

RETENTION OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN A HIGH-NEED, LOW-INCOME SCHOOL
COMMUNITY: EXPLORING PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

Christopher Finley

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Doctoral Committee

Chad R. Lochmiller, PhD
Committee Chairperson

Frank Perrone, PhD
Committee Member

Patricia K. Kubow, PhD
Committee Member

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“I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.” -John Steinbeck

I have been blessed to be surrounded by great teachers my entire life, and I am beginning to recognize how unique it is to be surrounded by such great educators. I would like to formally acknowledge some of the great teachers I’ve had in my life.

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Abstract

Classroom teachers are the most important school-based predictor of student growth and achievement and are especially so when they are highly effective. Yet previous research has suggested that it is difficult to retain teaching staff in high-need, low-income school communities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a). Indeed, many schools serving at-risk school communities lose up to 50% of their staff every five years, and novice teachers (1–4 years of experience) are especially susceptible to high turnover rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017a). Sadly, teacher retention rates are often the lowest in high-need schools that serve a large proportion of low-income students. Teachers therefore are not serving the students who need them the most. This has become an equity issue within public schools in the United States. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to document and describe the leadership actions that a building principal takes to influence working conditions in their schools. The study focused on one school principal and members of the school team who worked in one high needs, low-income school community. The researcher analyzed interview data from teachers, administrators and the principal, and used this data along with document and field note reviews to produce themes. Analysis indicates that principal leadership influences teacher working conditions in a high-needs, low-income school community and that this might potentially improve teacher retention. Findings from this study largely align with previous research, which shows that many teachers leave schools due to working conditions rather than student demographics or achievement outcomes. Analysis suggests the principal took four leadership actions to improve teacher working conditions: (1) The principal developed an awareness and connection to the community, which included students, parents/guardians, and teachers; (2) The principal supported the teachers by developing relationships and creating trust within the community; (3) The principal developed systems to build school culture and collective commitment; (4) The principal advocated for the school's unique, community-based needs. In sum, all of these leadership actions provided support for the teachers, and ultimately, improved working conditions and teacher retention over time. The study has implications for leadership preparation and support as well as discussions about how to conceptualize personnel activities within the context of instructional leadership.

Chad R. Lochmiller, PhD
Committee Chairperson

Frank Perrone, PhD
Committee Member

Patricia K. Kubow, PhD
Committee Member

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

As a school principal with more than 18 years of experience, I have directly observed the detrimental effects of teacher turnover in some of our highest-need school communities, including in the Midwestern state where I currently work. According to publicly available data from the state's education agency, in 2019, 36% of teachers working in my district's highest-need elementary school had less than five years of teaching experience. This stands in stark contrast to the most affluent suburban school in our district, where more than three-quarters of classroom teachers are considered veteran (4+ years) teachers. In addition, in this quasi-urban elementary school, more than 85% of the student population currently receives free or reduced lunch. The literature suggests that this situation is not unique to our district; in fact, it poses a significant problem for educational leaders in many schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to previous research, having an effective, veteran teaching staff will lead to positive outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009; Stronge, 2013). Research has also suggested that effective teachers are able to help students learn and grow at a high rate, contribute to the faculty learning community, and support students' social and emotional needs, regardless of the students' socioeconomic backgrounds (Nye et al., 2004). Sadly, such teachers often have the lowest retention rates in high-need schools and are, therefore, not serving the students who need them the most. This presents a significant equity issue for schools.

Retaining effective teachers in schools with high rates of student poverty is a significant leadership priority in public education. Research has documented the high turnover of novice teachers over time (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Redding & Henry, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2019).

Ingersoll and Perda (2009) calculated the teacher attrition rate in urban schools and found that it ranged from 19 to 26% annually. This rate may be up to 50% higher in Title I schools, which serve low-income students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). High-need, low-income school communities have the highest teacher turnover, which comes at a detrimental cost to those school communities and the students they serve (Allensworth et al., 2009). In a large-scale study conducted in the New York Department of Education over an eight-year period, researchers found that higher rates of teacher turnover negatively impacted student achievement in both mathematics and language arts (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The revolving door of teachers in our high-need, low-income school communities results in the students most in need of effective instruction having the least access to it. Thus, retaining effective teachers in this setting should be a school leader's top priority.

Research has indicated that poor working conditions predict teacher turnover and that school leaders can influence teacher retention by establishing positive working conditions in a school community (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005). Improved working conditions promote the retention of veteran, effective educators (Boyd et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Grissom, 2011; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Ladd, 2011; Milanowski & Kimball, 2010). Earlier research indicated that malleable working condition factors predict teacher turnover rates (Loeb et al., 2005). Loeb et al. (2005) found that these factors were diverse and included such things as textbooks and resources, room temperature, the cleanliness of the building, and more substantive working condition factors, such as parent communication and access to high-quality professional development. Loeb et al. also determined that these important working condition factors could be good predictors of teacher turnover. Importantly, in more

recent research, Ladd (2011) highlighted evidence that these factors are largely within the purview of school leaders. Furthermore, Ladd (2011) identified that teachers' working conditions are highly predictive of their intent to leave or stay in a school. These working condition factors are independent of other school factors, such as poverty and the racial mix of students (Ladd, 2011).

This study focuses on teachers' work experiences and aims at identifying principal leadership actions that potentially influence teachers' working conditions within a school. Urick (2020) suggests that teachers' perceptions of leadership decisions and their impact on working conditions influence their decision to stay in or leave a specific school. Specifically, she identified four types of leadership that support teacher and student outcomes and influence teacher retention. The first type of leadership, managerial leadership, focuses on actions which attend to the daily operations and management of a school, these include the allocation of resources, development of schedules, establishment of school routines, assignment of duties, and management of student discipline (Urick, 2020). The second type of leadership, transformational leadership, focuses on transformational actions, which enhance growth and successful outcomes for the entire organization (e.g., establishing a shared vision, beliefs, and building a community for all stakeholders). These actions are thought to promote organizational change (Urick, 2016). The third type of leadership, instructional leadership, focuses on the alignment, coordination, and discussion of instruction (Urick, 2020). The fourth type of leadership is shared leadership with teachers. Teachers are more likely to stay in their position if they have an influence on decision-making within the school (Urick, 2016). For the purposes of this research, I highlight aspects of human resource management (HRM) which align with managerial, transformational, and instructional leadership.

Problem Statement

First and foremost, the largest school-controlled determinant of student success is having an effective staff leading student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009). Effective teachers are required especially in our communities supporting at-risk student populations (Podolsky et al., 2019). There is an urgent need to improve teacher retention in the schools that need the support of such teachers the most. With this study, I attempt to add to the research on principals' leadership actions and practices that support effective teachers and build the staff's collective capacity. This support may lead to the retention of effective teachers in high-need, low-income school communities.

Many teachers cite internal working condition challenges as the reason for leaving high-need, low-income school communities (Ladd, 2011). Thus, the problem this study aimed to address is how principals influence the school-based, malleable conditions that can lead to the retention of classroom teachers in high-need, low-income school communities.

Purpose of the Study

There are three types of external or internal factors that may influence the retention of effective teachers in schools. These are fixed school characteristics (student demographics, etc.), structural features (salary, tenure, etc.), and malleable factors that school principals can influence (strategic actions that support teachers; Viano et al., 2020). This study explored the malleable school factors that evidence has suggested are important determinants of teacher retention. Often, school leaders' actions influence these factors.

According to prior research, there are six important HR actions that building principals can take to support teachers in high-poverty U.S. schools and strengthen their knowledge and expertise. These actions include strategic hiring practices that ensure the proper personnel fit for the school community (Miller et al., 2020). Once the principal has secured the proper teacher placement, veteran teachers must offer a meaningful induction program and mentoring to provide novice teachers with the support and guidance they need to meet the challenges and expectations of teaching. In addition to hiring, induction, and mentoring, building principals adopt practices that foster a collaborative culture through scheduling opportunities for teachers to share their practices, empowering teachers through shared instructional leadership opportunities, and providing the staff with timely and useful professional development. These activities collectively foster relationships, trust, and the collective capacity of the faculty.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how one principal in a high-need, low-income school setting uses their role as the instructional leader to promote increased retention of classroom teachers. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, does the principal of a high-need, low-income school setting use their instructional leadership to create working conditions that improve teacher retention?
 - a. Which HR actions does the principal say they take to increase teacher retention, if any?
 - b. Which of the building principal's actions do classroom teachers say increased their willingness to stay?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the empirical literature about principal leadership actions that increase teacher retention in high-need, low-income school communities. Specifically, the study

contributes to the relatively sparse literature about which strategic HRM practices principals perceive are most helpful in retaining effective teachers. Indeed, as Grissom and Bartanen (2019) argued, there must be a better understanding of the principal's HR capacity and management of teaching talent within their building. Urick (2016) also underscored the need for further research to identify leadership practices within a specific school with a specific group of teachers to yield information for building principals to support their practice.

Organization of the Text

The remainder of this dissertation will adhere to the following format. In Chapter 2, I reviewed relevant literature and the concepts that guided the study. The review moves from recognizing the importance of effective teachers in high-need, low-income school communities to the historical challenges of retaining effective teachers in these communities. I then identified principals' HR actions that may lead to positive working conditions and the retention of effective teachers. I included empirical research from three main areas: effective teacher influence on student achievement and growth; working condition challenges in high-need, low-income school communities; and building principal instructional leadership and HRM actions that can lead to positive working conditions for teachers. Chapter 3 describes the research methods for completing the analysis of one quasi-urban high-need, low-income school community in the Midwestern United States. Here, I also identified connections to existing empirical evidence related to effective teacher retention and strategic HR activities designed to support teachers. Chapter 4 presents the research findings and Chapter 5 provides a final discussion of the possible implications of this study for leadership actions and practices that support effective teacher retention and policy to support principal leadership in high-need, low-income school communities. This chapter will also discuss potential limitations of the study.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Within this chapter, I will review literature related to teacher retention challenges in hard-to-staff schools. I will focus on descriptions in the literature of principals' HR actions as well as empirical evidence associating positive teacher working conditions with the retention of effective teachers. To carry out this literature review, I used OneSearch@IU, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and ERIC through the Indiana University library system. I selected relevant articles that were empirically grounded and published in peer-reviewed journals. My search terms included "teacher retention in schools," "leadership actions in schools," "human resource management in schools," and other terms necessary to collect and retrieve relevant literature. To augment my literature search, I also reviewed the curriculum vitae of experts in the field to ensure that I was aware of current published work. I have organized this literature review into sections, with the first section describing the building principal's HRM role in a school community. Next, I will discuss the importance of effective teacher retention in a high-need, low-income school community. Finally, I will highlight specific leadership actions that will enable principals to shape malleable working conditions and support the retention of effective teachers.

Teacher quality is the most important determinant of student growth and achievement in school (Stronge, 2013; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Teacher quality can lead to statistically significant gains in student achievement (Hanushek et al., 2005; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). The discussion below focuses on the retention of effective teachers, the impact high teacher turnover can have on student growth, and the purposeful HR leadership actions and practices of school principals to promote positive working conditions.

Building principals can nurture a culture that is conducive to teacher retention in specific buildings regardless of student demographics. Simon and Johnson (2013) found the following:

Using a range of research methods and definitions of working conditions, researchers have repeatedly found that when teacher turnover is analyzed from an organizational perspective, the poor working conditions common in America's neediest schools explain away most, if not all, of the relationship between student characteristics and teacher attrition. This is important because, unlike demographic characteristics of students, working conditions can be changed. (p. 40)

In the following sections, I will describe empirical studies on teacher retention and those that examined how the principal's actions promote positive working conditions and the retention of effective teachers. In the first section, I will establish that the building principal, who serves as the building's instructional leader, is well positioned to use this role to influence the working conditions and HR development and provide support within the school building.

The Role of the School Principal

Research has suggested that school principals play an essential role in managing key staffing practices and decisions within their buildings. Milanowski and Kimball (2010) contended that middle managers in a school corporation are responsible for implementing policy and practice within a school building. HRM support and execution are often most efficient when those directly involved in the work process are responsible for them (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010). HR activities that are within the principal's purview often include recruitment, selection, hiring, placement, induction, professional development, and performance evaluation. Most often, administrators at the district level determine issues related to compensation and benefits and, sometimes, these are codified within state policy (e.g., uniform teacher salary schedules).

As the instructional leader in a school community, the principal should be aware of the impact their actions have on teachers perceived organizational support. Organizational support includes providing opportunities for faculty collaboration and empowering teachers to participate in instructional decision-making. Specifically, to employees, the extent to which the organization values their contribution matters (Shanock et al., 2019). Shanock et al. (2019) provided evidence-based recommendations through the lens of organizational support theory. They highlighted that this perceived organizational support should encourage employee engagement as an employee begins to feel more competent in their work. In schools, this can be seen as the teachers connecting favorable employee treatment with a trusting, caring, and supportive work environment. This translates to increased employee satisfaction and positive HR outcomes, such as engagement, performance, and retention. Focusing on support through hiring practices (finding the right fit for the position), ensuring proper mentoring and induction for new teachers, providing high-leverage professional development, supervising and providing timely feedback, and scheduling time for collaboration with a focus on shared instructional leadership will ensure that teacher engagement, performance, and retention occur (Boyd et al., 2011; Odden, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2013).

In the section below, I will review empirical literature describing the importance of teacher retention in high-need, low-income school communities. I will then focus on specific HR actions and practices that principals can undertake to support teachers' working conditions, growth, achievement, and retention in these historically underserved school communities.

Human Resource Management at the Building Level

At the building level, the principal is the HR manager who has a direct influence on the human capital within the building (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010). The knowledge, skills, and

training of teaching staff can add great value to a school community, and a competent instructional leader can strengthen these aspects in a school community. Odden and Kelly (2008) identified the principals' importance as the key performance managers: "In the broadest sense, school leaders are 'people managers' who are accountable for motivating those they manage to carry out the school and district strategies for improving instruction and ultimately student achievement" (p. 26).

Successful principals strategically target important HR functions that support teachers. Odden and Kelly (2008) defined the strategic management of human capital as the hiring, development, performance management, and retention of effective teachers, and Odden (2011) discussed the importance of human capital management within the school setting. The strategic management of human capital resources in schools includes hiring, mentoring and induction programs, professional development, supervision and feedback, and the power of a collaborative staff supporting student learning (Odden, 2011). Mathis and Jackson (2010) referred to HRM as "intellectual capital to reflect the thinking, creativity, and decision-making that people in organizations contribute" (p. 5). One of the most influential ways that leaders of school organizations can influence performance is through HRM (Odden & Kelley, 2008). Donaldson (2013) noted that principals who strategically use human capital functions, such as employee motivation, innovation, and professional development geared toward instructional improvement, are successful at securing effective teaching faculties. These principals also have the ability to hire and retain effective staff and remove and replace ineffective staff (Donaldson, 2013). School principals are well positioned to have a direct impact on the support and retention of effective teachers.

The Retention of Effective Teachers

An important focus for successful principals is the supervision and feedback they provide to teachers. Principals must be aware of the influence teachers have on successful student outcomes. Understanding what constitutes an effective teacher is important for principals as they focus their actions on HR support that will lead to positive teacher and student outcomes (Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Aligning teacher effectiveness with various aspects of HRM will lead to school-wide improvement. Such success and HR support will also promote the retention of effective teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). Research shows that an effective, successful teacher is more likely to stay in their position (Ronfeldt et al., 2012).

