Retaining Teachers Through Talent Centered Education Leadership

WORKING PAPER SERIES II:
What We Know About the South Carolina Teacher Workforce

RESEARCH TEAM
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+ ABSTRACT

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) have 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 (TCEL) – 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 examining the relative importance of 13 administrative supports frequently identified in the literature. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving the provision of those types of supports; it also links the supports, as well as teacher shortages, to the often-neglected problem of principal turnover.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

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). This undoubtedly contributed to the half million fewer public education employees (about half of which were teachers) in September 2020 than in September 2019 (Economic Policy Institute, 2020), a year before the pandemic (Rogers & Spring, 2020). Spikes in retirement and leaves of absence left many schools understaffed (Stabile, 2020) at a time when existing teachers are being asked to take on even more responsibilities to add to their enormous and overwhelming workload (e.g., additional cleaning, teaching in a digital environment, additional parental outreach) to accommodate the changing contexts.

Why Teacher Shortages Matter

Even before the onset of COVID-19, the decline in enrollment in teacher education programs coupled with rising teacher turnover (CERRA, 2019) have 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). In fact, although more pronounced in recent years, fears of a teacher shortage have received national attention since the 80s (National Academy of Sciences, 1987; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). There are numerous reasons why this matters greatly. Obviously, teachers are needed to staff classrooms, especially in response to escalating student enrollment demands (Tickle et al., 2010). In addition, even high potential interventions and educational programs will not yield the fruits of the labor if the educator force is constantly replaced. However, teacher employment challenges can have even further reaching impacts. From an academic perspective, schools that experience repeated turnovers typically experience disruptions in continuity, damage to trust, diminishment in the cohesion of the community, and the subsequent decline in student achievement (Boyd et al., 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Furthermore, Sorenson and Ladd's (2020) review of two decades of administrative data on math and English language arts teachers in North Carolina suggests that teacher turnover results in replacement of departing teachers with those with weaker qualifications (e.g., less experience, without full licensure, teaching out of subject area, performing worse on teacher licensure test), especially for high poverty schools. To make matters worse, turnover from departing teachers results in additional stress and responsibilities for the educators that remain (Guin, 2004).

Teacher turnover and its relationship with teacher quality has profound implications for inequity, as teacher turnovers are more likely to occur in “high needs” rural and urban environments (i.e., schools attended by large concentrations of economically disadvantaged and academically underperforming students of color), their loss particularly damaging after these mostly under resourced school employers have spent significant resources to train them (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Tran, Aziz, & Reinhardt, 2020). Unfortunately, these environments are more likely to employ teachers that are the least “qualified” across a variety of “quality” metrics to begin with (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2010; Gawlik et al., 2012; Goldhaber, et al., 2015), and often replace their departing teachers with even less effective and experienced replacements (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Therefore, turnover statistics understate the severity of the problem, as substitutes, “out-of-field,” and under or even unqualified teachers replace those that leave (Brill & McCartney, 2008). This is additionally troubling given that teacher quality has been linked with students’ academic achievement (Chetty et al., 2014), with less experienced teachers being associated with lower achievement (Odden, et al., 2011; Ladd & Sorenson, 2017), and that achievement has been linked to students’ wages in adulthood (Hanushek, 2011; Ramirez et al., 2006).

From a financial perspective for school districts and taxpayers, teacher replacement is costly (Barnes et al., 2007; Watlington et al., 2010). For example, Synar and Maiden (2012) presented a model for estimating the cost of teacher turnover and tested the model on ten years of data for a large (enrolling almost 40,000 students) sample district. The estimate was more than $14,500 per turnover, which would equate to approximately $18,000 per leaver today, after adjusting for inflation. Replacement costs include (but are not limited to) advertisement, job fair participation, resume and application review, interviews, conducting criminal background checks, orientation and training of the new employee, and the time and effort of everyone involved in these activities. Because salaries are lower in small rural school districts, the cost of turnover is less there. However, they are often more resource constraints in terms of people (i.e., rural personnel often occupy more duties and roles) and finances, which renders them even more disadvantaged in their response to teacher employment challenges.

