earning a school performance grade of A or B according to state standards for proficiency and growth. John Locke Foundation’s Director of Education Studies Stoops (2015) recommended that educators discover which strategies made schools successful and share what they learned with struggling schools that serve at-risk students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions of factors that influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in an

urban school district. The study was centered on teacher impressions of their work environment and what motivated them to continue working in such challenging school environments. This led to a better understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate them. Studying these factors provided insight as to why teachers choose to remain in highly impacted (high-poverty, high-performing) schools and are able to produce positive gains in student learning. This study also provided information on recommended professional development opportunities. The overall goal of this research was to help high-needs schools improve their ability to retain high-quality teachers by identifying the factors that cause them to remain in the school despite the challenges.

Research Questions

The primary research questions for this study were

1. What intrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
2. What extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
3. What professional development opportunities are important in motivating teachers to stay in a high-poverty school?
4. How does a teacher's level of commitment impact their decision to return to a high-needs school?

Significance of Study

“If we do not find ways to reduce the growing inequality in education outcomes—between the rich and the poor—schools will no longer be the great equalizer we want them to be” (Reardon, 2013, p. 1). Over the past decades, our nation has struggled to

reform the school system so that it may reflect the unique needs of the population in order to better prepare for a sustained, prosperous future. Unfortunately, the achievement gap has continued to widen as a result of historically disproportionate socioeconomic statuses.

In comparison to other countries, the U.S. has been declared “a nation at risk,” as a result of a subpar education system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Such reports prompt school improvement goals that create more comprehensive educational practices including increased rigor; revised standards; and more attention to training, compensating, and evaluating teachers. The report recognized that a sound instructional plan delivered by high-quality teachers is the key to higher student achievement. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining a stable supply of teachers who are willing and able to address the unique learning needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit the nation as a whole.

Sustaining high-quality educators has been an area of concern for decades. Understanding the unique challenges will provide insight on how to solve this chronic problem in our most hard-to-staff schools. Analyzing teacher perceptions will help school leaders design and provide the resources to help retain quality teachers in the school, district, and profession.

Theoretical Framework

Frederick Herzberg was one of the best known motivation theorists. His two-factor theory sought to explain the process of motivating employees in an effort to improve job satisfaction. This theory was developed in 1959 after interviewing over 200 employees about their perceptions towards their jobs. Also known as Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory and dual-factor theory, Herzberg et al. (1959) suggested that

employees are motivated by certain factors (motivators) and are unmotivated by a separate set of factors (hygienes) that cause dissatisfaction. According to this theory, the factors that increase job satisfaction are distinctly different than those that cause one to be dissatisfied with their job (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Leaders can increase employee satisfaction and productivity by focusing on providing more motivators. Motivators are considered intrinsic factors, as they are performed for the pure enjoyment of the activity itself. Herzberg et al. (1959) identified the following factors to be intrinsic in nature, leading to job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement.

Factors that lead to dissatisfaction are referred to as hygienes. Hygiene factors represent extrinsic causes, as they are done in anticipation of an external outcome. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) research specified numerous factors that could cause job dissatisfaction if not applied appropriately: salary; growth potential; status; supervision; company policy; working conditions; personal life; job security; and interpersonal relationships with subordinates, peers, and supervisors.

In his 2010 book, *Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom*, William Glasser contributed to the body of knowledge regarding how individuals are motivated. According to "Glasser's Choice Theory," individuals are motivated by their goals to satisfy their basic human needs: belonging/love, power, survival, freedom, and fun. Glasser contended that our behavior is influenced by our search for fulfilling these needs (The William Glasser Institute, 2010).

Overview of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five sections. Chapter 1 includes a description of

the attrition problem, trends in education, and an overview of this research. Chapter 2 is a review of literature correlated with the themes presented in the research survey. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 details the data collected and research findings. Chapter 5 summarizes the study in relation to the theoretical framework found in Chapter 1 and offers recommendations for both improving teacher retention and further studies relating to teacher attrition.

Definitions of Terms

Retention

Refers to keeping employees in their current position.

Attrition

The phenomenon of teachers leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 503); “a reduction in the number of employees or participants that occurs when people leave because they resign, retire, etc. and are not replaced” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Turnover

“The departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 500).

Title I

A component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; a federally funded program that provides financial assistance to local education agencies and schools. The purpose of the Title I program is to help at-risk students meet the state’s challenging academic content and performance standards. Schools qualify for Title I funds based on economic need.

High-Poverty/High-Needs/Highly Impacted Schools

Schools consisting of students from a low socioeconomic status where 76-100%

of the student body is eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program (McFarland et al., 2018; NCES, 2010).

High-Performing Schools

Schools that have either met or exceeded the state's expectations for growth during each of the last 3 years as measured by the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions on retention in high-poverty schools. Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of literature and research as it pertains to teacher decisions to work in high-needs schools. The chapter explores research regarding the relationship between working conditions and teacher intentions and motivation theories and also examines the factors that impact retention: intrinsic, commitment, extrinsic, and professional development factors.

According to Ingersoll (1997), the percentages and reasons for teachers who abandoned their teaching assignments in urban, high-poverty schools were poor salary (46%), student discipline problems (27%), unsafe environment (26%), poor opportunity for professional advancement (24%), inadequate administrative support (18%), lack of faculty influence (11%), lack of professional competence of colleagues (10%), inadequate time to prepare (8%), intrusions on teaching time (7%), and class size too large (7%). Although this study recognizes the reasons teachers leave the profession, the focus centers on why they decide to continue in their role despite the challenges.

Studies revealed similar reasons for teachers leaving the profession. These reasons include dissatisfaction with the work (55%), changes in their personal lives (43%), retirement (31%), career changes (31%), and financial challenges (18%). Of the teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with the profession, they cited problems with the school administration (33%), not having a role in school decision-making (29%), and school facilities and resources (27%; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Working Conditions/Job Satisfaction

Locke (1976), defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional

state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). In general, teacher working conditions are defined by the physical, organizational, sociological, political, cultural, psychological, and educational features of the workplace (Johnson, 2006). Connecting the two, a person experiences job satisfaction if the workplace meets the individual's needs on all levels (Maslow, 1954).

Teachers' continued employment in America's schools is influenced by their job satisfaction. Borman and Dowling's (2008) comprehensive meta-analysis of 34 studies on teacher attrition revealed that teacher working conditions determine the level of job satisfaction, which have a significant impact on teacher attrition. Their research emphasized the need for effective organizational factors of the school, including administrative support, teacher leadership opportunities, manageable student discipline, and well-allocated resources. Teachers in these studies also indicated that fair salaries and less-challenging student populations were reasons for greater teacher retention. Kearney (2008) also found a correlation between teachers who are satisfied with their working conditions and the positive influence on retention trends. Kearney compared the level of job satisfaction between African American and European American teachers finding that class size, financial compensation, and leadership opportunities were factors that encouraged higher retention of African American teachers.

Numerous studies have proposed that working conditions can actually serve as a predictor of the school's turnover rate and teacher commitment (Ladd 2009; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Shann, 1988; Tickle et al., 2011). These studies of teacher retention support this association between teacher job satisfaction and teacher turnover, recognizing the various perceptions by teachers of the working condition factors. Even beyond

demographic characteristics, job satisfaction is a key indicator of turnover intent (Lambert, et al, 2001). Recognizing that working conditions are key factors in determining teacher job dissatisfaction and teacher turnover, schools can gauge their overall effectiveness based on this individualized school data.

Particularly, in high-poverty schools that serve a largely minority student population, working conditions also correlate to teachers' staying intentions. Ladd's (2009) analysis of teacher survey data supported the notion that teaching and learning conditions not only influence teacher plans to leave a school, but this remained true regardless of the school's unique demographics. However, Borman and Dowling (2008) determined that student demographics impact teacher turnover, along with academic standings, the culture of the school, and individual teacher characteristics. Perrachione et al. (2008) found that teacher retention was directly influenced by student demographics along with teacher job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. According to Horng (2009), an increasingly large number of teachers are leaving the profession as a result of high burnout and stress caused by improper working conditions. The participants in the study actually cited working conditions to be more important than student characteristics when seeking employment at a school.

Other researchers have also noted the struggles teachers face to maintain their motivation for the teaching profession. According to Dembélé and Rogers (2013), the decision to leave is a result of "poorly functioning educational delivery systems, poor working conditions, a lack of resources, limited human capacity, weak accountability, low salaries, and poor management (including recruitment, selection, deployment, career advancement, motivation, incentives and retention)" (p. 174).

Understanding the connection between working conditions, job satisfaction, and ultimately teacher turnover, the state of North Carolina also measures teacher perceptions of the school climate and culture in an effort to better understand learning and working environments. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey was initiated in 2002 by Governor Michael Easley with the intention to help school leaders and policy makers identify potential challenges to student learning. The survey also helps practitioners and researchers address challenges in the retention of effective teachers in schools where they are most needed to impact student growth. The Working Conditions survey provides a broad overview of characteristics that summarize the work environment in North Carolina schools: time, facilities and resources, teacher leadership, school leadership, new teacher support, community engagement, instructional practices, professional development, and managing student conduct. Analyzing such factors has implications for the future of the teaching profession, as teaching conditions are correlated to student achievement and teacher retention (ASQNC, n.d.). The data from this survey instrument, along with the surveys completed by the participating teachers, were used to inform this study's discussion on teacher perceptions in high-poverty, high-performing schools.

In addition to the impact of working conditions on teacher job satisfaction, teachers are also motivated by other personal and professional factors (Maslow, 1954). "To be motivated means to be moved to do something" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). Organizations seek to better understand the variables that motivate individuals in an effort to attain higher levels of overall success. According to Gagné (2004), increased motivation leads to higher achievement and productivity. This motivation influences a

person's decisions and actions.

Intrinsic Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), "intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56). Individuals' natural curiosity and interest influence their participation in these activities. This internal drive motivates a person to pursue and seek success in their experience. Specifically for teachers, "dimension for intrinsic motivation is the satisfaction derived from teaching, recognition, enjoying teaching, career development, the challenging and competitive nature of teaching, teaching as one goal in the life and control over others" (Tehseen & Ul Hadi, 2015, p. 233). Many teachers are internally motivated to pursue the profession for the inherent benefits to them and the profession.

Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) conducted a series of qualitative interviews and surveys to better understand why teachers choose the teaching profession and what influenced their intentions to stay. The current and retired teachers indicated that their commitment to the profession was a result of intrinsic motivators: enjoyment from working with children, intellectual fulfillment of the job, the contribution they can make to society, passion for the subject, and the positive impact they could make as role models to children. Less influential in the study were the extrinsic motivators of professional development opportunities, job security, salaries, benefits, promotion opportunities, and accolades from society. These preferential intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were similar across the variety of age groups involved in the study. However, Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd recognized that teachers who openly voiced their immediate intentions of leaving the profession were more likely to prefer extrinsic rewards as factors

in turnover decisions.

A qualitative study of 30 elementary school teachers conducted nearly 30 years earlier also found that intrinsic rewards served as the major motivator for teachers (Plihal, 1981). Further, Plihal's (1981) study determined that students achieved at higher rates when teachers experienced high levels of motivation towards their students and the content they teach. These highly motivated teachers are typically more effective as they have a more positive influence on helping students meet learning goals (Mertler, 1992; Plihal, 1981).

In addition to the personal benefits and increased productivity associated with being intrinsically motivated to engage in work activities, employees can also benefit psychologically. Tomic and Tomic (2008) recognized that existential fulfillment enabled teachers and principals to enjoy their work responsibilities and experience greater success as a result. The quantitative study of 215 teachers and 514 principals in the Netherlands discovered an additional correlation to teacher retention, finding that teachers who experienced this type of intrinsic motivation were less likely to face burnout, making them more likely to remain in the profession. Their longevity was fueled by their existential fulfillment. Tomic and Tomic suggested more focus on intrinsic motivation factors to retain teachers.

A recent study surveyed over 1,000 early childhood educators to better understand the factors that caused them to leave the profession (Grant et al., 2019). This national survey revealed a close connection between the work environment and personal welfare as a result of job-related stress. Teachers who were more intrinsically motivated experienced less frustration and burnout. As a result, they were more committed to the

job and were less likely leave the profession.

One of the factors that contributes to teacher turnover relates to student behavior challenges in highly impacted schools (Ingersoll, 2001). A study conducted by Bilz (2008) found that a challenging work environment and student discipline issues play a major role in teacher decisions to leave a high-needs school. “Many safety and security measures are more prevalent in public schools where poverty is more common” (Carlton, 2017, p. 4). Harrell and Jackson (2004) cited student behavior challenges such as these to be one of the major reasons for teacher turnover.

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Colledge, 2002), individuals must have their basic physiological needs met before they can be motivated to reach higher levels of safety, belongingness, esteem, and ultimately self-actualization. Before teachers can advance to this high degree of success in their workplace, their perceived needs must be satisfied. Particularly, in at-risk school environments where safety is a major concern, teachers who do not trust the security of the school and work in fear of their personal safety fail to achieve their full productivity potential. Although a significant number of teachers choose to transfer from schools in more challenging neighborhoods to a less demanding environment, teachers who are intrinsically motivated tend to seek out such challenges (Aud et al., 2012). Despite the student behavior challenges, some teachers choose to remain employed in the highly impacted school environment.

Student misbehavior not only causes stress to the teacher but also hinders student academic achievement on high stakes assessments (Chen et al., 2007). This is especially detrimental in a high-needs school setting where student academic growth is already stunted by their socioeconomic limitations. According to former President Bill Clinton’s

1998 guide on *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*, it was reported that “in high-poverty urban schools, for instance, a full *two-thirds* of the students fail to meet even minimum standards of achievement” (p. 1). This research went on to determine that part of the reason for this disparity is a result of the insurmountable challenges that face students. These challenges include the prevalence of “family distress, crime, and violence” (Turning around low-performing schools: A guide for state and local leaders, 1998, p. 1) that keep students from investing their full potential into the school experience. As a result, “students in high-poverty schools may be performing at levels up to four years behind their peers in low-poverty schools” (p. 1). The *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools* (1998) guide also asserted that at-risk students are susceptible to numerous other challenges including the following:

- Inadequate and inequitable resources in comparison to other schools. In addition to physical resources, human capital is lacking in the neediest schools. “Teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely than their counterparts in other schools to be teaching outside their field of training or teaching without a license” (p. 1).
- Persistent stress and disorganization caused by low achievement, low expectations, increasing staff mobility and absenteeism, and the lack of productive teacher-parent relationships.
- Student attendance and behavior problems that resulted in being retained or dropping out of school altogether.

The *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools* (1998) guide acknowledged the seemingly insurmountable obstacles faced by schools that serve at-risk students.

However, the report also recognized four of the nation's neediest schools that beat the odds by implementing strategies that raised student achievement. In each school, dedicated staff members were instrumental in implementing successful interventions that addressed the unique needs of the students. Despite the challenging behaviors and academic deficiencies, teachers like these choose to stay instead of transferring to an easier assignment. Locke and Latham (1984) theorized that people are not motivated by mundane, rote assignments. People tend to have better work ethics when they experience a sense of accomplishment in completing a challenging assignment.

The structure of the school and the demographics of the students may shape teacher decisions about where they work and how efforts can be developed to attract high-quality teachers to high-needs schools (Borman & Kimball, 2005). Some teachers choose to stay employed in challenging, urban schools that serve low-income students from diverse backgrounds because they enjoy the challenge and are intrinsically motivated to do so.

Teacher intrinsic motivation also has an impact on student performance in school. Muller (2001) studied approximately 6,000 public school students and found that students who were at risk of dropping out experienced more success in school when their teachers "are interested, expect them to succeed, listen to them, praise their effort, and care (p. 242). A study by Teven and McCroskey (1997) yielded similar results as students learned more from teachers who they perceived to be more caring and concerned about their needs.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of teachers maintaining positive peer contact. In addition to teachers leaving high-poverty schools because of poor

administrative leadership, poor working conditions, and an inadequate amount of discipline, Donaldson and Johnson (2011) determined that lack of collaboration was a major factor. Kraft and Papay (2014) recognized similar factors that matter most in teachers deciding to stay include the school's culture, the principal's leadership, and relationships among peers.

Contrary to these studies, positive relationships with coworkers and supervisors within the workplace show a negative correlation with turnover (Lambert et al., 2001; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Pitts et al. (2011) also studied the correlation between relationship factors and job retention. Pitts et al. found that positive relationships with employers have a greater positive impact on retention than relationships with coworkers.

Commitment

Schools ultimately benefit by having teachers who are vested in the overall goals of the organization. When there is a high level of commitment, people are more likely to achieve the goals they set (Locke & Latham, 2002). Locke and Latham's (1984) research indicated that people work harder when they feel committed to the work of the organization. Locke and Latham (2002) also found that people who view the organization's problems as their own, believe they are more responsible for creating solutions and will work harder to accomplish those goals. This level of commitment is greater than experienced by others who believe they work to meet the goals of a company that has different values.

These highly committed teachers who have a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to seek opportunities to lead. Teacher leadership correlates to "teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices" (Ingersoll et al., 2017, p. 6). The

Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2005) defined teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (para. 3). Teacher leaders serve a variety of purposes including participating in school improvement teams, professional learning communities, and administrative meetings. They also use their expertise to serve as mentors to other teachers.

Like in the business world, employees who are more content are more likely to continue working if the company values their efforts (Lambert et al., 2001). Educational research has shown that teacher stability improves when teachers report a strong sense of collective responsibility and when teachers are given the opportunity to influence school decisions (Allensworth et al., 2009). Particularly in high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools, teachers complain that they feel they are not treated like professionals when they are not included in making decisions on school initiatives (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Research suggests that school reform efforts are better sustained when more experienced teachers on staff are given the opportunity to engage in school leadership activities (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005).

Over 1,500 teachers from a large, high-needs school district participated in a 2019 study to understand the factors that influence an educator’s commitment to the school and the profession. A major contributor to the commitment was the level of support provided to the teacher. This support helped teachers feel psychologically safe and more able to focus their efforts to supporting students (Ford et al., 2019).

Extrinsic Motivation

A goal for a successful organization, like a school, is to recognize and encourage intrinsic motivation for the work at hand, while at the same time supplying extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2010) defined extrinsic motivation as “a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome” (p. 60). A study conducted by Tehseen and Ul Hadi (2015) supported Ingersoll and Smith’s (2003) research that the working conditions of the school serve as an extrinsic motivator. Teachers experience more satisfaction when they benefit in some way from the school environment. Some extrinsic motivators include positive financial benefits, school appreciation efforts, school administration, and cultural diversity.

With the 2017 federal investment of \$69.4 billion in discretionary funding and \$139.7 billion in new mandatory funding, the U.S. Department of Education recognized the value of highly qualified, effective educators in schools to serve students. These funds go to support a variety of reforms, including

helping ensure equitable access to effective teachers and school leaders for low-income and minority students in high-need schools by investing \$1 billion in mandatory funds for the new RESPECT: Best Job in the World program to support a nationwide effort to attract and retain effective teachers in high-need schools, and \$2.8 billion in discretionary funding to support teachers and principals at every phase of their careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 2)

These funds are specifically designated in response to the persistent challenge of attracting educators to work in at-risk settings (U.S. Department of Education,

2017). Just as the federal government allocates funds to education, the state of North Carolina dedicated 39% of the general fund to education in 2016-2017 (NCDPI, 2018). Teacher compensation (salary, extra pay, benefits, and pension) represents the “single largest expenditure in any school organization” (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013, para.1). How these funds are dispersed to teachers may influence their motivation towards the work. According to Tehseen and Ul Hadi (2015), “extrinsic motivation mainly includes the award applied externally as a salary or wages, free accommodation, educational progress in paying premiums, meals, additional payments in case of financial problems, paid leave and free medical assistance” (p. 1). Borman and Dowling (2008) analyzed 14 different studies on how teacher salary motivates teachers to stay in the profession. They found that the rates of attrition decreased with higher salaries. Although more experienced teachers, ranging from 6 to 30 years of experience, were most influenced by the salary, teachers with less experience also saw increased odds of turnover with lower salaries. Salary was found to be a predictor of teacher retention in this research. Data analyzed by Liu and Meyer (2005) found similar results in determining that low teacher salaries along with student discipline problems were the main reasons for teacher lack of satisfaction with their work environment.

The New Teacher Center’s Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) survey asks questions to determine teacher perceptions of school leadership or “the ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns” (New Teacher Center, n.d.b, para. 1). The Wallace Foundation (2013)

reported the five key responsibilities of school leaders: shaping the vision, creating a cooperative climate, cultivating leadership, improving instruction, and managing people. Teachers are more likely to leave when they sense that the principal's vision is unclear (Wong, 2002). In addition to positively impacting student achievement, effective school leaders attract, support, and retain effective teachers (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). Strong administrative leadership supports teachers in school improvement areas including student discipline, curriculum, instructional strategies, and professional growth (Borman & Dowling, 2003).