Ultimately, the product of effective teaching is high student growth and achievement, but there are many dimensions of teacher effectiveness. Test scores alone do not cover the extent of an effective teacher's role in the classroom and school community as a whole. The definition of an effective teacher should include factors that consider the education of the whole child. It should include a vision of education "in which students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged" (Varlas, 2009, p. 2). It is impossible to identify an effective teacher without focusing on the sum of multiple parts. For the purposes of this research, I adopted Goe et al.'s (2008) definition of teacher effectiveness. They identified five key elements of effective teachers: effective teachers (a) have high expectations for all students and help them learn; (b) contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes; (c) use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; (d) contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic mindedness; and (e) collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure students' success,

particularly students with special needs and those at high risk of failure. These five points constitute my definition of an effective teacher and will inform the rest of my investigation.

Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005) argued that although teacher retention has been an important priority for school districts across the United States, it is important to understand that indiscriminate teacher retention will not help schools reach their goal of having effective teachers in all classrooms. This is an important distinction to make because the retention of effective teachers, not simply the retention of all teachers, should be the goal for all schools. Guarino et al. (2006) also asserted that we cannot assume that an improvement in teacher retention is an outcome that is always valuable to the organization, since the retention of ineffective teachers may not help the school. In a more recent study, Grissom and Bartamen (2019) were able to demonstrate that low-scoring teachers (as rated by the Tennessee teacher evaluation system) were more likely to leave a school with a principal whom they considered effective. The reverse was also true, as less effective teachers were more likely to stay in a school with a principal whom they rated as ineffective. This finding was consistent with their hypothesis that more effective principals are better at retaining effective teachers and at removing ineffective teachers (Grissom & Bartamen, 2019). There is an important distinction to make between retaining all teachers and strategically retaining and providing guidance and support for effective teachers. In effect, this research has positioned the principal as an important arbiter of teacher quality.

Factors Influencing the Retention of Effective Teachers

I will review the research on teacher retention chronologically. Shen (1997) conducted an exhaustive study on teacher retention and attrition based on a nationally representative sample from the 1991 School and Staffing Survey. Shen was able to identify various factors that

influenced teachers' decision to stay or leave a building. Shen also uncovered some of the reasons why turnover is higher in certain school communities. New teachers find it difficult to work effectively with high-need, low-income student populations, which leads to a large number of new teachers in challenging school settings leaving the profession at high rates. This study yielded several noteworthy results: New teachers were more likely to move or leave the profession, the intrinsic merits of teaching mattered to the teachers who stayed, and teacher empowerment and influence over decision-making were related to teacher retention (Shen, 1997). This has important leadership implications because, although many external factors are beyond a school principal's control, such as salary, student demographics, and personal teacher choices, there are also internal, malleable factors that building-level administrators can influence and enhance. A building principal's actions and practices can lead to the retention of effective teachers and, ultimately, a cohesive staff.

Researchers subsequently began identifying some of the malleable working condition factors that influence the retention of an effective teaching staff. Loeb et al. (2005) identified internal working condition factors outside of student demographics that lead to high rates of teacher turnover. They conducted a survey with questions focused on the physical attributes of teachers' working conditions, such as textbooks and resources, room temperature, and cleanliness of the building, but they also included the quality of professional development as a contributing factor. Loeb et al. were able to identify a strong correlation between teacher turnover and the more substantive working condition factors, such as strong professional development. This study was important because it supported the notion that although student demographics affect working conditions, there are internal working condition factors, above and beyond student demographics, that have an impact on teacher turnover rates in high-need, low-

income school communities. Further studies also underlined the influence of negative working conditions on teachers' decision to stay or leave a school community.

In a comprehensive literature review focused on teacher recruitment and retention, Guarino et al. (2006) reviewed factors that may contribute to teachers' decision to enter or leave the teaching profession, such as gender, race/ethnicity, ability, and personal/family-related factors. They highlighted negative working conditions as a leading factor in teachers' decision to leave. Guarino et al. explored the concept of desirable working conditions for teachers as a leading indicator of whether they will stay or leave a school and highlighted external factors that can impact working conditions, such as student demographics. It is well documented that teachers leave high-need, low-income schools at a higher rate than schools with less poverty and academic challenges (Guarino et al., 2006; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Significantly, Guarino et al. (2006) also identified some specific strategies and practices relating to internal working conditions and successful retention. Mentoring and induction programs for new teachers, class sizes, the amount of administrative support they receive, and the level of autonomy granted to teachers were all important factors. All of these internally controlled factors appear to play an important role in teachers' decision to leave or remain in their position (Guarino et al., 2006). In the section below, I will highlight the importance of effective teacher retention in high-need, low-income school communities.

In Fuller et al.'s (2007) study on factors that influence Texas schools, they identified that principal characteristics were associated with teacher quality and the likelihood that teachers would remain in their position. They also determined that principal leadership, teacher quality, and low teacher turnover were associated with increased student achievement. Highly skilled veteran teachers can improve student achievement, especially the progress and growth of

students living in high-need, low-income communities (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). In their study focused on New York State in 2013, Ronfeldt et al. concluded that teacher turnover has an especially harmful impact on student achievement in schools with low-performing students. Researchers have also demonstrated that not having a consistent, knowledgeable staff in place can harm the school communities that have the greatest need for veteran teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2013).

The inability to retain teachers with experience and knowledge can have a dramatic impact on student achievement, growth, and the overall culture and climate of a school (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). One can infer from schools with high teacher turnover that the turnover also has an impact on collegial relationships, trust among faculty and staff, and overall institutional knowledge. The case studies in Guin's (2004) research on urban elementary school turnover uncovered the organizational challenges and incoherent academic programming that schools with high teacher turnover face. High turnover and the inability to retain an effective teaching staff make relational trust difficult, and this constant turnover also makes meaningful collegial relationships difficult to sustain (Guin, 2004). These aspects of the school environment support student learning and have a dramatic effect on the culture and climate of the school (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Simon and Johnson (2013) contended that when schools lack the social capital that comes from strong collegial relationships, collaboration among faculty members and overall teacher leadership will diminish.

Research has also shown that high teacher turnover can be disruptive to the learning environment of a school (Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Ingersoll (2004) argued that this is also an indication of underlying problems with systems, procedures, culture, climate, and overall working conditions within the school community. Continual changes in the staff make

programming that has a positive impact on student achievement challenging to sustain over time (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). Given the impact that principals can have on the working conditions and overall culture and climate of a school, I will highlight how school principals can use their role to retain effective teachers. In the section below, I will explore leadership actions that contribute to the retention of effective teachers.

Principals' Actions Influence School Conditions Surrounding Teachers' Work

Initially, research on school communities with teacher retention challenges perpetuated the notion that teachers were fleeing high-need, low-income environments because of the student demographics (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). As research in this area increased, it became apparent that many teachers were actually leaving due to working conditions, not student demographics (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2011). To be clear, student demographics are a fixed school characteristic that influence teachers' working conditions, and fixed school characteristics are out of the principal's locus of control (Viano et al., 2020). More recent research has identified the important role principals have in creating malleable working conditions.

Ladd's (2009) research in rural schools in North Carolina clarified that teachers' perceptions of school leadership have a direct impact on whether they intend to remain at the school or find a different job. Leadership actions had a direct influence on working conditions within the schools under study. Ladd's (2011) quantitative study reviewed the important results of a North Carolina survey of teachers' perceptions of their working environment. Some of the overall working condition categories that the survey revealed to be most important to teachers were leadership, teacher empowerment, mentoring, and professional development (Ladd, 2011). According to Urick (2016), "Teachers' perception of leadership is a well-established predictor of

attitudes associated with teacher decisions to stay or leave” (p. 435). Urick noted that teacher retention is linked to teachers’ perception of their current environment. Successful school principals base decisions on interactions with the teachers and school context (Urick, 2016). These interactions contribute to improved working conditions as well as greater opportunities for collaboration, engagement in instructional decision-making, and input into professional development.

School principals’ leadership, the relationships they develop, and the actions they take affect teachers. Grissom (2011) argued that principals have a direct influence on teachers by acting as mentors, ensuring appropriate supplies are available, and ensuring the teachers have a voice regarding, for example, curricular initiatives, professional development, and interpersonal elements, such as relationship building and trust. Principals also impact teachers indirectly by influencing other aspects of the school environment, such as the development of a collaborative culture, guiding and supporting teachers with professional development opportunities, and developing a common, shared vision for student learning (Grissom, 2011).

Other aspects of the school environment are important to school success as well. Grissom and Loeb (2011) conducted a study involving survey responses from principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parents to identify important principal skills that had improved school outcomes. Their finding highlighted the importance of principal managerial tasks, such as budgeting and maintaining campus facilities. They argued against the principal having a narrow focus on overseeing day-to-day instructional practices at the expense of the multitude of organizational functions that need managing. Grissom and Loeb contended that principals who focus too much energy on instructional leadership are unlikely to see improvement unless they are successful organizational managers as well. Their conception of effective instructional

leadership combines an understanding of the school's instructional needs with abilities to focus resources where they are needed, hire effective teachers, and keep the school operating smoothly. Grissom and Loeb warned against the false dichotomy between managerial tasks and instructional leadership. The results of their research pointed to the importance of both aspects.

Principals can have a positive influence on the school culture, working conditions, and, consequently, the retention of effective teachers when they support important HR functions within the school building. Darling-Hammond (2010) highlighted the critical role of building principals in retaining teachers and ultimately concluded that structures of support, appropriate resources, and high-impact professional development help in retaining teachers. Building principals play an important role in creating working conditions for success. Darling-Hammond stated that "Effective leaders and policymakers create great school environments in which accomplished teaching can flourish and grow" (p. 27). She established with this work that school principals' actions can have a direct impact on teacher retention. Sutcher et al. (2019) also identified school leadership as an influential factor in teacher retention.

Teachers' perception of building principal support is another important factor in the retention of an effective teaching staff. Boyd et al. (2011) investigated schools' contextual factors and teacher retention decisions in a large-scale study in New York City. This study determined that teachers' perceptions of the school administration had the most significant impact on teacher retention decisions (Boyd et al., 2011). Other research has shown that some of the determining factors in a teacher's decision to leave are a lack of administrative support, classroom management challenges, school culture and climate, and overall job satisfaction (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Kukla-Acevedo (2009) estimated the effects of administrative support, classroom control, and behavioral climate on teachers' decision to stay in their current position

and determined that administrative support, especially regarding student behavior management, had a direct and statistically significant relation with teacher turnover. Student misbehavior and lack of administrative support and guidance concerning behavior can lead to chaos and disruption to the classroom learning environment. Administrative assistance with behavioral challenges is important to teachers (Ansley et al., 2019). The literature broadly indicates that there are many administrative actions and practices that directly support a school's internal working conditions.

As an HR manager within the school setting, a principal must take intentional, supportive actions. Examples of these supportive actions include involvement and leadership in induction and mentoring programs, leading focused professional development, and establishing a collaborative culture within the building. Favorable working conditions support the teaching staff and develop the human capital within the school building. Empirical evidence supports the notion that strategic principal leadership practices and actions support positive working conditions and effective teacher retention. My interest lay in the specific instructional leadership and HR actions school leaders take to influence teachers' working conditions. Principals of high-poverty schools must think differently about hiring practices and teacher support systems due to the at-risk student population they serve.

Then, what do instructional leaders do to support the retention of effective teachers? My review suggests that there are specific actions principals take to provide targeted support to classroom teachers. This support enhances the working conditions within the school and thereby increases the likelihood that teachers will choose to remain in the school. Simon and Johnson (2015) found that the essential factors in teacher retention decisions were building leadership, a positive and collaborative working environment among colleagues, a strong focus on academic

excellence, and a culture of trust and respect (see also Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Research further suggests that principal HR activities include a focus on hiring and fit, leadership of new teacher induction and mentoring, delivery of professional development, supervision and supportive feedback, and opportunities for distributed leadership that lead to teacher empowerment through collaboration (Odden, 2011). These five actions form the conceptual framework that defines what principal HR leadership entails. The literature has also highlighted relationship building and trust as critical elements of the work environment in schools, which the principal influences. Relationship building and trust are sources of support and are the foundation of the aforementioned leadership actions. As Becker and Grob (2021) mentioned in their meta-narrative review of the literature on school principal and teacher retention, “In recent years, a growing consensus has emerged that principals influence school climate which then influences teacher satisfaction, and therefore, retention” (p. 6). For the purposes of this research, I explored the following principal HR leadership actions in a high-need, low-income school setting that ultimately influenced the school climate and the teachers’ working conditions: hiring and fit, induction and mentoring, professional development, supervision and feedback, collaboration and shared instructional leadership, and relationship building and trust. These important principal HR actions guided the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 1

Principals’ Human Resource Actions



Hiring and Fit

When considering potential teaching candidates, some personal characteristics are unchangeable, which is why the building principal plays a crucial role with regard to recruitment, hiring, and helping match qualified employees with the existing effective teaching staff. Ellis et al. (2017) noted the importance of the building principal in the role of hiring manager. The building principal must ensure that candidates have an appropriate job preview during the hiring process to enable them to understand the role they will need to fill.

After hiring teachers, principals play an important role in creating opportunities for them to interact and feel connected to the community. Miller et al. (2020) provided evidence that if early career teachers feel a connection with their school and colleagues, this will contribute to their decision to stay in the school. Their research therefore suggested that after hiring new

teachers, the principal should prioritize the development of professional relationships among the new teachers and existing faculty. Elfers et al. (2006). found that comfort level in working with colleagues and having shared values of the teaching practice were factors that explained some of the mobility of teachers within the teaching workforce of a western state. Teachers who do not share similar values with their colleagues are more likely to transition out of the school. Hence, building principals must intentionally hire employees who will be a good fit for the organization. This will ensure that employees are aligned in their approach to teaching and their shared values and vision will lead to a cohesive staff.

Player et al. (2017) used nationally representative data sets from the 2011–2012 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2012–2013 Teacher Follow-Up Survey to review the relationship between principal leadership and the appropriate “match” of the teaching candidate with the demands of the job. They determined that teachers’ perception of their ability and the demands of the job was associated with teacher retention in one school. This has important hiring implications because it is crucial that principals identify teachers with characteristics that will fit the demands of the job. After the principal has determined the proper fit, the next step is to ensure that novice teachers receive adequate support as they begin their teaching career in a new community.

Induction and Mentoring

There is empirical evidence that novice teachers are likely to improve their practice when appropriate early career support systems are in place, and empirical results have shown the positive effect quality mentors have on novice teachers (Goldhaber et al., 2020). This matching of novice teachers with effective veteran teachers should be a top priority for principals.

Principals are well positioned to implement school-wide initiatives that guide new teachers and support them with the mission of the school, instructional expectations, and school climate. There is also evidence that induction programming that connects new teachers with their colleagues promotes new teacher retention (Miller et al., 2020).

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers were more likely to stay beyond their first year if they had a mentor in their subject area and took part in planning and collaboration with other colleagues. A building principal can facilitate this mentoring process through the proper assignment and matching of novice teachers and mentors, and they are also in a position to create building-wide schedules that allow common planning and collaboration time. Guarino (2006) identified the importance of having a mentor in the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject, having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being part of an external network of teachers as important elements in the mentoring process.

Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) reviewed various new teacher induction supports and found that teachers who attended new teacher seminars received support and helpful communication from building leadership and those who had a mentor were less likely to leave teaching compared to teachers who did not receive this support. This shared instructional leadership approach and having teacher leaders acting as mentors throughout the building to support novice teachers is at the core of successful school communities. There is strong empirical evidence that the process of shared instructional leadership has the largest positive impact on student growth and achievement and influences effective teacher retention (Urlick, 2016).

This process will also support continual learning within the building, and strong professional development opportunities for teachers should guide this continual learning and support.

Professional Development

The principal has a critical role to play in orchestrating professional development that is meaningful, that supports teachers' instructional practice, and that influences successful student outcomes. "Professional development must be constructed in ways that deepen the discussion, open up the debates, and enrich the array of possibilities for action" (Little, 1993, p. 26). The struggle for coherent, meaningful professional development that fits schools' challenges and goals has been a problem for decades. Little (1993) highlighted the dominance of short-term workshop training versus in-depth school and classroom-based problem solving. The most effective and promising professional development involves including follow-up on collaboration, coaching, and consultation regarding the actual classroom practice after the training (Little, 1993).

Implementing meaningful and supportive professional development necessitates understanding what research has determined constitutes effective professional development. Professional development is important for teacher growth and support, building the collective capacity of the faculty as a whole, and ultimately, positive student outcomes for students. A building principal should prioritize the faculty's professional development, learning, and growth. Guskey (2003) reviewed researcher and practitioner literature on professional development effectiveness and found some commonalities but also much variance in their definitions of effective professional development. Guskey found that one of the most prevalent aspects of professional development in the literature was the importance of professional development that

enhances teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge. Another consistent factor of importance was the promotion of collegiality and collaboration among the faculty. Guskey mentioned that within each unique school context, there are highly effective teachers achieving positive student outcomes. It is important to identify and share these practices and strategies with colleagues (Guskey, 2003). This collaboration can prove to be highly effective professional development within specific school contexts. The building principal is well positioned to identify these effective teachers and provide opportunities for them to share their practice.

It is also critical to prioritize and schedule time during the school day for teachers to collaboratively reflect on their practice, provide feedback, and receive coaching. Ingvarson et al. (2005) reviewed the impact of professional development across 80 programs primarily based on teacher self-report data. Ingvarson et al. found that there is rarely time built into the process for feedback and coaching within the school setting. Hence, time should be built into the schedule for staff to examine student work in a collaborative and constructive manner. The building principal can create the schedules necessary for faculty collaboration and teacher learning. "Effective school administrators in strong professional communities expect evidence of professional development and act in ways that demonstrate they value teacher learning" (Ingvarson et al., 2005, p. 17).

Garet et al. (2001) noted that the duration of the professional development activity matters. One-time workshops will not have the intended effect unless the topics and learning are sustained over time (Garet et al., 2001). Garet et al. argued that professional development activities should have coherence in the classroom and be linked to other reform efforts and also encourage professional communication among teachers. They found that the form of the activity,

the collective participation of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject, and the duration of the activity lead to professional development success.

It is important to note that there is no consensus among scholars on the definition of effective professional development. Guskey and Yoon (2009) synthesized research by the American Institutes for Research that analyzed 1,300 studies focused on effective professional development. This synthesis indicated that workshops can be effective and bringing in outside experts can be advantageous to school staff. One area of consensus is the amount of time needed to see results and the importance of organized and focused time scheduled for professional development. Ultimately, professional development should be ongoing and embedded in teachers' daily practice (Desimone, 2009). Research has identified several core features of professional development, including content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009).

Principals, through shared instructional leadership and supervision, can establish expectations among teachers for continuous professional learning and growth. Support and guidance for professional learning from the principal in the areas of instruction and curriculum are important to teacher success. Principal behaviors that directly impact teacher retention include a clear vision for the school and staff and focused efforts to achieve this vision (Player et al., 2017). It is also important for new teachers to be part of a community of learners focused on professional learning as a systematic investigation of practice.

Little (2007) noted that the pursuit of evidence-based decision-making, and the professional development involved in this endeavor, constitutes a process of learning from current practice to improve future practice. In successful school communities, access to timely and relevant professional development and inquiry into effective teaching practice are the norm.

Collegiality and the common practice of sharing evidence from the classroom (in the form of stories and student work artifacts) are indicators of the most supportive and successful schools (Little, 2007). There should be long-term professional development in which the staff collectively participates to establish a shared language and a common understanding of high-leverage instructional strategies and an engaging curriculum (Horn & Little, 2010). An effective school leader will seek evidence of these high-leverage instructional strategies and engaging curriculum and provide constructive feedback to teachers.

Instructional coaching has also come to the fore as a leading mechanism for school improvement. In addition to the previous important professional development attributes, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that coaching and expert support and collaborative faculty learning lead to effective faculty professional development. Leadership coaching and instructional coaching are important conduits of school improvement (Lochmiller, 2018a). According to Lochmiller (2018b), the prevalence and necessity of coaching are due to the increased pressure to improve student achievement outcomes. More recently, Woulfin et al. (2019) highlighted the prevalence of school improvement vendors providing coaching services. Their research suggested that the vast majority among those providing this support are offering guidance to classroom teachers on instructional matters. In theory, instructional coaching within the building will lead to greater support for teachers and capacity building within the school (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Coaches help classroom teachers by teaching them new instructional approaches and how to integrate them into the classroom practice. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) underlined that coaches provide advice, demonstration, assistance with planning and data analysis, and the recognition and foresight to know which components of new policy to emphasize and which ones to buffer as the teacher continues to improve their practice. Successful principals

strategically use instructional coaches to support reform goals and guide professional development within the school.

Supervision and Feedback

Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) stated that teachers are the primary drivers of successful student outcomes, and successful teachers display particular characteristics that correlate with student success. Improving teacher quality leads to improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). There are instructional methods and teacher practices that result in positive outcomes for students (Stronge et al., 2007). These teacher practices lead to higher student growth and achievement, and a strong instructional leader will support and pursue these practices with their instructional staff. In their exploratory cross-case analysis, Stronge et al. (2007) were able to identify successful teacher practices and behaviors that led to positive student outcomes. They categorized the top three practices and behaviors in three distinct groups: (a) the differentiation and complexity of instruction, (b) the teacher's type of questioning, and (c) the management and frequency of disruptive behavior in the classroom (Stronge et al., 2007). This implies that an effective school leader will pursue and identify these behaviors and strategies in the classroom and provide focused support for teachers in each area. This roadmap to successful teacher practices and methods will help principals support teachers and provide feedback in these areas.

The principal's supervision of teachers and provision of timely, helpful feedback should be at the core of every well-functioning school. Stronge and Tucker (2017) discussed the essential components of an effective evaluation system, including the components of communication, collaboration, and commitment to organizational goals. A good evaluation system will provide constructive feedback through performance and focused improvement goals

as they relate to teachers' personal and professional growth. Focused improvement is formative and has a clear goal of continuous instructional improvement and support. The second part of the supervision and evaluation process is for accountability purposes (Stronge & Tucker, 2017). This aspect is more summative in nature and can be seen as a performance review of professional goals. This helps the building principal identify teachers' effectiveness in meeting their goals and areas requiring improvement and support (Stronge & Tucker, 2017). Effective principals guide teachers to improve their instructional practice. As stated previously, retaining ineffective teachers who are unwilling or unable to improve is not good for student outcomes. Proper supervision and feedback will support and guide effective teachers and effective teaching practices. According to the literature, teachers who viewed their principal as uninvolved in the teaching and learning process were more likely to leave their school (Urick, 2016).

There is constant tension between the supervisor's role in evaluating employees and in coaching employees to help them improve their practice. Lochmiller (2018a) highlighted the challenges associated with evaluative expectations and having the ability to separate these expectations from coaching conversations and support. The traditional expectation of evaluation often supersedes a supervisor's ability to coach effectively. It is important for supervisors to include coaching in their daily work; this important task involves central office coaching principals and principals coaching teachers (Lochmiller, 2018a).

Collaboration and Shared Instructional Leadership

There is an organizational element to HRM and HR support. Sims (2002) contended that organizational success is dependent on the development and retention of valuable HR. Little (1982) researched schools as workplaces. Using interviews with 105 teachers and 14 principals, she used this focused ethnography of the school working environment to identify factors that

lead to successful schools. Little's research focused on four successful schools and two schools that would be considered relatively unsuccessful. The largest difference between the successful and unsuccessful schools was the collegiality among staff members. Little found that in successful schools, "Collegial experimentation is a way of life; it pervades the school" (p. 332). She also found that principals can be conduits for a collaborative, collegial environment focused on improving practice (Little, 1982). Effective teachers working in a collaborative environment to support each other is important for ensuring successful school communities. In fact, in more recent research, Sun et al. (2017) identified a positive influence and spillover effects when effective teachers collaborated with colleagues. In other words, effective teachers made their colleagues better teachers through collaboration and sharing of successful instructional methods and curricula.

Novice teachers' need for strong support has been apparent in all empirical studies regarding teacher retention (Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Urick, 2016). The fact that 40–50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching in high-need schools creates a cycle of new, inexperienced teachers entering our most challenging schools (Ingersoll et al., 2014). New teachers, regardless of their skill and potential, are less effective than veteran teachers (Goldhaber, 2008). Veteran teachers can provide the support and expertise necessary to support new teachers through a collaborative school culture. Effective teachers are willing to share their abilities, knowledge, and insight with colleagues (Carter, 2003).

A collaborative culture within a school building supports and empowers teachers to take leadership roles within the building through shared instructional leadership. Urick (2016) found that shared instructional leadership may have the most positive impact on student outcomes and

school success. When the principal empowers teachers to participate in the instructional decision-making process, this increases the teachers' likelihood of remaining at the school (Urlick, 2016). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) acknowledged the positive impact of veteran teachers on beginning teachers. Veteran teachers' collaboration with and support of beginning teachers positively influence the quality of instruction and ultimately lead to higher student achievement and growth throughout the building. Little and Horn (2010) cited 25 years of research demonstrating the importance of teachers' collegial relationships as a factor in school improvement. It is possible to achieve greater teacher job satisfaction and support through social support, autonomy in decision-making, constructive feedback, task significance, and task interdependence (Betlini et al., 2015). Such environments should connect established teachers, novice teachers, and building principals. Johnson (2013) identified a strong correlation between collegial relationships, the principal, and the organizational culture within the school. Brown and Wynn (2009) noted that teachers need an encouraging environment that allows educators and administrators to share ideas and practices. Teachers want to be heard and know that their innovative ideas and concerns matter (Brown & Wynn, 2009). According to Allensworth et al. (2009), teachers are more likely to stay in schools where there is mutual respect among peers, an environment of innovation, and collective responsibility for student success. Little (1982) also supported the notion that continuous improvement should be a shared undertaking, and the schools that embrace this philosophy are the most adaptable and successful ones.

Moreover, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argued that the quality of a school's culture and collaborative support ensure good beginnings for new teachers. Principals who initiate, lead, and emphasize programs of collaborative support and innovation impact working conditions and support teacher growth. Allensworth et al. (2009) asserted that stable school communities are

conducive to faculty and principal collaboration and a strong sense of teamwork and professional working relationships. A collaborative faculty enables and encourages adult learning to coincide with student learning (Angelle & Teague, 2014).

Principals are critical to the success of professional learning communities (PLCs) as they democratically operate their schools, sharing decision-making and supporting teacher leaders throughout the building (Wynn et al., 2007). Talbert (2010) highlighted the importance of effective leaders at each stage of the PLC implementation process. The building principal should be an advocate for developing trust and shared decision-making (Talbert, 2010). After ensuring the establishment of a collaborative culture, the leader continues to play an important role in scheduling time for teacher collaboration and provides ongoing encouragement and advocacy for more significant student growth and achievement (Talbert, 2010).

Warren-Little (1982) observed that in successful schools, the ability to influence professional development and academic discourse is widely distributed among staff. There is less reliance on one person in a formal position of authority, and the voices vary by situation. In other words, there are experts throughout the building. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) identified shared decision-making as an important component in determining successful instructional practice. When the staff shares power, instead of there being a top-down approach, it has a positive impact on instruction and effective teacher retention (Guarino, 2006; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Urick (2016) found that shared instructional leadership has the greatest effect on student achievement and may also influence teacher retention. Building leaders should identify teacher leaders throughout the building and ensure they have opportunities to share their craft and expertise with others. Principals should have teachers leading professional development.

According to Ingersoll (2007), schools that value teacher input and involvement in the classroom and school-wide decision-making have more engaged and committed teachers. These schools do a better job of retaining teachers (Ingersoll, 2007). An effective principal will recognize important attributes and strengths in the faculty and ensure that teacher leaders throughout the building have opportunities to collaborate and lead. Principals have the ability to recognize teacher strengths and teacher leadership capacity within their building (Odden, 2011).

In a multi-site quantitative study in three school districts in the Southeastern United States, Angelle and Teague (2014) found a direct relationship between the faculty's collective efficacy and teacher leadership. In other words, teachers who believed their colleagues were strong teachers and were confident in their school's ability to successfully educate the students they served also connected this success to strong teacher leadership. Angelle and Teague also observed that teachers who had a strong belief in the vision of their organization were more willing to take on roles to ensure organizational success. The success of teacher leaders depends on the principal's ability and willingness to relinquish control and empower teachers to lead (Angelle & Teague, 2014). Hallam et al. (2015) obtained similar results regarding the success or failure of PLC teams. In the high-functioning PLC teams that Hallam et al. studied, teachers' autonomy to make decisions and their ability to lead their own collaborative efforts were important aspects of their success. The successful PLC teams were not micromanaged. They highlighted that successful building leaders would give direction regarding goals and the direction of the organization and then give teachers the opportunity to collaborate and identify strategies for success (Hallam et al., 2015). This collaborative school culture can be established by the building principal, and this collaboration fosters relationships and trust throughout the building.

Fostering and Prioritizing Relationship Building and Trust

Teachers value specific attributes and actions in a building leader. Administrators who guide teachers and listen to their concerns are more likely to retain teachers (Ndoye et al., 2010). Simply making sure that teachers know they are valued within the organization can increase teacher retention (Waddell, 2010). The results of Waddell's (2010) study conveyed the importance of relationship building. This social support is important to employees' satisfaction, productivity, professional growth, and retention (Waddell, 2010). In a study on 20 school sites in a western U.S. state, Hughes et al. (2015) used an Administrative Support Survey with teachers to measure four areas of perceived administrative support. Emotional and environmental support from the building principal were important factors in determining teachers' intent to stay in their current position. Relationship-building actions, such as recognizing a teacher for doing a good job, supporting teachers' decisions in front of colleagues and parents, and supporting activities taking place in teachers' classrooms, were examples of actions that teachers appreciate (Hughes et al., 2015). Informal, unscheduled social interactions between the teachers and the building principal also enhanced trust within the school (Hallam et al., 2015).

Trust is an essential component of a successful organization. Moye et al. (2005) explored the relationship between teachers' empowerment and interpersonal trust in their principal and found that both factors contributed to the working conditions within a school. Teachers who felt their voice and personal influence mattered in the school also had trust in their principal. Their research enabled them to recognize trust as a key element in successful schools. Collaborative, honest relationships contribute to trust in the workplace. Moye et al. contended that teachers who found meaning in their work and those who reported high levels of autonomy in the workplace also reported higher levels of interpersonal trust in their school principal. Leadership actions that

include consistency, integrity, genuine concern, and a willingness to share control all contribute to a school principal's ability to foster trust (Moye et al. 2005).