Policy Efforts in Response to Teacher Shortages

When it comes to addressing teacher shortages, policymakers have often focused on improving the supply of teachers through recruitment initiatives both into the field and in the district (Ingersoll, 2001; Simon & Johnson, 2015; Tickle, et al., 2010). Yet in Ingersoll’s (2001) seminal work on teacher staffing, he used nationally representative data to show that the main source of teacher shortages actually lie with the lack of teacher retention that contributes to the “revolving door” of qualified teachers leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement and that policy efforts aimed at improving the teacher employment scenario must attend to reducing the excess demand for new teachers by plugging the leaking boat, instead of constantly replacing teachers who exit. As he put it plainly, “Teacher recruitment programs alone will not solve the staffing problems of schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of low retention” (p. 501). The view that teacher recruitment is a misdiagnosed root cause of the teacher shortage, when the problem is in actuality a retention issue, has become increasingly commonly accepted in the literature (Merrow, 1999; Brill & McCartney, 2008).

Furthermore, policymakers often focus on pecuniary factors such as signing bonuses, tuition reimbursements, and loan forgiveness to address teacher staffing problems (Miller, 2012; Feng & Sass, 2018; Tran & Smith, 2019), based on the premise that adverse working conditions and challenges in teaching supply, especially for "hard-to-staff" contexts (e.g.., remote rural), specialty areas (e.g., science, technology, math, engineering, English Language Learners, and special education), and/or grade level (e.g., secondary school) can be "offset" by various forms of incentive/"combat" pay. However, they alone are inadequate solutions. One reason is due to the insufficient dollar amounts directed at funding efforts – with programs often offering insufficient financial incentives or discontinuing financial efforts because of lack of funding (Fowler, 2008). For instance, several studies have suggested a 20% average increase in teacher salaries is necessary to have a meaningful impact on teacher retention (Brill & McCartney, 2008), yet salary increases, if they even occur, rarely reach this level. Furthermore, financial issues represent only one area of need in order to attract and sustain teacher employment. Case in point, teachers do not only leave their positions for positions in other districts, but also other schools within their same districts, which further suggests the importance of working conditions given that schools within the same districts likely pay the same (Katz, 2018). Furthermore, as mentioned, financial incentives do not address the root cause of teacher shortages, which often has its origins in excessive turnover.

To be sure, not all turnover is the same. For instance, policymakers may feel that teacher attrition (i.e., those who leave the teaching profession) warrants attention, whereas teacher migration (e.g., teachers who switch schools, especially within the same district) or returners (e.g., those that leave teaching but return years later) may be seen as less problematic (Ingersoll, 2001). However, from the perspective of the school and the students within the school of the departing teacher, the effect is the same (e.g., the disruption from personnel change and the need to replace the departing teacher remain). Furthermore, every organization or industry experiences employee turnover and some turnover is healthy. This is especially the case if those that turnover are not a good "fit" for the profession or school and/or may be poor performers better suited elsewhere. Unfortunately, this is not the case for much of the excessive and repeated teacher turnover that is observed in the field, who often leave their professions or jobs because of job dissatisfaction resulting from poor working conditions (Tickle et al., 2010).

Borman and Dowling (2008) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis on the predictors of voluntary teacher turnover (i.e., non-retirement or transfers) and found that working conditions (e.g., degree of teacher networking, administrative support and collaboration, the material, social and cultural conditions of the work environment) played an influential role in moderating the effects of the characteristics that predict teacher turnover. For example, while high poverty rural and urban schools typically face stiffer challenges with teacher employment, a strong and supportive work environment can negate (at least a substantial amount) of the negative impact and improve the attractiveness of the workplace. In fact, while it is commonly believed that student demographics (e.g., economically disadvantaged students of color) deter teachers from teaching in high needs contexts, numerous studies have found that once the working conditions have been accounted for, the "deterrent" influence subsides (Horng, 2009). In other words, high needs schools often have subpar working conditions, but they are not synonymous (Loeb & Myung, 2020). In fact, teacher retention is stronger at high need schools with superior working conditions (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Tickle et al., 2010). Regardless of the attributes of the school, school leadership has been found to be the strongest predictor of teachers' feeling of organizational engagement, career commitment, and retention sentiments and decisions (Boyd et al., 2011; Weiss, 1999).