According to Johnson's (2006) research, the level of perceived administrative leadership impacts the schools' learning and working environment as they set standards, provide support, and reinforce norms. Numerous studies draw a distinct correlation between administrative leadership and teacher attrition. When teachers believe that school leaders attend to their best interests, they are more likely to return to the school and remain in the teaching profession (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Ladd, 2009). Boyd et al. (2011) went so far as to determine that teacher perceptions of the school administration have the greatest influence on teacher retention decisions.

Loeb et al. (2005) conducted surveys to determine if teacher turnover results from ineffective administrative support. Consistent with this agreement, Luekens (2004) quantified this in their research determining that almost 40% of teachers cited lack of administrative support as the reason for leaving their teaching assignment.

Research conducted by Choi and Tang (2009) implied that teacher turnover can be minimized with positive administrative support. The perceived level of administrative

support is actually the most significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction and ultimately their intent to continue the work. The presence of a supportive administration has been found to impact the other variables that affect working conditions. Teachers in the study were actually more willing to overlook less than favorable working conditions when they were led by effective administrators (Tickle et al., 2011).

Professional Development

A connection can be made between self-efficacy and professional development, whereas the best way for leaders to cultivate productivity in staff is by providing the necessary opportunities for teachers to learn skills, setting good examples, and helping to build positive self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; White & Locke, 2000). These strategies require school leaders to make deliberate efforts to effectively train teachers to address the challenges they might experience at work. Effective professional development activities equip staff members with the necessary strategies to meet the overall goals of the school.

Allensworth (2012) suggested,

Schools that struggle with low achievement, especially those serving the most impoverished communities, face extraordinary challenges in developing strong organizations that can maintain a strong teaching staff. But building those organizational supports is what is needed to provide a high-quality instructional environment for all students and improve equity in educational outcomes. (p. 31)

Professional learning communities allow teachers valuable time to collaborate with other teachers in an effort to support school improvement goals and ensure student learning (Dufour, 2004). Carving out the time for teachers to engage in professional

learning activities might be a challenge when considering other teacher duties. The TELL survey recognizes the need for “schools [to] protect teachers’ time to plan, collaborate, and provide effective instruction” (New Teacher Center, n.d.c, para. 1). Used efficiently, dedicating this time to professional growth improves the teacher’s experience and outcome. The TELL survey defines the professional development component of teacher working conditions as having “quality learning opportunities are available for teachers to enhance teaching and learning” (New Teacher Center, n.d.a, para. 1) This time is critical to allow teachers the opportunity to adequately supervise and prepare engaging lessons for students, along with their other responsibilities.

The normal challenges that come with the teaching profession are intensified when teachers perceive that their time is being taken away from them with increased duties. Teachers expect to be given appropriate and fair teaching assignments that allow them to teach content that is within their specialty and do not overwhelm them with impractical workloads (Johnson, 2006). Particularly in high-needs schools that serve predominantly minority students from low-income backgrounds, teachers are often asked to teach in areas where they are not as qualified or licensed without appropriate training or background (Ingersoll, 2002a). Typically, new teachers are assigned course loads outside of their area when more-experienced, veteran teachers do not choose to teach the needed class. Beginning teachers in disadvantaged schools are usually less qualified and more likely to outnumber the veterans (Ingersoll, 2002a). Particularly, in high-poverty schools, this increased workload from poorly assigned classes contributes to the high teacher turnover which further widens the achievement gap. Not only does a student learning gap result, but educators also experience a teacher quality gap (Irvine, 2010). As

a result, students fail to learn what they need, and teachers are dissatisfied with their job (Johnson, 2006). Identifying and addressing the various gaps that are institutionalized in our educational system are essential to improving the system as a whole (Irvine, 2010).

Improving teacher, and ultimately student capacity, depends on effective training. Teachers are more inclined to remain in the profession if they receive the proper training (Wong, 2002). Unfortunately, increased turnover rates may interfere with the schools' ability to provide the timely support. According to Chung Wei et al. (2009),

Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers. However, most teachers in the United States do not have access to professional development that uniformly meets all these criteria. (p. 5)

U.S. teachers are generally allotted 3 to 5 hours per week for lesson planning. However, high-achieving nations like Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada dedicate 15 to 25 hours each week for teachers to engage in collaborative lesson development activities (Chung Wei et al., 2009). Ronfeldt (2012) discovered preservice teachers who learn to teach in "difficult-to-staff" field settings have lower retention rates than peers placed in less difficult settings. The beginning teacher training must be tailored to the needs of the setting. To address the diverse ethnic groups represented in urban schools, a study by Clewell and Villegas (2001) suggested that training in multicultural sensitivity is necessary for teachers working in such environments. Teachers would also benefit from a well-rounded induction program; an assigned mentor; and job-specific training on content, classroom

management, and instructional strategies (Wong, 2002).

Since Herzberg et al.'s (1959) inquiries about what motivates employees, numerous researchers have conducted studies to uncover the answers. This study continues this trend by seeking a better understanding of why effective teachers persist, despite the obstacles. There was no shortage of research conducted by others that centered on intrinsic, extrinsic, commitment, and professional development factors. These studies clearly suggest that these factors are critical in answering the research questions that provide some insight on teacher retention.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this study, I uncovered the perceptions of teachers in high-performing, urban, high-poverty elementary schools with similar demographics to gain insight into the factors that motivate them to continue working in the school. Chapters 1 and 2 provided an overview of the study and a review of the literature. This chapter describes the setting, participants, research design, instrumentation, procedures, data collection, data analysis, limitations, and additional research opportunities.

Setting

This study was conducted in a large urban school district serving 54,105 students in 80 schools. In the 2017-2018 school year, 43 of the district's schools participated in the Title I program to receive federal funds to help at-risk students meet academic standards.

Students in this district are racially diverse: 40.2% White, 28.5% African American, 24.5% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 2.5% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian or Native Hawaiians/Pacific. Over 30,000 students in the district are classified as economically disadvantaged, as they meet the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price meals.

The district employs approximately 4,200 classroom teachers. In accordance with federal law, almost all teachers (100% elementary, 98% middle and high) are considered highly qualified. The 1-year teacher turnover rate in the district, 18.2%, is greater than the turnover rate of the state, 13.7%. In 2017, most of the teachers in the district had at least 10 years of teaching experience (65%), while 24.5% had 4-10 years of experience, and 10.2% of the teachers had 0-3 years of experience.

Participant Selection

Schools

In order to better understand the relationship between teacher retention and highly impacted schools, the study focused on the district's Title I schools. Narrowing the focus to the district's highest performing Title I schools addressed the research questions that sought to identify dispositions of teachers experiencing success in higher performing, high-poverty schools. Although the district's Title I schools were not meeting academic proficiency goals, several of them were succeeding in helping students achieve academic gains. For the purpose of this study, 11 of the 42 high-poverty schools in the district were considered "high-performing" as they had all either met or exceeded the state's expectations for growth during each of the last 3 years as measured by EVAAS. EVAAS is a growth reporting tool used by North Carolina educators to guide data-based school improvement efforts. According to SAS EVAAS (2020), growth is defined as "current achievement/current results compared to all prior achievement/prior results with achievement being measured by a quality assessment such as EOG tests" (p. 1).

Instead of focusing on proficiency level, EVAAS measures student growth over time, also referred to as "value-added." A school is classified as meeting expected growth when there is "evidence that students made progress similar to the Growth Standard" (SAS EVAAS, 2020, p. 28). This growth standard occurs when the growth measure is between 2 standard errors above (2.00) and 2 standard errors below (-2.00). According to EVAAS reporting, schools that exceed expected growth have "significant evidence that students made more progress than the Growth Standard" (SASEVAAS, 2020, p. 28), as their growth index is 2.00 or greater.

In order to examine similar school settings, I selected eight elementary schools that fit the study criteria: Title I schools who had met or exceeded EVAAS growth over the most recent 3-year period. Table 1 details the growth status of each of the selected schools for this study. In addition, Table 1 relays the assigned pseudonyms (an alphabetic letter) for each of the eight schools that were included in this research.

Table 1

EVAAS Growth of Participating Schools

School	2016		2017		2018	
	Growth	Index	Growth	Index	Growth	Index
A	Met	-1.62	Met	0.34	Met	-0.01
B	Met	0.31	Met	-0.61	Met	-0.28
C	Met	0.00	Exceeded	2.84	Met	-0.01
D	Met	-0.23	Exceeded	6.19	Exceeded	5.23
E	Met	-1.27	Met	0.91	Met	-1.65
F	Met	0.45	Met	0.26	Exceeded	4.22
G	Met	-1.27	Met	-0.12	Met	1.19
H	Met	-0.33	Exceeded	3.87	Exceeded	4.97

Note: Eight participating schools.

Table 2 provides more detail on the demographics (enrollment, race, and socioeconomic status) of the student population at each of the schools involved in the study. The data from this district correlate the findings of other researchers including the National Equity Atlas (2016), which revealed that minority students are most likely to attend schools where at least 75% of the students enrolled qualify as poor or low-income, according to federal guidelines.

Table 2*Demographics of Students in Participating Schools*

School	Total student enrollment	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Percent of economically disadvantaged students
A	441	43.7%	40.9%	11.5%	3.9%	64.7%
B	544	25.5%	66.9%	4.7%	2.9%	71.2%
C	817	20.3%	45.5%	28.8%	5.4%	48%
D	610	54.4%	35.4%	4.5%	5.7%	68.9%
E	635	49.7%	32.9%	11%	6.3%	53.6%
F	563	18.5%	29.2%	46.7%	5.6%	59.5%
G	661	20.1%	20.1%	52.8%	7%	57.5%
H	523	40.6%	26.2%	15.8%	17.5%	63%

This study provided insight on the teacher turnover rate for the participating schools. The teaching staff in the Title I schools used in this study had varying levels of experience. In addition to showing the percentage of the teaching staff who met the 5 years of experience for the research criteria, Table 3 also shows the number of teachers at each participating school and the school's teacher turnover rate.

Table 3*Demographics of Teachers in Participating Schools*

School	Total number of classroom teachers	Percentage of teachers in experience bands			Teacher turnover rate
		0-3 Years	4-10 Years	10+ Years	
A	39	10.3%	25.6%	64.1%	10.7%
B	52	30.8%	19.2%	50%	17.4%
C	61	8.5%	29.5%	62.3%	5.6%
D	46	8.7%	30.4%	60.9%	6.4%
E	47	19.1%	31.9%	48.9%	11.8%
F	41	12.2%	12.2%	75.6%	4.8%
G	46	15.2%	26.1%	58.7%	9.9%
H	45	17.8%	11.1%	71.1%	4.4%

Teachers

As the goal of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers who return to highly impacted schools, participating teachers consisted of individuals who had at least 5 consecutive years of experience who had achieved career status in one of the eight identified schools in the selected school district. Principals were contacted to assist in identifying certified teachers who met the specified research criteria. Preferred participants were teachers who were serving on the School Improvement Team, as they would more likely be strong teacher leaders. These teachers contributed to the overall success of the school and provided valuable insight on the working conditions and factors that motivate teachers to commit to high-poverty schools. The research included two to eight participating teachers in each of the eight schools bringing the participant sample 23 teachers.

Research Design

Although the Likert responses for each category were averaged, an overall qualitative methods approach was undertaken because of the potential benefits of providing a better understanding of the research questions. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to construct meaning interpreted from people's perceptions and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This supports the goal to uncover, from teacher perspectives, how school working conditions impact teacher drives to remain in the profession. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) recommended the qualitative approach to gathering insight from data, especially when using a relatively small participant sample, like in this study.

To better facilitate the process for collecting data, uncovering themes, and

identifying concepts that need further expansion, a two-part approach to analyzing the research questions was selected. In this study, surveys as well as interviews were used to gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions. Diverse sources of data provided opportunities for more in-depth study of the motivations of the teachers in accordance with my initial focus on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The different processes also encouraged the prospect of additional unanticipated themes and information emerging from both the survey and the follow-up interviews (Driscoll, 2007).

Phase 1 of this study consisted of surveying teachers identified by their school principals as effective practitioners. The teachers have worked for at least 5 years in that Title I school setting and planned to return for the next school year. Data from participating teachers in each of the eight participating schools (approximately 24 total teachers) were analyzed. Analyzed to calculate averages for each question, these overall trend data were gathered from a validated teacher survey (Walker, 2004) that collects demographic details in addition to teacher perceptions of the school environment. These perceptions provided insight on the four research questions:

1. What intrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
2. What extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
3. What professional development opportunities are important in motivating teachers to stay in a high-poverty school?
4. How does a teacher's level of commitment correlate to their decision to return to a high-needs school?

In the second phase of this research, participants engaged in an interview session with me. These interviews helped to build a more informed understanding of the reasons teachers decide to continue working in a challenging school setting. In the interview sessions, participants were asked to provide additional insight into the questions asked in the survey. In addition to expanding on the general trends uncovered through the survey, the interviews provided more detail on the specific preferences that encourage teacher retention. Having the interviews in school-based groups, whenever possible, allows the teachers to reflect on issues that were raised by other participants.

Instrumentation

A survey was used to collect initial data on teacher perceptions on sustained employment in a high-needs school (Appendix A). The instrument was developed by Walker (2004) for her dissertation research on teacher retention in an urban school district in Virginia. As the original design of the survey was to analyze perceptions on a school district, permission was granted to modify the survey to focus on the teachers' individual schools to achieve the goals of the current study. Walker derived the items from the survey based on the research questions of her study and informed research on other retention surveys.

In addition to gathering data on teacher demographics, Walker (2004) also inquired about teacher reasons for remaining in the school district in the study. A Likert scale was used to assess participant ranges of opinions and to assign scores for each area. Validity tests were conducted to ensure content alignment and outcomes with the goals of the research study.

The survey was structured around four general themes that classified teacher

reasons for working in the specified educational environment. Survey responses were categorized into these themes, representing the motivations for sustained employment in the schools: intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, commitment factors, and professional development factors.

Procedures

I secured permission from creator of the validated teacher survey instrument to be utilized in the study. A request to the selected district upon which the research would be based followed. The survey permission and district approval was included in the proposal that was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University Institutional Review Board to conduct research on human subjects. After securing the necessary approvals, I scheduled meetings with the principals of each of the eight schools to explain the intended research procedures and to solicit support in identifying participating teachers (Appendix B).

Once identified, teachers were sent an invitation to participate in the study along with appropriate consent forms (Appendix C). Email was used to send a Google survey link for the participants to respond to the survey questions. Invitations to participate in the study informed teachers that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous in an effort to secure honest feedback and to ensure the teachers that their comments would not be used against them. Participants were assigned a pseudonym for themselves for clarity in the data analysis. Participating teachers were given a month to complete the online survey. I followed up with the participants to provide reminders as needed.

Additionally, teachers were asked to volunteer to participate in continued study through qualitative interviews. Willing teachers were asked to submit an email address so

I could schedule the interviews over the course of the next 2 months. Assurance was provided that this contact information would remain confidential. Participants were given the opportunity to arrange in-person meetings or phone conferences to accommodate their preferences. To assist in the data analysis, interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription.

The semi-structured interview format sought to provide more clarification on the overall survey responses that were provided in the teacher survey. Once the survey data were received, interview questions were created based on the trends (Appendix D). These additional questions were validated by experts in personnel retention in the district: the instructional superintendent, the human resources specialist, and the Title I program director. The goal was for teachers to provide further insight and interpretation on trends that emerged from the survey. The individual interviews served as a tool to confirm survey results.

Data Collection

I collected the data from the teacher surveys. Teachers used the Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree) to reflect on their experiences in their school. The higher the Likert score, the more the participants agreed with the motivator to return to that work environment. These data were not utilized for statistical analysis; however, averaging these responses gave an indication of the factors that were the most important and least important in influencing a teacher's decision whether or not to continue in their current assignment.

After uncovering the trends in the surveys, I conducted follow-up interviews to get more information on key concepts that were addressed in their responses. The

questions asked in the one-on-one sessions asked teachers to provide more explanation on why the majority of the participants responded in the way they did on the survey. These qualitative responses gave a clearer understanding to support the survey findings. The conversations also provided anecdotal data to substantiate teacher views.

Data Analysis

The initial survey responses of the participating teachers were analyzed to uncover trends in their demographics (gender, ethnicity, years of experience, age, and education level) as it relates to their perceptions of their school environments.

Analyzing the survey responses provided insight on the four research questions about why teachers choose to continue working in high-poverty schools. Ten of the survey questions sought to identify what intrinsic factors influence teacher retention. Six of the questions helped specify the extrinsic factors that encourage teacher retention in that school setting. Six of the questions provided insight on the professional development needs that motivate teachers to stay in high-poverty schools. Ten of the questions in the survey revealed how a teacher's level of commitment impacts their decision to return to the Title I school environment.

During the qualitative interviews, I coded teacher responses that provided more insight on each of the four research questions. The data gathered from these conversations with teachers added additional details that explained why teachers were motivated to continue working in high-poverty, high-performing schools.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the eight Title I elementary schools in an urban, 80-school district. The research worked to uncover the perceptions of a sampling of teachers with at

least 5 years of experience in these focus schools. The findings in this report represented the perceptions of the teachers involved in both phases of the study. The opinions are not intended to represent the thoughts of all teachers in high-needs schools in all school districts. Unique life experiences and specific school environments may influence teacher reasons for staying in high-needs schools.

Because the nature of perceptions derived from surveys, teacher and school results may have been influenced by factors beyond my control. Data collected from the teacher retention survey are based on teacher opinions that may or may not be informed by factual information. These perceptions have the potential to be influenced by specific circumstances or events in the school. I assumed the participants answered truthfully to all survey and interview questions, providing a detailed view of their teaching experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore what factors encourage teachers to continue working in high-poverty school settings. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What intrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
2. What extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in high-performing, high-poverty schools?
3. What professional development opportunities are important in motivating teachers to stay in a high-poverty school?
4. How does a teacher's level of commitment correlate to their decision to return to a high-needs school?

The study took place in an urban school district, focusing on elementary Title I schools that had a record of making positive student academic gains. Teacher leaders who have served at least 5 years in that school were asked to complete the survey and participate in the follow-up interview. This chapter details the findings of this study.

Response Rate

Eight schools were identified to meet the research criteria (met or exceeded growth for each of the past 3 years). In each of these schools, principals were asked to identify at least three teachers who served as leaders in the school who had chosen to work at that site for the past 5 years in a row. Of the eight schools that were invited to participate in the study, six schools chose to engage in the research. A total of 30 surveys were distributed to these six schools. After three email requests over the course of a

month, 23 teachers from those schools completed the survey as requested (76.7% response rate). Twenty-one of the 23 teachers participated in the one-on-one follow-up interviews, a 91.3% response rate. The number of teachers who participated in the survey and interviews are recorded in Table 4, along with the pseudonym (letter) for each of the schools.

Table 4

Study Participants

Participating school	Number of surveys distributed	Number of survey participants	Number of interview participants
A	6	2	1
B	4	3	3
C	2	2	2
D	6	6	6
E	9	8	7
F	3	2	2
Total	30	23	21

Demographics

The 23 participants were assigned an identifying letter and number combination to protect their privacy. The letter corresponds to the participating school and the number is associated with the participating teacher from that school. The following chart details the demographic profile of each participant.

Table 5*Participant Demographics*

Teacher	Gender	Race/ethnicity	Number of years of experience in Title I school	Age	Education level (highest degree)
A1	Female	African American	40	60-69	Bachelor's
A2	Female	Caucasian	24	50-59	Master's
B1	Male	Asian/Pacific Islander	12	30-39	Bachelor's
B2	Female	Caucasian	24	50-59	Master's
B3	Female	African American	28	50-59	Bachelor's
C1	Female	Caucasian	20	50-59	Master's
C2	Female	Caucasian	24	40-49	Bachelor's
D1	Female	Caucasian	14	40-49	Master's
D2	Female	Caucasian	13	40-49	Bachelor's
D3	Female	Caucasian	11	50-59	Master's
D4	Female	Caucasian	24	40-49	Master's
D5	Female	Caucasian	15	60-69	Bachelor's
D6	Female	Caucasian	12	50-59	Master's
E1	Female	Hispanic	14	40-49	Master's
E2	Female	Caucasian	20	40-49	Bachelor's
E3	Female	African American	5	40-49	Bachelor's
E4	Female	African American	31	40-49	Bachelor's
E5	Female	Hispanic	12	30-39	Master's
E6	Female	Caucasian	9	40-49	Master's
E7	Female	Caucasian	24	50-59	Master's
E8	Female	Hispanic	23	40-49	Master's
F1	Female	Caucasian	8	30-39	Master's
F2	Female	Caucasian	8	40-49	Master's

Note: Twenty-three survey participants.

Of the 23 participants, 22 (95.7%) were females and one (4.3%) was male. The race/ethnicities represented were 15 (65.2%) Caucasian, four (17.4%) African American, three (13%) Hispanic, and one (4.3%) Asian/Pacific Islander. Four (17.4%) of the teachers worked between 5 and 10 years in a Title I school, 10 (43.5%) worked between 11 and 20 years, seven (30%) worked between 21 and 30 years, and two (8.7%) worked between 31 and 40 years. The age groups represented by the participating teachers

included three (13%) 30-39 years, 11 (47.8%) 40-49 years, seven (30.4%) 50-59 years, and two (8.7%) 60-69 years. The largest number of teachers had a master's degree: 14 (60.9%). Nine of the teachers (39.1%) had a bachelor's degree.

