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## Teacher Retention in High-Poverty, Urban Schools

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Teacher Retention in High-Poverty, Urban Schools

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Master of Arts in Education – Educational Leadership

ED 590: Research & Complete Capstone Cohort #911

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### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this capstone project to my children, Ashe', Aria, and Tristan. You are the foundation of my being each and every day and I am so grateful that God has chosen me as your mom. Your support and words of encouragement throughout this process have been never ending and I love you more than you will ever know. You will do amazing things in life and I cannot wait to continue by your side watching and cheering you on like you have done for me. Thank you for being amazing humans.

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**Abstract**

Teaching has always been about the success of the students. Students who have effective, qualified teachers show the most success. Throughout the years, schools in urban areas have struggled to keep quality teachers within their buildings. Due to teacher turnover in the neediest schools, the students are greatly affected. The students in high-poverty urban schools are some of the lowest performing students across the country. When you pair low performance with significant teacher turnover, the outcome is grim. Research shows that districts and schools need to do more than just recruit qualified teachers, they must also retain them for the sake of their students. This paper explores the reasons behind teacher turnover and what strategies schools and districts can implement to halt the revolving door on teaching in high-poverty, urban schools. A variety of literature was reviewed along with research studies to determine if there is an effective way for schools and districts to retain teachers in urban schools.

*Keywords:* high-poverty schools, teacher retention, urban schools

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Teacher turnover is inevitable, but our nation's high-poverty, urban schools are in desperate need of effective teachers who are willing to commit to teaching in these schools long enough to make a significant difference in the students' performance (Freedman and Appleman, 2009). A child's educational journey begins early on in their life prior to ever stepping foot in a school building. Children learn and flourish from the moment they can observe things around them, and this journey continues into their school years. Every child has a right to a quality education provided to them by an effective teacher who will provide meaningful opportunities for them to continue their educational journey. Providing this education to all children is a daunting task for school districts because they lack the understanding of how to retain quality teachers, especially in high-poverty, urban schools. A shortage of qualified teachers exists in urban areas of districts where the students who face the greatest challenges as learners reside (Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi, & Smith, 2009). The students in schools that are not staffed by quality teachers are falling increasingly further behind their peers. If students in high-poverty schools are to be given the same quality of education as their peers in non-poverty schools, then schools need to determine the factors that are contributing to the revolving door of teachers. "In general, schools in large urban districts serve a large share of disadvantaged students, who may stand to gain the most from increased teacher quality and stability" (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017, p. 7). Fixing poverty is not in the hands of educators (Hattie, 2015), and because of that, the weight of teacher recruitment and retention issues falls on the schools and districts to devise and implement resources that their neediest schools and students will benefit from. Furthermore, research will assist districts to prepare, recruit, and retain quality teachers (Vagi, Pivovarova, & Barnard, 2019) in high-poverty, urban schools.



Retaining quality teachers in urban schools has a positive effect on students and can be done by building relationships, having successful school environments, and preparing teachers appropriately for the teaching profession.

### **Importance of the Research**

Teacher retention is hugely influential to the academic success of students, especially in high-poverty, urban schools. The turnover rate of teachers in urban schools can also affect students' perceptions of themselves, their future endeavors, and their relationships with other people. Teacher turnover also has a negative impact on the culture of a school, whereas research states that high teacher retention is linked to strong school culture (Simon & Johnson, 2015). It is valuable for schools and districts to learn from educators about why they stay or leave high-poverty schools. The feedback from teachers about what emerged from the research—teacher's relationships with students and colleagues, school environment, and teacher preparation programs—will be important for understanding the retention of quality teachers in urban schools. Research has found that it is not enough just to recruit quality teachers, schools and districts must keep them, too (Wronowski, 2018).

### **Scope of Research**

Schools are the backbone of communities. The pivotal role that teachers play within those schools has a lasting effect on future generations. Because of this effect, it is vital that schools and districts find the most effective way to retain teachers, especially in high-poverty, urban schools. This paper will explore research about teacher retention in urban schools and how relationships between teachers and students have a lasting effect on students. It will also look at how the school environment plays a role in retaining teachers within an urban school. Support within the classroom is just as important as support outside of the classroom for both the students

and teachers. Furthermore, how prepared teachers are when entering classrooms of high-poverty, urban schools will also be examined as a tool for teacher retention. The aim of this paper is to examine effective teacher retention strategies that will benefit the teacher, school, and most importantly, the students.

### **Research Question**

The nation's highest poverty schools are struggling to retain quality teachers to educate children who are already facing challenges beyond their control. It is important that districts find ways to retain teachers within urban schools to ensure that all students receive a quality education. In light of what is known about educational leadership, how can schools retain teachers in high-poverty, urban schools?

### **Definition of Terms**

**High-poverty schools** refer to schools with more than 50% of students who are eligible for free/reduced lunch (Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

**Teacher retention** means that a teacher remains in the same school, although they can change grades or subject areas (Papay et al., 2017). In the context of this paper, it means that the teacher remained in the same school or district.

**Urban schools** refer to schools that serve students from poverty-stricken communities (Kraft et al. 2015). For the purpose of this research, urban schools mean schools whose student population is mostly brown and black and come from low economic areas.

### **Summary**

High-poverty, urban schools are struggling to retain quality teachers. The lack of teacher retention has lasting effects on the students who are already experiencing challenges inside and outside of school. There are many factors that contributed to the reasons that teachers gave about

why they remained in high-poverty, urban schools such as school relationships, school environments, and how prepared they were to teach in such difficult environments. The research attempts to understand how schools and districts can retain quality teachers in the most challenging schools. It also spotlights strategies districts can use to retain teachers (Papay et al., 2017).