While financial factors definitely matter and should not be neglected, non-pecuniary factors such as improvement of working conditions is equally, if not even more important. School leaders can be critical in influencing and shaping a culture of trust, high expectations, collective responsibility, strong collegial relationships, support, development, and growth, all of which are critical for teachers' employment sentiments and decisions. For example, the provision of administrative support has been consistently identified to be the most important factor influencing teacher retention (Katz, 2018; Horng, 2009) and has recently been identified as most salient for recruitment as well (Tran & Smith, 2020a). The latter is not surprising given that factors that attract individuals to an employer are often the factors that retain them as well (Tran & Smith, 2020b). Furthermore, "supportive working conditions can be viewed as an aspect of overall compensation" for teachers (Reininger, 2012, p. 199). Supportive working conditions allow teachers to improve, therefore improving their sense of self-efficacy, which has been found to be important for teacher employment (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Tran, Hogue, Moon, 2015). In one study, the majority of those who have left teaching have reflected on how they are able to have better work-life balance and operate in superior working conditions in their new profession (Marvel et al., 2007).

Working conditions also have ramifications from an equity perspective. For example, teachers have been found to more likely avoid schools with larger concentrations of students of color, from high poverty communities, and those who perform worse on academic achievement measurements; but as mentioned earlier, some speculate it may be the poorer working conditions that are correlated with these factors that are driving teachers away and not the students themselves (Loeb & Myung, 2020). When it comes to working conditions, workspaces (e.g., school facilities), resources (e.g., technology and textbooks), safety and discipline, as well as growth opportunities (e.g., professional development) can play a huge role in influencing the attractiveness of the school for teachers (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2011; Loeb et al., 2005). Unfortunately, these conditions and resources are often worse for high needs school, with the end result being an exacerbation of inequity for their students.

Talent Centered Education Leadership

Given the lack of perception of prestige associated with the profession (Tran & Smith, 2019), coupled with the associated accumulating workload, stress, intensification of accountability, and the resulting burnout of the profession (Tran, 2020), teaching has suffered from a lack of attractiveness for prospective and current teachers alike. Unfortunately, compounding the problem is the fact that administrators and school employers often direct the entirety of their focus and attention in response to student and community (e.g., parent) needs, to the neglect of their teachers and staff. The workforce are often treated as human resources by their employers, as a means toward achieving the organization's ends, without consideration provided for their own needs. While that status quo may have been commonly accepted in the past, today's workers are increasingly expecting more from their employers.

Historically, human resource management in schools has often found itself on the receiving end of criticisms for being outdated, reactive, and transactional (Konoske-Graf et al., 2016; Tran, 2015), with its over emphasis on "putting out fires" (Weick, 1996), despite the necessity to operate and exist in a turbulent and constantly changing environment. Meanwhile, organizations that employ progressive talent management practices are increasingly strategic, with concerns for employee engagement, and how to foster a supportive and developmental work environment (Dineen & Allen, 2016). They not only nurture the human capital (e.g., their knowledge, skills, and abilities) of their workforce but also their social capital (e.g., social support, social connectivity, collaboration, trust) (Crane & Hartwell, 2019). The latter captures the "relational dimensions of talent" (p. 82), which has been increasingly linked to performance (Ariss et al., 2014) and is particularly relevant in education, based on the interpersonal nature of the profession. Grounded by these advances in talent philosophy, TCEL 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 worker's strength, hold high expectations, and communicate clarity of direction without micromanagement of their faculty and staff.