Findings

The data were analyzed based on the research questions that sought to understand what factors motivate teachers to stay employed in high-poverty schools. The validated survey questions relate to each of the four motivating factors: intrinsic, extrinsic, commitment, and professional development. When participating teachers took the initial 32-question survey, the Likert-scale responses revealed their level of agreement with the stated reason for why they chose to stay in their current school setting. The survey was used to gather trend data on the motivation factors. The follow-up survey provided additional data to expound on the key findings.

Intrinsic Motivation Factors

Ten of the survey questions inquired about teacher intrinsic motivation for continuing their employment in their Title I schools. The results for Statements 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 15 are included in the chart below and provide insight on this factor.

Table 6*Results from Survey for Intrinsic Motivation Factors*

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I specifically sought employment in a Title I school.	13%	39.1%	13%	13%	21.7%
2. I was educated in a Title I school, therefore, I wanted to teach in one.	40.9%	40.9%	9.1%	4.5%	4.5%
4. I have received self-gratification from my years of teaching in this Title I school.	0	0	4.3%	43.5%	52.2%
5. I have developed good collegial relationships within this school.	0	0	0	26.1%	73.9%
6. I have been effective in working with high-need children.	0	0	0	65.2%	34.8%
7. Working in this school gives me a sense of self-satisfaction.	0	0	0	54.5%	45.5%
11. I can build a rapport with urban children.	0	0	8.7%	43.5%	47.8%
12. My home is close to this school.	8.7%	34.8%	0	34.8%	21.7%
13. I am familiar with the needs of urban children.	0	4.3%	13%	65.2%	17.4%
15. I enjoy the challenges associated with Title I schools.	0	8.7%	21.7%	43.5%	26.1%

I asked the following interview questions in order to gain better insight on the intrinsic motivations:

- **Interview Question 1.** What made you decide to become a teacher?
- **Interview Question 2.** There was a wide variance in agreement on whether or not teachers sought out a Title I school for employment. What things did you have to consider before working in a high-needs school? (Based on Survey Question 1)
- **Interview Question 3.** Only 9% of the teachers had experience as a student in a high-needs school. Do you think it is necessary for a teacher to have been educated in a Title I school to be effective in their school? Why or why not? (Based on Survey Question 2)
- **Interview Question 4.** Teachers overwhelmingly responded in favor of working in a high-needs school because of the self-gratification, self-satisfaction, good collegial relationships, positive impact on students, and their ability to build rapport with students. No teachers disagreed with those questions. Do you believe these are the main reasons that make you an effective teacher? (Based on Survey Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11)
- **Interview Question 5.** Although most Title I schools come with significant challenges that impact the students and staff, 70% of the participating teachers agreed that they embraced these challenges and use them as a source of motivation. What kinds of challenges do teachers working in high-poverty schools face? (Based on Survey Question 15)

Teacher responses to the survey and interview questions provide insight on the intrinsic

factors that motivate them to return to their Title I school.

Interview Question 1

Most teacher participants suggested that their reasons for becoming a teacher were primarily intrinsically based.

Coming from a family of educators served as a motivation for teachers to enter the profession. This was the case for Teachers B1, B3, D2, D3, and F1. Teacher C1 mentioned, “I came from a long line of teachers.” Although Teacher A1’s parents were not educators, they were a source of motivation for her: “My parents saw the teacher in me before I did. I had a gift for teaching. I went to college and majored in education. I have a love for teaching.”

Some of the teachers mentioned that they were inspired by educators who taught them as a child. “I always had good teachers throughout my life” (Teacher C1). “I had a great fifth grade teacher. He was fun and inviting and I remember thinking ‘I want to be like him’ and he encouraged that idea” (Teacher C2). Teacher E5 reflected on a teacher who was supportive to her when she first moved to this country at 8 years old:

I didn't speak any English. My first U.S. teacher helped me acclimate to the school and culture. She helped me acquire language skills and was a welcoming and kind spirit. She is the person who influenced my goal of becoming a teacher.

Teacher D6 got very emotional reflecting on a positive influence in her life:

I went to a very diverse middle and high school. I was positively influenced by an outstanding African American teacher. I wanted to be just like her. I reached out to her years later and thanked her for being such a great influence in my life. She's the reason I became a teacher. She believed in me when most people didn't.

Although Teacher E4 was also motivated by other teachers, her experiences were not as positive as the others:

From my experiences growing up in school, a lot of the teachers were not nurturing or caring so I felt like that's what I wanted to do in order to make a difference. Students come into the schools with a lot of issues and they just need to feel loved. I want students to love school and learn because that's how you get out of some of the situations that you're in when you're little.

Many of the teachers were motivated by their previous experiences working with children. "I've worked with children all my life, including teaching Sunday School and Vacation Bible School in the ninth grade" (Teacher A1). "I've participated in athletic events with youth and it [teaching] just clicked with me" (Teacher B1). "I took students on summer mission trips with a humanitarian focus. These experiences had a focus on teaching. I enjoyed working with students beyond the academics" (Teacher D2).

I taught Sunday School and Special Education before. It is amazing how much young children can learn! It's fascinating! I love children! I love working with kids and seeing the light bulb go off when they learn something new. And I love hugs. (Teacher D5)

Teacher E6 commented that her experiences as a volunteer in Cub Scouts helped her "develop a love for pedagogy and for being an educator."

Some of the teachers felt led to the profession from an early age. According to Teacher E3, "I wanted to be a teacher since I was a child." "I graduated with BA in psychology. Teaching just seemed like a natural thing to do. I always worked with children and did Big Brothers Big Sisters in college. I just wanted to help" (Teacher E2).

Teacher D4 knew she wanted to be a teacher, but she was not sure of her area of focus:

I started out as a history major to teach high school. I liked American History, but I didn't feel as passionately about the other areas. I decided to go to elementary. I always liked kids, but didn't actually picture myself teaching the youngest children. I got my Master's in early childhood education and I found that the little ones are my joy.

According to Teacher F2, her reasons for becoming a teacher were to

just to help kids. I love kids. To make a difference, that was my main thing when I was younger. That's what I always wanted to do and that's what I always saw myself doing. I never saw myself doing anything else.

Teacher E6 said, "I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. It's a calling. I questioned whether I was on the right track in college. I considered other paths, but nothing else was appealing." Teachers B3 and F1 also specifically mentioned that teaching was a "calling" for them.

Nine of the participating teachers did not grow up with the intentions of becoming a teacher. "I did not grow up wanting to be a teacher. After week one of working on my degree in Early Childhood Education, I was hooked. I knew from that point that I wanted to become a teacher" (Teacher B2). Teacher B3 had a similar experience: "I did not go to college with plans to be a teacher. I started out focused on Business. Once I got into it [teaching], I loved it." Teacher E7 also started out pursuing a degree in business management:

I worked in various office jobs in that field, but I wasn't satisfied. I went back to college and got a Master's in education. I started out as a part-time teacher,

worked a summer program, and then got a full-time job – 44 years ago. I’ve been at the same school for my whole career.

Teacher D1 started as a nursing major but was not fulfilled. She started on the path towards education and realized that was where she wanted to be. Teacher E1 originally wanted to be a children’s dentist. Teacher E4 mentioned that when she was in high school, she started working with children in a daycare and “fell in love with it.” Even though Teacher F1 has been teaching for 13 years, she admitted that she “did not want to go into the profession to start with.” She “always wanted to work with kids in some way, preferably in the medical field as a pediatrician” (Teacher F1). According to Teacher D2, “Teaching is not what I went to college for, but the credits lined up for an education degree. I enjoyed my first teaching job and decided to stick with it. I started out focused on marine biology.”

I didn't start out with the plan to become a teacher. I got a degree in banking. My husband’s job required him to move a lot. I knew there was always a need for teachers, and I could get a job wherever we moved. I started as a substitute. I fell in love with teaching after I started. I love it now and wouldn't leave. (Teacher D3)

Survey Question 1

The results for Survey Question 1 indicated that there was a wide variance in agreement on whether or not teachers sought out a Title I school for employment. Eight of the teachers (34.7%) indicated that they were specifically looking for a Title I school when searching for a school home.

Interview Question 2

During the follow-up interviews, teachers were asked to expand on the things they had to consider before accepting a position in a high-needs school. Teacher D6 wanted to work in a Title I school because she was educated in a Title I school: “I know what it’s like, so I wanted to go back and help.” Teacher B3 felt she would be accepted and valued more at a Title I school because she believes she has “a caring spirit that students need.” Teacher B2 expressed similar feelings as she compared her experience to a previous experience in a non-Title I setting: “I didn’t feel the connection and that I was making the kind of difference that I did with the kids and the families.”

Teachers B2 and D2 were specifically drawn to Title I schools because of the diverse backgrounds of the students and staff. Teacher B2 “love[s] that it [her school] is multicultural and reflects the real-world.” Having lived abroad, Teacher D2 appreciates the opportunity to work “with students from other backgrounds.” She was attracted to Title I schools “where the diversity was more prominent” (Teacher D2). Teacher E3 transferred from a non-Title I school to Title I because she is “a big proponent for encouraging diversity” and wanted to “teach and empower students so they don’t have to rely on others.” Teacher D1 mentioned that she took the job at her current school because it was one of the few positions that was available at the time.

Most of the teachers (52.1%) indicated that they were not specifically searching for a Title I school like the one in which they began working. In fact, five of these teachers were not even aware of the unique characteristics of a high-poverty school setting. Teachers B1, D3, D5, E1, and E2 felt like they were not fully informed of the details of the school they were moving into, but they ended up enjoying the experience

over time. Teacher D3 commented, “I was pretty naive about Title I schools and now I would not teach anywhere but a Title I school. It would be very hard leaving.” According to Teacher B1, “As a young teacher, I didn’t have a clear understanding of the difference between Title I and non-Title I schools.” Teacher B1 remembers feeling surprised by the low achievement scores and high number of disciplinary challenges. He felt “duped” by a former administrator who downplayed the school’s challenges in order to convince him to work there. Fortunately, Teacher B1 was able to utilize some of the strategies he had learned in a previous school where “classroom management and safety were priorities.” As a brand new teacher moving to North Carolina from another state, Teacher E2 was not familiar with the district’s Title I schools, but she recalled the distinction that she was given from a principal of a non-Title I school: “The kids at my school teach themselves, you just have to show up. If you really want to help kids, you should teach at [a Title I school].” Teachers E5 and E6 did not realize their school was a Title I school, but they had accepted the position because they were attracted to the magnet program at the school. “That program has been the biggest motivator for me to continue working at the school” (Teacher E5).

Teachers A1, C1, F1, and F2 recalled witnessing the population of the school change during the time they were working there as a teacher. This change moved the schools into ones that now receive Title I support to meet the more intense learning needs of the students. According to Teacher A1, “Families who could afford to move, transitioned out of the inner-city school. We saw an immediate decrease in academic performance.” Teacher F1 noted that “we all had to make some changes to adjust, but we did receive more support to do those things.”

Survey Question 2

In the survey, only two of the teachers indicated that their experiences being educated in a Title I school encouraged them to become an educator in one. Based on the survey, 82% of the teachers did not have experience as a student in a high-needs school. Teacher B5 actually commented that she “wanted to work in a high-needs school because [she] didn’t have that experience growing up.”

Interview Question 3

In response to the interview question regarding whether or not it is necessary for a teacher to have been educated in a Title I school to be effective in their school, all teacher participants disagreed. “It’s not necessary, but it helps to be able to understand and relate to what the students are experiencing” (Teacher B3). Teacher D5 shared similar sentiments:

It’s not necessary, but it would have made the learning curve easier and a lot less stressful if I had known what was going on and how I could have helped my students more. Maybe I could have started learning more about the children earlier on.

According to Teacher D3,

It probably took me a good six months to understand what a Title I school is, but having that first-hand experience of being a student would be beneficial, but I don’t think that if you didn’t, it would mean that you could not be effective.

Although Teacher D6 does not believe growing up in a Title I setting is the key to making you an effective teacher, she acknowledged the benefit of the understanding:

I understand where they are coming from...I know that embarrassment of getting

free lunch. I know your mom is working two to three jobs and she doesn't have time to help you with your homework.... As educators, it's our job to educate them and send them home with something that they are able to do independently.

Survey Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 11

In the survey, teachers overwhelmingly responded in favor of working in a high-needs school because of the self-gratification, self-satisfaction, good collegial relationships, positive impact on students, and their ability to build rapport with students.

Interview Question 4

Teachers were asked to discuss if the referenced intrinsic factors are the main reasons that make them an effective teacher. Teacher B2 believes these characteristics are a source of motivation for her, especially the positive impact on students:

I feel that I am making a difference and I can see the positive impact on the students.... For anybody, whether it's a teacher or if you're working at McDonald's, or even if you're a 3-year old building blocks, a person needs to see that they are making a difference in order to be self-motivated or validated.

Teacher C2 is also motivated by seeing her students' growth:

I can see that my children grow every year. That's what's important to me. If I can get a child to go up two or three levels in their reading, that's progress. You know every child is going to be on grade level by the end of the year. Some teachers get so overwhelmed, but as long as my children are making growth and I'm seeing that growth, that's gratification for me.

Teacher D3 shared this growth mindset:

We've experienced teachers over the past that don't believe certain kids can be

successful, but you've got to have that growth mindset that says “I don't care if they are on a kindergarten level.” As long as the students show growth, you are being successful.

Teacher E5 admitted this positive impact did not come easy at first:

The very first years are very difficult. I didn't feel that I was effective and that I was meeting all of my students' needs. It took about the first 7 or 8 years for me to finally feel like I was being an effective teacher. It was a struggle in the first few years, but once I gained the expertise and more training, the easier it got.

“Rapport and relationships are most important to me. Everything else falls into place” (Teacher F1). Teacher E2 thinks the main characteristic of an effective teacher is “being able to build a rapport with the children because if you can't connect with them, you're not going to be successful.” Teacher E7 agreed with the power of connecting with students:

Anybody can write a lesson plan or follow a lesson plan, but can you connect and make the kids interested enough to do something? ... I've got a few kids that I could never reach. They sat in my class for a year and I tried, but I wasn't the one that sparked it for them. But there's many more that I was the spark for. I do feel for those few kids that were just there and I could not connect with. I think about those kids and wonder where they are and what they're doing.

Connection is important to Teacher F2 also:

I just feel like I get to know the kids and the families and when I know them really well, I feel like they can open up to me more, they can trust me more and then we can have very open communication and I feel like that helps all around

with everything. They're more free to let you into whatever is going on in their lives, how they do things, and that's what makes me a good teacher.

Teacher D5 expressed that she is not only motivated by the students but also by her colleagues: “You've got both ends of the coin – relationships with students and with the other teachers.” Several teacher participants are particularly motivated by the good collegial relationship at their Title I school. According to Teacher D1, it is important to have the other teachers who work with you “hold the load with you.” Those thoughts coincide with Teacher D4’s belief that you “have to have the support and dedication of the staff that you are working with because you are in that together.” Teacher D3 commented, “I don't feel like I would still be at [my school] if it wasn't for my team, and the support staff, and the administrators.” “The relationships between colleagues are good. There's that roller coaster during the year when you question what you were doing wrong, and they get it. And the rapport for me is important” (Teacher D6).

Survey Question 12

Over half of the teachers (56.5%) commute to a school that is not close to their home. This implies that they are highly motivated to pass over schools that are closer to work in their current Title I school.

Survey Question 13

Familiarity with the needs of urban students is something the majority of the teacher participants had in common. Eighty-three percent of the teachers cited this as a motivator for staying at their urban school site.

Survey Question 15

Although most Title I schools come with significant challenges that impact the

students and staff, 69.6% of the participating teachers agreed that they embraced these challenges and used them as a source of motivation.

Interview Question 5

When prompted to expand on the specific challenges students in high-needs schools face, several of the teachers commented that the lack basic needs, like food, served as obstacles for children. “Students come to school hungry” (Teacher A1). “Our students’ communities are often food-poor” (Teacher D2). A major problem is

poverty and all of the issues that come with that. You don't know what happened to your children when they walked in. You don't know if they've eaten the night before. You don't know what’s going on in their house. (Teacher D4)

Teacher F2 shared how she learned that hunger is a challenge: “You hear people say ‘The only time they ever eat is at school’ and you just don't really understand until you really know the family and they tell you ‘Yes, the only time they eat is at school.’”

Some of the teachers expressed concern with how food insecurity affects student performance at school. Teacher D2 shared some of the questions she asks herself: “Did they eat breakfast? Did they have dinner the night before? Is food going to be a hurdle for them to overcome in class?” According to Teacher E3,

[Problem] number 1 is the social and emotional part of children’s lives that impact their learning and success. I believe in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If children's needs are not met at the base, they can't really focus on anything else. Some days when my kids come in, they need to talk rather than learn main ideas and supporting details. One those days, I need to put on my listening hat rather than my teaching hat. There are some kids that come in hungry. [We provide] free

meals. We try to eliminate a lot of those barriers.

Teacher B3 also notices similar home challenges as they impact the school experience:

We have a lot of children that come from poverty and are lacking a lot of the things they need. If you haven't experienced some of those things in your life, you may not be able to recognize the trauma that they are experiencing. A lot of new teachers don't know how to deal with the behaviors of students in Title I schools. Teachers need to be able to recognize that a student might be misbehaving or not participating because they are sleepy, hungry, or irritable. Not knowing where their parents are, not having any food at home, having to move in the middle of the night, not being able to get a good sleep at home, not having electricity at home.

The challenge of parental involvement came up several times in the interviews.

Teachers B3 and E2 mentioned that one of the biggest challenges they face is “the lack of communication with parents” (Teacher B3). Teacher D1 agreed: “Connecting with the families and getting them involved can sometimes be difficult.” Teacher D5 detailed how this challenge affects student performance:

Lack of parent involvement at home is one of largest challenges because, basically, what a lot of them get is what you give them in the classroom. When you don't follow up at home, there's a lot of lost time.

Teacher E6 also sees this impact on student learning: “Lack of supports at home, especially with this transition to digital learning. You have students who are doing their work and some who you can't get in touch with anyone at home.”

Teacher A1 shared that these experiences were very different for her child who

attended a non-Title I school. She compared the difference between her worksite and the school her child attends:

That school had so many resources. There was an active PTA that was overflowing with parents. They sometimes had turn parents down because they had too many volunteers for field trips. It's no comparison between our school and a school with a strong PTA. (Teacher A1)

Teacher E2 made a connection between the two main challenges she experiences: “lack of parent support and discipline.” Teacher F1 expanded on this connection:

Their home experiences. Parent support. I definitely saw a change in the amount of parent support and behavior challenges since our population changed when we became a Title I school. It stems from what their previous experiences are, the expectations from their family unit, and what they bring to the classroom. Their foundational piece is challenging because you come into a classroom with 20 plus students and everybody has a different background experience. That's a challenge in any school, but in higher poverty populations, you're going to experience more challenges with behavior and with getting the parental support at home. Kids don't feel safe and their behavior and actions show that in the classroom.

Teacher D3 explained how she addresses the discipline challenges:

You just have to get them on board and build that relationship with them that says, “Listen, I am not here to be your friend. I have a job to do and I love you, but you are not going to get away with this.” It's kind of like that tough love that you do with children. Until they trust you, you are not going to reach them. It's very important to build those relationships from the get-go and maintain them as

well.

Teacher C1 commented that her challenge with communicating with parents is the result of a language barrier:

I enjoy the challenge of trying to reach the kids and reach out to the parents. I try to do as much as I can to help them. We have a lot of second language families in our school, which poses another challenge. Our translation staff and ESL staff are amazing.

Teachers do recognize that parents want to help but face challenges of their own.

“There are parents who want to do better, but they don't know how” (Teacher D2).

Teacher D3 had a similar response:

The number one challenge is parental support. I just feel like, not all of our parents, but maybe a good portion believe that the teacher is in charge of their child's education 100% and that is not the case. If you don't have that support at home, education is not a number one priority. It's very challenging to instill in students that this [education] is your way out and no one can ever take away your education. To be honest, I don't think the lack of parental support is intentional, I just think they don't know how. That's no fault of their own; it's just how it is.

Teacher A1 recognized the challenges parents face at home:

Students want to learn and you have parents who really want to help, but sometimes it's hard to get parents to come in for conferences because they are so busy working and they are afraid to lose their job. Parents are faced with a choice. Is it “Come to school and see how my child is doing academically?” or “Go to work?” Of course, parents are going to go to work so they can put food on the

table and try to maintain a roof over their family's head. As time goes on, it becomes even more challenging. Now [referencing the pandemic] parents are struggling with supporting their students with their distance learning work.

Teacher E3 compared parental involvement in different types of schools:

When you have parents that reach out to you, it's easy. When you work at a Title I school, you know that you are not working under the best circumstances. You're not getting students that have backgrounds that are affluent. You have to have strategies in your belt to be able to combat those things.

Teacher E4 agreed and offered suggestions for support:

You tend to have students who don't get a lot of support from home. There are a lot of issues that they deal with in their communities and in their households.