Trust is also a critical element of thriving, high-performing schools (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). In fact, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found an indirect influence of trust in the building principal on student success through the effects of school climate, teacher professionalism, and community engagement: "This suggests that when principals are trustworthy, they set a tone that influences how teachers relate to one another, to students, and the community at large" (p. 258). The entire school community determines if the principal is consistent in their words, actions, and deeds to identify them as trustworthy and someone they should follow as a leader (Cranston, 2011).

Summary

Strategic HRM is based on the notion that an organization will be successful if it uses human capital effectively. Supporting, guiding, and enhancing these resources leads to organizational success. My study rested on a set of assumptions about the ways in which principals increase the retention of effective teachers through improving the faculty's working conditions and managing human capital. These assumptions reflect research stating that well-prepared, effective teachers have a positive influence on student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nye et al., 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). They also reflect the belief that the building principal, in acting as the building's instructional leader, can influence and enhance the school's internal working conditions through intentional HRM practices (Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2011; Milanowski & Kimball, 2010; Odden, 2011). This is important because, as previous research has shown, unlike student demographics, working conditions are malleable factors that can change through interactions between the school principal and teachers (Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005;

Simon & Johnson, 2013). In this study, I focused on six leadership actions—namely, hiring and fit, induction and mentoring, professional development, supervision and feedback, collaboration and empowerment, and relationship building and trust.

Chapter 3.

Research Methods

This descriptive qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) investigated the HR practices of a school principal in a quasi-urban, high-poverty school. In this study, I defined the case as the principal's actions that are unique to the school, situated within school-based conditions, and dependent upon the demographics and socioeconomic status of the school's students. This dissertation thus presents one descriptive case of the HR actions of the principal of a Title I elementary school where 85% of the study population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. This elementary school serves a diverse student population that is 10% Hispanic, 18% multiracial, 15% African American, and 57% white. Furthermore, 25% of the student population receives special education services and support. The teacher demographics are 3% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, 5% African American, and 89% white. The faculty consists of 37 certified teachers. I selected a qualitative case study for my research because of the study's aim to describe a phenomenon within a bounded system—that is, a principal's HR actions within an elementary school setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Research Setting

Table 1

Characteristics of the School

Student Demographics	
Student enrollment (n = 345)	(%)
Black/African American	15
White	57
Multiracial	18
Hispanic	10
Free-reduced lunch eligible	84
English language learners	6
Students with disabilities	25
Teacher Demographics	
Total number of teachers (n = 37)	(%)
Hispanic	3
Black/African American	5
Multiracial	3
White	89
Years of Experience	
0–2	18
3–5	18
6–10	36
11–15	13
16–20	3
20+	15

I selected this particular school for the study because of its remarkable shift in teacher turnover under the leadership of a new principal. The school, Westview Elementary (pseudonym), has completely reversed its prior issues with teacher turnover and has returned to stability in its teaching staff under this new leadership. This is remarkable because the school currently has the highest free/reduced lunch population in its school district comprising 14

elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. The school serves the largest public housing development within the school district, which is in close proximity to the school.

This building has undergone multiple attempts at reform, reorganization, and restructuring over the last 10 years. In fact, a new school building was also constructed, and it is currently the newest and most state-of-the-art elementary facility among the 14 elementary schools in the district. The central administration sharpened their focus on improving the instructional practice during this renovation and reorganization period, yet many attempts failed over time, and the department of education considered it a “failing” school. In recent years, due to the adoption of student growth measures, this school is no longer considered a failing school. It is currently rated a C school on the state’s A–F rating scale and no longer faces punitive measures, scrutiny, and pressure to improve from the state. Nevertheless, the school continues to face many challenges, but most importantly, it seems to have stability in the community at this time.

The current school principal has been at the school for five years. Prior to her arrival, the school had four principals within a two-year period. During this transitional period with many building principals, there was also a large turnover of the teaching staff and a continued failing status from the state department of education. During the last four years, under the current building principal, there has been a high level of teacher retention. The building continues to have academic challenges but is seeing growth in its achievement and reductions in students’ behavior challenges. It is no longer considered a failing school and continues to make academic growth and progress.

Research Participants and Sampling Rationale

For this research, I used a purposeful sample (Patton, 2002) of 13 participants out of 37 certified staff members who have been employed over the last four years at this Title I school in a quasi-urban setting serving a high-need, low-income student population. The participants included the building principal, the assistant principal, and 11 current teachers as noted in Table 2.

The building principal has approximately 25 years of experience in education, most of which she has spent serving as a building leader. She was valuable to this study because of her perspective as a leader working in a school that had high teacher turnover before her arrival. I was interested in learning about her leadership style and the intentional actions she has pursued to support and develop teachers. I also interviewed the assistant principal to understand his role in supporting teachers and the school community.

In addition, I interviewed one teacher at each grade level (K–6), two special education teachers, and two special area teachers to ensure that I was speaking with teachers from multiple areas of the building, totaling 11 teachers. I asked the building principal to identify teachers with a wide range of professional experience. Half of the teachers in the study were hired by the school's current principal while the remainder were hired during the previous principal's administration and thus transitioned to the new principal. The sample of teachers represented various races, ethnicities, genders, and years of experience.

Table 2

Characteristics of Interview Participants

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Education	Position	Years of Experience	Years at Westview
P.01	64	Female	MA	Principal	27	5

P.02	58	Male	MA	Assistant Principal	25	5
P.03	39	Female	MA	Instructional Coach	16	9
P.04	32	Female	MA	Social Worker	6	6
P.05	43	Male	EdD	Art Teacher	18	8
P.06	41	Female	MA	Music Teacher	18	4
P.07	55	Female	MA	Special Education	33	33
P.08	31	Female	MA	Grade 2	1	1
P.09	30	Female	MA	Grade 1	9	3
P.10	55	Female	BA	Grade 6	7	1
P.11	30	Female	MA	Special Education	7	7
P.12	46	Female	MA	Kindergarten	23	5
P.13	29	Female	BA	Grade 4	6	5

This purposeful sample of participants enriched the data analysis due to the participants' experiences together over the last five years and their varying perspectives on this high-need, low-income school community. All participants provided insight into the strategic HR practices that have taken place during this time.

Researcher Positionality

I approached this study as an elementary principal employed in the district where I conducted my research. I have 18 years of experience in this role but have not worked at Westview Elementary. As a colleague conducting research within the district where I am employed, I had to record and thoroughly analyze all data to ensure that my potential bias as a colleague did not influence the data. As an educator, I fully recognize that the pressures of

teaching continue to increase as the punitive nature of standards-based education has found its way into our public schools. We have experienced many new initiatives over the years, and each one has helped to define our belief system within the school setting. The good teachers have weathered the storm by being empowered to embrace the new initiatives through their experiences and knowledge, and their leadership has been crucial to school community success. I recognize that I cannot ignore the potential impact of these unique and positive experiences on my general perception of events and interactions within a school organization. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) proposed several important questions to review throughout the qualitative research process: “What might you be projecting onto the data based on your own beliefs and life experiences? How does your ‘positionality’ or social location affect what you see? How are you guarding against your biases?” (p. 208). Throughout the study, I reviewed the data and ensured that I identified my potential bias during the collection and analysis of the data.

Data Collection

The data collection included 13 semi-structured initial interviews of 30–45 minutes with the participants, 13 follow-up interviews scheduled with each participant based on the initial findings, and documentation pertaining to student demographics and HR information (see Appendices A, B, and C). This documentation provided me with staffing information during the last five years, such as annual teacher turnover rates and current teachers years of experience overall and years of experience in the building. I also reviewed the student demographic data to identify levels of poverty within the school and possible student behavior indicators, such as discipline referrals and the number of students who have been suspended each school year, and student achievement over time and attendance. It is important to note that the State of Indiana has changed testing vendors, rigor, and expectations numerous times over the last 10 years. This

could make finding comparable standardized data points challenging. I compared teacher retention rates with the current building principal versus teacher retention rates in the two years leading up to the year of her hiring as well. All these indicators informed my understanding of the school culture and climate as well as possible connections related to teacher retention.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the building principal, assistant principal, and 11 teachers, including seven classroom teachers and four special area teachers. I developed a common interview protocol for the administrators and classroom teachers. I interviewed each candidate at least twice, and the interviews varied in length. The first interview involved general questions and discussion regarding HR practices and working conditions within the building. The second interview was a more focused discussion highlighting the important HR and working condition topics that appeared relevant to the staff in the first interview. As I required some clarifications and had additional questions to ask, I scheduled additional interviews with a few candidates as needed. Interviewing is typically the best technique to use when focusing on a small number of selected individuals within a school (Merriam, 1998). I used a recruitment email message (see Appendix D) to establish initial contact with participants. I also included a general overview of the study to clarify the purpose of the interviews (see Appendix E). The interview questions explored the current strategic HR practices and general working conditions in the building from an administrative or teacher perspective (see Appendix A). The follow-up interview explored the specific HR practices the initial interview data suggested were relevant.

I interviewed the principal, assistant principal, and teachers through Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions, and I recorded the interview sessions within Zoom. I transcribed the interviews verbatim into MaxQDA for coding and analysis. As I began to code the interviews in

MaxQDA, the system provided some good visual representations of the data that enabled me to begin to identify prevailing themes. MaxQDA can also identify the number of times key words were used by participants, such as trust, collaboration, etc. This helped the interviewer understand some of the common elements from each interview. MaxQDA has proven to be a fast and efficient data analysis system that enables the researcher to organize and categorize data strategically.

Observation

As in-person observations were not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, I scheduled two initial informal conversations and then a third discussion to clarify questions with the principal to gauge her emphasis and focus on staffing throughout the building. I noted the principal's hiring and staffing focus, and I identified areas that she emphasized and highlighted throughout our conversations. These discussions offered the principal's account of the environment I was studying and gave me good insight into her focus throughout her time at Westview.

Document Retrieval

The documents needed for an in-depth analysis of the human resources at this school came from the building principal, the 2019 Mid-America Community School Corporation Annual Performance Report, the state department of education's data website (see Appendix C), and local newspapers describing the contentious time for the school and then the transition to a new principal. I also worked with the school district's HR office to collect staffing data over the last five years. The specific school enrollment and student and teacher demographic information came from the state's data website.

This study resulted in a data set consisting of multiple interview transcripts and audio recordings of all interviews. In addition, I obtained the school's 2019 Annual Performance Report from the state department of education. This document showed the schools' achievement, attendance, staffing, and discipline reports for the last four years. I also acquired staffing data from the school district database. I included the original interview protocol in this manuscript as well. I kept anecdotal notes and memos in a handwritten journal during the interviews, informal discussions, and immediately following these events. This handwritten journal of memos that I wrote during and immediately following each event proved to be a useful tool for the overall data analysis.

Data Analysis Strategy

I undertook a thematic analysis of the qualitative data I had collected during my fieldwork phase (Braun & Clark, 2006). This analysis produced themes describing the HR actions principals and teachers reported having commonly observed. As I compiled and analyzed the data, I identified actions, words, and events that support and emphasize strategic HR practices overall. I sought evidence of intentional principal practices focused on strategic HRM within the six areas highlighted earlier: hiring and fit, mentor and induction, professional development, supervision and feedback, collaboration and empowerment, relationship building and trust.

The first step was to organize and become familiar with the data, and the MaxQDA program was a useful tool that enabled me to download the interviews and documents into one location. The transcription of verbal interviews took place during this initial phase. This computer software was helpful as I began marking initial memos and points of interest. This phase included multiple reviews and repeated reading of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

During the second phase of analysis, I looked for examples of leadership actions that supported HRM and had a positive impact on the culture and climate of the school as well as any challenges in this area. I began the initial coding process during the second phase. I started by identifying words and short phrases that began to capture the essence of conversations from the principal and teacher perspectives. Specific words, phrases, and actions began to stand out as I reviewed the data, and I started writing memos and the first phase of codes in the observations and interviews. “Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so you can easily retrieve pieces of data” (Merriam, 2015, p. 173). During this phase, I printed all interview transcripts and also began highlighting and making hand-written notes on each of the transcripts.

During the third phase of analysis, as certain codes became more prevalent, I began to highlight possible themes in MaxQDA and entered them into the coding system. As computer software can organize and sort information better than the human mind can, the complex coding system became much more user friendly (Saldaña, 2015). MaxQDA was helpful in allowing me to create tables to organize potential themes. During the third phase, I merged codes into categories, and then themes started to emerge. After reviewing the principal leadership actions that resulted in specific categories, I identified themes that began to emerge in the data. Such thematic analysis of data is an approach that allows the researcher to move from the broader context to identifying themes within the data set (Lochmiller & Lester, 2015).

The next phase included the identification and possible elimination of some themes. This review and revision of the data was important as solid themes began to emerge. As I began to identify patterns, it became important to look through all data sources and ensure the identified themes were representative of the whole data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The final two phases involved defining and naming the themes and producing the final report. Clearly defining each theme to ensure that they serve their purpose is important (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point, I had a clear description and understanding of the HR actions the building principal had taken and a clear understanding of how teachers perceived this support. The end result was a detailed analysis of each theme that the data clearly represented. In the final phase, I completed a report to highlight the final analysis of the data. Essentially, the final phase tells the story of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this research, I conducted an analysis of the principal's instructional leadership and HR actions within this school setting, and the teacher and principal perspectives pieced together this story.

Limitations

This research was limited to one quasi-urban elementary school with a purposeful sample of its teachers. Due to the narrow representation, it is impossible to generalize the information and data collected. Going in-depth in one case and not including other schools involved making the assumption that this principal was doing something different. Additionally, my decision to interview colleagues instead of educators outside the school district created the potential for bias.

Although I only studied one school, this allowed me to study that school deeply and engage in sustained fieldwork. There is a need for additional research on high-need, low-income school settings to see if the instructional leadership actions and practices had similar effects across a variety of school communities.

COVID-19 Implications

This research was conducted during an extended period of disrupted learning due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. There were a few challenges with conducting research during this time, such as the inability to conduct on-site observations due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Despite the challenges, the principal and teacher interviews gave me an understanding of the internal working conditions and principal leadership actions that may have influenced a positive change in the teachers' internal working conditions.

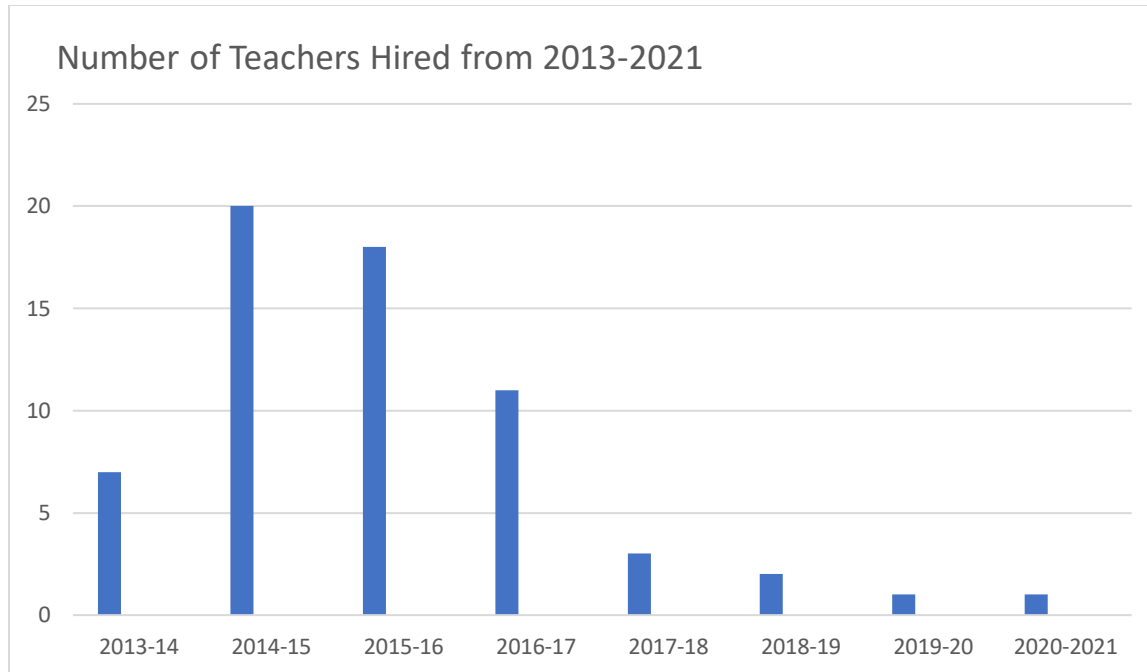
Chapter 4.