Because beginning teachers in their initial teaching years are more vulnerable of leaving the profession (Tickle et al., 2010), it makes sense that extra emphasis is placed on supporting new teachers. For instance, based on interviews with principals and focus groups with teachers, Brown and Wynn (2007) sought to understand the leadership styles principals of high retention schools employ to support and retain their faculty. According to corroborating data from both principals and teachers, principals that lead high retention schools typically are proactive with supporting new teachers (as opposed to reactive), are committed to their own growth, as well as those of their students and teachers across the career spectrum. The latter point is important because targeted attention to new teachers should not be at the neglect of more seasoned ones, who have differentiated needs of their own (Tran & Smith, 2020c). Indeed, school employees of all experience levels can benefit from support from sources such as differentiated developmental opportunities (Tran & Smith, 2020c). For more experienced teachers, these opportunities may take the form of evolving work assignments to varying degrees of leadership roles matched to their skillsets and preparation (Rosenblatt, 2001).

TCEL is particularly relevant in these turbulent times. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, while many teachers were kept in the dark by their employers by not being consulted on how to proceed or provided sufficient instructions concerning how to protect themselves and perform their jobs, Tran, Cunningham & Hardie (2020) reported on how talent centered educational leaders meaningfully involved the workforce by soliciting their input to inform the development of guidelines for how to proceed and maintained constant communication, even when leadership themselves were not sure what they were going to do next, given the unprecedented nature of the event. Their unwavering emphasis toward humanizing the workplace allowed for the continued demonstration of respect of the workforce and helped them feel calmer in the uncertain context.

Talent centered education leaders demonstrate an understanding that schools can only be as successful as those who work inside of them and that they must provide a nurturing and supportive environment so that the conditions are ripe for educators to maximize learning opportunities for their students and themselves (Tran & Smith, 2020b). Those that can do this will not only attract and retain teachers but are also more likely to engage and motivate their teachers to go the “extra mile” (Hutton, 2017, p. 571) in reciprocation for their employers going the “extra mile” for them.

What Type of Support Matters for Teacher Retention?

Research has consistently demonstrated that teachers often leave or intend to leave their positions due to dissatisfaction with the principal (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Ingersoll, 2001) and, in particular, has highlighted the critical importance of administrative support for their continued employment (Boyd et al., 2011; Horn, 2009). Research has linked several different types of administrative support to teacher retention. For example, one type of support with strong research based evidence is mentorship. Smith and Ingersoll’s (2004) analysis of a nationally representative sample of beginning teachers found that they were less likely to turnover (either to other schools or out of the profession) when they received same subject mentors and were engaged in collective induction processes that included common planning time, provision of the time and space for collaboration with their peers on instructional issues, and were connected to an external network of peer teachers. These collegial supports typically include formal and informal meetings and should be well-structured with rigorously selected and effectively trained mentors who are engaged and dedicated to the success of the mentoring relationship (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall 2007).

When facilitated effectively, mentoring can be beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee, as the mentors are provided opportunities to expand their skills and take on differentiated responsibility and leadership development for their own professional growth (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Margolis (2008) studied retention decisions of teachers with four to six years of experience (the most critical time period for teachers who have acclimated to the school environment to decide whether they wish to leave or stay). Drawing from teacher career cycle theory, he argues that these teachers are in their stabilization year and seek new challenges and stimulation to keep them interested in the teaching profession. Based on results of his qualitative study, he suggests that serving as a teacher mentor is a promising avenue for this, while at the same time benefitting new teachers that may be ill-prepared and When facilitated effectively, mentoring can be beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee, as the mentors are provided opportunities to expand their skills and take on differentiated responsibility and leadership development for their own professional growth (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Margolis (2008) studied retention decisions of teachers with four to six years of experience (the most critical time period for teachers who have acclimated to the school environment to decide whether they wish to leave or stay). Drawing from teacher career cycle theory, he argues that these teachers are in their stabilization year and seek new challenges and stimulation to keep them interested in the teaching profession. Based on results of his qualitative study, he suggests that serving as a teacher mentor is a promising avenue for this, while at the same time benefitting new teachers that may be ill-prepared and stressed with the position. A mentorship approach provides greater access to mentoring to educators working in under-resourced schools and reduces the principal's burden for addressing this. To optimize the success of the mentorship program, reduced teaching requirements should be provided for both, so they can have the time and space to engage in the mentorship relationship and work.