When I first started in a Title I school, I thought the parents just didn't care, but once I started building relationships with the parents, I realized that they do care; they just have so many issues that they put their own children on the back burner because they are trying to survive. They are trying to make it in life, and they are juggling a lot. I wish that we could have parent education programs in Title I schools where we could set it up at different times throughout the day for the parents to come in. Parents tell me often that they'd like to come in, but they have to work. I understand that.

Student academic challenges were cited as being significant obstacles experienced by educators in a high-poverty school setting. Teacher D1 noted that Title I teachers sometimes struggle “finding the best way to teach children the standards and concepts that they need to know even if [the students] are not on grade level or if they don't appear

to be ready for that concept.” “Most of our children come in 3 years behind, so you are struggling from the get-go on trying to get them where they need to be each year”

(Teacher D4). This challenge impacted Teacher E5’s instructional practice over time:

The first few years were very overwhelming. Every year, I have a vast majority of students who come in dramatically below grade level. The first few years, I don't feel like I helped them to grow as much as I should have. I now have more strategies that I can use. Now I get excited, because I know what I have to do to help them close the gaps that they have. I can quickly pull in those strategies and see growth.

Teacher B1 also works to meet the diverse needs of the students in the school:

It's important to give something [education] that is high quality to a population that a lot of other people don't even think of. It's important to me because I know that I can go back to [a previous, more affluent school] and teach those 3rd graders and teach to them through a closet where they can only hear half of what I am saying. If I assess those kids, they'll probably score better than most of the kids that I am working with now. However, it's more important for me to do what I am doing because you can tell when those kids care, even when they're cursing you out. (Teacher B1)

The “excessive testing” referenced by Teacher D2 makes differentiating instruction even more difficult. Teacher C2 expressed concerns with the “state expectations”:

That's a challenge because you know they have their requirements and expectations and that's a challenge for any teacher to try to meet those. Sometimes it's realistic and sometimes it's not. So to me, that would be one of the main

challenges. But also sometimes you have to put that out of your head. As long as you're meeting the needs of your children and you see them growing, sometimes you have to realize you know its apples and oranges and not everybody is going to be on the same level.

Having students attend school regularly is also an issue that affects academic standing.

“Attendance is one of the main concerns. If students aren't there on time, they are losing valuable instructional time and falling behind even though they are already behind”

(Teacher B3).

“Students bring many of the social and emotional circumstances that students experience at home with them when they come to school” (Teacher E1). Several teacher participants recognize the social and emotional learning needs as common challenges students face. According to Teacher D2,

For high-poverty schools, there are a lot of battles and the challenges go beyond just what is happening at schools. Students have underlying stress that they bring with them; Students experience emotional effects as well. What happened in their homes the night before? Were mom & dad fighting? Were older brothers & sisters battling with parents? What went on in their neighborhoods?

Teacher D1 discussed how to respond to these social and emotional challenges. He believed that we should “develop an understanding of where the students are coming from and what they are having to deal with outside of the school day and how it can affect their education.”

Our children come to us needing a lot more than some other kids. Our kids have needs that they don't even know they have. We work with them to try to blur

those lines, so they feel like they don't have that many needs. (Teacher E7)

In many cases, teachers reflected on how they purchase supplies and materials for their students. One teacher (D2) even recalled helping a student get a scholarship for a class trip to Washington, DC. The student's thank you note showed his appreciation for being able to sleep in a real bed. At home, he slept on the couch and could not go to sleep until the rest of the family went to bed. She realized that this is what caused him to be sleepy at school. Teacher D2 continued to reflect:

For most of my kids, they come in with an elevated level of stress and survival need and how do I balance that with an education, because knowing that the education they receive is going to impact the rest of their future. At high-poverty schools, there's a lot more to education and the importance of building a positive community is elevated. You have to focus on students' stress level and how to bring that down before students are able to get to why they need to add numbers or read carefully.

Teacher B1 mentioned how staff members are affected by working in a Title I school: "The trauma, stress, and pressure that the students feel also has an impact on the teachers. It can lead to burnout." Teacher B1 reflected on the impact of the high teacher turnover rate at his school:

Over 70% of the instructional staff has turned over in the past 4 years. It's hard to keep effective teachers in high-needs schools, because the people who do the extra work leave because it's hard to maintain that level of expectation that is put on you. I've seen teachers leave who have given a lot of time and energy to the kids and to building the ties to the community with new teachers who have to

learn the community, develop rapport, adapt to teaching high-needs children, while at the same time becoming more comfortable with the curriculum content that you've been hired to teach.... I feel strongly about not having brand new teachers in these struggling schools because many of them are not prepared well in college for the experience and we don't have the time to properly train them when they get to the school setting. It takes several years to become an effective teacher.

Despite the numerous challenges evident in a Title I school learning environment, teachers have found ways to address those needs. According to Teacher B2,

There are a zillion challenges, but I think teachers in general are resilient and move through the challenges. Balancing the needs to educate the child that day, versus let them sleep on their desk because last night was a bad night. Some of the students are struggling to keep up with their work because there are survival needs that are higher than an academic need at that point. In a Title I school, it's being able to balance when being firm on academics is necessary and picking and choosing your battles.

Although Teacher D4 had worked in a Title I school in another state, she actually found that her Title I school in North Carolina provided more support than she was accustomed to, including "smaller class size, fewer disciplinary problems, and the support of a teacher assistant." Teacher D1 also relayed that an unexpected benefit of being a teacher in a Title I school is that "materials and supplies are not a challenge for teachers at my school." Funding is provided to support these needs.

Extrinsic Motivation Factors

The study participants responded to six questions in the survey to gauge how extrinsically motivated they were to continue in their role as a teacher in a high-poverty school setting. Statements 3, 8, 9, 10, 14, and 16 were designed to assess how strongly teachers felt they needed the outside influences.

Table 7

Results from Survey for Extrinsic Motivation Factors

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
3. There were no other positions available.	21.7%	52.2%	13%	8.7%	4.3%
8. Administrators in this school show appreciation for teacher efforts.	4.3%	0	0	52.2%	43.5%
9. Staff members in this school are recognized for a job well done.	4.3%	0	8.7%	52.2%	34.8%
10. In this school administrators' behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging. *	4.5%	0	4.5%	40.9%	50%
14. The cultural diversity of children in this Title I school is important.	0	0	0	69.6%	30.4%
16. The salary and fringe benefits I receive in this Title I school are fair.	17.4%	26.1%	39.1%	17.4%	0

Note. * One teacher chose not to respond to Question 10.

I asked the following interview questions in order to gain better insight on the extrinsic motivations:

- **Interview Question 6.** How actively were you recruited by Title I schools? Non-Title I schools? (Based on Survey Question 3)
- **Interview Question 7.** In what ways have administrators and other staff members at your school shown their appreciation for the work you do? (Based on Survey Questions, 8, 9, and 10)
- **Interview Question 8.** Why is it important for you to teach in a culturally diverse setting? What positive and challenging effects might a teacher experience when serving students, especially those from a different cultural background? (Based on Survey Question 14)
- **Interview Question 9.** How important is it for a teacher to receive fair compensation for their work? Why do you think there was a disparity in how participants responded to Survey Question 16 about fair salary and benefits? (Based on Survey Question 16)

Teacher responses to the survey and interview questions provide insight on the extrinsic factors that motivate them to return to their Title I school.

Survey Question 3

Most of the teachers indicated that they had other school possibilities when they were searching for a teaching position. Although three of the teachers acknowledged that there were no other positions available, 74% of the teacher participants stated that not having any other options at non-Title I schools was not the reason that led them to their current assignment, implying that they had a choice of where they wanted to work.

Interview Question 6

Teachers B3 and E6 indicated that they were actively recruited to teach in a Title I

school. “As a VIF teacher, the Title I schools expressed more interest. I didn't know what Title I schools were before” (Teacher E1). Teacher E4 moved to North Carolina from out of state. She was offered a position at several other schools but decided to accept the job at her current Title I school. Teacher B2 was encouraged to come to her Title I school by a friend who was serving at one. Similarly, Teacher E7 shared that she was asked to interview by a colleague at her Title I school: “I was young and wanted a job. Over time, I just became part of the building.” Teacher D4 shared that she was highly recruited to teach by principals from Title I and non-Title I schools:

I decided to go with the Title I school over others because the Title I principal spent three hours with me on the interview. She took me around the school. We had some of the same philosophies. I had a good feeling. Everywhere we went, the staff was very welcoming. I didn't get that too much at the other school.

It came down to what was available when some of the teachers were looking for a position. Some of the teachers noted that the district's positions that were available were only in Title I schools. “No one was searching for me. When I was looking, there was an abundance of positions available in my current school” (Teacher D5). “I was not recruited. I actually went to the job fair and applied to only two schools – both were Title I” (Teacher D6). Teacher D1 relayed that the position at her school was available when she was searching for a position.

Survey Questions 8, 9, and 10

A common belief among most of the survey participants was that they are motivated to continue working when their efforts are celebrated by the people with whom they work. An overwhelming 96% of the survey participants felt that administrators in

their school show appreciation for teacher efforts. In addition, 91% of the teachers believe that their administrators' behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging. In these Title I schools, 87% of the teachers think that staff members in their school are recognized for a job well done.

Interview Question 7

Most of the teachers felt appreciated by their administrators. This extrinsic motivator encouraged the teachers to continue to work hard. These administrative appreciation strategies were often very simple displays of gratitude.

We don't have a PTA at my school. Our administrators give us pats on the back, nice notes, and words of encouragement. On Wellness Wednesdays they provide healthy treats in the lounge. We also get positive acknowledgements in the staff meetings. (Teacher A1)

Teacher E4 appreciates that her principals communicate that "we are doing a good job and thank us for what we do. I enjoy working with my colleagues. I receive a lot of support from my co-workers. It feels like home away from home." Teacher E6 likes the "public praise. Thanks and praise notes in mailboxes and at the start of staff meetings." According to Teacher C2,

It could be something as small as a little note in your box to something like, in staff meetings, praising all the staff members. Sometimes some grades levels have been called out to speak (to share something they've done in class). Overall, our administration makes sure that everyone is appreciated...whether it's something like a shoutout in a faculty meeting or a little something personal in your box. They're really good at praising us for what we do and what we've done with our

walkthroughs and the feedback from observations.

Teacher F2 shared some similar appreciation strategies from her principals and other teachers at the school:

We do a lot of shoutouts, anybody can do that. Administrators really do it a lot. Just shouting out to certain staff members that do a good job on certain things. In PLTs [Professional Learning Teams] now and then, she'll give us papers and notes to different teachers and put them in their boxes and it's really nice when you go to your boxes and you have like five of these things telling you how wonderful you are from people you don't normally hear from so that's really helpful. We do Teacher-of-the-Month and Teacher-of-the-Week that just highlights different teachers. All the time on email they're just saying stuff about certain teachers that have done something during the week.

Teacher D1 also agreed that she is thankful for the “shout-outs, emails, meetings, and discussions” from her administrative team. Teacher D2 shared a variety of strategies that her principals use to recognize teachers:

Being visible. Coming in the classroom for non-evaluative purposes just to check on teachers and students. Positive words of encouragement. Leaving a post-it note about something positive. I feel affirmation from words of encouragement. Raffles, gift cards, food, school supplies, and other acts of service are important to some of my other teammates. I also appreciate that my administrators and instructional support staff show their support in a variety of ways to appeal to what teachers like. [They should] make the effort to get to know their staff.

Teacher D3 added to this variety of appreciation efforts:

Sometimes we are called into the office as a grade level or as an individual to talk about EVAAS data, etc. That's recognition. Our PTA will show their appreciation when our school gets a good grade on the school report card or when we are at a low point at our school to provide a pick me up. There are also normal Christmas parties. It's nice when everybody can get together to socialize where it's not about work. That's very healthy.

Teacher B1 shared that his administrative team is known for

motivating teachers in staff meetings and positive messages on sticky notes during walkthroughs. Assistant principals do a fantastic job for staff morale as much as a principal does, because sometimes the AP is just there more often. Principals are usually consumed with more meetings.... They also do little things like informal conversation in the hallways and a Kona Ice truck visit.

Teacher B1 turned this extrinsic motivation factor into one that was more intrinsic; although he is thankful for his principals' efforts to recognize staff, "I have learned to motivate myself and not depend on an administrator for accolades. Not that I don't care about receiving acknowledgement for the work I do, but I expect to do a great job in the first place." Although Teacher E5 has not observed as much of the appreciation efforts that others have, she also learned to motivate herself:

There could be more of this type of extrinsic motivation at my school. I don't get this type of support so much at my school, but I motivate myself because I'm that type of person. But as far as receiving that type of outside motivation, there is a lack of that at my school. Some types of motivation I'd like to hear are quick recognitions while walking down the hall like "Congrats on your test scores.

Great strategy used in class today.” I understand that our administration is busy as a result of the growth of our school size. I would appreciate more frequent comments expressing appreciation to motivate us. This gratitude doesn't take money like donuts or gifts cards, just let me know that you noticed that I am doing a good job. That means more than any of the other things that are often done for teachers during teacher appreciation week.

Beyond the tangible appreciation items, Teacher B3 is simply grateful for “administrators being supportive and willing to provide the things you need to provide a good education for the children. It’s good when they have the understanding that it’s [teaching] not easy, but that teachers work hard.” This type of support is in line with Teacher C1’s preference for being appreciated:

They [principals] walk the talk. We get supported with parents and times that there are issues. They don't hand out cookies and flowers all the time and I don't expect that. They show us in what they say and how much they recognize our efforts.

Teacher D4 also seeks the support from her administrative team:

Our administration is very supportive of us and will back us up if we have any problems with students or with parents. I think this is part of the reason we've been able to keep so many of our teachers at our school. They work hard with any type of recognition that we have like faculty recognitions and celebrations at staff meetings. We have an award that is passed from faculty members to faculty members. Our social committee and PBIS committee all work really hard on morale and keeping that up throughout the year.

In addition to simple shows of appreciation, the support also resonated with Teacher D5:

Verbal praise. Little trinkets/tangible items in your mailbox. Administration would see you in the hallways, ask you how you are doing and remember issues that you've been having. I always felt like their door was open. I loved that my admin team will always have your back. This is different from my experience in a private school where I felt like the administrators always took the parents' sides over the teachers. I always felt like the administration was on my side.

Although Teacher D6 enjoyed small tokens of appreciation like “positive notes from administrators about what you are doing well, asking teachers to share what they're doing with other teachers, and to be recognized verbally and on Twitter,” what she especially appreciated was the faith that her principal had in her potential to be a great educator:

“My principal told me that I would be the teacher-of-the year within 3 years and I was.”

Teacher E1 made a connection between her principals’ gratitude efforts, support, and school improvement:

Admin is supportive and verbally and publicly recognize teachers when they do a good job. It’s good for the team to see that the administrators are not just in their office, but they are aware of what's happening around them and the efforts that others are contributing. Our school is showing a lot of growth since our principal has taken this position, because he takes into account what the teachers say and recognizes what they do well. I feel like we are a family at my school.

The impact of a strong principal was clear in Teacher E7’s comments:

Administration makes the difference. I've had administrators who write notes to you. A personal note about something you did well, makes you feel good and

want to keep doing it. I've had administrators who call you out in staff meetings to publicly thank you and administrators who say "If I'm not talking to you, you are fine." I've had to learn to feel good about the "If I'm not talking to you, you are doing your job" principals. I've learned to adjust to both styles.

Some of the teachers revealed that their principal's support positively impacted teacher recruitment and retention. Teacher C1 met the principal at a job fair and started working at her current school because she wanted to work with that principal. Teacher C2 noted that a strong principal influenced her to choose a Title I school:

It was the principal and the way he interviewed and the way he made me feel and the way he presented himself was the reason I went to work at [the school]. So, the Title I really wasn't a yay or nay it was just basically the principal. After I interviewed with three other principals in this area, he just had the greater pull I guess you'd say.

Teacher B1 commented,

I actually considered leaving the school, but was convinced to stay by the principal who wholeheartedly expressed his appreciation for the work that I've done for the school and community. I felt validated by the effort that was made by [principal] to keep me at the school.

I enjoy working for my current principal because he trusts me to do my job without micromanaging. I've been at the same school for 20 years and had a couple of administrators. One of those principals had a style that was so difficult for me to work with, that I even considered transferring to a different school.

(Teacher E2)

This type of trust from administration was also evident in Teacher E3's reflection:

I don't have a principal that goes around patting everyone on the back. However, he respects the work that I do and has confidence in what he hired me to do. He trusts me and just lets me be. He's there when I need him though. He's not micromanaging you. He has your back when you have a problem with a parent. I feel really trusted by the administrators and the rest of the instructional staff. They respect me as a professional. I'm not extrinsically motivated, but I'm motivated by being trusted.

Similar thoughts were shared by Teacher F1:

We get positive notes in our box, shout outs, Staff-of-the-Week, Teacher-of-the-Month. I believe that one of the biggest things [ways to show appreciation] is the respect that they have for our knowledge and the trust that they have for what we do in the classroom. They trust us to try something new with a standard and the freedom to try something new. And they don't require every classroom to do the same thing. We have the trust and freedom within PLTs to talk about different things and try different things. That respect and appreciation for trying new things is shown by how they respond to our lesson plans or activities or the shout outs and recognition that we get.

The appreciation efforts were short-lived for Teacher B2 where there was a significant amount turnover in administration: "We've had nine principals in 14 years at my school."

Survey Question 14

All the teachers in this study appreciate the cultural diversity found in a Title I

school. This unanimous belief that diverse cultures benefit the whole school community is prominent in teacher leaders who have made a long-standing impact on the school.

Interview Question 8

Some of the teachers discussed the diversity that was common in their high-needs school. “Staff and students are incredibly diverse, representing various different cultural backgrounds. This represents the real-world. Not like the private school that I worked at before” (Teacher B2).

Teacher participants gave valuable insight on why it is important for them to teach in the culturally diverse Title I school settings. “Working with people from different cultures opens you up to things that you didn't previously know or hadn't thought about in that way” (Teacher D1). Teacher C2 discussed the learning opportunities in her culturally diverse school:

I think one of the effects it has, at least personally, I learn from them as well. I can learn more about their cultures so I can take that back to my class I have next year and that I can remember things that I need to do to help each student because you know each student is different and comes from different backgrounds and to me, I love it. I think it's interesting to have those different cultures and backgrounds. It's like anybody would say, “If you had all the same thing, it would be boring.” You know it's never boring when you have a variety in the classroom.

According to several teacher participants, this cultural diversity is just as important to the students as it is to the teachers. Teacher B1 relates to the students well as he represents a minority culture in this country (Asian-American), and he is also one of the few male teachers at his school.

Kids don't know how to take you when you look different than everyone else.

Cultural diversity is important to me because I recognize that I am culturally different than everybody else. I was raised in a predominately White neighborhood. I didn't experience a whole lot of diversity until I got to college.

It's very important to me that kids are taken care of while they are with me. I want them to feel like I have their back. It makes it easier for me to teach diversity to kids, because I have lived a diverse life. (Teacher B3)

Teacher C1 also commented on her experiences with diversity and how it impacts the students:

I think it's important for kids to attend a school that is diverse, because that's the way the world is. When I went to school, it wasn't until high school when I encountered somebody that was not white. I can name the exchange student and the couple of African American students that were in my high school. When I moved here as a teacher, I was dealing with Hispanic and African American children. [My school] is more of a microcosm of the world and it's gotten me to understand different cultures and different backgrounds. I think that's an important way for children to be educated. The language [barriers] are a challenge. It's interesting to think about what goes on in different kids houses – food and traditions. I don't know that culture represents a challenge; it just makes things more interesting.

Teacher E2 discussed how cultural diversity can help students in the future:

The world is made up of different cultures. Having the children being able to interact with other children that are culturally different from them is very

important for me. When they grow up and go to a job, there won't just be one culture working there. It's a life skill that they need to be able to get along with other people.

Teacher E3 explained how the diverse populations at her school are sources of pride:

When you have a diverse school like ours, it tears down some of the misconceptions. We've got a lot of international students who choose our school because it's ok to be who you are. Those differences are celebrated, and students don't feel like they have to hide it. Our school fosters that appreciation. The kids benefit from interacting with each other. They learn how to respect each other.

Teacher D4 agreed and made a personal connection to her own family:

Our world is becoming more culturally diverse. As a family, when we are looking at a school for our son, we are looking for something that is going to mimic the world, so I think teaching in this type of situation is good for anybody. I'm learning a lot that I didn't know about the cultures that I work with. I think that's important for people to realize. Awareness. Understanding. I've learned so much from my kids and parents that I probably would not ever have known if I had not working in the school that I am in now.

Some of the teachers reflected on their experience living in another country. "I lived in other countries and understand from experience, that you learn so much more from other cultures. You can see similarities and differences. It also teaches you to respect other people and their views" (Teacher A1). Teacher E1 learned more about different cultures when she came to this country. She feels this is an experience that she

looks forward to teaching her students: “The world is much larger than we see and there are many other cultures, languages, accents, foods, and celebrations. That is important in helping students develop tolerance and respect.” Teacher E4 also had experience living with other cultures while traveling with her husband when he was in the military:

When you are able to meet other people who were raised differently from the way you were raised, you learn so much more and you can see similarities and differences. It also teaches you how to respect others and their views.