Chapter Two will examine studies that relate to teacher retention within high-poverty schools and reasons that were found to be effective in the retention of teachers. Chapter 3 highlights how the research can be used to improve the retention of teachers in urban schools. This chapter also summarizes the findings of the literature review.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Several studies revealed that there are multiple reasons why teachers do not remain in high-poverty, urban schools. This literature review attempts to determine the factors that influence teacher retention and what insights school districts can gain to have a positive transformation on teacher retention within high-poverty, urban schools. This chapter discusses the findings of earlier studies regarding teacher retention within high-poverty schools and reasons encompassing why teachers remain in or leave such schools. It also analyzes other literature and research about the effect teacher turnover in high-poverty schools has on the students within those buildings.

The beginning section of the literature review focuses on school-based relationships between the student and teacher, teacher and student, and teacher and peers. These three types of relationships were examined in the research as factors in teacher retention. The first portion of the literature review also analyzes the role that these relationships play in the success of students in high-poverty, urban schools. The research of He, Cooper, and Tangredi (2015), Kraft et al. (2015), McIntyre (2010), Petty et al. (2012), Quartz (2003), Rucinski, Brown, and Downer (2018), Simon and Johnson (2015), and Wronowski (2017), all have found how valuable school-based relationships are to the retention of teachers in high-poverty, urban schools. These relationships help to build the foundation for which teachers can effectively educate students in such challenging environments.

The second portion of the literature review discusses the impact that the school environment has on the retention of teachers. The elements of the school environment that were discussed in the research were school community and leadership of the building. The components of the school environment had a marked (sizable?) impact on job satisfaction of

teachers and whether teachers remained in urban schools. In the research of Freedman and Appleman (2009), Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, Volman (2014), Ingersoll (2001), and Worthy (2006), job dissatisfaction was the top reason that teachers gave for leaving high-poverty schools.

In addition, the final section of the literature review looks at what research has concluded as to what role teacher preparedness programs play in teacher retention in urban schools. Programs that the research found offered semester-long practicums to a full years' worth of experience in high-poverty schools. The studies of Burstein et al. (2012), Harrell, Thompson, and Brooks (2018), and Whip and Geronime (2015) discussed teacher preparedness programs as being those of pre-service and student teaching that influence the longevity of teachers in high-poverty, urban areas. It also found that with proper training and support after leaving the program, teacher retention remained constant in high-poverty schools.

### **School-Based Relationships**

The research has found that teachers value relationships within the classroom and school. These relationships help to build the foundation needed for both the teacher and students to be successful. The relationships formed within the school environment help with teacher retention in high-poverty schools for long periods of time. There are three types of relationships that teachers find vital in their profession: student-teacher, teacher-student, and teacher-peer.

**Student-teacher relationships.** Students are important stakeholders within schools and so it is important that their voices be heard when it comes to how they view their relationship with their teacher. The quantitative research study executed by Rucinski et al. (2018) on 526 children in grades three through five across six high-poverty public schools in New York City, New York, found that students' perceptions of their student-teacher relationship played a role in

how they felt about themselves, acted in class, and how well they performed. How much emotional support the teacher provided in the classroom had a direct effect on whether the child felt that they had a positive and productive relationship with the teacher or not (Rucinski et al., 2018). The more emotional support the teacher provided, the better the student viewed the relationship; the less emotional support that the teacher provided, the worse the student viewed the relationship with the teacher. Wronowski (2017) stated that there is a unique need for open and honest relationships in urban schools. In the qualitative study by Wronowski (2017), she used interviews and observations of nine urban teachers to gain insight into why they remained in high-poverty schools and one of the participants stated, “Our urban students need a very real, honest interaction” (p. 556) and that is what the teachers gave them. This statement supports Rucinski et al.’s (2018) finding that honesty has an impact on students’ perception of how well they view their student-teacher relationship. The overall conclusion in Wronowski (2017) and Rucinski et al.’s (2018) research is that the rapport between student and teacher is an important predictor in the success of students and must come before anything academic. Wronowski and Rucinski et al. also agree that the limitations to their research were small participant groups, and they would like to see research in the future of bigger participant groups to get a variety of experiences. The small participant groups were not able to capture multiple grade levels and were not a very diverse group.

**Teacher-student relationships.** Teachers in high-poverty, urban schools value the relationships they build with their students as much as the students indicated in the previous section. Teachers view the relationships they build with their students as an important component to the success of the students and themselves as an educator. A qualitative research study by Petty et al. (2012) consisted of online surveys that gathered the opinions of 537 high school

teachers within 23 high need schools in one southeastern state and found that teachers remained in high-poverty schools because of the bond they created with their students. Teachers discussed that the relationships they built with the students helped better themselves as educators and were the main reason they remained teaching in the high-poverty schools (Petty et al., 2012). Research also indicated that teachers that grew up in the local, urban areas were more prepared to teach in high-poverty schools because they understood the children's unique needs and had a desire to create sincere relationships with the students (Petty et al., 2012). Teachers in urban schools strive to teach the whole child because they understand that students in high-poverty areas bring their home life to school with them. In He et al.'s (2015) qualitative five-year study of a white, male teacher who worked in an urban high school in the South, found that the teacher gained satisfaction in helping make students' lives better, especially for the students whose everyday circumstances were out of their control. The participant "developed the perception of his teacher's role as an advocate, facilitator, and role model for the students he works with" (He et al. 2015, p. 52) which helped him to reach his students. This research complemented the findings of Kraft et al. (2015), Petty et al. (2012), and Quartz's (2003) studies that teaching is more than just providing academic material to students, it is building a foundation of support and encouragement as well. Teachers in the qualitative research study by Quartz (2003), which was made up of 326 teachers in Los Angeles' hardest-to-staff schools, also found that teachers working alongside students in the school yard, on student council, or in after-school sports and music programs created supportive relationships that solidified the bond between teacher and student that Petty et al. (2012) spoke of in their research. The relationships between the teacher and students are influential in the success of the students. Kraft et al.'s (2015) qualitative research study of a diverse set of 83 teachers across a sample of six high-poverty, urban schools

in one district using interviews also complemented the research of Petty et al. (2012) that teachers remained in high-poverty schools because of the relationships with their students. Successful teachers in urban schools become active learners and participants of their school's community by seeking to understand its strengths, resources, and needs so that they can better educate their students who live there (Kraft et al., 2015). This finding supports the fact that teachers who teach in high-poverty, urban schools seek to educate the whole child because they believe that encompassing all parts of the child's life helps the academic success of the child.

