

Retaining Teachers through Talent Centered Education Leadership

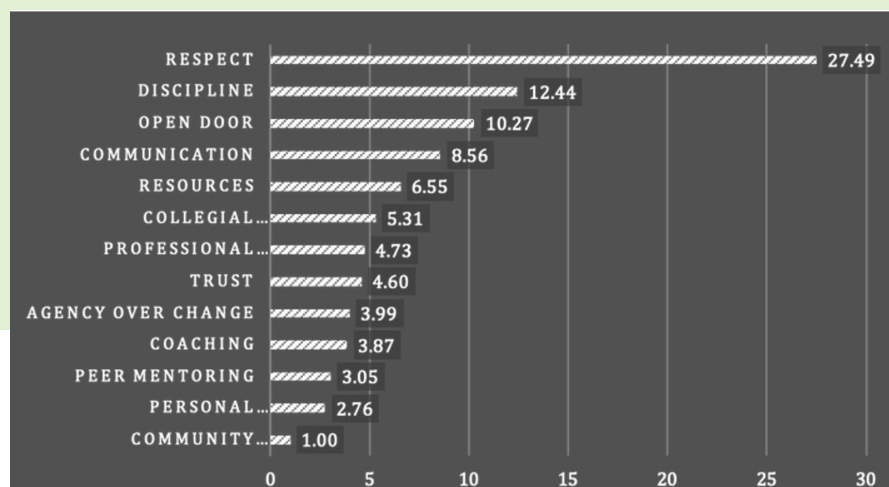
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The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 exacerbated pre-existing teacher staffing challenges across schools in the U.S., where escalating work related uncertainty, stress, scrutiny and safety concerns have resulted in elevated dissatisfaction with the education profession (Tran, Hardie & Cunningham, 2020). Even before the onset of COVID-19, the decline in enrollment in teacher education programs, coupled with rising teacher turnover (CERRA, 2019) has resulted in what some are calling the “teacher shortage crisis” in South Carolina (Thomas, 2018) and across the nation (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003).

This report discusses why teacher shortages matter, the policy initiatives that have been employed in response, the salience of administrative support for teacher retention, and how a new paradigm in education human resources management — known as talent centered education leadership — can optimally leverage administrative support to its full capacity. The report then addresses what types of administrative supports matter for teacher retention and shares preliminary results from a study conducted in South Carolina examining the relative importance of 13 administrative supports frequently identified in the literature. It concludes with recommendations for improving the provision of those types of supports and links these supports, as well as teacher shortages, to the often-neglected problem of principal turnover.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM NEW STUDY IN SOUTH CAROLINA ON ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR TEACHER RETENTION

To better understand teachers’ perceptions of the relative importance of different types of administrative support across different types of schools (e.g., high vs. low turnover, rural vs. urban) in South Carolina, a study was conducted by Tran and colleagues (Tran, Cunningham & Hardie, 2020) to examine this unexplored territory. Preliminary results from a sample of 178 South Carolina teachers across 13 schools indicate that “respect” was by far the most importantly ranked attribute, perceived to be over 27 times more important than “community leadership,” the lowest ranked attribute. According to the sample, the second and third most important attributes were “discipline” and having an “open door policy” (see figure below).



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage the promotion of Talent Centered Education Leadership (TCEL), which is a new approach to people management in the education workplace that emphasizes being responsive to individualized employee needs from both the human and social capital perspectives, and encourages leaders to intentionally design supportive employee experiences for their faculty and staff across the career spectrum of the workforce (Tran, 2020; Tran & Smith, 2020b). In doing so, Talent Centered Educational Leaders do not prioritize student needs to the neglect of their faculty and staff, nor do they treat people as resources toward an end. Rather, they play to each individual school workers' strengths, hold high expectations, and communicate clarity of direction without micromanagement of faculty and staff.
- Focus on the provision of administrative support for teacher retention (the major source of teacher shortages), with particular emphasis on providing and demonstrating professional respect for teachers. Research has consistently identified administrative support importance in the literature.
- Emphasize evidence-informed professional development for school leadership growth so that they have the capacity to provide teachers and staff the support they need to feel successful in their educational context.
- Consider leadership development in teacher staffing (recruitment and retention) policy and initiatives.
- Address principal turnover as a priority, which is linked to teacher turnover and exacerbates teacher shortages.



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