Representing mixed nationalities, Canadian and American, Teacher E6 went to homogeneous schools as a student and tried to fit in. She even taught overseas for 2 years where there were others representing diverse nationalities. She realized, “I wanted to teach in schools that celebrated diverse cultures. Empowering! It's important for kids to embrace who they are. They shouldn't have to hide part of their identity when they are at school” (Teacher E6). For Teacher E5, she experienced “culture shock” when she moved to this country at 8 years old:

My first school was predominately white, and it was very difficult for me because I didn't feel represented. Growing up and experiencing that first-hand makes me realize that it's important for all children to feel welcome and that every child that's in my classroom never feels the way that I felt or has to go through the things that I went through. Having gone through that makes me more cognizant of this and makes it so much more important to me that all cultures be represented, that there be diversity, that there tries to be an understanding of all cultures and respect of all cultures. To me, that is something that is always on my mind.

Teaching in a culturally diverse setting can also present some challenges. Teacher

D1 shared that you “want to be able to relate to them [the students] specifically, yet you haven't had to deal with things that they've had to deal with. Over time, as you learn more, you can learn to empathize and sympathize more.” Despite the differences, Teacher D5 referred to herself as “colorblind” and “focused on seeing students as individuals who need love and acceptance regardless of their cultural background. I’ve never had any issues with relating to the different cultures.” Teacher F1 shared her appreciation for serving in a culturally diverse school and recognized the special skills teachers need to master in that setting:

It’s important to teach in a culturally diverse classroom because that’s the world that the students are being brought up in. It’s important for them to have knowledge of that and see adults and others role model how to respect and appreciate and share in the different views of everybody in our world. You have to think of so many things – the activities that you do in the classroom may not always be viewed in the same light as somebody else from a different culture. It’s important to not only build rapport with your students, but also with the families and that your families trust that what you are doing in the classroom is also in their child’s best interest.

Teacher F2 also employs certain strategies that will enable students and staff to take full advantage of everyone’s cultural uniqueness:

I think it’s really important for kids to see different kids. We don't want all the kids to look the same. I think it’s really important so they can learn from other people and other cultures. I think it's important to have the parents come in and explain also because I know just what I can read and not everything on the

internet is true so you try to research and find things and it's not true or they're from a completely different area and they celebrate totally differently from what you research. So I think it's very important to have the parents come in and talk to them and ask "What do you believe about this?" and "How do you celebrate this?" At the very beginning of the year, I send out a survey and those are some of the questions that are on there. "What holidays do you and don't you celebrate?" "Why do you celebrate this?" "What do I need to know about your family?" or "Where you came from?" That's very interesting to find out. I've always heard that Hispanics really put teachers on a pedestal and, yeah, that is true in some places but in some places they don't do that, so that's important for me to know which families I need to reach out to more to gain their respect. I think it's important for the kids to see and embrace all the differences. We all look different and might celebrate different things, but we're all the same on the inside and we all have a heart and we can all be loving.

Survey Question 16

Monetary compensation is an extrinsic motivator that has varying effects on the study participants. In response to the statement about the salary and if fringe benefits teachers receive in the Title I school are fair, only four (17.4%) of the 23 teachers agreed. Ten (43.5%) of the teachers felt that the monetary compensation was not appropriate for the work they do. Nine of the teachers (39.1%) were undecided on whether or not their benefits were fair.

Interview Question 9

I inquired about the monetary benefits teachers receive. "Title I teachers work

extremely hard and we don't get any fringe benefits" (Teacher A1). However, some of the teachers remember a time when teachers were paid more for working in highly impacted schools. "We used to get bonuses. That was cut out" (Teacher A1). Teacher E2 commented, "We don't get any different salary at another school. We used to get an 'Equity Plus' bonus. When they stopped giving the bonus, it didn't make me want to leave." Teacher D2 also remembers receiving an extra supplement for working at a high-needs school:

One of the things that has frustrated me that's not fair that the schools that don't have a strong PTA don't get the monetary support like other schools. We used to get reimbursed for school supplies. It's more challenging when you don't have the PTA or the community partners to help level the playing field by providing supplies and other things that students need.

Not only is there no longer a supplement, but Teacher E6 commented that Title I struggles are even more complex:

We get extra pressure, more observations, the district looks at you more, you get more district people come in telling you mixed messages about what to do and what not to do. I'm unsure of the compensation benefits for Title 1 schools.

Several of the participants reflected on how their salary impacts their families. "It's extremely important, especially in this state, for teachers to be compensated fairly. Teachers don't want to focus so heavily on money, but it is hard to be able to support your family and live comfortably" (Teacher D1). This is also a concern for Teacher D3: "We don't make very much money. If I didn't have another income coming into my home, I would have to take another job." According to Teacher E3,

For me, money has never been a driving force, however in my profession, I feel very concerned for my colleagues and myself. If I weren't married, I probably wouldn't be able to support myself. I have a lot of single friends who are teachers that have their Master's and they still struggle just to make ends meet. That's why it concerns me that our teachers don't make enough to support their home and monthly expenses. I find that very concerning. Although salary is not a motivating factor, it concerns me because some people who are passionate about education can't afford to be a teacher anymore.

Some of the teachers commented that educators actually spend their own funds to support their classroom needs. "Teachers use a lot of their own money to supply things for their classroom. If they had more resources, it would be better. A lot of the money the teachers make ends up going right back to the school" (Teacher E1). According to Teacher A1,

At our school, we spend our own money to buy things for our classroom. If there are things that I want my students to have, I purchase them myself. I think a lot of teachers do that. I have spent a lot of my own money throughout the year. Even giving the kids birthday parties or buying various school supplies. We pay our bills and then we turn around and put money back into our classroom. I purchase clothes for kids or pay for them to go on a field trip.

Although Teacher D4 does not believe her salary determines whether or not she continues in her role, she has similar concerns and remembers when the district provided extra funding to support teachers who need to make additional purchases to support their students' instructional needs:

That money was used to reimburse me for buying the things that I need in the classroom to help my kids and differentiate for them so I can help them get caught up. A lot of times when you're teaching kids that are farther behind than other kids, you need extra support and extra materials other than what the county already provides.

Several other teacher participants indicated that monetary compensation is not a motivator for them to continue teaching. "Salary does not come into play when deciding whether or not to work here" (Teacher D6). According to Teacher D3,

Personally, I didn't become a teacher for the money. I'm going to do what I feel is necessary, regardless of what kind of money I make, because of the commitment I've made. If you are not student-centered and you are constantly thinking about if you make enough money to be doing all of this extra work at home, I feel like you need to get out of the profession because these kids don't ask to be put in their situation. They are born into it. I feel we all have a calling and mine was to be in a Title I school. I feel like if you are basing your work ethic on money, you are in the wrong profession.

Although Teacher D5 would appreciate an increased salary, especially since she has a 40-minute drive to work, she does not think a teacher's reward should come from their salary:

If this is your dedication and what you feel called to do, then you do it. There sure are a lot of rewards that come from teaching the students I teach. I never thought about deserving to get more money because I work in a Title I school. I've worked on the opposite end of the spectrum where parents were overly demanding also.

"I love what I'm doing. The pay doesn't make that much of a difference. The only regret that I have is that I didn't go back to get my Master's" (Teacher A1).

The challenge with being paid appropriately has caused some teachers to consider leaving their Title I school or the profession at some point. According to Teacher B1,

Last year, I interviewed at another school for a position that paid a lot more money. One of my administrators convinced me to stay and I love the community and the school. I decided to give up the extra pay to stay at my school.

Considering all of the work you have to do and given the circumstances in the state of North Carolina, it [the pay rate] is a major factor in me considering additional opportunities moving forward. Even as an A.P. [assistant principal], you're not making the type of money for the type of investment that you have made in your education.

When assessing the teaching workload compared to the salary received, Teacher E5 also had to reevaluate her profession of choice:

I have actually considered leaving the profession due to this because of the work that is put into what I do. When I'm working on lesson plans until 8 or 9:00 at night and I have a family that needs me and I can't pay the bills at the end of the month, that disconnect just doesn't correlate. It's not fair. I do love what I do so I always end up changing my mind and staying in the profession, but that has several times for me been the factor that almost makes me want to leave the profession. This is what I love and what I'm prepared for.

Teacher F2 commented that there would have to be a significant change in salary to get her to consider leaving her school: "I don't know if I would consider going to another

school just because I was going to get a bonus, maybe like a \$40,000 bonus, but not like anything small.”

Teacher B1 proposed how improving teacher salaries will benefit students:

What needs to happen to promote growth and move kids and help our overall public-school system, is essentially the same thing they are trying to do right now with the principals in our district and in the state. Pay these people like in sports. Be able to compensate those people who have extra responsibilities [leadership].

Although Teacher B2 agreed that teachers deserve a higher salary, it is not a motivating factor for her to continue working at her school:

Being a single mom who needs to put her kids through college, the money is important, but not important enough to make my decision on whether I work as a teacher or not. Whether I’m working at a high-needs school or not, I still teach the same way and try to make the same connections. I’m satisfied. Money pays bills, but it's not my deciding factor.

The following teacher participants shared similar sentiments that the passion for the work is more important than the salary:

It's important, but if you're like me and you love what you do and you love the children – it’s in my mind, but in the back of my mind. That’s not what I go to work for every day, but everyone could use the extra pay to show that you are being valued. (Teacher B3)

I think across the board, no one is really happy with their salary. We thought we were going to be able to get the pay increases when we all signed on.... I know though at another school, it's not going to be any different in terms of a pay

increase unless I go to one that is one of the schools that are really on the red flag list so to speak. That's not a factor for me. If I was looking for a pay increase, I would go out of state and I'm not planning on doing that. (Teacher C2)

I knew what the pay grade was when I went into the teaching field so I don't get caught up in how much I make because I truly love what I do and I want to make a difference. What I'm making is okay, because I believe this is my purpose.

(Teacher E4)

I've never really even looked at my salary as a part of my choice in career. I came into this profession having come from two teachers, knowing that I won't live the most lavish lifestyle, but I will be fine and will be able to carry out my passion.

So my salary really isn't a factor or motivation for me at all. I have gotten the bonuses before for being blue in testing. That is a huge motivator, but my yearly salary and being in a Title I school isn't even factored into my decision of whether to stay or look elsewhere. (Teacher F1)

Commitment Factors

Of the 32 questions in the survey, 10 of the items revealed the level of the commitment a teacher has towards their school. Items 23 through 32 suggested that the teachers who are more committed to the school are more likely to continue their employment in that setting.

Table 8*Results from Survey for Commitment Motivation Factors*

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
23. This school values student achievement.	0	4.3%	0	34.8%	60.9%
24. The school is committed to meeting the needs of all children.	0	4.3%	0	47.8%	47.8%
25. I enjoy discussing my school with people outside of it.	0	0	8.7%	52.2%	39.1%
26. I view the school's problems as my own. *	0	4.5%	18.2%	50%	27.3%
27. I feel emotionally attached to this school. *	0	0	0	36.4%	63.6%
28. This school has a great deal of meaning for me. *	0	0	0	50%	50%
29. I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school.	0	0	0	39.1%	60.9%
30. I think I could easily become as attached to another school.	13%	26.1%	52.2%	8.7%	0
31. I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this school.	0	4.3%	27.1%	30.4%	43.5%
32. I feel a part of a family in this school.	0	0	0	43.5%	56.5%

Note. * One teacher chose not to respond to Questions 26, 27, and 28.

I asked the following interview questions in order to gain better insight on how the level of commitment motivates teachers to stay in their high-needs school:

- **Interview Question 10.** Would you work at a school that did not value student achievement or was not committed to meeting the needs of all children? Why or why not? (Based on Survey Question 10)
- **Interview Question 11.** Can you describe what conditions need to be in place for a teacher to become personally connected to a school? (Based on Survey Questions 25-32)

Teacher responses to the survey and interview questions provide insight on the commitment factors that motivate them to return to their Title I school.

Questions 23 and 24

All but two teachers believed that their school both values student achievement and is committed to meeting the needs of all children. The two teachers who disagreed with one of the two statements are from the same school (School E). According to these two questions, the school's level of commitment also corresponds to commitment as a motivation factor.

Interview Question 10

During the follow-up interview, the overwhelming majority of teacher participants felt strongly about working at a school that values student achievement and is committed to meeting the needs of all children. Teachers referenced their commitment and purpose in this discussion. "If you're not trying to do those things [improve student achievement and meeting the needs of students], there's no purpose in you being there" (Teacher B1). "That's what we're here for, for the children. If the school's not doing that then that defeats the whole purpose of being a teacher and an educator" (Teacher C2). Teacher E1 emphasized that at such a school, "it would be very difficult to work under

those conditions. It's like swimming upstream in a river.” “We work very hard at my school and I just can't imagine being at a school that does not work towards that goal. You have to be student-centered. That's your client” (Teacher D4). Teacher D1 emphasized that making a positive impact on students is “why teachers are in the profession”; and if the growth is not achieved, “this is one of the reasons that teachers change schools.”

Teacher D5 addressed the importance of dedicating a collaborative team to help students meet learning targets:

I spend hours upon hours working hard to help my students grow as much as they can. Everyone around me needs to show similar commitment. If everyone around the students isn't committed, the students won't show the growth that they are capable of. It's a team effort.

An underlying goal of working to address the unique needs of all student learners is a common trend among the teachers. “We need to meet the needs of all children. I feel we need to look at every child as an individual and plan for that child so every child can grow” (Teacher A1). Teacher B3 commented that if a school was not designed to support the needs of all learners, she “wouldn't want to work there because it wouldn't be fair to the children if we tried to help some, but not all. I wouldn't be happy in that type of environment.” Similar thoughts were expressed by Teacher E2: “I wouldn't want to work there, even though I know that I would do the best for my class. Just seeing other children not being treated the same would bother me too much.”

Questions 25-32

These items reveal a level of commitment that is related to a teacher's personal

connection to the school. Each of the statements in this section show that teachers are highly motivated and committed to their roles as teachers in their high-needs school setting. A large majority of the teachers commented that they enjoy discussing their school with people outside of it (91%), view the school's problems as their own (77%), and would be happy to spend the rest of their career with their school (74%).

Survey Questions 27, 28, 29, and 32 had 100% agreement from the participating teachers on feeling emotionally attached to the school, finding personal meaning with school, having a strong sense of belonging to the school, and feeling a part of a family at the school.

All of the questions in this section show average favorable ratings except Number 30, "I think I could easily become as attached to another school." To this question, the majority response was "Undecided" (52.2%). Two of the teachers indicated that they could see themselves forging a close connection with another school if they ever decided to leave their current school.

Interview Question 11

Teacher participants were asked to describe what conditions need to be in place for a teacher to become personally connected to a school. Their responses relayed their level of commitment to the profession and to their school.

Several of the teachers spoke about the strength of their collegial network as a factor in their decision to stay at their school. Teacher B1 spoke highly of his colleagues' ability to support students and suggested that strong teachers can play a significant role in improving a struggling school's outcomes:

The majority of the teachers that I work with care about making sure that the

students are taken care of. I'm very proud to work at [my school] for that reason alone. The majority of the people who are there are for the right reasons. The majority of the teachers have grown to fall in love with this community. It's not necessarily the conditions in place at a school physically or culturally; it depends on the strength of the teaching staff. If you took all of the teachers that are involved in this study and put them all in one struggling school, I think you could turn that school around in only one year.

Teacher D4 noticed a correlation between the positive relationships with peers and how they can impact students:

I think it has a lot to do with the support you get and who you work with. Friendships and family. You are at school a lot and they're your second family. That's the way it is at our school. We look out for each other and we are there for each other when we need each other - good or bad. Having that family relationship with the people you work with carries over into your classroom. Your staff has to be happy in order for your kids to be happy.

This support network is also important to Teacher D2:

It is the school community and environment that is created by the staff that makes the difference. We're in this together as a family. I feel the connectedness. [I like] being checked in on and supported, teammates providing positive reassurances, teammates helping you focus on the positive impacts that you are making even though it may seem as if progress is moving too slowly. My teammates helped me to look past the slow academic progress to looking at the amazing strides in behavior that sets the student up for future success.

According to Teacher E4,

I enjoy the personalities that I work with. We tend to be a family. I love [our principals]. They are very supportive. If we go to them and we have an issue or concern, they help us. You have to get to know your colleagues. Even those who work on a different grade level. I look at everyone at the school as part of a team and we have to work together to give all of the children what they need. I think it's important that teachers connect, collaborate, and encourage each other.

This family-like atmosphere is also important to Teacher E1: "After spending a lot of years in a school, the people end up becoming your family, especially for me since I don't have other family here." Teacher B2 agreed that the positive relationships with the students and the staff are essential in fostering personal connections to the school. Those relationships are often strained when there is a lack of consistency.

Turnover is a big factor. When I first came to my school, it was like a family. Everybody knew each other. Nobody left unless they retired. I don't feel that now and haven't for a few years at my school because of not only the principal turnover, but the teacher turnover also. We've had at least 20% teacher turnover rate each year. When that happens, you lose that sense of family. It becomes more like a shopping mall revolving door. But, if you're not looking at the staff and looking at the children, you build that family through the students since we teach their siblings and make familiar connections with the families. That remains much more consistent than with the staff. My family is more with the students than with the staff. We don't have the time or commitment with the staff because the turnover is so high. It's hard to believe, but there are actually some staff members

that I don't know well, and I don't have a strong relationship with them.

Teacher D5 saw the benefits firsthand of a supportive team of teachers at her school:

“The teachers at my school are committed. I was asked to move to a different position within the school and my colleagues were very supportive in offering help.”

Participants discussed how the positive relationships with colleagues extend beyond the school setting and strengthen teacher commitment. “There has to be friendships made between the teachers outside of work. [It helps to have] a strong team. I've worked together with one of my colleagues since I've been at my school” (Teacher E2). According to Teacher C2, teachers become personally connected to the school as a result of

the overall morale of the school, teachers feeling appreciated, being acknowledged for our efforts and our work, having different social gatherings other than just the meetings at school, offering those outside-of-school activities where the teachers can meet and take their minds off of it and get along in a different atmosphere. I know our school is really good about that.

In addition to the strong relationships with the students, staff, and families, some of the teachers suggested that the relationship with the school's administrative team is responsible for the commitment a teacher has towards their school. “The administration has got your back” (Teacher D5). According to Teacher B3,

The major factor is that you have to be able to build relationships with the students and your parents because that's your purpose for coming there every day. Then you've got to be shown appreciation by your administration knowing that we are all working towards a common goal and we are all working hard and

collaborating together.

Teacher E5 discussed teacher perceptions of the principals and how this creates a model for the other staff members to follow:

You need to have a respect for your administrative team. If a teacher respects the administrative team and how they are running the school and how they are treating the teachers, that would make a teacher want to stay. There has to be a very high level of respect towards me and the students. It starts at the top and that impacts how the teachers treat each other. [It matters] if I'm being disrespected in front of others or the way I'm being treated or spoken to. [It also matters] if I see children being treated wrong. It's the treatment and level of respect that I see from the top trickling down that will make me want to stay.

Teacher D6 believed that the principals' strategic leadership plays a major role in facilitating the connection between teachers and their school:

To become personally connected, you have to really agree with the vision of that school. The person at the top creates that vision. Principals set the vision, the mood, and the tone. You can become attached if that principal shows that they love that school and the challenges, that they want everyone to succeed. Those who aren't connected to that vision, go away to a different school where they can find the vision for them.

Teacher E3 shared how his administrative team encourages personal connections between the staff at her school:

Our school is really large, so the way our admin deals with that is to start building within each grade level first. If you have a strong grade level, you have a strong

school. We all look out for each other, so if someone is having a baby or some kind of celebration on that grade level, that grade level communicates it to the rest of the school. This keeps the bond and relationship going amongst the staff.

Teacher C1 included the entire school community as contributors to a positive and productive work environment:

It starts from administration and also the people at the bottom - the people that work in the office, the cafeteria people, the custodians, and everybody who is so invested in supporting each other. Administrators build that atmosphere. There have been four different principals since I've been at my school, but it seems what was built from that original person that I wanted to work for has continued. Our school has tremendous community support. The local churches and businesses are very supportive.

Teacher D3 expanded on the support she receives from all the staff at her school:

I found out very early on when I was at [school] that you need support from everyone. I figured out quickly that I needed to talk to my kids' E.C. teachers, get the counselors involved, get support for medical needs, and communicate with the other teachers. I feel that you need to reach out. I don't believe that if you are in a Title I school, that you are able to do this on your own. I think that's why you become so attached to the school, because everybody is there to support you whether it's another grade level teacher, or if it's our home-school coordinator. I call on people all the time for help. That's just the way it is at a Title I school and that's what makes our school so tight knit. If somebody can't help me or answer my question, they find the answer somewhere else. It's very supportive.

Teacher E6 summed up the thoughts of several other teachers:

You have to have people that you enjoy working with at the school, people that you enjoy being around day to day. You have to have a community of learners that you enjoy being around. You also have to have administrators that you enjoy working for that appreciate you and what you are doing.