The teachers in each of these studies understood that in high-poverty schools, the academic and social success of their students is an important factor in the education of the whole child. Many of the participants in Kraft et al. (2015), Petty et al. (2012), and Quartz's (2003) studies felt a greater sense of achievement, both personally and professionally, when their students were successful considering the outside challenges they faced. This feeling is what kept them teaching in challenging schools of high poverty where the students did not even see their own potential (Kraft et al., 2015).

The limitations of the research were that the sample group sizes were small and did not include a variety of diverse participants that accurately represented all teachers in high-poverty schools. More research is needed with a wider range of diverse participants in the sample groups to gain a better understanding of how important teacher-student relationships are to the teachers in high-poverty, urban schools. The instruments used—surveys and interviews—were applicable when gathering information about teacher-student relationships; however, they would not be a good source when collecting quantitative data due to the subjective nature of human emotions and relationships.



**Teacher-peer relationships.** Teaching is a personal and relationship-based profession and without positive, supportive relationships with colleagues, teachers often are left feeling burnt out and unsuccessful. When this feeling persists, especially among novice teachers, research shows that teachers leave the teaching environment. Freedman and Appleman (2009) stated in the opening paragraph of the mixed methods research study of a cohort of 26 participants, in which they followed teachers from their first year of teaching through their fifth year of teaching, that throughout this nation, high-poverty, urban schools are in need of dedicated and effective teachers who will commit to these schools long enough to make a significant difference in the school culture and student performance (p. 323).

Effective, novice teachers benefit from the expertise of veteran teachers and the knowledge they present, but beginning teachers also want to have a voice. Being allowed to share their voice in discussions, meetings, and planning is important in the retention of these teachers within high-poverty, urban schools. Teachers value the support systems that they build with their colleagues and view this as a reason they remain teaching in high-poverty, urban schools. “Teachers who work well together, collaborate, and co-plan may see working in a high-need high school as a challenge they are willing to take together” (Petty et al., 2012, p. 81) and this has helped teachers avoid the burn-out phase and rise to the occasion of providing the most effective education to the neediest of students. McIntyre’s (2010) qualitative research interviews of 20 teachers in three schools located in socially deprived areas within one Local Authority within the UK supported Petty et al. (2012) and Kraft et al. (2015) in the data that teachers who build relationships with teachers and students within their school are connected to those communities for years. Teachers that work well together, uplift, and support each other are teachers that are bound by ties of loyalty and professionalism to the community in which they

teach (McIntyre, 2010). This view is supported by Kraft et al. (2015) who wrote that the challenges students brought to the classroom from their community are the challenges that teachers said are what had drawn them to their school and what has kept them there. Students in high-poverty schools are currently facing challenges of poverty, low performance, and inexperienced teachers who end up leaving the teaching profession within a few years (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teachers who collaborated with team members and colleagues, along with administration, felt a greater sense of community within their school, simultaneously creating a positive teaching and learning environment for both staff and students. This community of teachers understands that it takes an incredible amount of dedication and affection for their students (Wronowski, 2017) and each other to remain in the challenging teaching environment of high-poverty schools. Quartz (2003) notes,

The real heroes of urban schools are those who figure out ways to stay connected to their profession, their pursuit of social justice, their colleagues, their students, and their communities. These heroes are not born; they emerge from an extensive network of supports and a solid understanding of pedagogy (p. 105).

### **School Environment**

Along with building authentic and meaningful relationships with students, teachers also noted that a supportive school environment led them to remain in high-poverty schools (Petty et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). The research found that teachers identified school environment as administration and support within the school. These were important factors in determining if a teacher remained in a high-poverty school.

**School leadership.** Administration that fostered respect and recognized student and teacher achievement also contributed to the value of the school environment (Petty et al. 2012, p. 82). The sense of community that was built from the support of the staff and administration factored into the longevity of the teachers in high-poverty schools.

Petty et al. (2012) and Ingersoll (2001) found that lack of administrative support was the main reason teachers left high-poverty schools. The lack of support from administration encompassing student behavior, teacher mentoring, and teacher voice were all noted by teachers who left high-poverty schools, but lack of administrative support was the top reason. When teachers do not have the backing of the administration, especially in high-poverty schools, they begin to seek out different work environments. The research in this paper has shown that teachers' relationships with principals and colleagues influence their decisions to stay or leave because those are the factors that shape their success with their students (Kraft et al., 2015).

Worthy's (2005) study used a qualitative, longitudinal five-year case study approach that investigated the reasons why a novice teacher remained teaching in a high-poverty, urban school through the challenges he faced. Similarly to Ingersoll (2001) and Petty et al. (2012), Worthy (2005) found that novice teachers progressed through different stages in their teaching over the first five years, and it is also noted that there is a higher turnover rate of teachers before this five-year mark due to poor job satisfaction resulting from a lack of support from administration/faculty. Papay et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study across 16 urban school districts in seven states by using administrative human resource records provided by states and districts to conclude that almost 20% of teachers leave their school within one year and close to 60% leave within five years. This finding supports Worthy's (2005) report that there is a higher turnover rate within the first five years of teaching. This high teacher turnover rate breaks up a

school's culture and climate, therefore creating instability in students' learning. Papay et al.'s (2017) study found that when schools and districts do not retain their most effective teachers, the cost to the students and their learning is the biggest loss. Disadvantaged students in high-poverty, urban districts have the most to gain from increased teacher quality and stability (Papay et al. 2017) through teacher retention. This research study did not note any limitations and accredited that to the use of administrative data from multiple states and districts versus surveys and interviews that previous research studies used.