Beyond mentoring, there are many other types of support that have been found to be influential for teacher retention. For instance, schools with teachers that are provided more autonomy have teachers that are more trusting, satisfied, and less likely to turnover (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Grissom, 2011; Johnson, 2006). These teachers feel safe to teach how they would like to. In addition, teachers that have input into major school level decision making (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ingersoll, 2001), such as planning time and resource allocations, through avenues such as leadership teams (Brown & Wynn, 2007) are also more likely to stay.

The research also suggests that supportive school leaders should work to alleviate unfavorable working conditions on their employees. For example, because of tradition and seniority influence, new teachers are often assigned the most challenging classrooms with students that display the most behavioral problems (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Given that new teachers are more likely to turnover (Tickle et al., 2010), school leaders should make more equitable classroom assignments (Rosenholtz, 1989).

To select teachers that are more likely to not only stay but thrive and grow in the work environment, school leaders should also make more strategic hiring decisions. Unfortunately, school hiring can often be late (e.g., occurs after the start of the school year), based on passive recruitment (that does not actively seek to expand the recruitment pool), "information poor," and reliant on minimal interactions between the teacher candidate and the school leader (Liu & Johnson, 2006; Odden et al, 2011). This matters because these types of hires are more likely to turnover (Papay & Kraft, 2016). Escalating workloads (Brill & McCartney, 2008), lack of discipline support with student behavioral issues (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Liu, 2007), lack of professional growth or developmental opportunities (Grissom, 2011), as well as professional and social isolation (Brown & Wynn, 2007) all contribute to job dissatisfaction and drive teachers out of the profession.

To counteract these negative factors in the workplace, school leaders can support teachers by equitably enforcing disciplinary consequences to promote school safety (Allensworth, 2009; Boyd et al; 2011), being present and accessible, nurturing teacher bonds, as well as facilitating a learning organization (Senge, 1990) where collective inquiry is practiced (Brown & Wynn, 2007) among a network of learners focused on the collective good in a collegial atmosphere where everyone learns from one another. These supports, along with other salient evidenced-based supports from the research, are displayed in Figure 1: Administrative Supports for Teacher Retention.

Figure 1. Administrative Supports for Teacher Retention

+ INFORMATION SOURCES AND METHODS

Preliminary Results from New Study in South Carolina on Administrative Support for Teacher Retention

While it is now commonly understood in research that administration support is critical for teacher retention, what is less known is what types of administrative supports matter more than others. This is further complicated by the fact that administrative support is often defined differently depending on whom you ask. For some, administrative support primarily means enforcing student disciplinary actions to manage student behavior to ensure a safe work environment for teachers. For others, it is mostly about direct instructional support and feedback on classroom pedagogy. Many others may see administrative support more broadly as a combination of the aforementioned types of support and more. While all supports may matter, it is important to understand which require more emphasis from leadership and employers to best support their employees.

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. While the researchers are currently in the process of collecting and analyzing data, this paper will share some of the preliminary results and discuss some early insights on findings.

The study relies on a form of utility analysis, known as Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) that uses an experimental design to randomly assign different attributes of administrative support to teachers across different contexts in order to obtain estimates of their perception of the relative importance of these attributions. We further examine these differences by function of school type. Given higher levels of turnover at middle and high schools relative to elementary schools (Goldring et al., 2014), we focused on the former schools, and also examined whether responses would differ depending on the extent that turnover is a problem for the school (i.e., whether the perception of the relative importance of different types of administrative supports differed by high vs. low turnover schools).