Teacher F1 attested that teacher levels of commitment and purpose encourage positive relationships at the school site:

The teacher has to want to be at the school and in the profession in order to accept all of the other parts of the job. You can do a lot of recognitions, but if someone doesn't want to be there, you're never going to be able to change their mind or get them to want to be a part of your family. I've encouraged people to come visit my school. We have several schools around us that people [teacher candidates] tend to prefer more. I encourage people to come to my school for a tour to get a feel for it instead of just listening to what other people say. I attended school here. My kindergarten teacher teaches next door to me. You have to be ready to accept all the relationships. If you decide to go in and just teach within your bubble and not be open to all of the community and relationships and kids' personal lives, you're not going to be open and accepted. You have to start with the leadership being comfortable with sharing their personal lives and having relationships with the teachers where they are engaging in casual conversation and expressing a genuine interest in the kids' lives.

Teacher F2 had similar thoughts as her colleague about how the positive relationships between the staff at her school contribute to creating a positive environment that others

should take note of:

I think one of my things [that makes me personally connected to this school] is that my children went here and I taught here before I ever had kids so they all went through here. Knowing that you entrust all these teachers with your own children, that's a big thing. Also, those teachers entrusting me with their own biological children, I mean, that's huge. Just seeing siblings come through that you've had and the families over and over that you've had; going out into the community and going to football and baseball games and dances; and getting to know them outside of school is important. It drives me crazy seeing all this stuff on Facebook about people like “Oh I moved to a new area; what school should I pick blah blah blah?” Then all these people will respond “Oh don't pick this school or this school.” That sends me over the edge, but I just bite my tongue and I leave it. There are some times when I can't and I just have to respond and I'm like “I might get fired.” I want people to make up their minds based on what they feel and that's why all these people are touring all these schools so that they can get a feel. Don't turn around and ask other people because they'll just tell you how they feel.

Building positive rapport with the students and families also proved to be a factor that encourages teachers to be more committed to their school. Teacher B1 felt connected to his school after “building a strong, trusting relationship with the students, even when you are being firm with your expectations with them.” His experience in his current Title I school is very different from his previous workplace: “I came from a school in another district where my commitment to educating and protecting the students was not

appreciated” (Teacher B1). This student-centered approach is important to Teacher E3 and his school family:

We are a school that thinks about the students first. Their primary focus is “Are the students happy?” We understand that relationships and emotional stability drives a lot of what children need in order to learn. Making sure you place an emphasis on the students and their mental well-being helps because if they're in the right place mentally, sometimes you can get them to a place where they are motivated. The learning is on them.

In addition to the positive relationships with the other teachers, Teacher D1 commented that she is “big on relationships” and appreciates the “connections with the families and being able to see the students and their siblings grow up over time.”

Professional Development

Six of the questions from the survey provided insight on the professional development needs of teachers who support at-risk students. Items 17-22 asked teacher participants to rate which professional development topics are the most beneficial to teachers who serve students in highly impacted school settings.

Table 9*Results from Survey for Professional Development Motivation Factors*

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
17. Mentoring is important for teachers to be retained in Title I schools.	0	0	13%	52.2%	34.8%
18. Peer observations are important professional development activities in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	0	13%	26.1%	47.8%	13%
19. New teacher support groups are important professional development activities in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	0	0	17.4%	34.8%	47.8%
20. Alternative assessment training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools. *	0	13.6%	13.6%	63.6%	9.1%
21. Classroom management training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	0	0	4.3%	39.1%	56.5%
22. Cultural awareness training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	0	4.3%	13%	43.5%	39.1%

Note. * One teacher chose not to respond to Question 20.

I asked the following interview questions in order to gain better insight on the professional development needs:

- **Interview Question 12.** What kinds of professional development opportunities have you had over the past few years at your school? Which have been the most and least beneficial?
- **Interview Question 13.** What were some of the reasons that some of the teachers you know of have left the school or profession?

Teacher responses to the survey and interview questions provided insight on the professional development factors that motivate them to return to their Title I school.

Survey Questions 17-22

The item with the highest, most favorable remarks in this category suggests that classroom management training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers in this study believed that this training is essential in helping teachers address the challenges they may face as a teacher in a high-needs school.

The next most favorable source of professional development was that mentoring is important for teachers to be retained in Title I schools. Eighty-seven percent of the participants felt that teachers would be more likely to stay employed in a highly impacted school if they had a mentor to help them.

Interview Question 12

Teacher participants were asked to expand on what specific kinds of professional development opportunities were the most and least beneficial to them as educators in a highly impacted school setting.

Several of the teachers commented that they most appreciated workshops that are practical for their work in the classroom. According to Teacher E5,

The least beneficial workshops have been the ones that are not hands-on, the presenter is reading from slides, and you're just sitting there taking in the information, but it's not anything hands-on that I can take back to my classroom.

The ones that are the most beneficial are the ones that are hands-on, and I can leave that training with things that I can apply to the classroom the very next day.

I've been to trainings and you're so excited to come back to the classroom and apply it.

Teacher E6 agreed that she liked professional development sessions that focus on “high quality IB experiences” because “teachers come away with knowledge that they can use right away.” Teacher D2 commented that she appreciates “learning from other teachers who have experienced success. I value when experienced educators come into my classroom to observe and provide practical support so I can walk away with specific strategies.” Teacher D3 found great support in the district’s Teacher Academy program that is led by teacher leaders who shared their expertise with other classroom educators in the district. Teacher B2 appreciates active sessions that focus on helping her and her colleagues work more efficiently as a team:

I like get-to-know-you activities. Movement activity that requires you to speak to people and learn who you are and what you are all about. We get thrown into a classroom and get busy with our work. You want us to work as a team, but we've not become a team yet.

Professional development activities that focused on teaching literacy strategies were preferred by several of the teachers who were interviewed. “Decent reading and writing trainings to help us learn how to support students. Well-rounded reading training.

This made it easier for me to make connections for the students” (Teacher B1). “Reading Foundations training was great training. It got everyone on the same page. Guided reading provides good examples of what the expectations are” (Teacher D6). The following teachers also specifically noted the importance of foundational reading trainings: B3, D1, and D4. Teacher D6 recognized how the data about this Foundations training is important to school improvement: “The whole school owns the data. If the foundational skills aren't there, that affects how well other teachers can do their job.”

Some teacher participants discussed the benefits of content-specific professional development. Teacher B1 shared his admiration of a recent math training. Technology trainings were welcomed by Teachers B1 and D4.

I love PDs that go vertical, when we discuss with the grades above and below to discuss the strengths and weaknesses and figure out how to prepare the students. We learned that a lot of the things we were teaching weren't even in the curriculum. (Teacher D6)

Some of the teachers mentioned that they have participated in training programs that helped them tailor the instruction to the unique needs of their student learners. According to Teacher D1, “I appreciate the things that are tailored specifically to what your school needs. EC and ESL teachers sharing strategies on how to support students are helpful.” “The most beneficial have been for English language learners; helping them to improve their vocabulary” (Teacher D2).

Probably the most beneficial [training] would be any of them that have to do with differentiation and giving us new ideas on how to differentiate in your classroom especially with ESL [English as a Second Language] now being a big factor.

(Teacher C2)

Teacher C1 appreciated the same workshops: “SIOP [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol] training was beneficial. We learned great strategies that can be used for all kids, not just second language kids. Also, we've done a lot with differentiation” (Teacher C1).

Teacher D3 agreed on the necessity of differentiation training: “The PD on differentiation was helpful because it’s always good to get new ideas. Every year, your class is different and of course you have to differentiate your lessons.” Differentiation was also relayed as a beneficial professional development by Teachers B3 and D4.

Sessions that help teachers improve negative student behaviors were noted as beneficial to Teachers B3, C1, D1, D3, D5, D6, and E1. Teacher E1 commented that she “enjoyed the ones that helped her learn about behaviors and how to connect with the parents.” Teacher E2 believed workshops that help teachers train students to behave appropriately is important: “Behavior management is a must in the beginning at a Title I school. I encourage new teachers to figure out their classroom management plan and then you can get around to teaching the content.” Programs that reinforce positive student behaviors were recognized by some of the teachers. “Ongoing PBIS [Positive Behavior Intervention Support] trainings and discussions are valuable” (Teacher D1). Teacher D4 also thought the support of this program was beneficial: “PBIS is our behavior system. It has turned our school around. You have to be on board with that 100% in order to be effective with your school and your discipline in your classroom.” Teacher D3 expanded on the benefits of this resource:

I have really good classroom management; however, for a couple of students I had last year – I had no tools in my toolbox for them. We are a PBIS school, so

we've had several PBIS trainings on our ER [Early Release for professional development] days. At several faculty meetings, we've had the PBIS team from Central Office come in and help us with some of those really strong-willed children about helping them cope at school. That was very beneficial to me because if you don't have classroom management, you are not going to be able to teach. I feel very strongly about that. I know I was not able to reach all of my kids. It took me three-quarters of the school year to finally get [one of my students] on board. It was all about building trust because we don't know what they experience at home and what they see. We have to conform and try to see if from their perspective.

Teacher D6 acknowledged that teachers need “training on how to handle conflicts, behavior management, and social emotional learning.” According to Teacher D5, “Training to help teachers de-escalate the heightened emotions of our children is needed.” Although she did not need it as much, Teacher C1 noted that behavior management training is needed for beginning teachers: “We haven't done a lot with classroom management and I don't feel like I need it as much as a new teacher would.”

Teacher E3 agreed on the need for classroom management training for new teachers:

Classroom management. A lot of our young teachers learned that you don't have to go in with a strong hand, but you do have to be firm. [The training] talked about stating what you want out of students and modeling the expectations and behavior. You can't teach in an environment when there's no structure.

Being a resource for beginning teachers is important to Teacher D4: “I mentor new teachers. New teachers have their meetings and meetings with their mentors that are

required by administration in order to keep them supported.” Teacher E2 commented that “new teacher support groups help retain the new teachers.” Teacher E4 discussed how mentoring programs improve the new teacher experience:

I enjoyed having a mentor who you can go to if you have any issues or concerns. They can help you deal with whatever you are going through. I think it’s great when you have mentors because teaching is hard, and you have a lot of challenges. But if you have mentors and stay in contact with them, you’ll always have someone to help you and give you good advice.

Trainings that helped teachers implement culturally relevant strategies were a popular choice among the teachers. “Cultural diversity awareness. We learned the importance of celebrating individual differences” (Teacher E3).

I thought the Racial Equity Institute was eye-opening and fantastic. It helped us learn about the history of slavery and the opportunities that people have been given or not given. [The focus was on the] history of U.S. and the importance of who you are working with, not just what you’re teaching. (Teacher B1)

Teacher C2 liked those sessions that helped her build positive relationships with her students: “I like having more PD on social emotional learning so that we can connect with students on a personal level to relate more about what they’re going through outside of school.” Teacher D5 agreed: “PD that focuses on SEAL [Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning] is wonderful.” According to Teacher F1,

PD needs to reflect the needs of our children. We need continuous support and workshops on working with these things. My principal has done a great job this year about adding in trauma-informed strategies. Our teachers have really loved

those workshops. This would have benefited me tremendously with other kids that I've had in the past.

Although Teacher C1 appreciated training that addressed student socioeconomic challenges, she wished she could have done more:

We just got finished with some Ruby Payne training on supporting children in poverty. It started out being very beneficial, but it ended up leaving us feeling defeated. There is all of this trauma that kids from high risk background face. It was very well-intentioned, and I learned a lot, but it wasn't as beneficial in the long run as they had hoped.

Teacher participants also better informed the discussion on which trainings were least beneficial to helping them accomplish their goals. Teacher B2 mentioned that she does not like “cheesy PD that has the same focus over and over.” Teacher D1 mentioned that she did not like sessions where there are “no innovative ideas.” “I don’t like it when textbook or computer program reps come in to show off a product and try to convince you to make a purchase” (Teacher D2). Teacher B3 was overwhelmed by the seemingly never-ending training sessions: “The issue is that we get so many different trainings and before we get a chance to use it, it changes so much.”

Interview Question 13

During the follow-up interview, teacher participants were asked to describe reasons some teachers they know of have decided to leave the school or the profession.

Some teachers referenced the challenges new teachers face. Teacher A1 indicated that teachers experience frustration when they

come into a Title I school expecting one thing, but then realize that this is hard

work. I have seen two teachers in my career who were NC Scholars where they didn't have to repay their loans if they taught in NC for a certain period of time. I saw these two young teachers leave the profession and went to work in grocery stores. They couldn't take the stress, didn't have support from the parents, and didn't like the way they were treated by parents.

Teacher E6 recognizes the stress that Title I teachers feel: “It's more emotionally draining to be at a Title I school. It would be difficult to stay year after year without having a break.” Teacher B1 implied that this stress is especially frustrating to new teachers:

Teachers get frustrated and go find something else to do. A lot of these teachers don't have grit. A lot of the teachers are trying to learn their craft, but they don't have the patience or the mindset. Those teachers are leaving, and everyone knows they leave. That day-to-day feeling is different in a Title I school if you don't have people around you where you can feed off of their energy. Having people understand that you are all in the same boat and you all have responsibilities that seem like a lot, but it's important.

Teacher C1 shared the experiences of some of the new teachers at her school:

One of the new teachers came straight from her student teaching experience and struggled because she needed more time and experience. Another new teacher realized that the pressures of teaching were not for her and she decided to leave and find a new career. I tell my mentees to make sure that they know that this is something you want to do before you spend so much time and feel like you can't leave.

Teacher B3 confirmed that “newer teachers struggle.” Teacher D4 expanded on these

struggles new teachers face:

The paperwork is overwhelming. Some of the discipline issues are overwhelming for a new teacher especially if they haven't done the internship or don't have any experience in a Title I school. Some of them don't know what they are getting themselves into. It's not a problem in my school, but the lack of support and the lack of professional development could possibly be a reason. Some of our kids are tough and they [beginning teachers] aren't prepared for that. Some of the parental issues and other problems with our kids are tough and if you haven't had those life experiences or haven't worked in that setting, it is very eye-opening and scary for some of our new teachers.

According to Teacher C2, these struggles are impacted by personal family issues:

A lot of them are the younger teachers who had small children so they would stay at home to take care of them and we have had some from my school that have left to choose a different career path.

Teacher B2 mentioned that some of this stress comes from the excessive workload: "Too much work; lesson planning taking too much time during the week and weekend; having to do so much in nonstop meetings; taking away time from your family; too much work and too many duties." Teacher D2 agreed, commenting, "teachers love teaching and their students, but they resent the amount of outside work that steals from their families."

Teacher D2 referred to this excessive workload as "political red tape and paperwork." She referenced the workload of special education teachers

who have extremely large numbers of students on their caseloads. They can't

support the individual needs of the students. As much as they love the kids, they experience a great deal of stress because of the other hoops that they have to jump through.

“Some left because of behavior challenges” (Teacher D2). Other teachers agreed that this is a reason that might contribute to a teacher choosing to leave the profession. Major issues are a result of “classroom management, not being able to connect with the students, challenging students, not having as supportive, collaborative teacher teams working together” (Teacher D1). Teacher B3 also agreed that “classroom management is the major issue.” Teacher E2 discussed how behavior challenges are not unique to Title I schools:

The key reason that I've heard is that they can't handle behavior. Then they go to another school and they still can't handle behavior. They think they're not going to have any. I've come to the conclusion that all students are the same. No matter what school. My children at home do the same things that the kids at school do.

There are behavior challenges in non-Title I schools also. Teachers that leave the profession just weren't cut out for it.

Teacher F2 believed that behavior management is hinged upon mutual respect, but this respect does not come easy:

[Some of the students] have no respect for authority; whether its teachers, administrators, or police, anybody. They just don't have that respect so it's hard to reach those children. I think some teachers [think] “I'm a teacher, so they're going to respect me and that's it.” I don't think that they're [teachers] willing to really dig deep to the root of “why are they being so disrespectful and what's causing that

and how can I help ease it for them?" I think they aren't willing to do that so they just want to go to a school where it's easier and the kids listen and abide by the rules, but you know that's changing everywhere.

Teacher B1 has experienced teachers who left his school because "they haven't experienced success at their school." Teacher D2 suggested that these teachers felt "disillusioned" because of the

unmet expectations that come from teachers coming in to the profession with the savior complex that they see in TV dramas about caring teachers who come in to save students instead of coming in to serve the students and their families.

Teacher D6 also has seen these unrealistic expectations in new teachers:

We all think we're great. They [new teachers] come in thinking that they are going to save the world. The moment it becomes too hard or too uncomfortable, then they're out. Teaching is hard in itself, but then you throw in a kid that will call you inappropriate names. Everyone isn't cut out for teaching and everyone is not cut out to teach in a Title 1 school. I worked in a non-Title 1 school because I thought it was going to be easier. I stayed for a year and left. It was a different kind of stress that I didn't like. Those kids don't need me. People leave because it's too hard. I think people leave because they don't like being told to try new things. And maybe if you didn't scream at the kids, it would be easier.

Teacher E3 has noticed these unfulfilled expectations and recommended support strategies:

I think some teachers leave when they stop being able to make a difference. It's probably best that those teachers don't hang in there because, when a teacher has

gotten to the point where they feel they are no longer being effective, they are probably doing more harm to the children. I think most teachers who walk away, it's not a bad thing, but it is hard on the students because they don't have consistency. I think from a hiring standpoint, most administrators are going to have to be real with those teachers and be honest about the students' needs and challenges. Some people are not ready to deal with that. You have to be prepared to handle that. Teachers who are fresh out of school don't always know how to address those challenges.

According to Teacher D5, when new teachers are unsatisfied with their impact, they leave for a less challenging job because they “got an easier job or got a job at another school where they had friends.” She connected the age range of new teachers to their level of commitment: “I see millennials as teachers who will leave the school immediately if they are not satisfied. It's a generational commitment” (Teacher D5).

Financial challenges were also cited as a reason that caused some teachers to abandon the profession. “Some of the teachers left because the job that they love didn't pay enough to support their family” (Teacher D2). Even though he believed teachers should earn a viable salary, Teacher B1 commented that this would not be the reason he would leave his current school assignment:

If I were to leave [my school], it's not necessarily about the money, but what kind of situation would I be going into. There might be a point where I go left and find something that is not in education at all because I'm not a dummy. I hope that we can get to the point where we put the money where our mouth is in terms of what we can do to support Title I schools, because we all know that teachers make all

the difference.

Some of the teachers referenced a contributing factor to the high teacher turnover rate is “lack of support” (Teachers A1 and D2). Teacher F2 commented that some teachers leave because they do not have the support of the parents. She also recalled that some of the teachers from her school left to follow a supportive principal who moved to a different school. Several teacher participants indicated that teachers need the support of their administrators to perform their best work. Teacher B2 believed that administrators play a large role in determining whether a teacher returns to the profession or not:

The principal has been the determining factor 99% of the time and not the children. Teachers may tell the administrator a variety of reasons for leaving like they are moving, and the drive is too far because they don't want to leave a bad reputation for themselves. But behind closed doors, the teachers reveal that they can't work with the administrator. I know principals have a tough job. You can't pay me enough to be a principal. I don't want that kind of responsibility. I'd rather deal with children rather than adults. But I think as a principal, you have to find a finesse and remember - not that the staff are your children, but technically, they kind of are. You've got to treat them in the way that you want them to treat the students. You can still get what you want, but in a respectful way – just like a parent would with a child.

Teacher E4 spoke to the support new teachers need:

When you first start as a teacher, it is overwhelming, especially when you are at a Title I school. You go into teaching because you want to make a difference, but sometimes you don't have the tools, like classroom management or family issues

that you can't handle. If you don't have the support that you need from mentors or administrators, it's overwhelming for a first-year teacher. Something is lacking when they come from college right into the classroom.

Teacher D3 discussed how teachers can be supported through several of the obstacles that cause them to question their role as a teacher:

We had a teacher leave the profession in January. I personally think teachers get burned out and I don't know of any type of support that could help. I know that everyone is in the same boat. Teacher retention is important. If you can make it in a Title I school, you can make it anywhere. My principal started new teacher meetings each month and they had mentors. That's helpful. It's not like a "gotcha"; you are there to help them put tools in their toolbox that might help them. The main thing we have when new teachers come in is classroom management. When you don't have that, you can't teach, and it crumbles. I think that's where that support system comes in – with faculty, administration, anyone.

Teacher F1 relayed how important it is for a school to provide support to its teachers:

It's hard if you don't have administrators or other teachers who are able to help you with the challenges. The challenges increase as the year goes on. What I've done with my students in the past 2 years is way different from what I've done when I started 13 years ago because you are seeing a whole new generation of kids that have had such different background experiences. Many of them are coming from backgrounds that are impacted by poverty. [Teachers need] continuous check-ins with admin, counselors, and lead teachers who provide ongoing support. Teachers don't feel like they have the tools and strategies to deal

with the students they are serving.

Teacher E6 suggested a more proactive way to support teachers: “We try to be upfront with people about what is happening at the school. We don't want to trick anybody into signing on to be with us without being upfront about what's happening at our school.”