In support of Papay et al.'s (2017) research of teacher turnover rates pertaining to the support of school leadership, Ingersoll's (2001) quantitative study of the data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its counterpart, the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), used questionnaires for a random sample of 6,733 elementary and secondary teachers over a 12-month period. These studies found that schools that provided more administrative support to teachers had distinctly lower turnover rates. This lower teacher turnover benefited the school culture and student performance within the urban school. Kraft et al. (2015) identified that when high-poverty, urban schools engaged effectively with their school environment, they became "stable, responsive and productive organizations that retain teachers who are committed to students and their success" (p. 27). High-poverty, urban schools could retain quality, effective teachers if they listened to the voices of the teachers within them and built a solid foundation of honesty, trustworthiness, collaboration, and respect between the teachers and the school administration leadership.

**School support.** Teachers entering the teaching profession in high-poverty, urban schools need to be supported by the school community. That support should include the administration, parents, students, and the community. "The culture of poverty that is pervasive in

urban, high-needs schools can be shocking to people who have never been exposed to it before” (Wronowski, 2018, p. 559) and because of this, it is important that schools address this with teachers entering such communities. A lot of research has consisted of small, white participant groups that have had little to no exposure or experience within high-poverty, urban schools or communities. In Wronowski’s (2018) study, four of the teachers interviewed had grown up in suburban or rural areas and went through a complete poverty shock when they were hired at their urban schools. The success of the teachers in this study depended on their ability to acclimate within the new culture that they found themselves; it was a “unique kind of flexibility of culture” (Wronowski, 2018, p. 560). The teachers had to understand that their students were not coming from areas and homes like they were used to, they were coming from communities which were very different from their own backgrounds.

Effective administrators understood the poverty shock that their teachers experienced, and they used that to create an environment that would showcase the community their students came from so teachers could see the strengths of the urban communities. A few new teachers wanted to ensure that they worked alongside parents and community members so they could fully understand and access the resources of their urban neighborhoods (Quartz, 2003). This experience left the teachers eager to work with parents, students, community members, and the administration to ensure student and school success. Many teachers, 86% of those in the study, indicated that they had made their school community a more caring place just by developing relationships with parents and by connecting with and respecting parents and students (Quartz, 2003). Schools in which teacher retention was high noted that organizational supports were put into practice by the administration and they acknowledged the roles that the school’s environment and the uncertainty of the environment played in teachers’ work (Kraft et al., 2015,

Gaikhorst et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Kraft et al. (2015), it was shown that “schools can support teachers with appropriate, deliberate, and coherent approaches to the uncertainties of teaching in urban environments” (p. 3). Schools that exhibited those approaches were more likely to draw in effective teachers, work with them to develop their teaching over time, and build effectiveness throughout the school, ensuring that all students benefited from effective and committed teachers. The findings of Gaikhorst et al.’s (2014) qualitative research study of eight beginning teachers in 11 urban primary schools using 19 in-depth semi structured interviews contributed to the work of Kraft et al. (2015) and Wronowski (2017) around support structures for retaining quality teachers. The studies found that when the support structures were focused on the specific challenges of teaching in an urban school, the teacher retention was positive. Providing support in all areas of the teachers’ work helped them to feel more confident in bridging their differences in backgrounds with their students and providing a high-quality education to their students. Research has shown that it is important for teachers to feel valued and heard. Administration that supported those feelings worked endlessly to truly hear their teachers and to utilize what they said to benefit their school and students. A supportive administration plays a pivotal role in the success of the teachers and students in their school. What the research has concluded is that teacher retention happens when teachers feel empowered and successful. Wronowski’s (2017) figure 1 shows how teacher empowerment leads to successful teachers in high-poverty, urban areas, which ultimately leads to quality teachers being retained and recruited within these schools.



Figure 1. A model of teacher recruitment and retention in urban, high-needs schools. From *Education and Urban Society*, by Meredith Wronowski, 2018, retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517713608> Copyright 2017 by The Author(s).

### Teacher Preparedness Programs

High-poverty, urban schools present many challenges to teachers, even veteran teachers can experience challenges within such environments. Research indicates that how well teachers were prepared for the teaching profession had an impact on how successful they were and how long they remained within high-poverty schools. A quantitative study by Vagi et al. (2019) was conducted as part of an evaluation of a teacher preparation program housed in a state university

in the southwestern United States and consisted of 1,126 participants. This study concluded that having an urban experience prior to graduating from the teaching program showed greater success in teachers becoming culturally aware and remaining in urban schools for longer amounts of time, although it could not guarantee that they would remain in teaching forever. This study supports previous research by Burstein et al. (2009), Freedman and Appleman (2009), Harrell et al. (2019), Petty et al. (2012), Quartz (2003), Watlington et al. (2004), Whipp and Geronime (2015), and Worthy (2005) that preservice teachers who completed practicums and student teaching experiences in high-poverty, urban schools gained more knowledge and experience from being placed in these areas. It also found that preservice teachers were more often offered jobs right after college, remained in high-poverty schools for longer, and were effective and successful teachers within their schools. While Vagi et al.'s (2019) research did not evaluate a specific teacher preparation program, it did indicate that teacher preparedness programs that offered year-long residencies for their preservice teachers seemed to be critical for student teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession (p. 125). This teacher preparedness program helped to 'weed out' those teachers who may not have been mentally prepared for the teaching profession. In their review of teacher turnover, Whipp and Geronime (2015) conveyed that school districts need to pay closer attention to who they hire to halt the revolving door of teachers. They believed that if districts spent more time and money upfront investigating potential teacher hires and evaluating the teachers' experiences, prior and during teacher preparation, they could cultivate effective teachers. Data for Whipp and Geronime's (2015) study was gathered using 72 graduates of an urban teacher education program and the retention of the teachers in urban schools for three or more years. The data revealed that urban k-12 schooling, volunteer service, and student teaching in a high-poverty, urban school led to urban commitment,



employment, and teacher retention of at least three years in an urban school (Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

Research of teacher preparedness programs continues to show a correlation between experience in urban schools and teacher retention within those schools. A quantitative approach was taken by Watlington et al. (2004) in their research assessing teacher retention and demographic variables in four South Florida School Districts over a multi-year project of 2,129 teachers who were hired during the 2000-2001 academic year. They published that 62% of teachers that were hired and retained came from approved teacher education programs with preparation in urban schools. This data is consistent with the research that has been found in this paper regarding preparedness programs for teachers that focused on urban school placements for preservice and student teaching assignments.