Responding teachers are presented with attributes (e.g., having input on school decision making vs. having a school leader who enforces disciplinary rules) and asked to select among varying options to rate their preferences. These attributes were the most salient administrative supports for teacher retention from the literature and include the following 13 factors: trust, professional appreciation, coaching, open door policy, enforcing discipline, resources, community leadership, peer mentoring, collegial relationships, personal relationship, respect, communication, and agency over change. We further piloted these attributes with existing educators to ensure they were uniformly understood by all respondents. Beyond the qualitative data collection and analysis, we also plan to conduct qualitative interviews with teacher respondents to better understand their choices.

Preliminary results from our sample of 178 South Carolina teachers across 13 schools indicate that “respect” was by far the most importantly ranked attribute, perceived to be more than 27 times more important than “community leadership,” the lowest ranked attribute. According to our sample, the second and third most important attributes were “discipline” and having an “open door policy” (see Figure 2: Relative Importance of Administrative Support).

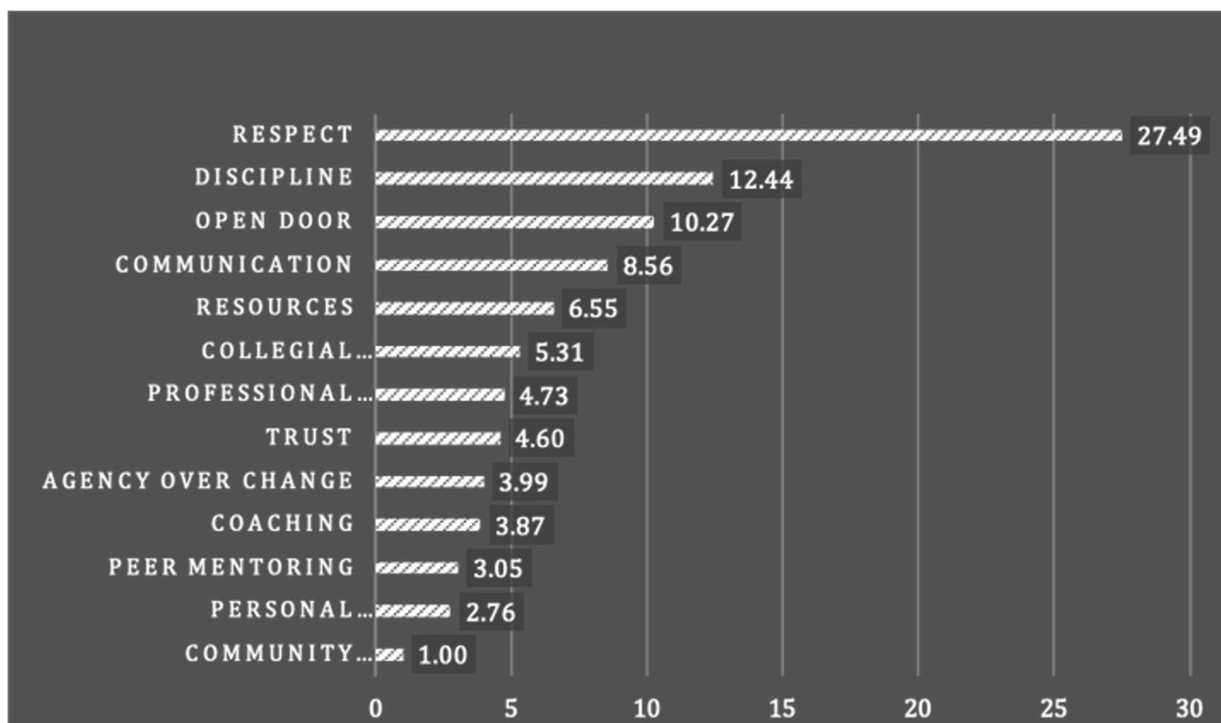

Figure 2. Relative Importance of Administrative Support

Furthermore, the finding of the importance of "respect" was consistent across sub-analyses for low retention, high retention, rural, urban, middle, and high schools respectively. Although community leadership has been cited as important for school leadership, especially in rural communities (Pendola and Fuller, 2018), it was consistently ranked as the least important of the attributes. "Discipline" and "open door policy" were frequently identified within the top five, if not second or third ranked attribute across the sub-analyses. Taken together, these findings suggest areas of emphasis for school leaders to improve teacher retention, particularly concerning demonstration and provision of "respect."

+ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report's advocacy for more attention on how school leadership can create talent centered education workspaces should not be construed as being in opposition of those who argue for more financial incentives and pecuniary efforts to improve teacher staffing. It is quite clear that money matters, as lower salaries deter teaching career interest (Imazeki, 2005; Tran & Smith, 2019). However, as consistent with the broader retention scholarship (Ambrosius, 2018), it is increasingly recognized in education that addressing monetary concerns is necessary, but insufficient by itself in solving teacher shortages (Boyd et al., 2011; Tran & Smith, 2020a).

In Katz's (2018) comprehensive review of the policy evidence on teacher retention, she concluded that "[g]iven mounting evidence linking school leaders to improved teacher retention, it makes a lot of sense to continue investigating what principals do to improve teacher retention, while also investing in efforts to place a strong leader in every school" (p. 5). Likewise, data from a nationally representative sample of schools suggest that teachers are more satisfied with their work environment and less likely to leave their schools when they perceive their leaders to be more effective, and this relationship is particularly strong in high need schools (Grissom, 2011). Not all turnover is the same, and research has suggested that effective principals have been found to be associated with lower teacher turnover on average but high turnover among low performing teachers (Loeb et al. 2012; Grissom & Bartnanen, 2018). Unfortunately, many principals report struggling with how to provide support for teacher development (Barber et al., 2010), but leadership development has shown promise as a link to respond to this.

Numerous studies and researchers have suggested leadership development as a promising way to improve the effectiveness of school principals and improve the working conditions of their teachers. For instance, Tickle et al., 2010 suggested "'high quality professional development institutes' for administrators" (p. 348) as a way to help improve the capacity of school leaders to provide the type of supports necessary to improve teacher retention. Because principals can significantly influence teachers' perception of working conditions, Burkhauser (2017) recommended school leaders engage in professional development in areas such as "addressing teacher concerns, providing useful feedback, or establishing a feeling of mutual respect and trust at the school" (p. 139). Consequently, this report recommends that South Carolina leadership development emphasize these areas. This is particularly relevant for South Carolina teacher retention, given that our preliminary statewide research on the importance of different aspects of administrative support highlighted the salience of respect. This impresses the importance for South Carolina education leadership development to focus on preparing school leaders to demonstrate and model that respect to those they lead.

The importance of respect has also been corroborated by college students in their potential consideration for teaching in South Carolina (Tran & Smith, 2019). From a talent centered perspective, a human-centered focus is especially appropriate for a human-centered industry like education.

While leadership development has the potential to improve teacher retention, it can also improve the retention of school leaders as well. For example, results from Jacob et al's (2015) randomized controlled design study showed that the three-year Balanced Leadership principal development program had a causal effect on the retention of participating principals and their teachers. The former area receives much less attention than teacher retention but is critical for several important reasons.

Principal Turnover – a Neglected Problem

While not as publicly discussed as teacher turnover, principal turnover warrants increased attention. For one, principal turnovers have also been found to exacerbate teacher turnover (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2009; Miller, 2012), as it is quite common for teachers to follow their school leaders when they depart. Secondly, like with teacher turnover, repeated principal turnovers hurt students' academic achievement (Miller, 2013) by thinning trust and creating instructional and directional inconsistencies in the school. Thirdly, principal replacement is even more costly than teacher turnover, with amounts exceeding $70,000 when developmental costs are included (Jensen, 2014; Tran et al., 2018).