Other teachers who have decided not to return to their school had a variety of reasons, including a change of location. “Some have moved because they've moved, and they want to work closer to home” (Teacher E5). “They had different opportunities or moved closer to their school” (Teacher B1). Teacher E6 also referenced teachers moving away. According to Teacher E6, some teachers came to their school through international agencies: “I wished they could stay, but their programs didn’t allow it.” “Some teachers' teaching style didn't jive with magnet theme. Some teachers just weren’t happy with the school” (Teacher E6). According to Teacher E1, “Some of the teachers who left did not open their minds when the school's population and focus changed. They were not as open-minded to the changes in the school's culture.”

Despite the challenging work of serving at-risk students in high-poverty school settings, teacher passion keeps them motivated to continue working as an educator:

I've stayed so long because I truly have a love of teaching. No two years are the same. And I like that. You may have a great year this time and then you're struggling the next. That makes my adrenaline go. I'm always thinking about ways I can do better. I've made my kids a part of my job when they were younger.

I just truly have a love of teaching. (Teacher A1)

Teacher E1 shared the same positive sentiments about remaining in the profession:

I don’t know about why other teachers are leaving. I surround myself with

teachers who are committed to the work they are doing. All of the other teachers at my grade level are fighting hard to make the school a fun place for the students to learn by including practices that are appropriate for their age.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a review of the study, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations.

The purpose of this study was to uncover the reasons teachers choose to remain employed in their high-needs, urban elementary school. Eight Title I schools that had a positive record of student achievement (met or exceeded growth in the past 3 years) participated in the study. In these schools, 23 teacher leaders who were recommended by the school's administration engaged in a survey and follow-up interview to find out which intrinsic, extrinsic, commitment, and professional development factors motivated them to continue working in their school setting, despite the challenges associated with Title I schools. This research can be useful to school districts and school leaders who seek to improve their teacher retention rate in some of the neediest schools. Decreasing the teacher turnover rate gives at-risk students an opportunity to benefit from effective, highly motivated teachers who are committed to inspire positive change.

Answer Research Questions

The primary research questions for this study and results were as follows.

Research Question 1: What Intrinsic Factors Influence Teacher Retention in High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools?

The survey and interviews indicated that the majority of the teachers were in agreement regarding the intrinsic motivators for continuing to work in their school. Among the largest sources of intrinsic motivation were being self-gratified from their years of teaching in their Title I school (95.7%), good collegial relationships within the

school (100%), being effective in working with high-needs children (100%), being satisfied with their work (100%), being able to build rapport with urban children (91.3%), being familiar with the needs of urban children (82.6%), and enjoying the challenges associated with Title I schools (69.6%). Teachers were not as motivated by growing up in a Title I school (9%) or living close to the school (56.5%) and did not specifically seek employment at a Title I school (34.7%).

Research Question 2: What Extrinsic Factors Influence Teacher Retention in High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools?

This study revealed that teachers were extrinsically motivated by administrators who show their appreciation for teacher efforts (95.7%) and by administrators who are supportive and encouraging (90.9%). Teacher participants also shared that they are motivated when staff members are recognized for a job well done (87%) and when cultural diversity is valued in their Title I school (100%). The survey did not point to a majority decision on whether or not the monetary compensation was a motivating factor for teachers to continue their role in their school. The follow-up interviews supported the survey's results.

Research Question 3: What Professional Development Opportunities Are Important in Motivating Teachers to Stay in a High-Poverty School?

Participants in this study supported the following professional development learning opportunities for teachers in high-needs schools: classroom management training (95.6%), mentoring (87%), new teacher support groups (82.6%), cultural awareness training (82.6%), alternative assessment training (72.7%), and peer observations (60%). In the follow-up interviews, teachers shared that they most appreciated workshops that

were practical for their work in the classroom, especially when they had the opportunity to learn with and alongside their peers. Teachers noted that they benefitted greatly from training sessions that focused on teaching literacy skills. Such foundational training helped them feel more confident in improving student achievement. Teachers also appreciated sessions that focused on helping them differentiate content to meet all of their students' learning needs.

Research Question 4: How Does a Teacher's Level of Commitment Impact Their Decision to Return to a High-Needs School?

Participants in this study revealed a high level of commitment as a result of the following: valuing student achievement (95.7%), the commitment to meeting all children's needs (95.6%), feeling compelled to discuss the school with others (91.3%), identifying with the school's problems (77.3%), feeling emotionally attached to the school (100%), feeling that the school has meaning to them (100%), feeling a strong sense of belonging to the school (100%), feeling happy to spend the rest of their career at the school (73.9%), and feeling like they are a part of the school's family (100%). Several of the teachers (39.1%) did not feel like they could be attached easily to another school. In addition to these factors, teachers also commented that their positive relationships with their colleagues, administrators, students, and families helped them to become more connected to the school. Because of the strong connections with their school, teachers were more committed and were more likely to remain employed at the school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Intrinsic Motivation

The dedication of the teachers who participated in this study confirmed the

intrinsic motivation that was defined in Tehseen and Ul Hadi's (2015) work: "Dimension for intrinsic motivation is the satisfaction derived from teaching, recognition, enjoying teaching, career development, the challenging and competitive nature of teaching, teaching as one goal in the life and control over others" (p. 1). In this study, teachers expressed more intrinsic benefits to continuing their work in high-needs school settings. Similar conclusions were also reached as in the studies conducted by Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012), Plihal (1981), and Tomic and Tomic (2008).

School and district leaders can improve their productivity and positive impact on students by hiring highly effective, passionate teachers to address the unique learning needs of students. Special attention must be invested in recruiting and retaining staff members who are specifically adept in supporting students in a high-needs school. Based on the results of this survey, focusing on intrinsic factors is an effective strategy for maintaining a motivated workforce.

According to the information gathered from the interviews with the study participants, many of the teachers were positively impacted by teachers who taught them and by their parents who were also teachers. Schools may consider increasing the opportunities for positive exposure between students and effective, inspiring teachers. In addition to making sure students are influenced by strong leaders, schools can also offer programs that provide an introduction to teacher training. Having such positive role models increases the chances that a young person considers a profession as a teacher. Such a positive introduction to teaching may also encourage a teacher to continue working through the anticipated challenges.

Since so many of the teachers mentioned that they had experience working with

children before they chose to become educators, such experiences may also support the teacher recruitment and retention cause. School districts and colleges may advertise or even sponsor activities that encourage students to tutor, serve as camp counselors, lead athletic events, or engage in other children-centered leadership activities. These events inspired the participants in this study to develop a passion for making a positive difference in the lives of young people they mentored. This passion for the work motivates teachers to remain employed at their school so they can continue to make a positive impact.

Only eight of the teachers who participated in this study (34.7%) indicated that they were actively recruited by a Title I school. Even the teachers who were not familiar with being educated in or working with high-needs children ended up appreciating the experience of serving in the neediest schools. Title I schools must make a special effort to actively recruit and retain teachers. In an ideal situation, districts should have the option to direct highly effective, experienced teachers to those schools who need them the most. If these assignments were celebrated as opportunities for those teachers who have proven themselves successful, such an experience would be highly regarded.

In the interviews, many of the teachers revealed that they were unaware of the unique characteristics of Title I schools. Several of the teachers had never actually visited one of these schools. Providing a clear understanding of Title I programming should be a part of teacher education training and new teacher introduction workshops. Some of the teachers felt disillusioned, not knowing what to expect when they began working in their high-poverty school setting. In order to prevent this frustration, school administrators should be open and honest, letting teachers know details about the school and sharing the

unique challenges so new teachers know what to expect. Schools should fully develop their support plans to train and mentor new teachers. Schools should also plan support for veteran teachers as the school population changes to a more diverse community, representing learners from minority groups, low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with language barriers and significant achievement gaps.

Teacher participants revealed that building positive relationships with their school colleagues and administrators is a significant factor in determining their level of satisfaction. School leaders creating a positive climate that provides opportunities for school staff to collaborate, celebrate, and share in fun activities is a way to encourage teachers to remain connected to that school setting.

Because maintaining rapport with the students and families was also cited as a positive motivator, schools should also invest energy in social and emotional learning activities that help teachers build positive relationships with their students and parents. Implementing parent engagement activities such as PTSA, curriculum nights, conferences, and volunteer programs can also help bridge the gap between the school and homes, creating an atmosphere that is more conducive to student learning. These social and emotional learning strategies should also be practiced with teachers to help them better manage the stressors that come with teaching in high-needs settings. Such support may be effective in decreasing teacher burnout.

Most of the teachers in this study also indicated that the students and their families deal with significant challenges like food insecurities, fixed incomes, unstable homes, and other issues that are a result of living in a high-poverty environment. Schools can be a support to students and families by prioritizing programs that provide needed

resources. Backpack food programs, clothes closets, healthcare support, and parent education sessions are examples of these resources that can provide safety nets that allow students to be able to focus on their school work with less worries about their basic needs being met. Supporting the students effectively gives them a better opportunity to perform well in school. This also decreases significant stressors that impact teachers who are so empathetic about their students' struggles and dedicated to helping them overcome barriers to success. Several teachers in this study agreed with Maslow (1954) in the belief that an individual will perform better if their basic needs are met. When their students are successful, the teachers are more encouraged to continue in their role.

Extrinsic Motivation

In accordance with the characteristics of extrinsic motivation factors, teachers experience more satisfaction when they benefit in some way from the school environment. Deci and Ryan (2010) defined extrinsic motivation as “a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome” (p. 60). The findings in this study support the studies conducted by Tehseen and Ul Hadi (2015) and Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggesting that the working conditions of the school serve as an extrinsic motivator. Teachers in this study were very motivated by school appreciation efforts, school administration, and cultural diversity. Financial benefits; however, did not serve as a major motivator.

In addition to positively impacting student achievement, effective school leaders attract, support, and retain effective teachers (National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). This current study confirmed the positive impact of effective administrative leadership on a teacher's

decision to stay. This concept has been well-proven by numerous other research studies including those conducted by Wong (2002), The Wallace Foundation (2013), Borman and Dowling (2003), Johnson (2006), Ladd (2009), Ingersoll (2001), Boyd et al. (2011), Loeb et al. (2005), Luekens (2004), Choi and Tang (2009), and Tickle et al. (2011).

This research supports the belief that employees are more content and more likely to continue working if the company values their efforts (Lambert et al., 2001). The teachers who engaged in this study felt more inclined to stay at the school because they feel appreciated and supported. This support helps teachers feel psychologically safe and more able to focus their efforts supporting students (Ford et al., 2019). According to teacher comments in this study, another contributing factor to feeling committed comes from them being given leadership responsibilities and being treated like the education professionals they are. This was similar to the findings in studies conducted by Allensworth et al. (2009) and Inman and Marlow (2004).

School and district leaders must implement regular opportunities to celebrate the accomplishments of their staff. This recognition can come in a variety of formats including public praise, positive notes, and treats. Teachers in this study also shared that they appreciate principals who openly show that they trust and respect them as professionals. For several of the teachers, it was the specific principal who made the difference in whether they returned to that school site. These extrinsic motivators encourage teachers to continue working hard. Districts would benefit from ensuring that schools are led by effective administrative teams that can support the needs of the staff in addition to the students and families.

Every teacher in this study indicated that they are motivated by working in a

culturally diverse school setting. The teachers commented that this diversity creates positive learning experiences for them and the students. District and school leaders can use this information to improve recruitment and retention by implementing strategies that ensure schools represent diverse groups of students and staff. Magnet programs, school choice policies, and redrawing residential zones may be diversifying tools for some districts.

Although the teachers in this study do believe it is important for teachers to be paid appropriately for the work they do, the amount of monetary compensation proved not to be a major motivating factor for teachers to continue working in high-poverty schools. The teachers recognized from the beginning that a career in teaching is not a high-paying profession, so they did not go into it with the expectation of living a significantly different lifestyle. However, districts can positively impact teacher turnover by maintaining a commitment to providing the raises teachers were informed of when the job started or be transparent in communicating when changes need to be made.

Districts and schools can also ensure that teachers have the supplies they need to engage their students in innovative lessons. Although teachers were willing to use their personal funds, they would appreciate having the requested classroom supplies provided for them. Schools may make Title I funds available for the purpose of providing necessary instructional supplies. Districts and schools can also support teachers by utilizing additional staff members to relieve pressures from the excessive workload that can be required of teachers in a Title I school. Better managing these tasks can allow teachers more time to dedicate to designing and implementing creative, standards-based lessons.

Professional Development

Overall, teachers who participated in this study welcomed opportunities to engage in high-quality professional development. As a result, they felt more confident and effective in their job responsibilities. This is in line with other studies conducted by Bandura (1997) and White and Locke (2000) that found a connection between self-efficacy and professional development, whereas the best way for leaders to cultivate productivity in staff is by providing the necessary opportunities for teachers to learn skills, setting good examples, and helping to build positive self-efficacy.

Based on the findings of this study, districts and schools would support teachers more effectively by providing professional development that is high-quality, relevant, and practical. Teachers should have the opportunity to attend sessions that incorporate mentoring, peer observations, new teacher support, alternative assessment strategies, classroom management, and cultural awareness. Teachers need support in building foundational skills and implementing content-specific differentiation strategies. In addition to content being differentiated to meet student needs, professional development content must be differentiated and intentional to meet the needs of the teachers. It is especially important that new teachers receive extensive professional development support. Following up with the beginning teachers to provide additional coaching and support is critical in retaining teachers. To make the continuing learning experiences effective, it is recommended that time be dedicated in a teacher's schedule for them to engage in the professional development and apply it to their teaching practice. This dedicated time can be arranged on designated staff professional development days, during the school day with a qualified substitute teacher providing coverage, or during teacher

common planning periods when possible.

Commitment

I heard numerous stories that communicated how hard teachers are working in service of the students in their schools. This study confirmed Locke and Latham's (1984, 2002) research that found that people are more likely to achieve the goals they set when there is a high level of commitment. Similar to this study, their studies also found that people who view the organization's problems as their own, believe they are more responsible for creating solutions and will work harder to accomplish those goals. Even though the teachers in this study shared the various challenges they experience on a daily basis, they are so committed to their work that they choose to continue to return to the job even though they have other options within the district or in another profession. This feeling of contentment also was evidenced in research by Lambert et al. (2001) who found that employees in the business world continue to work for the company when they are more content and they feel valued.

Teachers who participated in this study were recommended because of their positive impact on students and because they serve as leaders at the school. Just as in research conducted by Allensworth et al. (2009), teacher stability improves when teachers report a strong sense of collective responsibility and when teachers are given the opportunity to influence school decisions. Other studies have also noted the positive impact on teacher retention when teachers are given leadership opportunities (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005; Inman & Marlow, 2004).

This study proves that increasing teacher commitment to their school boosts the likelihood that they will continue to work at the school. Participants in the study indicated

that schools can foster teacher commitment by ensuring that the mission of the school is dedicated to implementing strategies that value student achievement and demonstrate a belief that all students can learn when given the proper support. Teachers must have a clear understanding of this mission and progress and have the structure and training to accomplish those goals.

Because so many teachers emphasized the importance of developing a community of learners committed to making positive change, school leaders must invest the energy in building a positive and supportive school culture. Creating collaborative teams not only improves teacher performance and student achievement, but it also encourages greater commitment to that school setting. Giving teachers an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and participate in decision-making is another recommendation on building a more committed team. Another result to this more positive climate is that teachers develop a stronger sense of pride in their school and share their accomplishments with others, also supporting recruitment goals.

Recommendations for Further Study

More extensive study on teacher retention may provide more insight on what factors motivate teachers to continue working with at-risk students. Other researchers may expand on this study by engaging in the following recommendations for further study:

1. Include a larger selection of teacher participants.
2. Conduct a similar study with more teachers in a secondary school setting.
3. Conduct the study in a rural setting.
4. Compare the findings in this study to the perceptions of teachers in another

school district.

5. Compare the perceptions of teachers in a Title I setting to those in a non-Title I school.
6. Track the impact teacher salaries have on attrition rates in order to uncover if salary is a predictor of teacher retention for specific experience bands.
7. Replicate this study taking a quantitative approach to gather data.
8. Assess if teacher education program, certification pathway, or participation in a specific professional development influences retention.
9. Follow teacher participants from this study to see if their motivations change over time.

Limitations

The participation rate in this study was lower than expected. The goal was to include eight schools and at least three teachers from each school. The actual number of participants was lower than planned (23 teachers from six schools). The time period during which the surveys and follow-up interviews occurred was a challenging time for teachers. Schools had closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was difficult to get all the responses in a timely manner as the teachers and I were also trying to adjust to the virtual learning environment.

My role as a principal in the district may have also been a limitation in this study. Teachers may have been more hesitant to relay the impact of the principal in influencing teacher decisions to stay or leave the school. Participants may have been concerned about offending me or my principal colleagues.

Summary

This was a qualitative research study that explored the factors that motivate a teacher leader to remain employed in a high-poverty urban school. Understanding these intrinsic, extrinsic, professional development, and commitment factors help district and school leaders provide needed support and design positive and productive work environments. Maintaining a consistent, qualified, experienced, and passionate teaching staff will ultimately improve student outcomes.

References

- Allensworth, E. (2012). Want to improve teaching? *American Educator*, 36(3), 30-31.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ986682.pdf>
- Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., & Mazzeo, C. (2009). *The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago public schools*. Consortium on Chicago School Research.
https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/CCSR_Teacher_Mobility.pdf
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). *Tapping the potential: Retaining and developing high quality new teachers*. Washington, DC.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2005). *Teacher attrition: A costly loss to the nation and to the states*. <http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/TeacherAttrition.pdf>
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2008). *What keeps good teachers in the classroom? Understanding and reducing teacher turnover*. Author.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2014). *Teacher attrition costs United States up to \$2.2 billion annually, says new Alliance report*. <https://all4ed.org/press/teacher-attrition-costs-united-states-up-to-2-2-billion-annually-says-new-alliance-report/>
- American Institutes for Research. (2009). *State and local implementation of the no child left behind act volume VIII—teacher quality under NCLB: Final report*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/nclb-final/report.pdf>

- Ashiedu, J. A., & Scott-Ladd, B. (2012). Understanding teacher attraction and retention drivers: Addressing teacher shortages. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(11). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n11.1>
- ASQNC. (n.d.). ASQNC – North Carolina teacher working conditions. https://asqnc.com/?page_id=2302
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2012). The condition of education 2012 (NCES 2012-045). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Freeman.
- Barnes, G., & Crowe, E. S. (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497176.pdf>
- Barton, P. (2004). Why does the gap persist? *Educational Leadership*, 62(3), 8-13. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov04/vol62/num03/Why-Does-the-Gap-Persist%C2%A2.aspx>
- Bilz, J. A. (2008). *Job satisfaction and teacher career stages* (Publication No. 3311282) [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2003). *Schools and inequality: A multilevel analysis of Coleman's equality of educational opportunity data*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: a meta analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 367-409.

- Borman, G., & Kimball, S. (2005). Teacher quality and educational equality: Do teachers with higher standards-based evaluation ratings close student achievement gaps? *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(1), 3-20. <https://doi.org/10.1086/496904>
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 303-333.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). *Number of jobs, labor market experience, and earnings growth among Americans at 50: Results from a longitudinal survey*. U.S. Department of Labor.
- Carey, K. (2004). The real value of teachers: Using new information about teacher effectiveness to close the achievement gap. *Thinking K-16*, 8(1), 3-40.
- Carlton, M. P. (2017). *Summary of school safety statistics*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250610.pdf>
- Carroll, S. J., Reichardt, R. E., Guarino, C. M., & Mejia, A. (2000). *The distribution of teachers among California's school districts and schools* (MR-1298.0-JIF). RAND Corporation.
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *What does the research tell us about teacher leadership?* LD OnLine: The world's leading website on learning disabilities and ADHD. <https://www.ldonline.org/article/24932/>

- Chait, R. (2010, March 10). *Removing chronically ineffective teachers*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2010/03/10/7525/removing-chronically-ineffective-teachers/>
- Chen, Y., Paquette, K. R., & Rieg, S. A. (2007). Coping with stress: An investigation of novice Teachers stressors in the elementary classroom. *Education*, 128(2), 211-226.
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., & Rockoff, J. E. (2011). *The long-term impacts of teachers: Teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w17699>
- Choi, P. L., & Tang, S. Y. (2009). Teacher commitment trends: Cases of Hong Kong teachers from 1997 to 2007. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(5), 767-777. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.01.005>
- Chung Wei, R., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States U.S. and abroad*. National Staff Development Council. <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/professional-learning-learning-profession-status-report-teacher-development-us-and-abroad.pdf>
- Clewell, B. C., & Villegas, A. M. (2001). *Evaluation of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest fund's pathways to teaching careers program*. The Urban Institute. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045.pdf>

- Colledge, R. (2002). Maslow's theory of human motivation. *Mastering Counselling Theory*, 129-138. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-62957-8_10
- Cotton, J. L., & Tuttle, J. M. (1986). Employee turnover: A meta-analysis and review with implications for research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 11(1), 55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258331>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6-13. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may03/vol60/num08/Keeping-Good-Teachers@-Why-It-Matters,-What-Leaders-Can-Do.aspx>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). Inequality and the right to learn: Access to qualified teachers in California's public schools. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), 1936-1966. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2004.00422.x>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2010). Self-determination. *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479216.corpsy0834>
- Dembélé, M., & Rogers, F. H. (2013). More and better teachers for quality education for all: Identity and motivation, systems and support. In J. Kirk, M. Dembélé, & S. Baxter (Eds.), *Collaborative works*. https://moreandbetterteachers.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/more-and-better-teaching_september-2013.pdf

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. SAGE Publication.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage Publications Inc.
- Division of Labor Force Statistics. (2018). *Employee tenure summary*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Donaldson, M. L., & Johnson, S. M. (2011). Teach for America teachers: How long do they teach? Why do they leave? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(2), 47-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721711109300211>
- Driscoll, J. (2007). *Practicing clinical supervision: A reflective approach for healthcare professionals* (2nd ed.). Bailliere Tindall Elsevier.
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may04/vol61/num08/What-Is-a-Professional-Learning-Community%C2%A2.aspx>
- Duncan, A. (2011). *Our future, our teachers: The Obama administration's plan for teacher education reform and improvement*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/our-future-our-teachers.pdf>
- Ford, T., Olsen, J., Khojasteh, J., Ware, J., & Urick, A. (2019). The effects of leader support for teacher psychological needs on teacher burnout, commitment, and intent to leave. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 57(6), 615-634. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-09-2018-0185>

Gagné, F. (2004). Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory
1. *High Ability Studies*, 15(2), 119-147.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359813042000314682>

Glasser, W. (2010). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. Harper Collins.