Harrell et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study of 76 science and math teachers, 75% white, 13% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 3% Asian, within an urban setting over a five-year period, and their data found that preservice teachers who had a cycle of feedback from the supervising teacher and the teacher preparation program were successful when obtaining and retaining a teaching position in high-poverty, urban schools. It also suggested that universities must find ways to support the teacher candidates once they become teachers. This type of support may look like a mentor coach who can facilitate strategies for effective classroom discipline practices for the new teachers (Harrell et al., 2012). What is currently displayed within teacher preparedness programs is a two separate worlds approach to educating preservice teachers (Worthy, 2005). This means that the preparedness program of the university does one part, usually preparing the teacher for teaching, and the school in which they are hired is responsible for teaching them classroom management, collaboration, and curriculum. Research

has found that this approach lacks cohesion in supporting and encouraging teachers to learn and grow in the teaching profession. A transition between preparedness programs and teaching jobs needs to happen so that novice teachers are not thrown into the challenging environments of urban schools with no support system. By working together, the new teacher can feel supported by what they know—the university—and what they are joining—the workforce. If the two programs can work together to support the novice teacher, then the teacher can feel confident in dealing with the challenges that await them in the classroom of high-poverty, urban students. A participant in Worthy's (2005) study said that, "a truer collaboration between university faculty and school faculty, which would include planning together and teaching side by side in university and school classrooms, would be invaluable for the learning of preservice and inservice teachers" (p. 392). This invaluable collaboration would then produce effective teachers for the neediest students.

In support of that desire for a cohesion of university and schools, Burstein et al. (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study of 554 candidates in a one-year, full-time credential program in recruiting, preparing, and retaining elementary, secondary, and special education teachers for urban schools. This study was aimed at restructuring teacher education as a shared school-university responsibility through the Accelerated Collaborative Teacher (ACT) preparation program (Burstein et al., 2012). Of the 554 candidates of the Burstein et al. (2012) study, 94% of them completed the ACT program; 43% were hired in the urban school district where they were trained, and after five years of teaching, retention averaged 74%. Key components of ACT are a common core of courses, specialization for elementary, secondary, and special education, and field experiences that were linked with core classes and specialized curriculum (Burstein et al., 2012). The research found that candidates felt well prepared in classroom management,

collaboration, and planning and this helped them feel confident when remaining in the teaching profession. Even though previous research from Freedman and Appleman (2009), Harrell et al. (2019), Petty et al. (2012), Quartz (2003), Watlington et al. (2004), Whipp and Geronime (2015), and Worthy (2005) had limitations that did not focus on a specific teacher preparedness program, the results were consistent with Burstein et al.'s (2012) findings that teacher preparedness programs have a positive effect on teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools. With that, Petty et al. (2012) also concluded that preparation could include restructuring programs to include Urban Teacher Residencies and/or work in Professional Development Schools for the retention of quality teachers within urban schools. Research by Freedman and Appleman (2009) found that their participants were successful after they were required to take a year-long methods seminar and a set of courses that included urban education, second language methods, and language study for educators (p. 324). This strategy built the preservice teachers' confidence in being able to relate and work with students in challenging communities from many diverse backgrounds.

Teacher preparedness programs need to start normalizing urban teaching rather than problematizing it and students need to not be labeled as the problems to why teachers do not stay in urban schools, but as the reason for teachers' commitments to high-poverty schools (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Teachers teach students that how they view things can influence how they do things. It is the teachers' turn to take their own advice and see high-poverty schools and students in a different light and commit to providing them the education that they deserve.

### **Review of the Proposed Problem**

In light of what is known about educational leadership, how can schools retain teachers in high-poverty, urban schools?

Teacher retention in high-poverty schools can be obtained when districts take the proper channels to secure them. The school system is only as good as the teachers, but teachers cannot do it on their own; they need support, collaboration with peers, to develop expertise, and lastly, they need effective school leaders (Hattie, 2015). The studies show how schools can retain quality teachers in high-poverty schools by building relationships, providing a supportive environment, and using teacher preparedness programs to guide teachers into being effective teachers within challenging schools. The studies show why focusing on providing teachers opportunities to build themselves up within urban schools is key to retaining them in high-poverty schools. Creating opportunities for teachers to build relationships with their students and colleagues in high-poverty, urban schools helps them create a network of support that all can benefit from. Research has shown that the better the relationships are within a school, the better the students and teachers perform. Teacher preparedness programs vary in levels of effectiveness. These studies show that the more organized, supportive, and collaborative teacher preparedness programs are in placing teachers in urban, challenging schools the more successful the outcomes of teacher retention are within these schools.

### **Importance of the Topic**

Districts need a clear understanding of why teachers leave and stay in urban schools in order to develop systems and strategies that retain teachers. The importance of understanding what teachers believe are the key reasons they stay in challenging schools is an asset to districts and schools if they want to have a positive, lasting effect on future generations. Students deserve to be taught by the best so they can be the best.