Findings

Westview Elementary is a Title I elementary school located in a quasi-urban school district in the Midwestern United States. The school serves students enrolled in kindergarten through sixth grade. The school's enrolled student population comprises about 350 pupils. The school serves an economically disadvantaged student population, with 86% of the students qualifying to receive free or reduced lunch. The school employs 37 certified teachers. Between 2013 and 2016, Westview experienced a period of significant leadership and teacher turnover. During this period, the school's performance led to a schoolwide restructuring. This forced restructuring had little input from parents or teachers and resulted in multiple years of high teacher turnover. Teacher participants also noted the difficulties they faced with school leadership during this time, such as the lack of support they felt from the principal. From 2013 to 2016, the building saw the departures of 45 teachers and appointments of four new principals. This is a notable number because the school only has 37 certified teaching positions, suggesting that some new teachers left in the middle of the school year. In 2016–2017, the district hired a new principal. During the new principal's first year, in 2016, she was tasked with hiring 11 new teachers to begin her tenure at the school. During the next five years, the school saw significantly reduced teacher turnover. A review of the staffing for the period 2013–2021 suggested that the school's retention issues have largely dissipated over the last five years (see Figure 2). This coincides with the hiring of the new principal before the 2016–2017 academic year, suggesting that the new principal played a role in the staffing stability from 2017 to 2021.

Figure 2

Westview Teacher Turnover



The increase in teacher retention under this principal's leadership raises important questions concerning the actions the principal took to stabilize the school's staffing in the wake of a mandated restructuring effort. The school serves as a unique case to understand how principal leadership can improve teacher retention. This chapter will describe the leadership actions that the principal and other members of the school took that led to reduced teacher turnover and improved teacher working conditions.

The chapter will present four significant findings, which I frame as leadership actions. First, the principal focused on supporting teachers by developing relationships and trust with all stakeholders, including parents and the community. The development of trust was the fundamental building block of the principal's efforts, and she used improved relationships to stabilize student behavior, (re)engage parents in the school community, and create more stability in classrooms. This stability supported classroom teachers in their daily work. Second, the principal took actions to support teachers, develop positive relationships, and create trust with

the faculty. Third, she developed systems that would create a culture of collaboration and shared instructional leadership within the school to (re)engage classroom teachers in decision-making. Among these efforts, she established the building leadership team, whole-child support team, and behavior management team to support student and teacher success, and she reorganized school schedules to support collaborative teacher time. This extended her reach throughout the school community, and teachers mentioned the network of support that came from having teacher leaders throughout the building and that established trust among the faculty. Finally, the principal identified specific staffing needs and advocated for building specific professional development, resources, and staffing positions that would contribute to student success in the classroom. In sum, data suggest that these actions may have contributed to improved teacher retention by creating better working conditions in the building. In the sections below, I will review the four leadership actions and supporting data. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings presented.

Leadership Action 1. Developing an Awareness and Connection to the Community

An article in the local newspaper described many of the difficulties the school faced prior to the participant principal's arrival. The article highlighted parents' concerns about the principal's restructuring plan. The primary complaint was that the principal did not include parents or teachers in the process. In addition, the article featured photos of parents picketing at a school board meeting when there was no communication regarding a school-wide restructuring of classrooms. Later that same year, owing to the parents' concerns, the principal included parents in the school improvement plan, but parents noted that there were still trust issues within the community. The article regarding community frustrations over the lack of communication

and input regarding the restructuring process also coincided with the three years of high teacher turnover at Westview.

After the new principal's appointment in 2016, the local paper published another article highlighting the principal's focus on building a caring culture within the school community because she recognized the strain in relations between the school and the community prior to her arrival. She recognized the importance of prioritizing the informal, relationally bound aspects of school leadership. She was quoted as follows:

Good leadership is good leadership, and it's all relational. That's a big part, I think, of working with a community in poverty. I think it's really working with these families and finding ways to connect with them, it really is. It's one hundred percent the reason they start to trust you and the school.

As illustrated in this quote, the notion of including everyone within the community to support the learning environment for students was pervasive. The principal clearly understood that this would take additional hard work, and she mentioned that the entire community needed to be included in the learning process for it to be successful. In a school that had faced such significant disruptions, the prioritization of relationships with parents seemed to be a critical focus for the building's leadership team.

The principal recognized that parents and families felt disconnected from the school community and that productive conversations about students' academic and social and emotional needs were not taking place after the restructuring effort. To address this, the principal focused her leadership on establishing positive relationships with students and parents, which she viewed as the foundation for rebuilding trust for all stakeholders. The principal offered many examples to describe her efforts to connect with families, including canvassing the neighborhood before

school began to make families aware of the upcoming year, conducting home visits, and identifying opportunities for after-school care as well as meal support for children. She described her interactions with the families and students as follows:

I treat people with a lot of respect, and I talk to them and I go to their house and I pick up their kids. Pre-pandemic, I would do a run at least once if not two or three times a day up to the public housing addition. They got to the place where they were calling and they would say, "I just need you to come get them." I'm going to do whatever I can to help somebody to be at school. So, if I have to take them food, or I let kids take naps in the office; I have a big beanbag chair and blanket that I take home and wash every night. So, those kinds of things. I think it helps build a trust level. They know I have their back when there's a problem, and I talk to them. I talk very straight to them, but I don't look down on them. You know, their lives are tough.

These actions improved trust and created a culture where families felt supported and valued. From the perspective of teacher retention, forging this kind of connection with families created a situation where teachers saw their work as being both about the children in their classrooms and the community from which they came. This connection to families and students began to improve the teachers' working conditions.

Westview's Annual Performance Report, a document the state published, displayed important trends regarding the improved working conditions (see Tables 3 and 4). In 2016–2017, the school's attendance rate was 94.5% and there were 58 student suspensions. In 2019–2020, the school's attendance rate was 95.7% and there were 20 student suspensions. This represents an increase in attendance of 1.2% and a decrease of 38 student suspensions.

Table 3**Westview Attendance Rates**

Academic Year	Attendance Rate
2016-2017	94.5%
2019-2020	95.7

Table 4**Westview Suspension Rates**

Academic Year	Student Suspensions
2015-2016	99
2016-2017	58
2019-2020	20

Establishing Common Ground with Families and Their Children

To enhance relationships with families and improve working conditions for teachers, the principal asked every teacher in the building to meet students in their homes and hand out flyers in the neighborhoods before the beginning of the school year. She intended for this activity to help the teachers develop a positive rapport with the families before the school year began. As she recalled, these efforts “helped us have more students enrolled, and we had a good turnout at the meet-and-greet. I think it helped our families, knowing we are willing to come to them, not just them coming to us.” The teachers who participated in this study reported that this relationship building and fostering of trust with families and students improved working conditions over time by establishing a more positive school climate and culture. The climate of

the building, which had felt volatile, became less so and collegiality became more integral to the community.

One of the new Grade 6 teachers, the inclusion teacher (working with all grade levels), and a kindergarten teacher mentioned the importance of the principal and her assistant's relationships with many of the families and how these relationships helped both new and veteran teachers in the building. As a new teacher, the participant had not yet been able to form relationships with families, and the principal's preexisting connection to the community was beneficial to her as a new teacher. For the veterans, there was a renewed sense of collaboration between the school and the families. The quote below displays the support that took place:

They're communicating with the parents all the time. Many times, they have been able to get communication with the parents started before I do. They know the families, and I think that helps because you have the support from the administration, and they are familiar with the parent; they are familiar with the parent and student. They know the situation, and I don't have the background on a lot of these kids, so they have that insight that I don't necessarily have. The big difference was definitely the teamwork aspect, the collaboration, and the consistency.

The principal and her designated leadership team helped new and veteran teachers connect with the community. The three teachers noted the importance of the already established community connections and the fact that they turned to the principal and leadership team often to help with this connection to families. This shared approach to supporting students and their families ensured that there was always support available when needed.

Much like classroom teachers, members of the school leadership team adopted this shared approach to supporting students and their families. In fact, the assistant principal, one of

the special area teachers, the school social worker, and all interviewed classroom teachers also noted the building leadership's intentional focus on getting to know the families and their situations, developing relationships, and attempting to establish trust, and it was clear, as shown in the following example, that they also used this approach when challenges arose in the school. In illustrative examples, the assistant principal and special area teacher respectively explained the following:

The assistant principal notes that in some cases, we've been able to say, you know, "I'm not out to get your child. I'm here to help you. We're both on the same page that we want your child to be successful, and with what we want your child to do here." Well, I'm just communicating with the parents and saying, "What can we do to help make sure that happens?" So, yeah, those relationships are huge.

A special area teacher stated that some of it is just the fact that we have consistency, again, for a long stretch of time and the norms have changed. You know, it's no longer normative for students to yell, scream, and leave the room, then have parents support this type of behavior.

This communication with parents enhanced the abilities of the principal, assistant principal, social worker, and teachers to work with parents to handle challenging situations as they arose, thus supporting teachers in their classrooms. As one of the special area teachers highlighted, parents stopped supporting poor behavior, which had been a common occurrence prior to the arrival of the new leadership. Finding common ground with parents and helping them recognize the school's leaders as sources of help and guidance for their children were critical. It is important to note that since the previous comments were made by members of the leadership team and behavior management teams, the influence of establishing relationships extended

throughout the building and nurtured this continuity and common ground throughout the building.

Establishing Positive Student Relationships Supports Teachers' Working Conditions

The principal identified student misbehavior, classroom disruptions, and supporting teachers with classroom management challenges as the top priorities when she began her tenure at Westview Elementary, because these were the leading contributors to the stressful climate and working conditions under the previous leadership. She focused on building relationships with the students as part of her priority of supporting the teachers and developing a sense of trust with the students. By proactively establishing positive relationships and building a network of support for the students, participants mentioned that the school climate had increasingly improved over time.

Teachers mentioned that there was now an intentional practice of focusing on trauma-informed care. They indicated that the behavior management team focuses on creating the right climate in the classroom for the students. This climate has improved working conditions for teachers. In fact, a kindergarten teacher stated that she observed a noticeable difference in student behavior within her classroom particularly after the school hired a behavior specialist and a family and community liaison. The behavior specialist focused on providing support and guidance with challenging student behavior, and the creation of the community liaison position was intended to build relationships with families and help them find community resources when needed. Both individuals had helped with crisis situations in her classroom. This support from additional adults and weekly check-ins with students helped in eliminating extreme behavior in her classroom. She noted the change in the working conditions in her classroom:

Since they (the principal and assistant principal) have been our principals over the last five years, things have improved in my classroom every year and we don't see as many extreme behaviors in the classroom.

The principal and her designated team's focus on student needs and the establishment of a team of professionals to support HR in the building had a direct influence on the teachers' working conditions.

In another example of the principal's clear focus on developing relationships and trust with the students, the social worker, special area teachers, and the inclusion teacher mentioned the principal's child-centered approach and her observed focus on taking care of each child's individual needs. The principal was focused on trying to help children manage and understand their emotions, not simply send them away for noncompliance. HRM in schools looks different from that in other organizations because it is the intersection of formal HR initiatives, such as the professional development needed to help teachers understand this philosophical approach to supporting children, with all the informal, relationally bound actions that transpire in the work environment with all stakeholders. The social worker, who works intimately with all students and their families, gave an example of how this informal interaction between the principal and the students began to influence the entire faculty and staff's approach to student support:

Her strength is that she has a very child-centered approach. I don't want to go into too many details, but our previous principal, if there was a child screaming in the hallway, he would tell the assistant and I that the kid needs to go home. And I'd be like, who is it? And he would say, "I don't know, and I don't care; they just need to go home." With our principal now, that wouldn't happen; she would say, "Come here. What do you need? Do you need food, a nap? What's going on with you? How can I help?"

Again, when teachers compared the previous principal's approach to behavior management to the new principal's focus on creating a supportive environment, they noticed a dramatic difference in leadership behavior that had contributed to establishing positive teacher working conditions. The participants mentioned that student outbursts still happen occasionally, but the students have a support network to help manage the behavior and quickly return them to the classroom when they are ready. Teachers feel this support in the building now, and it was nonexistent with the previous building leadership.

Owing to the principal's leadership actions, the school's teaching staff began to look at the students differently, and these relationally bound interactions that were taking place between the principal and students were beginning to change the mindsets of teachers. The principal's interactions and actions modeled what one teacher described as a "different" way of viewing and interacting with students:

I remember when I first got the job and I would watch how the principal talked with the students. And I think it was just a very different way of looking at them. And so, like switching the mindset and not seeing our school so much as having a deficit but really getting to know all the kids individually and kind of accentuating their strengths. A lot of the qualities that maybe exist in some of our students that don't exist elsewhere... so, we see a lot of perseverance and we see a lot of, you know, like we had kids that were walking themselves to school for the morning strings program and, you know, that kind of independence. And so, I think that she just modeled a lot of that—the way we should be looking at our students. And so, I could latch on to it and then think, okay, as a teacher, this is how I want to be.

This teacher noted the principal's observed actions and the influence that they had on her approach to students. She highlighted the principal's different way of looking at the students, and this new way of approaching and supporting students had an influence on the teachers within the building. Other teacher participants shared this perspective. For instance, a Grade 2 teacher noted the way the principal interacted with students and parents/caregivers. She stated, "There's just a way that she interacts with students, like she's amazing with our kids and she understands our parents. And she bends over backwards for teachers and for students." Teachers described their observations as a type of informal mentoring by the principal. In sum, participants saw the interactions between the principal and the students positively and felt they offered them new ways to support students.

Leadership Action 2: Supporting Teachers, Developing Relationships, and Fostering Trust

Related to her efforts to strengthen relationships with families and students, the principal also adopted an intentional focus on developing relationships and trust among the faculty. When the principal began her tenure at Westview Elementary, discussions with teachers and the superintendent enabled her to identify classroom management, lack of teacher support, and the feeling that working conditions within the school had become chaotic and unsafe as her primary action items to address. Teachers and staff had been left to manage these conditions without strong administrative support because of the constant turnover in principals and the most recent principal's complete disregard for student behavioral support. As the statement below evinces, the principal clearly recognized that years of negative interactions with the school administration had diminished relationships with students and their families. Moreover, she clarified that rebuilding relationships and trust with families would likely help stabilize the school community.