The most recent national data (from 2016) suggests that almost 18% of school principals leave their position annually (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Results from the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) national survey of secondary school principals show that 45% of the responding principals in the field reported they are most likely to leave the profession within the next three years because of their own working conditions, with the percentages higher for school leaders in high poverty and rural schools (Levin et al., 2020). Inadequate compensation for the increasing workload, stressful accountability systems that fail to engender trust of being fair and constructive, as well as the lack of professional learning opportunities and decision-making authority (e.g., over curriculum and staffing) were also cited as significant factors. The authors make several recommendations for improving principals' working conditions. Specifically, at the local level, they suggest a) supporting evidence informing professional development via Title I part A funds; b) providing principals with resources to have adequate staffing (e.g., student services personnel to help support students' socio-emotional needs) at their schools; c) improving working conditions that are more responsive to school leader needs (e.g., gathering school leadership input to inform decisions that affect schools, facilitation of mentorship opportunities); and d) increasing the autonomy that school principals have for decision-making. At the federal level, they suggest a) funding high-quality principal preparation (e.g., in exchange for commitment to serve in high need schools); b) assistance to improve the equity and adequacy of principal compensation, with additional incentives for principals leading high need schools; c) increasing investment in leadership preparation and development programs; and d) providing sufficient funding to support education and support of the whole child through Title IV, the Student Success and Academic Enrichment Grant Program. By addressing school principals' capacity for support, policymakers may be able to lift two birds with one arm and address the working conditions that promote retention for school principals and teachers (Tran & Smith, 2020b).

Despite the promise shown in research concerning the viability of leadership support as a retention strategy for the workforce (Mancuso et al., 2010; Margolis, 2008), state programs, such as South Carolina's own Rural Recruitment Initiative, do not treat leadership development as a teacher staffing initiative (i.e., they are treated as leadership support and not teacher support) and therefore have an opportunity for growth to make further impact. Principal preparation programs alone are insufficient to prepare school principals to provide the type of differentiated supports their teachers may need to cultivate the working conditions that allow for excellence to flourish, as that type of ability and skill requires on-the-job experiences, mentorship, and ongoing professional development (Tran & Smith, 2020b).

Addressing working conditions as a potential leverage to improving educator retention is particularly attractive given that it is a "policy amenable" (Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989) solution. Yet in South Carolina, little is known about teachers' working conditions and how to respond to it, because there lacks ongoing systematic data collection through avenues such as an indepth annual statewide working conditions survey for educators. The collection of this longitudinal data can help better inform policies and practices to improve teacher working conditions across the state. Moreover, while often discussed independently, factors that affect recruitment also influence retention (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). For example, poor working conditions affect both recruitment and retention (Tran & Smith, 2020a; Boyd et al., 2011; Horng, 2009). In addition, like most challenges in education, there is no "silver bullet" to resolve educator staffing challenges, but rather this will require a coordinated multi-tiered effort to make substantive change. The argument for a multitiered solution to teacher staffing problems is not a novel concept. For instance, Darling-Hammond and Ducommun (2007) argue that individual local programs alone will not solve teacher recruitment and retention issues. They claim, "[i]ntelligent, targeted subsidies for preparation coupled with stronger supports at entry and incentives for staying in high-need schools are needed to ensure that all students have access to teachers who are indeed highly qualified" (p. 7). The support relates directly to job-specific motivators, as more support would theoretically result in increased job performance and the consequent job satisfaction, whereas the incentives to stay may be related to addressing extrinsic factors that deter employment interest. At the end of the day, Brill & McCartney (2008) remind us that in order "[t]o freeze the revolving door of professional educators, we must make the inside of a classroom a far more attractive and rewarding place to work" (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p. 772). This is true for both school leaders and teachers, as well as the entire educational workforce. Consequently, school employers should strive to create talent centered educational organizations, and policymakers should develop policies that support them in that endeavor.

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