## **Summary**

The research uncovered some key components for retaining quality teachers in high-poverty schools and what things can be done to help teachers grow into successful teachers within these challenging environments. Theme one addressed the importance of teacher relationships within a classroom and school. What was found in the research is that relationships that are built on honesty create trusting and supportive relationships between students and teachers and teachers and their peers. Theme two evaluated the school community and the impact that successful leaders had on the success and retention of teachers within their schools. The retention and success of the teachers within these urban schools was dependent upon how supportive and encouraging the school leader's interactions were. The more positive these interactions were, the longer the teachers remained in the school. Theme three examined the role teacher preparedness programs had in the success of teachers remaining in high-poverty schools. What this research found was that the better prepared teachers are for challenging teaching environments, the longer they remained teaching in those schools.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research presented a clear indicator that teacher turnover is not an easy fix and that it will take a variety of adjustments for districts to ensure the retention of quality teachers within high-poverty, urban schools. These adjustments will help districts hire teachers with expertise, cultural awareness, and commitment to teach in high-poverty schools, which in turn will create environments in which students and teachers are successful.

Consequently, more research of concrete information is needed regarding schools and districts implementing teacher retention programs into their hiring processes. Chapter 3 will go

over specific application examples of how future studies will address teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools.

### **Chapter Three: Discussion/Application and Future Studies**

#### **Insights Gained from the Research**

As teachers maneuver through the teaching profession, they will encounter many students and schools that challenge their techniques and even their livelihood as a teacher. Although it was hypothesized that the number one thing that people believe will keep teachers in any school is higher pay, the findings of the research have actually concluded that this is not accurate. Paying teachers more will not create a retention of teachers within schools, let alone within high-poverty, urban schools. Although it has been proven that offering teachers a higher salary will help in the recruitment of them to high-poverty schools, it does not help in retaining them.

The research does show that teachers base their decisions for remaining or leaving a school on personal and professional factors. Therefore, even if they are paid more money, if they do not feel supported by administration or feel as though they do not have a voice within the school or their classroom, they will give up the money and job to go to a school where they may make less money but feel more valued. One teacher noted that she has spent her entire teaching career teaching in high-poverty, urban schools. She stated that she has left schools that paid her more because of the lack of support from administration and because she felt that she was not being valued for what she brought to the table. In her case, as is for many teachers, leaving the students was difficult because she understands the impact that the revolving door of teachers has on the students. The saying that money buys happiness is not evident in the realm of teacher retention in high-poverty schools.

Another theory that surfaced throughout the research was that if districts increased benefits for teachers they would remain teaching in challenging schools. This, like paying teachers more money, had a positive effect on recruiting teachers, but not retaining them.

Throughout the findings of teacher benefits, districts did not discuss with teachers why these benefits were not keeping them in urban schools. There seemed to be a lack of communication between the district and the teachers. In order for any and all strategies to work in the retention of teachers, there must be open communication between the stakeholders. Although it seemed like the districts were listening to someone who was telling them that increasing teacher benefits would retain them in urban schools, it is quite evident that they were not talking to the right people, the teachers.

Whether districts pay teachers more money or increase their benefits this will not fix the retention issue in urban schools. Districts need to communicate and work with teachers who have remained in high-poverty schools and listen to their voices. The research shows that if districts were to pair higher teacher salaries or increased benefits for teachers with support from administration, mentoring programs for new teachers, and relationships within the school community, they would begin to halt the revolving door of teachers in high-poverty, urban schools.

### **Application**

As stated earlier, teacher turnover is inevitable, and some teacher turnover is actually healthy for school environments. What schools and districts realize is that teacher turnover that consistently happens year after year has an extreme negative impact on students and staff.

Research shows that there is not just one solution to teacher retention in high-poverty schools. If districts applied administrative support practices to their school communities along with higher pay or benefits for teachers, they would be creating an environment that emits positivity and teachers would want to continue to be a part of. Teachers care about their students, and as the research has shown in the previous chapter, relationships that they build with their



students plays an important role in their decision to stay at the school. When teachers choose to leave schools, it is not an easy decision for them. They weigh personal and professional reasons for leaving and the findings of the research suggest that teachers leave more for professional reasons than personal.

The ability of schools and districts to retain quality teachers in high-poverty schools entirely depends on how much effort they put into the recruiting process. As stated earlier, recruiting the right teacher may improve retention, but it will not be enough (Wronowski, 2018). The right teachers need to be hired and direct efforts need to be made in order to successfully retain them in high-poverty, urban schools. Schools and districts need to implement strategies that help them ensure that teachers are feeling respected and valued. When such strategies are implemented, along with higher pay or improved benefits, teachers' attitudes and confidence soar and they want to remain in urban schools. Providing multiple solutions to the problem has positive effects on teacher retention and student success.

### **Future Studies**

What is now needed is a cross-national study involving elementary, middle, and high schools in high-poverty schools pertaining to the retention of teachers. This research could be improved by following teachers in urban schools who are retained at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, within schools that feed into each other. Each level of the schools were included in a number of studies presented in this paper but there was no consistent cross-district comparison for teacher retention. Within districts, certain elementary schools feed into specific middle schools and the same for high schools. Future studies could analyze the different school levels to see what is working within one level or more to retain quality teachers. Using that

information would benefit them in developing strategies to retain teachers throughout each of the different levels in the district.

Further studies need to be carried out in order to validate the information surrounding higher teacher pay and benefits. Although the research here discussed how these two items have an impact on teacher recruitment, it did not discuss in great detail how they can be used to retain teachers. A quantitative study involving teacher retention because of higher pay or increased benefits would give insight into whether that is a single significant factor or a multifaceted factor.

More research using controlled groups of teachers is needed to determine teacher retention. Future studies could analyze more data by following beginning teachers throughout their teaching profession and not just limiting to the first five years like a majority of the research has done. This would allow a greater range of understanding as to why teachers leave or remain in urban schools over the years.