She mentioned this observation and the previous principal's approach as she began the transition at Westview:

So, it was very clear that the teachers had not been supported with management of behaviors and that sometimes, if they sent them to the office, the referrals, sometimes the referrals were lost or, using my administrative assistant because she was there, she said that he would just tear them up, throw [them] away, and wouldn't call the kids down, and he just didn't do it. And he basically, and he did tell teachers, "You have to handle it." Well, that then became kids standing in the hallways, people screaming... this is what the superintendent said about the environment at that point. You know, when she would visit over here and there would be kids crawling around on the floor in the office and running up and down the halls. And it was a mess.

From this quote, it is obvious that the previous administration had ignored student behavior management and the overall climate in the building had become chaotic and unsafe. She recognized that the previous administration did not provide sufficient support for students' social and emotional needs and there was no connection with the families, which in turn, created negative working conditions for teachers.

The teachers' relationships with the previous principal had been extremely poor and they lacked support, and the new principal was intent on changing this. The lack of support from the previous principal was a recurring theme throughout the interviews with teacher participants, and the principal's interviews pointed to a clear and focused effort to repair these relationships and provide support to the teachers. The building principal mentioned the previous leadership and some of the reasons for the high turnover prior to her arrival. She noted that the relationships were extremely troubled and that instead of teacher support, there were simply threats of removal

if things did not improve. She stated that the teachers had told her the previous principal would not listen to their concerns and gave no formal support, just threats of dismissal and removal from the school. The new principal described the transition that the school experienced before her arrival:

The first year I came here, I had to hire 11 teachers in a week. We have 20 classroom teachers, so it was over half our staff. It had really been that way for several years, losing 10 teachers a year, and every year teachers would fill out that survey that they wanted to transfer to another school in the district (inter-district transfer request to one of the other 14 elementary schools in the district).

These are striking turnover numbers, and the principal felt the turnover was taking place due to the negative and toxic relationships the previous principal had with his staff. There was a clear indication that the building's previous leadership was a factor in the large teacher turnover that had been taking place at Westview. The principal went on to explain her approach and what the working environment was like prior to her arrival:

There was a real traumatic experience here, before I came, with the principal who was right before me. It was bad without end. He would yell at teachers at almost every faculty meeting and tell them how awful they were. He would berate them in front of their colleagues and tell them that they better start looking for jobs. People were afraid of him and they didn't talk about it or tell anyone because they were afraid the work environment would get even worse.

The principal mentioned their experiences with the previous principal to explain that her approach was the exact opposite. She began having discussions with teachers and listening to their concerns and what they felt they needed to have success. In fact, she stated that she felt her

leadership approach had strengthened the teachers' working environment: "I happen to think teachers work harder and work stronger and work better when someone thinks they're doing a good job than for someone who is criticizing them all the time." Again, the recurring theme of supporting teachers surfaced. Rather than berating teachers, as the previous principal had done, she mentioned her positive approach to supervision and feedback. She said that she always starts with the positive things she sees in the classroom, then asks important questions about things she feels could improve, and then finishes with more positive feedback focused on empathy and an understanding of the challenges a classroom teacher faces. She felt that over time, teachers had started trusting her and did not see her observations as opportunities to catch them doing something wrong but as opportunities to have genuine discussions focused on helping them improve their practice.

Participants noted that the principal and assistant principal were willing to spend time with teachers, actively listen to their challenges and concerns, and take meaningful actions when needed to offer support. Many of these actions came from the school's behavior management team, which provides resources and support to assist teachers with students' behavioral and academic challenges. Teachers viewed this support as crucial to their success over the last five years with this principal. The social worker noted the following:

I feel like we're a really good team. Our principal and assistant, they are really good at listening, taking time to meet with us if we feel there's something that we need to discuss or if we have a concern. They are so accessible.

The teamwork approach and the leaders' accessibility resonated with the staff. Teachers expressed appreciation for their caring attitude toward the children and their accessibility and availability throughout the school day as needs arise. Participants noted that the principal shows

empathy toward the work the teachers do and has a clear focus on finding ways to support the work.

All teacher participants also mentioned the change in the school climate after the new principal arrived. In fact, one participant, a veteran teacher leader and the instructional coach in the building, mentioned that the principal was one of the reasons why she decided to stay at Westview. This particular teacher emphasized the importance of principal leadership and support in her willingness to stay at Westview after the new principal arrived. She described her feelings before the new principal arrived:

Well, there was a time kind of in the middle of my nine years there that I packed my room at the start of summer and prayed I would find a different spot. And I applied everywhere, and it was really a low moment for me. This school can be very overwhelming, and I just didn't feel I was receiving the support needed. This was the summer before the new principal and her assistant got hired. I stuck around, and when they came to the first meeting, there was just a different vibe and positivity. I moved back in and called off the search and stayed. Now, I'm so glad that I did because it hasn't been easy, but it's just a more positive Westview over the last five years.

This teacher's experience speaks directly to the influence that positive working conditions can have on a teacher's willingness to stay in the school environment. The fact that this particular teacher stayed had a dramatic influence on the entire faculty, according to the building principal. She is the building's instructional coach and according to the building principal, staff consider her a master teacher. The principal also shared the sentiment that keeping a teacher of this caliber in the building has helped in strengthening the faculty as a whole due to the nature of her

position and the professional development and support she has given to the entire faculty over time.

Another participant mentioned that through daily conversations and time spent working with this principal, her approach to building relationships and the fact that she was approachable had set the tone for a positive work environment. She said that it is never “do as I say” but problem-solving conversations that yield solutions. This teacher appreciated that the principal was available throughout the day and would always take time to have conversations and listen to concerns:

Our principal is real. She doesn't pretend to be perfect and she doesn't pretend to know all the answers; she's approachable. If her door is open, you can knock on it and you know she will help. She's not always in the middle of something like our previous principal. She has all the time to take to have a conversation with you.

Again, there was mention of the previous principal's lack of leadership by being too busy to support teachers in their work. All participants mentioned the new principal's daily informal conversations, accessibility, and nonjudgmental approach and how much the teachers appreciate this. It is important to note the participants' affirmation that it is not “empty cheerleading”; the principal truly listens to their concerns and takes actions to try to support the teachers' efforts. One initial action that she took after listening to teachers' concerns was to pursue professional development to support the teachers' classroom management and students' behavioral challenges.

School-Specific Professional Development and Resources Support Staff Development and Retention

The principal recognized that teachers needed support with and training on classroom management, and she advocated for further professional development and a comprehensive approach to addressing classroom disruptions. It was clear that she knew where the funding for the professional development was coming from, and she made sure these departments knew the impact the efforts were having on their community. She noted her advocacy when she first arrived at Westview:

So, we asked for a little bit more (professional development through the Well-Managed Schools program). For some reason, it was paid for through our Special Education Department. But I talked to our Special Education Director in our district and told her we needed additional training. So, suddenly, we both went to the training (assistant principal and principal) and there was an administrative piece involved. We sat through the additional training with the teachers, but then we asked for more because there is another level of it besides the classroom management piece. So, we had this person who is kind of a guru come in for a week at a time, and our district Director of Special Education paid for it. She did these two or three times and everyone's trained in it now.

The principal identified the strength of the school-wide behavior management program, Well-Managed Schools, when implemented with fidelity, and advocated for more professional development through this program. This created a different culture where teachers and students understood the expectations, and it led to a safer school environment and change in the school culture and climate:

We got back to our focus on The Boy's Town model of behavior management and focused on the Well-Managed Schools protocols. We have consistent language [for] K-6 and our students know that if they get in trouble in the class for disruption, they can't go back until they take certain steps and apologize for their behavior. Before, it was so intense and everyone was on edge. Now, the student and staff know the expectations.

This advocacy ensured that behavior management professional development and trauma-informed care were taking place for all teachers, and her advocacy ensured that all teachers were trained. Having all staff members trained changed the culture and thereby created a more supportive environment for students' social and emotional growth. This organized and structured system provides support for teachers, and participants acknowledged the positive change in their working conditions.

Informal, Relationally Bound Interactions with Teachers May Lead to Retention

As the data below show, leadership is an important factor in explaining why and how teachers chose to remain in the school. The music teacher explained that the building principal was a big reason why she decided to stay. According to her, she has the flexibility to teach in ways that allow her to access her best or highest skills:

I don't know if she knows this, but she's a big reason that I've decided to stay.

Obviously, the kids are great, but I also feel like I have a lot of autonomy to make decisions. You know, I have creative tendencies and I tend to think of a lot of ideas. Our principal actually pokes fun at me for it, and in a nice way. In the past, with other leaders, I would have ideas and all I would hear was "Sorry. I'm sorry, we can't do that." But now, even if I've had a hard day, I'm going to try to think of creative ways that I can

make things better. And sometimes, I need support from my leaders, and it's great to know that they are going to say, "Oh yeah, that's a great idea; let's try it. This is great."

This participant provided an example of a direct link between teacher retention and the collaborative culture that this principal has established. Again, this open communication and focus on innovation can lead to a culture of continual improvement. Another teacher also mentioned this collaborative support and the culture of shared decision-making involving classroom management and student support in her classroom. She felt that without this level of support, she would have left the building due to mounting frustrations:

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for our principal and assistant principal. Like, I would have left my first year if it hadn't been for them. I feel like I can go to them for anything and they aren't going to judge me. I think they see my strengths and weaknesses and they're able to build on that with me and give me constructive feedback, especially with behavior management. I mean, they listen to me and hear my ideas. They always take my input and then we come up with a plan together. But I felt like I really have a voice with them.

This teacher expressed her intent to stay in the school due to the support she receives from the principal and assistant principal. This is another important statement that highlights the importance of shared decision-making and the collaborative culture that has been established.

This relationship building and fostering of trust within the community have contributed to the collaborative culture that the building leaders have established. Relationship building and trust have led to a more collaborative school culture in which teachers work together to solve problems. The participants mentioned that they feel their voices are heard and they now have avenues and structures in place for collaborating with their colleagues to problem solve and collectively identify solutions. The next leadership action explores the systems that the principal

put in place to encourage a collaborative culture and the avenues that she made available to allow teachers to voice their opinions. The analysis shows that the teachers appreciate the implemented systems, and they have had a positive influence on the classroom and school culture.

Leadership Action 3. Developing Systems to Build the School Culture and Collective Commitment

The data analysis shows that the principal shaped a culture of collaboration and shared instructional leadership within the school by creating leadership teams and systems to support teachers in their work. The principal also reestablished a school-wide positive behavior support focus and ensured consistent meeting times for the teams and worked to create a schedule with common planning times that would allow grade-level teams to collaborate. The systems fostered collaboration including the intentional practice of involving teachers and teacher leaders in the decision-making process. This included implementing systems to ensure that teachers would have a voice when the administration makes important decisions. These systems have ensured that the building leadership and teachers are all on the same page, and the weekly meetings and daily informal conversations with the behavior management and leadership teams have opened good lines of communication. Participants mentioned that their voices are heard and that they feel like this collaboration leads to successful outcomes for students. In this section, I will first explore the establishment of leadership teams, then I will explore the principal's renewed focus on teaching positive behavior supports with fidelity, and I will finally highlight the scheduling required to implement these systems.

Leadership Teams Established Collaborative Norms

The analysis reveals the distribution of principal leadership related to teacher support to the faculty as one strategy to increase the availability of interconnected support and promote

collective commitment among the faculty. This collective support had a positive influence on the teachers at Westview Elementary. Leadership related to teacher support was also intertwined with shared instructional leadership. The principal established both the leadership and behavior management teams to engage in leadership focused on the development of a purposeful system for student behavior management and the establishment of trauma-informed care and restorative practices to enable students to maximize their time in the classroom and provide instructional support for teachers. The establishment of these teams was intended to support teachers' work, and teachers met regularly with the teams to discuss challenges and concerns. The leadership team met once per month and the behavior management and Positive Behavior Support teams met twice per week. The principal noted the following:

I have a leadership team that meets once a month and we do discuss instructional and curricular challenges. I'm very open and I also empower people, so I'm open for any discussion. I'll feed a lot of initiatives through the leadership team and then through faculty meetings.

The principal created the leadership team to ensure that teacher leaders in the building understand important district-wide initiatives and then discuss how to introduce these initiatives to the entire faculty.

As the formation and scope of the student behavior management team was an important initial leadership action for this principal, it is important to understand the principal and team's philosophical approach to managing student behavior. Discussions with participants and the principal made it clear that the student behavior management was not directed at punitive measures. Rather, the team approached student misbehavior as a learning opportunity for the students and helped them build the necessary social and emotional skills for success. They began

transitioning from simple student punishment to collaborative faculty problem-solving. The principal used different staff members to help with faculty-wide professional development in this area, specifically focusing on trauma-informed care and restorative practices to give students an opportunity to make amends and return to the classroom quickly.

The social worker, whom the principal placed in leadership roles throughout the building due to her intimate knowledge of students and their families, discussed the structured system in place for the behavior management team meetings:

This year, the meetings have been very scheduled. We have a whole referral form that we use now and teachers fill it out. Our principal and team then assign a case manager. So, either myself, a special education teacher, our family/community liaison, or our PASS [Positive Academic and Social Skills] teacher is assigned as the case manager. So, the case manager's job is to collaborate with the teacher to get data and any type of benchmarks or referrals that the teacher has for the student throughout the year. It's all kept in the document, and then we also fill out the student intervention form by Clay Cook so that it gives us a direction as to what kind of intervention might work for that student. We start an intervention and then we make a schedule to review how it's going. A lot of it has transitioned to dyslexia screeners and academic interventions.

The principal and her designated leaders are involved in each meeting and have current data available for each at-risk student. The structure of having focused conversations and then devising outcome-based solutions has become the norm. Importantly, she mentioned the team's role in identifying interventions and then following up to determine if the interventions have been successful.

The music teacher, who works with K–6 students, highlighted that there is an understanding that if a teacher is asking for support from the behavior management Team, the team knows that they have followed certain steps and now need assistance from an outside source. There is nonjudgmental support and no one identifies a teacher as ineffective; they are simply seeking answers through collaboration with colleagues. She offered an example of this process:

I had one class that was particularly tough, and I immediately talked with our behavior team and told them I had tried X, Y, and Z. You know, there are schools where you never ask for help with behaviors, because if you ask for help from your administrators, they'll peg you as being weak, you know, and that's kind of scary if you feel that way. In this situation, I had four people from our behavior team on the email thread and they know when it's that time, they need to go and help, because they understand the teachers are doing their best and have exhausted all options.

The principal established this procedure for collaborating with colleagues when classroom behavior challenges arise upon her arrival, and all teacher participants mentioned this procedure. Again, participants mentioned the supportive leadership approach that had improved the teachers' working conditions. The analysis shows a definite common theme among participants regarding the support they feel and the clear acknowledgement that there is a proactive plan in place to support behavior management.

Four veteran teachers mentioned the principal's intentional practice of developing a leadership team to build capacity within the building. This created a collaborative environment, even beyond the scope of the leadership team. The principal also understands the importance of allowing time for teachers to work together, which is essential for their shared instructional

leadership. One of the veteran teachers noted that she has worked in various Title I buildings, and this particular Title I building had a different atmosphere due to the principal and faculty collaboration:

I've been through many different Title I schools and I think the piece that feels different right now at Westview than it did in other places I've been has been the collaboration. So, like, amongst the teachers and administration that supports us working together, there's a lot of different pieces to that. The leadership team is one working cog to that. But outside of that, we're always bouncing ideas off each other, you know—what works and what we're struggling with. And our principal makes sure we have time for that. It definitely feels like everyone is on board. I think we've realized that if we don't work together, it doesn't work nearly as well.