Goldhaber, D. (2010). *Teacher pay reforms: The political implications of recent research*. Working paper no. 2010-4.0. Center for Education Data and Research (CEDR), University of Washington. <http://www.cedr.us/publications.html>

Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1994). *Looking in classrooms* (6th ed.). Harper Collins.

Grant, A. A., Jeon, L., & Buettner, C. K. (2019). Relating early childhood teachers' working conditions and well-being to their turnover intentions. *Educational Psychology*, 39(3), 294-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2018.1543856>

Hanushek, E. A. (2011). Valuing teachers. *Education Next*, 11(3), 41-45.
<http://hanushek.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Hanushek%202011%20EdNext%2011%283%29.pdf>

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *Journal of Human Resources*, 39(2), 326-354.

<https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.xxxix.2.326>

Harrell, P. E., & Jackson, J. K. (2004). Redefining teacher quality: Myths of no child left behind. *Teacher Education and Practice*, 17(2), 131-145.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Haycock, K. (1998). *Good teaching matters*. Education Trust.

- Haycock, K. (2001). *Dispelling the myth, revisited*. The Education Trust.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Hightower, A. M., Delgado, R. C., Lloyd, S. C., Sellers, K., Swanson, C. B., & Wittenstein, R. (2011). *Improving student learning by supporting quality: Key issues, effective strategies*. Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, www.edweek.org/media/eperc_qualityteaching_12.11.pdf
- Hornig, E. L. (2009). Teacher tradeoffs: Disentangling teachers' preferences for working conditions and student demographics. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(3), 690-717. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831208329599>
- Hussar, W. J., & Bailey, T. M. (2013). *Projections of education statistics to 2022 (NCES 2014-051)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (1997). The recurring myth of teacher shortages. *Teacher College Record*, 99(1), 41-44.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2002a). *Out-of-field teaching, educational inequality, and the organization of schools: an exploratory analysis*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- Ingersoll, R. (2002b). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(631), 16-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019263650208663103>

Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1133&context=gse_pubs

Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). Why do high-poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers?

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/news/2004/11/19/1205/why-do-high-poverty-schools-have-difficulty-staffing-their-classrooms-with-qualified-teachers/>

Ingersoll, R. M., Dougherty, P., & Sirinides, P. (2017). School leadership counts.

https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/539

Ingersoll, R., & Merrill, E. (2013). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. CPRE Research Report # RR-80. Consortium for Policy Research in Education. <https://doi.org/10.12698/cpre.2014.rr80>

Ingersoll, R., & Smith, T. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage.

Educational Leadership, 60(8), 30-33. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ666112>

Inman, D., & Marlow, L. (2004). Teacher retention: Why do beginning teachers remain in the Profession? *Education*, 124(4), 605-614.

Institute of Education Sciences. (2018). *Fast facts: Back to school statistics*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>

- Jacob, A., Vidyarthi, E., & Carroll, K. (2012). The irreplaceables: Understanding the real crisis in America's urban schools. The New Teacher Project.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533959.pdf>
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. ASCD.
- Johnson, S. M. (2006). *The workplace matters: Teacher quality, retention, and effectiveness*. Working Paper. National Education Association Research Department.
- Johnson, S., Berg, J., & Donaldson, M. (2005). *Who stays in teaching and why: A review of the literature on teacher retention (A project on the next generation of teachers)*. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org_/articles/NRTA/Harvard_report.pdf
- Kearney, J. E. (2008). Factors affecting satisfaction and retention of African American and European American teachers in an urban school district. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(5), 613-627.
- Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2014). Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(4), 476-500.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373713519496>
- Ladd, H. (2009). *Teachers' perceptions of their working conditions: How predictive of policy relevant outcomes?* CALDER Working Paper 33. Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education.

- Lambert, E. G., Lynne Hogan, N., & Barton, S. M. (2001). The impact of job satisfaction on turnover intent: A test of a structural measurement model using a national sample of workers. *The Social Science Journal*, 38(2), 233-250.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0362-3319\(01\)00110-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0362-3319(01)00110-0)
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), 37-62. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737024001037>
- Liu, X. S., & Meyer, J. P. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of their jobs: a multilevel analysis of the teacher follow-up survey for 1994-95. *Teachers College Record*, 107(5), 985-1003.
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp.1297-1349). Rand McNally.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1984). *Goal setting: A motivational technique that works!* Prentice Hall.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year Odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 705-717.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.57.9.705>
- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(3), 44-70.
- Luekens, M. T. (2004). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the teacher follow-up survey, 2000-01*. National Center for Education Statistics.

- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper & Brothers. Wiley & Sons.
- McFarland, J., Hussar, B., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Wang, K., Rathbun, A., Barmer, A., Forrest Cataldi, E., & Bullock Mann, F. (2018). *The condition of education 2018* (NCES 2018-144). U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf>
- McLaurin, S. E., Smith, W., & Smillie, A. (2009). *Teacher retention*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 507446). <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507446.pdf>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Attrition. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attrition>
- Mertler, C. A. (1992). *Teacher motivation and job satisfaction of public school teachers* [Unpublished master's thesis]. The Ohio State University.
- Muller, C. (2001). The role of caring in the teacher-student relationship for at-risk students. *Sociological Inquiry*, 71(2), 241-255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682x.2001.tb01110.x>
- National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2013). *Leadership matters: What research says about the importance of principal leadership*.
<http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/LeadershipMatters.pdf>
- National Center for Children in Poverty. (2019). *Child poverty*.
<http://stage.nccp.org/topics/childpoverty.html>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *The condition of education 2010*.
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010028.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Table 209.10. Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987-88 through 2011-12.*

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.asp

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk: An imperative for educational reform. A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education.*

United States Department of Education.

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>

National Equity Atlas. (2016). *Indicators of school poverty in the United States.*

https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/School_poverty

National Longitudinal Survey Program. (2012). *Number of jobs, labor market experience, and earnings growth: Results from a national longitudinal survey news release.*

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/nlsoy_07252012.htm

New Teacher Center. (n.d.a). *Professional development.* TELL Resource Library.

<https://teachingconditions.org/constructs/professional-development>

New Teacher Center. (n.d.b). *School leadership.* TELL Resource Library.

<https://teachingconditions.org/constructs/school-leadership>

New Teacher Center. (n.d.c). *Time.* TELL Resource Library.

<https://teachingconditions.org/constructs/time>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2018). *Highlights of the North Carolina public school budget.*

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2018highlights.pdf>

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2020). *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: 2018-2019 state of the teaching profession in North Carolina*.
<https://legislative.ncpublicschools.gov/legislative-reports/report-stateoftheteachingprofession.pdf>
- Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How large are teacher effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 254.
- Obama, B. (2009). President Obama's remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce [Transcript]. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/10/us/politics/10text-obama.html>
- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2013, September 3). *Teacher compensation*. U.S. Department of Education.
<https://oese.ed.gov/archived/oii/teacher-compensation/>
- Participant Media. (2010). *Waiting for "Superman": How we can save America's failing public schools*. Public Affairs.
- Perda, D. (2013). *Transitions into and out of teaching: A longitudinal analysis of early career teacher turnover* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Perrachione, B. A., Rosser, V. J., & Peterson, G. J. (2008). Why do they stay? Elementary teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and retention. *The Professional Educator*, 32(2), 1-17. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ862759.pdf>
- Pitts, D., Marvel, J., & Fernandez, S. (2011). So hard to say goodbye? Turnover intention among U.S. federal employees. *Public Administration Review*, 71(5), 751-760.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02414.x>

Plihal, J. (1981). *Intrinsic rewards of teaching*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, CA.

Programme for International Student Assessment. (2012). *PISA 2012 results*. OECD.

<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>

Rand Corporation. (2012). *Teachers matter: Understanding teachers' impact on student achievement*. http://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html.

Reardon, S. F. (2013). The widening income achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 70(8), 10-16. [http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/The-Widening-Income-Achievement-Gap.aspx)

[leadership/may13/vol70/num08/The-Widening-Income-Achievement-Gap.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/The-Widening-Income-Achievement-Gap.aspx)

Reardon, S. F., & Portilla, X. A. (2016). Recent trends in income, racial, and ethnic school readiness gaps at kindergarten entry. *AERA Open*, 2(3), 1-18.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858416657343>.

Reeves, D. (2003). *High performance in high poverty schools: 90/90/90 and beyond*.

Center for Performance Assessment. <http://www.leadandlearn.com/90-90-90>

Reeves, D. B. (2000, December). *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning organizations*. Advanced Learning Press.

Rice, J. K. (2003). *Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes*.

Economic Policy Institute.

https://www.epi.org/publication/books_teacher_quality_execsum_intro/

Ronfeldt, M. (2012). Where should student teachers learn to teach? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(1), 3-26.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373711420865>

- Rumberger, R. W. (2007). Parsing the data on student achievement in high poverty schools. *North Carolina Law Review*, 85(5), 1-23.
<https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4274&context=nclr>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54-67.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020>
- Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement: Research progress report*. University of Tennessee, Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.
- SAS EVAAS. (2020). *Statistical models and business rules*. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. <https://ncdpi.sas.com/support/EVAAS-NC-Statistical-Models-and-Business-Rules.pdf>
- Scafidi, B., Sjoquist, D. L., & Stinebrickner, T. R. (2005). *Race, poverty, and teacher mobility* (Research Paper Series No. 06-51). Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. <http://aysps.gsu.edu/publications/2006/index.htm>
- Shann, M. H. (1998). Professional commitment and satisfaction among teachers in urban middle schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92(2), 67-73.
- Southern Education Foundation. (2013). *A new majority: Low income students in the south and in the nation*. [Unpublished research report]. Southern Education Foundation. <https://www.southerneducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/New-Majority-2013.pdf>

- Stoops, T. (2015, February 17). *Low-income children, high performing schools* [Web blog post]. <http://www.johnlocke.org/newsletters/research/2015-02-17-1bduntg9ii5iufnsg6ggiauu3-edu-update.html>
- Tehseen, S., & Ul Hadi, N. (2015). Factors influencing teachers' performance and retention. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*.
<https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n1p233>
- Teven, J. J., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The relationship of perceived teacher caring with student learning and teacher evaluation. *Communication Education*, 46(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529709379069>
- Tickle, B. R., Chang, M., & Kim, S. (2011). Administrative support and its mediating effect on US public school teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(2), 342-349.
- Tomic, W., & Tomic, E. (2008). Existential fulfillment and burnout among principals and teachers. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 29(1), 11-27.
<http://dspace.ou.nl/bitstream/1820/3034/1/EXISTENTIAL%20FULFILLMENT%20AND%20BURNOUT%20AMONG%20PRINCIPALS%20AND%20TEACHERS.pdf>
- Turning around low-performing schools: A guide for state and local leaders. (1998). U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/PDFDocs/turning.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Teacher compensation. <https://www.ed.gov/oii-news/teacher-compensation>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017). Budget fact sheet.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget17/budget-factsheet.pdf>

Walker, A. D. (2004). *A case study of why teachers choose to remain in one urban school district* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

The Wallace Foundation. (2013). The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning. The Wallace Foundation.
<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Documents/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning-2nd-Ed.pdf>

White, S. S., & Locke, E. A. (2000). Problems with the Pygmalion effect and some proposed solutions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(3), 389-415.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s1048-9843\(00\)00046-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1048-9843(00)00046-1)

The William Glasser Institute. (2010). *The Glasser approach*.
<http://www.wglasser.com/the-glasser-approach>

Wong, H. K. (2002). Play for keeps. *Principal Leadership*, 3(1), 55-59.
<http://www.newteacher.com/pdf/PL0902Wong.pdf>

Wright, P., Horn, S., & Sanders, W. L. (1997) Teachers and classroom heterogeneity: Their effects on educational outcomes. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 11(1), 57- 67.

Appendix A
Teacher Survey Instrument

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher perceptions of factors that influence teacher retention in high-performing schools that serve a large population of students from low-income backgrounds.

PART I: DEMOGRAPHICS

Directions: Please select each item that applies to you. Only make one selection for each item and please answer all questions.

1.	GENDER	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female			
2.	RACE/ETHNICITY	<input type="checkbox"/> African American		<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian		
		<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian		<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Pacific Islander				
3.	NUMBER OF YEARS EXPERIENCE IN A TITLE I SCHOOL (Please include any teaching experiences outside of this school district.)					_____ years
4.	AGE	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 – 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 – 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 – 59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 69	<input type="checkbox"/> 70 - 79
5.	EDUCATION LEVEL	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree		<input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree		<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Degree
6.	CHOSEN PSEUDONYM					

PART II: SURVEY QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to each item by selecting the number that best indicates your opinion based on the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Undecided	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
-----------------------	--------------	---------------	-----------	--------------------

Reasons for selecting to teach in a Title I school:						
1.	I specifically sought employment in a Title I school.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I was educated in a Title I school, therefore, I wanted to teach in one.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	There were no other positions available.	1	2	3	4	5
Reasons for remaining in this Title I school:						
4.	I have received self-gratification from my years of teaching in this Title I school.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I have developed good collegial relationships within this school.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I have been effective in working with high-need children.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Working in this school gives me a sense of self-satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Administrators in this school show appreciation for teacher efforts.	1	2	3	4	5

9.	Staff members in this school are recognized for a job well done.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	In this school administrators' behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I can build a rapport with urban children.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My home is close to this school.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I am familiar with the needs of urban children.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The cultural diversity of children in this Title I school is important.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I enjoy the challenges associated with Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	The salary and fringe benefits I receive in this Title I school are fair.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Mentoring is important for teachers to be retained in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Peer observations are important professional development activities in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	New teacher support groups are important professional development activities in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Alternative assessment training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Classroom management training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Cultural awareness training is an important professional development activity in retaining teachers in Title I schools.	1	2	3	4	5

PART III: TEACHER COMMITMENT

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to each item by selecting the number that best indicates your opinion based on the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Undecided	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
-----------------------	--------------	---------------	-----------	--------------------

23.	This school values student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	The school is committed to meeting the needs of all children.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I enjoy discussing my school with people outside of it.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I view the school's problems as my own.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I feel emotionally attached to this school.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	This school has a great deal of meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I think I could easily become as attached to another school.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this school.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I feel a part of a family in this school.	1	2	3	4	5

Categories based on validation of survey content conducted by Dr. Anitra D. Walker:

<u>INTRINSIC FACTORS</u>
I specifically sought employment in an urban district because it is where I wanted to teach.
I teach in an urban district because I am familiar with the needs of urban children.
I decided to teach in an urban district because I enjoy the challenges associated with urban districts.
I remain in this urban district because of the collegial relationships I have developed.
I teach in this district because of its proximity to my home.
I intend to remain in an urban because I have been effective in working with urban children.
I can build a rapport with urban children.
I was educated in an urban district; therefore, I wanted to teach in one.
Teaching in an urban district gives me a sense of self-satisfaction.
I have received self-gratification for my years of teaching in an urban district.
<u>EXTRINSIC FACTORS</u>
The cultural diversity of children in the district is important.
Staff members in this district are recognized for jobs well done.
I teach in an urban district because there were no other positions available.
The salary and fringe benefits I receive in this district are fair.
Administrators show appreciation for the efforts of teachers.
Administrators' behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
<u>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FACTORS</u>
Mentoring is an important aspect of professional development.
Peer observations are an important part of my professional development.
Cultural awareness training is an important part of my professional development.
New teacher support groups provide much needed assistance for new teachers.
Teachers must receive training in classroom management.
Alternative assessment training is important in working with urban children.
<u>COMMITMENT FACTORS</u>
This school district values student achievement.
The district is committed to meeting the needs of all children.
I enjoy discussing my school district with people outside of it.
I view the school district's problems as my own.
I feel a part of a family in this district.
I feel emotionally attached to this school district.
I feel a strong sense of belonging to this district.
I plan to spend the remainder of my career with this district.
This school district has a great deal of meaning for me.
I think I could easily become as attached to another school district.

Appendix B

Email to Principals in Participating Schools

November 1, 2019

Dear Principal Colleague:

I am pursuing a doctorate in Education Leadership from Gardner-Webb University. I would appreciate your help with this process. The goal of my research is to determine the reasons that motivate teachers to choose to continue serving in high-poverty schools. Your school was selected not only because of your Title I status, but because of positive record of improving students' academic achievement as you have met or exceeded growth for the past 3 years in a row.

I would like to consult with some of your teachers to learn what strategies others can employ to improve the teacher retention rate. I'm seeking help from you in identifying teachers who meet the study criteria: teachers who have taught for at least 5 years in the same school. Ideally, these teachers are serving as a teacher leader on the School Improvement Team or in some other leadership capacity. The study participants and school names will remain anonymous as the goal is to learn from the overall trends.

Keisha Gabriel

Appendix C

Recruitment Email to Study Participants

November 1, 2019

Dear Experienced Teacher Leader:

I am conducting a research study to learn more about the factors that motivate high-quality teachers in Title I schools to continue their employment in high-needs schools. The results of this study will be used to inform teacher retention strategies in an effort to provide students with quality educational opportunities by experienced, consistent teaching professionals. Your principal helped me to identify you as a teacher leader who might be able to provide valuable insight on why teachers choose to stay in challenging school settings.

This study is conducted in two parts: a brief online survey and a follow-up discussion. If you are willing to help me conduct this study, please complete the online survey by Friday, November 15, 2019. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym as your school, survey responses, and interview feedback will all remain anonymous. Additional data analysis will be reported as it relates to demographic categories of participating teachers.

If you are willing to provide assistance with this research, please use the following link to respond to the survey questions: [Teacher Retention Survey](#). The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Afterwards, I will follow up with you to schedule a 20 to 30-minute conversation (via phone or in person) at your convenience to share with you the overall results and ask you to provide additional insight on the trends compiled from all of the survey responses.

If you would like to decline, you may simply reply that you are not interested in participating in the research. You will not be asked to specify the reason. In addition, you have the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any point without question.

Thank you in advance for your efforts to support the youth that we serve. I look forward to receiving your survey response and learning more from you through this study.

Sincerely,

Keisha Gabriel

Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Follow-Up Conversation with Participants

1. What made you decide to become a teacher?

Intrinsic

2. There was a wide variance in agreement on whether or not teachers sought out a Title I school for employment. What things did you have to consider before working in a high-needs school?
3. Only 9% of the teachers had experience as a student in a high-needs school. Do you think it is necessary for a teacher to have been educated in a Title I school to be effective in their school? Why/why not?
4. Teachers overwhelmingly responded in favor of working in a high-needs school because of the self-gratification, self-satisfaction, good collegial relationships, positive impact on students, and their ability to build rapport with students. No teachers disagreed with those survey questions. Do you believe these are the main reasons that make you an effective teacher?
5. Although most Title I schools come with significant challenges that impact the students and staff, 70% of the participating teachers agreed that they embraced these challenges and use them as a source of motivation. What kinds of challenges do teachers working in high-poverty schools face?

Extrinsic Motivation

6. How actively were you recruited by Title I schools? Non-Title I schools?
7. In what ways have administrators and other staff members at your school shown their appreciation for the work you do?
8. Why is it important for you to teach in a culturally diverse setting? What positive and challenging effects might a teacher experience when serving students, especially those from a different cultural background?
9. How important is it for a teacher to receive fair compensation for their work? Why do you think there was a disparity in how participants responded to Survey Question 16 about fair salary and benefits?

Commitment

10. Would you work at a school that did not value student achievement or was not committed to meeting the needs of all children? Why/why not?
11. Can you describe what conditions need to be in place for a teacher to become personally connected to a school?

Professional Development

1. What kinds of professional development opportunities have you had over the past few years at your school? Which have been the most and least beneficial?

2. What were some of the reasons that some of the teachers you know of have left the school or profession?