## **Conclusion**

The findings in this research conclude that teacher retention in high-poverty schools is multifaceted and cannot be solved with just a single solution. Research indicates that teachers will give up their position in a school if they do not feel respected, supported, and valued. Although further research may be needed in some areas, existing research states that schools and districts need to focus on supporting quality teachers that they have recruited in order to retain them. Schools and districts should communicate with teachers in high-poverty schools as to what needs they have in order for them to feel effective in the classroom. Schools and districts should also provide novice teachers with mentors and collaboration time with their teammates to build that professional relationship. The research has shown that these relationships play a vital role in

teacher retention. School district officials, school administrators, and teachers must confront what the research states about teacher retention; it is not benefitting districts, schools, teachers, or students in ways that produce positive outcomes for all. Although teacher retention ultimately falls on the schools and districts, communication with teachers about the support they need to be successful is the first step schools and districts can take in order to retain quality teachers in high-poverty, urban schools.

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**Appendix**

## Article Tracking Matrix

<b>Articles: Author(s) name and year of publication</b>	<b>Method: Qualitative/ Quantitative/ Meta-Analysis Mixed-Methods</b>	<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Outlier</b>
Burstein, N. Czech, M. Kretschmer, D. Lombardi, J. Smith, C. (2009)	Mixed-Methods			X	
Freedman, S. W. & Appleman, D. (2009)	Mixed-Methods		X	X	
Gaikhorst, L., Beishuizen, J. J., Korstjens, I. M., & Volman, M. L. L., (2014)	Qualitative		X		
Harrell, P., Thompson, R., & Brooks, K. (2018)	Quantitative			X	
He, Y., Cooper, J. E., & Tangredi, C. (2015)	Qualitative	X			
Ingersoll, R. M. (2001)	Quantitative		X		
Kraft, M. A. Papay, J. P. Johnson, S. M. Charner-Laird, M. Ng, M., & Reinhorn, S. (2015)	Qualitative	X			
McIntyre, J.	Qualitative	X			

(2010)					
Papay, J. P. Bacher-Hicks, A. Paige, L. C. Marinell, W. H. (2017)	Quantitative			X	
Petty, T. M. Fitchett, P., & O'Connor, K. (2012)	Qualitative	X		X	
Quartz, K. H. (2003)	Qualitative	X	X	X	
Rucinski, C. L. Brown, J. L., & Downer, J. T. (2018)	Quantitative	X			
Simon, N. Johnson, S. (2015)	Qualitative	X	X		
Vagi, R., Pivovarova, M., & Barnard, M. (2019)	Quantitative			X	
Watlington, E. J. Shockley, R. Earley, D. L. Huie, K. K. Morris, J., & Lieberman, M. (2004)	Quantitative			X	
Whipp, J. L. Geronime, L. (2015)	Quantitative			X	
Worthy, J. (2005)	Qualitative		X	X	
Wronowski, M. L. (2018)	Qualitative	X	X		



FINAL CAPSTONE PAPER RUBRIC: (PASS OR FAIL)				
Criteria (Total points)	Exemplary 420-403	Proficient 402-361	Competent 360-319	Unsatisfactory 0
<b>Cover Page; TOC, Abstract, Chapter One (50 points)</b>				
<b>Cover Page; Table of Contents, Abstract, and Chapter One:</b>  <b>Possible Points: ____/50</b> <b>Instructor Feedback:</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Reader Feedback:</b>	<p>The writer has <b>consistently</b> utilized the capstone paper template and followed <b>all guidelines</b> for the development of the cover page, TOC and Abstract; the writer has developed a <b>well-organized, succinctly written</b> chapter one informing the reader of the following:</p> <p>the topic and scope of the research investigation;</p> <p>importance of the topic to the field of education;</p> <p>statement of interest to engage the reader; at least 3 sources cited with a clear connection to the research question; definition of terms; how the scope of the problem investigated will be organized in a logical sequence through the use of subtopics; the research question concludes the chapter connecting to the Essential Question;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion (chapter summary) paragraph that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>48-50 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>usually</b> utilized the capstone paper template and followed <b>most of the guidelines</b> for the development of the cover page, TOC and Abstract; the writer has <b>mostly</b> developed chapter one informing the reader of the following:</p> <p>the topic and scope of the research investigation;</p> <p>importance of the topic to the field of education;</p> <p>statement of interest to engage the reader; at least 3 sources cited with a clear connection to the research question; definition of terms; how the scope of the problem investigated will be organized in a logical sequence through the use of subtopics; the research question concludes the chapter connecting to the Essential Question;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion paragraph that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>43-47 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>sometimes</b> utilized the capstone paper template and followed <b>some of the guidelines</b> for the development of the cover page, TOC and Abstract; the writer has <b>partially</b> developed chapter one informing the reader of the following:</p> <p>the topic and scope of the research investigation;</p> <p>importance of the topic to the field of education;</p> <p>statement of interest to engage the reader; at least 3 sources cited with a clear connection to the research question; definition of terms; how the scope of the problem investigated will be organized in a logical sequence through the use of subtopics; the research question concludes the chapter connecting to the Essential Question;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion paragraph that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>38-42 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>rarely</b> met the required components for the criteria in this category resulting in "0" points.</p> <p><b>NOTE: Less than 319 points results in "0" for this assignment as it is a "pass or fail" paper representing the successful completion of the MAED program requirements competently.</b></p>
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review (210 points)</b>				
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>  <b>Possible Points: ____/210</b>	<p>The writer has <b>consistently</b> provided a professionally written narrative which summarizes and synthesizes the information from the selected research studies in order to develop</p>	<p>The writer has <b>usually</b> maintained a professionally written narrative which summarizes and synthesizes the information from the selected research studies in order to develop</p>	<p>The writer has <b>sometimes</b> maintained a professionally written narrative which summarizes and synthesizes the information from the selected research studies in order to develop</p>	<p>The writer has <b>rarely</b> met the required components for the criteria in this category resulting in "0" points.</p> <p><b>NOTE: Less than 319 points results in "0" for this</b></p>