This is an important comment coming from one of the teacher leaders in the building, who works with all grade levels. There is now recognition in this building that they are much better as a community of learners supporting one another in their practice.

Scheduling to Promote a Collaborative Culture

Building a school-wide schedule allowing for teacher collaboration was another intentional strategy the principal used to strengthen the collaborative culture of the building and provide teachers with support. The principal made sure that grade levels had common preparation time to give teachers uninterrupted time to collaborate. Teacher participants mentioned that no prior principal had prioritized this type of scheduling. Participants stated that this scheduling and emphasis on collaboration, along with a focus on a school-wide plan for student social and emotional support, began to change the school culture. The principal added the following:

I do have common planning time for all grade levels. I try to assign someone who's experienced in the grade level too, if at all possible, because I feel like they can use their planning time together. And if I see somebody struggling, if I see it, it depends on what they're struggling with. But if it's something that's core curriculum, I send in our instructional coach. I will try to take care of teachers with someone else doing it very well. What I typically do is match them up with somebody who is doing it well.

Participants mentioned that these collaborative sessions enable teachers to support one another, and the principal has identified teacher leaders throughout the building to provide this support.

The instructional coach was in the building throughout the transition to new leadership, and she noted the marked difference in the culture and collaborative nature of the teaching staff at this point. There is a culture of support, and the veteran teachers mentioned the difference they can feel throughout the building, which has promoted a "team" atmosphere:

The work has been hard, but you walk down the hall now and it's just a totally different atmosphere, like with the students, the way students respond and with respect. And the teachers are, I think, feeling more supported. And so, you don't have people just shutting their doors because they're ready to crack, you know, like we're more of a team.

It is important to note that not only has there been a change in students' interactions with staff, but this change has also led to the teachers feeling a greater level of support with their practice. The participants mentioned that this change in working conditions fostered a more collaborative culture within the building and working in isolation is no longer the norm. They seek support from colleagues and leaders on the behavior management team and there is a clear set of expectations that has received emphasis through professional development and teacher modeling based on mentor teacher/behavior management.

Developing a System of Shared Instructional Leadership Leads to Teacher Commitment

In this school, changing the culture meant ensuring that teachers could participate in shared decision-making. They can exercise professional judgment and they have systems in place to ensure the sharing of data and follow-up from designated teacher leaders. In this case, the change in culture has helped them develop a sense of shared accountability and a greater level of commitment to the school's mission.

The data analysis indicates that the staff members are widely engaged in the school's decision-making process and feel that the administration considers their opinions about the school. This happens in leadership meetings, grade-level meetings, and daily informal interactions with the principal. All teacher participants mentioned their interactions with the principal, and one gave an example of how the principal empowers teachers to offer collaborative advice and possible support for issues throughout the building. This questioning of practice and seeking advice can lead to a culture of continual improvement:

I'm comfortable being honest with our principal, and she's been very helpful. Actually, sometimes, they (principal and assistant principal) come to us if they have questions and they know we have some area of expertise. They include us in the process, and we work together as a team.

Participants mentioned that the principal is not afraid to ask for advice and knows the teacher leaders in the building that she will need to include in the process when issues arise. This is an example of the mutual respect that the faculty receives and the collaborative approach that takes place between the faculty and building principal. The principal listens to teachers and includes them in the process, rather than adopting a top-down approach. Another participant gave an example of these informal interactions:

It's a nice balance in that I feel very comfortable to say what I feel, and I also know that our principal and I aren't always going to agree. Ultimately, I know, in the end, this is her baby, like she's the captain of the ship and I respect her for it. So, when she does say "No, I don't think we can do that," I at least know that she's thought of everything and I know she heard my words.

This mutual respect and collaborative environment allow teachers to give feedback if things are not working and need adjusting. Knowing that the building principal hears teachers is important to them because they receive support in specific, identified areas based on their discussions with the principal. These open lines of communication have led to more positive working conditions for the teachers.

The principal and assistant principal have appreciated this collaborative support as well, and they have valued the feedback from teacher leaders throughout the building to help guide their approach to student improvement. They recognize and understand the importance of continuing to strive for improvement throughout the building, including in their own leadership practices. The instructional coach, who is part of the building leadership team, highlighted the principal's growth mindset and focus on continual improvement:

Also, they're great at making sure that they have room for improvement, too. So, they'll ask the leadership team questions about themselves, like, what is it that we're not doing? What are the pieces missing? Why are we still struggling with this issue or that issue? There's been a lot of conversations [with] the leadership team as a committee. Now, the teachers are involved in some of the decision-making and idea forming. That wasn't happening before.

The connection between what was happening with previous principal leadership and the current leadership was evident throughout the discussions with participants, and they all noted the stark difference in the culture of the building and the fact that the administration now treats them like professional educators whose voices matter when discussing the curriculum, instruction, and student behavior management. These important discussions and collaboration helped the principal recognize important HR needs throughout the building. Since identifying the most important needs, the principal has relentlessly advocated for support in these areas.

Leadership Action 4. Advocating for the School's Unique, Community-Based Needs

The principal advocated for satisfying specific needs to support the teachers' working conditions in multiple ways. She contacted the central office and made sure they knew that there was a need for additional professional development in specific areas, helped with grants and moved funding around to sustain the family and community liaison position, and wrote a proposal that she presented to the superintendent for an additional position to support students with the highest needs with additional one-on-one and small-group social skills support. She also advocated for additional support from the speech-language pathologist, which she deemed important for students' language acquisition. She advocated for specific faculty members because she felt they were a good fit for their community. She also had repeated conversations with the superintendent to make sure she knew how Westview was using additional personnel. This advocacy supported the building culture and students' academic and social-emotional support, and ultimately, these supports possibly improved teacher retention at Westview Elementary.

Advocating for Specific Staffing Positions

In addition to professional development and programming to support all teachers and the principal and assistant principal, the analysis identifies advocacy as a central component of hiring, employee fit, and the creation of staff positions to support teachers with students who need additional support the most. The principal advocated for the creation of two additional positions—one to strengthen family and community partnerships and another to support students with the highest needs. One position was part of a Community in School grant opportunity, which helped pay for the family/community liaison position at Westview. The principal discussed her work with the superintendent to ensure that funding would continue to be available for this position:

It's a nonprofit organization, and it's nationwide. It's called Communities in Schools. We ended up transitioning the family and community engagement coordinator position into the Communities in Schools grant-funded position. It was beneficial for the district too, because if our district paid for one position, they would pay for the other, so they were able to add a community and school person at another school in our district now too.

This was important because the principal saw the benefit of having someone focused on developing relationships between the school and community, and she worked with the superintendent to keep the position funded at Westview.

The principal created the other position and then went to the superintendent and advocated for this additional level of support. She felt that besides the support teachers were receiving in the classroom, there was a top-tier “at-risk” group of students in need of intense social skills and academic support. She then designated the Positive Academic and Social Skills

(PASS) position and worked hard to find a master teacher to fill this role. She talked about her advocacy for this position and how she felt it would support their at-risk students:

We felt like we were really struggling with a handful of kids—maybe 10–20—that just need extra support and weren't getting it. So, I put together a proposal and took it to our superintendent a couple of years ago. I created this class called a PASS class as additional positive academic and social skills support, and I got to hire someone for that teaching position. So, part of the time they were one-on-one, but it's another human, another person, teaching how the brain functions, how it works when they're angry, and how to handle it appropriately. It's a great position, and we hired a veteran teacher (and former principal) for this position.

The participants mentioned the support they have received from this additional level of assistance. The social-emotional learning piece has been important in this community, and the principal was seeking out additional support in this area. The principal recognized that there was still a top-tier group of students that were not receiving sufficient support and created a proposal to bring her concerns and request to the superintendent.

The principal knew exactly whom she wanted to fill these important roles, and she recruited these individuals to add this additional level of professional experience and support to her faculty. She highlighted her perspective on filling the Communities in Schools position:

So now, we have the one position as communities and schools/family and community engagement. It's a good position, and we found a great fit in that position. He was a diverse candidate, and he was really good about keeping the community groups involved. Just having someone who looks like our students, a male role model, it's been a huge asset.

The principal knew the type of person she was looking for in the interview process for this position, and she was able to fill the position with a candidate that she felt would be able to connect with the Westview community.

She also advocated for the teacher to who would fill the PASS position once she was able to create this additional role for Westview, and she mentioned her advocacy for a full-time speech-language pathologist to support students. She highlighted this intentional advocacy and hiring practice:

So, this was a good position, so I hired a veteran educator for this position. She was at another high-need, low-income school community and she was doing all the discipline, and she ended up doing a lot of therapeutical work, a lot of things. She was a formal principal and she's a superstar.

I have a speech teacher that is phenomenal. There is now more support because I asked for it. I had to share her with another school before, and it was hard. Now, she's here full-time and organizes our whole child team, takes the notes, sets up who we're meeting with next time. Now, we also have a lot of push in speech services in Grades 1 and 2, and she can do that because she's here all the time.

Both of these quotes offer great examples of the principal's advocacy for not only specific teachers to hire but also additional positions to add support where it was needed. In this case, the speech teacher was able to take on a lead role in one of the building leadership teams and also provide additional speech support in the primary classrooms.

The principal focused on onboarding and screening potential candidates to make sure they were a good fit and were well-prepared for the challenges at Westview. She mentioned the importance of having teachers that recognize and embrace some of the unique challenges of

working in a school with 90% of the student population on free/reduced lunch, and she made sure to give potential teaching candidates a clear picture of the community. She was intentional with the hiring process, and she worked hard to fill open positions with candidates that could support the students' diverse needs.

So, you think about that (the staff she now has in important positions in the building). We have me and my assistant (both veteran principals), we have the behavior specialist, the family community liaison; we have the PASS teacher. I mean, these are power players, and then we have a speech teacher and social worker that's off the charts. They're amazingly good, and then my instructional coach is phenomenal. And our school psychologist is amazing. She is on our behavior management team and she's been instrumental in helping us put together positive reinforcement.

The principal worked hard to put experienced educators in key positions, and then she gave them leadership roles on the important teams she had established, such as the behavior management team, leadership team, and whole-child support team. Each of these teams meets on designated days and all team members interact with the faculty throughout the week. The principal mentioned that her advocacy for these key staff members provided much-needed support to students and staff.

It is important for a principal to continually advocate for the staffing needs of the building and make sure that others in the community recognize and understand how each teacher and support staff position influences the school culture. The Westview principal has been continually looking toward the future and advocating for the teaching positions that she has secured over the last few years. She noted that she feels fortunate that her advocacy has paid off, and they have many high-quality professionals available, who are being put to good use. She

noted that she was nervous because a new superintendent is coming into the district, and she was going to make sure that she advocated for all the positions they have in place that helped change the school culture and working conditions. As she began discussing her upcoming visit with the new superintendent, she said the following:

If he starts looking at places to cut money and he's here tomorrow and he sees this place running like this smooth machine, he might think, "Well, they don't need all that help over there," and start taking stuff away. I'm realizing I have to tell him that things are the way they are here right now because of the support. So, I think that I'm going to point that out to him: "Yes, we are heavily staffed, but let me tell you why..."

This highlighted her thought process regarding staffing. She realizes that advocating for support and then justifying this support will always be an important responsibility for her at Westview. Although the school now has a collaborative culture and the building is running smoothly, she still recognizes the ongoing advocacy needed to continue this level of support.

Chapter 5.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify leadership actions that building principals take to influence working conditions in their schools in an effort to retain effective classroom teachers. The study focused on one school principal and members of the school team in a high-need, low-income school community. The analysis indicates that principal leadership actions can influence teachers' working conditions in a high-need, low-income school community. This finding aligns with previous research showing that many teachers leave schools due to malleable conditions rather than due to student demographics (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2011; Viano et al., 2020). The analysis also points to leadership actions that support improving the building climate and staff culture as particularly important areas of leadership on which principals should focus. Indeed, this finding closely aligns with prior research. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that when principals developed trust within the community, it also had an influence on how teachers related to one another, to students, and to the community at large. The analysis indeed underscores the importance of developing strong connections to the surrounding community, particularly with parents and families. In addition to establishing trust and building relationships within the community, the findings highlight the importance of developing systems that fuel collaboration in the school. Urick (2016) observed that shared instructional leadership has the greatest effect on student achievement and may also influence teacher retention. In the present study, the building principal's leadership focused on creating teams to systematically support students' social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs. These leadership actions demonstrate that human resource activities may not just be managerial in nature but also have transformational qualities that produce widespread changes in the school.

Research has suggested that there can be positive spillover effects when effective teachers collaborate with colleagues (Sun et al., 2017). Finally, an important leadership action was advocating for building needs, particularly new staff who could address specific challenges or provide targeted support for students, families, and teachers. In sum, all the above actions provided support for the teachers at Westview Elementary and ultimately improved their working conditions over time.

Principals Are Well Positioned to Develop and Retain Human Capital

Miller et al. (2020) noted that a principal's intimate knowledge of the school and the teachers' specific needs can lead to teacher retention. The analysis suggests that Westview's principal worked hard to identify the school's specific needs and provide support to teachers in these areas. This aligns with prior research (Miller et al., 2020) and the analysis suggests that her knowledge of building-specific needs has supported teacher retention. Her initial actions of reaching out to the community and helping the teachers bridge the home-school gap that the previous leadership had created proven to be effective. The connections that formed between teachers, parents, and students ultimately supported the teachers' work in their classrooms. As Allensworth et al. (2009) stated, the development of a collaborative culture can lead to a stable school community. In the end, the trust built within the community and this principal's intimate knowledge of the school's needs became the foundation on which the other initiatives began to thrive. This also aligns with Grissom's (2001) research, which suggested that a principal can have an influence on interpersonal elements, such as relationship building and trust. The daily interpersonal support and building-specific initiatives that the teacher participants appreciated mostly came from the building principal and her designated leadership teams' knowledge of the school community. The analysis suggests that the principal based her decisions on interactions

with the teachers within the school context, which Urick (2016) identified as essential for strengthening teachers' working conditions. The principal was able to accomplish this at Westview Elementary by working with leadership teams and developing systems to identify and support the school's greatest areas of need. The principal focused on building systems that would improve the climate and overall working conditions, and as Ingersoll (2004) argued, such systems are essential to foster a stable school environment with high teacher retention.

Ultimately, after understanding the building-specific needs, the principal was able to recruit experienced educators to take on lead roles in her building, such as the family/community liaison and PASS teacher, who supported students with the highest social, emotional, and academic needs. She also ensured that the behavior specialist, school social worker, and school psychologist took on lead roles on the leadership and behavior management teams. As Miller et al. (2020) noted, a feeling of connection to support staff and the greater school mission can lead to teachers to stay in a particular school. We also know that these support systems are especially helpful for new teachers (Goldhaber et al., 2020), and the principal at Westview was initially tasked with hiring 11 teachers during her first year.