<b>Instructor Feedback:</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Reader Feedback:</b>	<p>a response and answer to the research question proposed in Chapter One. The narrative <b>fully</b> answers the proposed research question.</p> <p>Includes a minimum of 15 scholarly, peer-reviewed qualitative/quantitative/mixed-method <b>original</b> research studies.</p> <p>Chapter ends with a research finding summaries and conclusions</p> <p>The writer has <b>consistently</b> provided a <b>succinct and precise</b> summary of findings</p> <p>includes a review of the proposed problem that was investigated;</p> <p>the importance of this topic;</p> <p>and a paraphrased summary of the main points or themes of the literature review;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion paragraph (chapter summary) that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>202-210 points</b></p>	<p>a response and answer to the research question proposed in Chapter One. The narrative <b>mostly</b> answers the proposed research question.</p> <p>Includes a minimum of 15 scholarly, peer-reviewed qualitative/quantitative/mixed-method <b>original</b> research studies.</p> <p>Chapter ends with a research finding summaries and conclusions</p> <p>The writer has <b>usually</b> provided a <b>mostly developed</b> summary of findings</p> <p>includes a review of the proposed problem that was investigated;</p> <p>the importance of this topic;</p> <p>and a paraphrased summary of the main points or themes of the literature review;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion paragraph (chapter summary) that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>181-201 points</b></p>	<p>a response and answer to the research question proposed in Chapter One. The narrative <b>partially</b> answers the proposed research question.</p> <p>Includes a minimum of 15 scholarly, peer-reviewed qualitative/quantitative/mixed-method <b>original</b> research studies.</p> <p>The writer has <b>sometimes provided a partially developed</b> summary of findings</p> <p>includes a review of the proposed problem that was investigated;</p> <p>the importance of this topic;</p> <p>and a paraphrased summary of the main points or themes of the literature review;</p> <p>Chapter ends with a conclusion paragraph (chapter summary) that includes a transition to the following chapter.</p> <p><b>160-180 points</b></p>	<p>assignment as it is a "pass or fail" paper representing the successful completion of the MAED program requirements competently.</p>
	<b>Chapter Three: Discussion / Application / Future Studies (75 points)</b>			
<b>Chapter Three: Discussion/ Application/ Future Studies</b>  <b>Possible Points: ____/75</b> <b>Feedback:</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Reader Feedback:</b>	<p>The writer has <b>consistently</b> developed a <b>clear</b> summary of insights gained from the research that leads to improved instructional practice.</p> <p>The writer provided a <b>clear</b> description with examples of how the research is applied to instructional or educational practice;</p> <p>has provided a minimum of three suggestions for possible future studies;</p> <p>and the chapter ends with a powerful conclusion that acts as a conclusion for the entire paper.</p> <p><b>72-75 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>usually</b> developed a <b>mostly clear</b> summary of insights gained from the research that leads to improved instructional practice.</p> <p>The writer provided a <b>mostly clear</b> description with examples of how the research is applied to instructional or educational practice;</p> <p>has provided a minimum of three suggestions for possible future studies;</p> <p>and the chapter ends with a powerful conclusion that acts as a conclusion for the entire paper.</p> <p><b>65-71 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>sometimes</b> developed a <b>partially clear</b> summary of insights gained from the research that leads to improved instructional practice.</p> <p>The writer provided a <b>partially clear</b> description with examples of how the research is applied to instructional practice;</p> <p>has provided a minimum of three suggestions for possible future studies;</p> <p>and the chapter ends with a powerful conclusion that acts as a conclusion for the entire paper.</p> <p><b>57-64 points</b></p>	<p>The writer has <b>rarely</b> met the required components for the criteria in this category resulting in "0" points.</p> <p><b>NOTE: Less than 319 points results in "0" for this assignment as it is a "pass or fail" paper representing the successful completion of the MAED program requirements competently.</b></p>

APA Format & Mechanics (85 points)				
<b>APA format &amp; Mechanics</b>  <b>Possible Points: ____/85</b> <b>Instructor Feedback:</b>  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Reader Feedback:</b>	The writer has <b>consistently</b> met the criteria for the following requirements for this paper: APA formatted cover page; Table of Contents right/left justified; clear, half page Abstract – per APA formatting provided; in text citations per APA and included in References page; Reference page formatted per APA guidelines; Correct use of APA level headings; correct use of spelling, grammar, and punctuation; Higher level professional language; third person writing only; correct use of past tense.	The writer has <b>usually</b> met <b>most</b> of the criteria for the following requirements for this paper: APA formatted cover page; Table of Contents right/left justified; clear, half page Abstract – per APA formatting provided; in text citations per APA and included in References page; Reference page formatted per APA guidelines; Correct use of APA level headings; correct use of spelling, grammar, and punctuation; Higher level professional language; third person writing only; correct use of past tense.	The writer has <b>sometimes</b> met <b>some</b> of the criteria for the following requirements for this paper: APA formatted cover page; Table of Contents right/left justified; clear, half page Abstract – per APA formatting provided; in text citations per APA and included in References page; Reference page formatted per APA guidelines; Correct use of APA level headings; correct use of spelling, grammar, and punctuation; Higher level professional language; third person writing only; correct use of past tense.	The writer has <b>rarely</b> met the required components for the criteria in this category resulting in “0” points.  <b>NOTE: Less than 319 points results in “0” for this assignment as it is a “pass or fail” paper representing the successful completion of the MAED program requirements competently.</b>
	82-85 points	73-81 points	65-72 points	
<b>Revised June 2020</b>				
<b>TOTAL POINTS ____/420</b> <b>Pass or Fail: 319 points are required to pass</b>				