Teachers Appreciate Principal Support

The analysis suggests that the principal at Westview was intent on providing support for the teachers, and she recognized that this support would improve their working conditions. Becker and Grob's (2021) analysis of a considerable body of research revealed a correlation between teacher retention, school leadership, and specifically, principal support. In the case under study, this increased support, and a change in working conditions helped in retaining effective teachers and improving the human capital in the Westview community. This improved staff retention and staff stabilization were evident in the district's hiring data. The leadership

action of developing systems of collaborative support was possibly a contributing factor to Westview's teacher retention. The newly established collaborative culture has had a direct and positive impact on working conditions. The analysis aligns with Allensworth et al.'s (2009) finding that this approach can lead to a stable school community. Teachers at Westview mentioned the collaboration that began to transpire, and this aligns with previous research noting that this can have a positive impact on instruction, teacher commitment, and retention (Guarino, 2006; Ingersoll, 2007; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). As Ladd (2011) learned, teacher empowerment and professional development are important to teachers can have a positive impact on working conditions. The principal ensured that teacher leaders had opportunities to lead and make decisions concerning instruction and student classroom management, and she also provided whole staff training in the areas she felt needed the most support. These elements were evident in the research at Westview, and the teacher participants discussed their positive interactions and support they felt from their principal and leadership teams. Urick (2016) contended that teacher retention is directly linked to the way teachers perceive their current environment. The teacher participants in this research shared their positive perspectives on their current principal's leadership, and it may have been a contributing factor to the high teacher retention rate during the current principal's tenure. Many teachers noted that their voice was heard, and that the principal was willing to listen to their concerns and take actions to support their work. This substantiates the finding of previous research that teachers who feel that their voice is heard and that they are part of the decision-making process are more likely to stay in their job (Urick, 2016).

Where Instructional Leadership and Human Resource Management Intersect

This research suggests that HRM at the building level may differ from HRM in other parts of education. Indeed, contemporary discussions of HRM reflect this point: “As the chief human capital managers in their schools, principals are uniquely positioned to pursue differential retention strategies” (Gissom & Bartanen, 2019, p. 515). The strategies that Westview’s principal employed looked different. They did not, for example, focus solely on hiring, evaluation, or professional learning but instead focused on relationship building, engagement with the school’s parent community, and improved student behavior. These actions contributed to improving the working conditions at the building. What this suggests is that a principal’s HRM might be informal and relationally bound, as Milanowski and Kimball (2010) also noted in their research. This means that leadership actions may not be situated within formal staffing policies or processes but instead focused on the development of strong educational teams in buildings that can serve the needs of students. We know from previous research that principals can have a direct influence on the teachers’ working conditions (Simon & Johnson, 2013). As Grissom and Bartanen (2019) highlighted, such improvements in working conditions and teacher satisfaction reduce the likelihood that teachers will leave, and this was evident in the data from Westview.

Principal HRM intersects and overlaps with the principal’s role as the building’s instructional leader. This supports Boyce and Bower’s (2016) research on instructional leadership and HRM, and in the case of Westview Elementary, a positive trend was evident in teacher retention over time. Instructional leadership nested within a school community supports and becomes intertwined with HRM. Transformation leadership and shared instructional leadership actions support HRM actions at the building level. As an example, the principal at Westview and teacher participants mentioned the nonstressful and supportive measures the principal took in evaluating teacher performance and the informal check-ins that occurred. They

mentioned the sandwich approach that she took: Acknowledging good instructional methods that she was observing, then giving a few suggestions for possible growth, and then ending with another positive comment. This coaching and evaluating improved teacher skills but also helped develop relationships and trust between the principal and teachers. In their meta-narrative review of the literature on instructional leadership, Boyce and Bowers (2018) provided an integrated framework showing how HRM and instructional leadership relate, and they ultimately agreed that this can lead to teacher retention.

My research at Westview Elementary aligns with Grissom and Loeb's (2011) work and their conception of school leadership that combines the principal's understanding of the instructional needs of the school with the ability to focus resources where they are needed, hire effective teachers, and keep the school operating smoothly. My research on the leadership actions of the principal at Westview takes this notion one step further by showing how transformational and shared instructional leadership actions and managerial tasks intersect and work together to support teachers. It is true that there is a false dichotomy between managerial tasks and instructional leadership; both are needed for a school to run efficiently while supporting teacher growth and retention. The analysis of data from Westview also reveals that the principal leaned heavily on instructional leadership support and student support while integrating managerial tasks, such as resource allocation, and hiring practices. The missing piece from this conception of principal leadership that was a strong contributing factor to Westview's change of climate and culture was the relationship building with parents/guardians, teachers, and students that supported the instructional leadership actions at Westview. The trust that these stakeholders established was the foundation for all other leadership actions in this particular school.

Establishing Systems of Support for Teachers

Finally, the principal's leadership actions targeted establishing a collaborative culture and developing systems to build capacity throughout the building, which ultimately fostered strong bonds between the teachers. This confirms that the use of support teams and having teacher leaders throughout the building can change the working conditions for teachers, as Urick (2016) and Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) also noted. These efforts also extended the reach of the building principal and this, in turn, promoted a feeling of trust between the teachers and the principal, which Hughes et al. (2015) and Hallam et al. (2015) identified as a crucial element in a stable school community. The analysis aligns with Becker and Grob's (2021) research that suggested a feeling of trust can influence the school climate, which leads to teacher satisfaction and retention. In Westview's case, this was also evident in teacher interviews and the data on teacher turnover during this principal's tenure.

The climate had become so stressful and chaotic under the previous leadership that many teachers began working in isolation and did not seek out support from colleagues. When the new leader began her tenure, she emphasized systems to support teachers with classroom management and instructional challenges, and these systems changed the way teachers interacted with each other and the building principal to improve their practice. This aligns with Darling-Hammond's (2010) research finding that structures of support help retain teachers. It also confirms Kukla-Acevedo's (2009) finding that administrative support, especially regarding student behavior management, had a statistically significant direct relation to teacher turnover. This was evident in this study's data, as participants mentioned their new approach to working with a team when student behavior and classroom management challenges arose and the fact that teacher retention had increased during this principal's tenure. Teachers, especially new teachers,

began to perceive that they were more successful in the classroom, and as Grissom and Bartanen (2019) noted, effective teachers are more likely to stay in their school. At Westview, having a network of teacher leaders throughout the school providing support for all teachers could have been one of the contributing factors that helped build the capacity for change in working conditions and teacher retention. Ultimately, the HRM in this particular school moved beyond the managerial actions of the principal. This study contributes to the literature by illuminating how HR leadership is not just managerial in nature but is in fact transformational and shared.

Limitations of the Study

This research was limited to one quasi-urban school with a purposeful sample of elementary teachers. This provides a relatively narrow representation, making it impossible to generalize the information and data collected. By doing an in-depth investigation of only one school in this study, I was making the assumption that this principal's leadership actions have been different from those of her predecessors and that she has been doing something unique. Qualitative research with a larger sample size could strengthen the data obtained using qualitative research tools. There is also a need for more studies in different school settings. At best, this study provides evidence that teachers appreciated the leadership actions that this principal used to influence their working conditions, and these leadership actions, in turn, led to higher teacher retention rates during this principal's tenure.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides opportunities for further leadership development as well as potential research. Based on the overall findings and limitations of this study, the following recommendations could provide further insight on principal leadership actions that may lead to the retention of effective teachers. Several areas for future research on targeted high-need, low-

income demographics could continue to add to the findings of this study. Recommendations for further research are as follows:

1. More research is needed on how instructional leadership interacts with HRM in schools. It will be beneficial to hear the stories and experiences of teachers and principals.
2. Further research is needed to identify leadership practices within a specific school with a specific group of teachers.
3. More research is also needed to expand our understanding of the working conditions that matter the most to teachers.
4. Future research should include differences between what principals and teachers think matters.
5. More research is required to clarify the many dimensions of HRM in schools.
6. There must be further research on systems that support capacity-building through shared instructional leadership.

Finally, from a practical lens, principals can begin to make progress on improved teacher working conditions by integrating both their managerial activities and their broader efforts to reform the school as an organization. Transformational actions will enable successful outcomes for the entire organization through establishing a shared vision, beliefs, and building a community for all stakeholders. Shared instructional leadership will enable teachers to have an influence on decision-making, which increases ownership and commitment to the work. Both types of leadership actions are known to create a more positive working environment, which can lead to the retention of effective teachers.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol – Teacher

Introduction

My name is Chris Finley, and I am conducting a study that is focused on building principal human resource leadership actions and practices and the possible relationship and influence they may have on the retention of an effective teaching staff.

In this interview, I am going to ask you about leadership actions and practices that may influence the working conditions at this school. As we talk, I'd like you to consider the school culture and factors that may support you in your work as a teacher in this building.

This interview should take no more than 60 minutes. With your permission, I will record the interview. Do I have your permission to begin recording?

Questions for Interview #1

I will present the following questions to participants in their first interview. These are illustrative prompts and I may modify given the semi-structured nature of the interview.

1. Tell me a little about yourself as an educator, including your professional experience as a teacher in this building.

Probes

- How many years have you worked in education?
 - How many years have worked in this school?
 - Where did you complete your initial training as a classroom teacher?
2. What were some of the factors that motivated you to apply for a position in this school district?
 - What appealed to you about working in this school district?

- Why did you feel this school district was a good fit for you professionally?
 - Did anyone specifically recruit you or encourage you to apply?
3. What was your experience of the hiring process in this district?
- How did the principal and the hiring committee work with you throughout the hiring process?
 - How were the needs of students in the school and/or professional expectations for working here presented to you?
 - What was your initial understanding of the school's instructional program?
4. How were you supported as a new member of the school staff?
- Were you assigned a mentor when you started your tenure at this school? Would you describe this process during your first two years in the building?
 - Did you work with other teachers in your grade-level team or other members of your professional learning community? If so, can you give some examples of how this collaboration supported you?
 - Did you have any opportunities to observe other teachers in the building or district? If so, can you please tell me what you learned and/or noted in these observations that influenced your understanding of teaching expectations?
5. What type of professional development have you participated in since joining the staff at this school?
- Can you explain how this professional development informed your instructional practice?
 - Can you explain how this professional development informed your understanding of student behavior management?

- Can you explain how this professional development involved your colleagues at this school?
6. How do the building principal and other members of the school leadership team support your instructional practice?
- What feedback do you receive from your principal?
 - How frequently is this feedback provided to you?
 - Which aspects of the feedback are most helpful?
7. Finally, I'm going to ask you a few questions about leadership.
- How has the principal supported you as a classroom teacher in this school?
 - What, if anything, has the principal done to help you improve your teaching?
 - What, if anything, has the principal done to impede or prevent your improvement?
 - How has this influenced your thinking about staying in the school, if at all?
 - What recommendations do you have for teachers and principals working in high-need, low-income school communities?
 - Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions for Interview #2

I will present the following questions to participants in their second interview. These are illustrative prompts that I may modify given the semi-structured nature of the interview.

8. Can you tell me about the challenges you have encountered in working with a high-need, low-income student population?

Probe

- What support does the principal provide to you to help you work with a high-need, low-income student population?

9. Reflecting on your experience of the hiring process, what specific aspects of the community were NOT discussed with you during the hiring process?
- What do you wish you would have known then that you know now?
 - Can you explain how you were prepared or unprepared for this student population?
 - Can you explain your understanding of the school's curricular focus and instructional methods used when you first started at this school? How are the instructional methods and curricular focus different at this school than in other school communities with fewer high-poverty students?
10. What type of collaborative grade-level or special area support did you receive, if any?
- Describe how you work with your colleagues in your building.
11. What type of professional development have you been involved in at this school that is specific to working with a high-need, low-income student population?
- Can you explain how this professional development informed your instructional practice?
 - Can you explain how this professional development informed your understanding of student behavior management?
 - Can you explain how this professional development involved your colleagues at this school?
 - How would you describe the building leadership supervision and support of your instructional practice with a lens on supporting a high-need, low-income student population?
 - What feedback do you receive from your principal?
 - How frequently is this feedback provided to you?

- Which aspects of the feedback are most helpful?
12. What are you hearing from teachers about the way the principal (or other administrators) are supporting them in their classes? Example: behavior management, instruction, curriculum, etc.
13. Finally, I'm going to ask you a few questions about leadership and working in a high-need, low-income school community.
- What would you say is the principal's role in supporting classroom management and instruction?
 - What recommendations do you have for leadership programs that are preparing principals to work with high-need, low-income school communities?
 - After reflecting on the questions from the first and second interviews, is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Protocol – Principal

Introduction

My name is Chris Finley and I am conducting a study that is focused on building principal human resource leadership actions and practices and the possible relationship and influence they may have on the retention of an effective teaching staff.

In this interview, I am going to ask you about leadership actions and practices that may influence the working conditions at this school. As we talk, I'd like you to consider the school culture and factors that may support your teachers as they work in this school.

This interview should take no more than 60 minutes. With your permission, I will record the interview. Do I have your permission to begin recording?

Questions for Interview #1

I will present the following questions to participants in their first interview. These are illustrative prompts that I may modify given the semi-structured nature of the interview.

1. Tell me a little about yourself as an educator, including your professional experience as a leader in this building.
 - How long have you been involved in education?
 - How many years have you been at this school?
 - What initially influenced you to come to this school?
 - What contributed to your decision to stay?
2. What is your process for hiring classroom teachers for vacant teaching positions?
 - How do you describe the student population to candidates for teaching positions (i.e., what do you accentuate or not)?
 - How do you give potential candidates a good understanding of the school's curricular focus and instructional methods used?
 - What challenges and/or opportunities of working in this school do you communicate to the candidates?
3. After new teachers are hired in your school, is there an intentional induction process and do you assign a mentor when a teacher starts their tenure at this school? Would you describe this process during a teacher's first two years in the building?
 - Do you schedule opportunities for teachers to work with veteran or "mentor" teachers and other teachers in their grade-level team? Can you give examples?
 - Can you explain any opportunities that novice teachers have to observe other teachers in the building or district?

4. What professional development do your teachers participate in as members of the school staff?
 - How, if at all, is professional development differentiated on the basis of the teacher's experience or needs?
 - How have you observed the professional development informing their instructional practice?
 - How have you observed the professional development informing their understanding of student behavior management?
5. How would you describe your leadership supervision and support of the teachers' instructional practice?
 - What feedback do you regularly give to your teachers regarding their classroom instruction or student behavior management?
 - How frequently is this feedback provided to novice teachers?
 - How is your feedback differentiated, if at all?
 - What feedback do you believe teachers find most helpful?
6. What opportunities exist for teachers to work with their colleagues in the school building?
 - How, if at all, are teachers invited to make or shape instructional decisions in the school?
 - How, if at all, are teachers empowered to lead professional learning and/or direct school-wide conversations?
 - What feedback do you (or your leadership) often consider directly from your classroom teachers?

7. Do you receive feedback regarding the types of supports that teachers feel they need in the classroom? If so, can you give an example?
8. Finally, I'm going to ask you a few questions about leadership.
 - What would you say is your role in supporting classroom management and instruction?
 - What recommendations do you have for principals working with high-need, low-income school communities?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions for Interview #2

I will present the following questions to participants in their second interview. These are illustrative prompts that I may modify given the semi-structured nature of the interview.

10. Do you perceive that there are unique challenges in this school related to high-poverty that present challenges for this teaching staff? Also, are there aspects that inspire you and your staff?
 - How have you addressed these challenges?
 - How have you tried to provide inspiration for your staff?
 - What initially influenced you to come to this school?
 - What contributed to your decision to stay?
11. Does working in this school community impact the hiring process, and how do you address potential challenges?
 - What is the hiring process like when you have vacant positions?
 - Can you describe how you give potential candidates a good understanding of the student population they will be working with at this school?

- Are other faculty members included in the hiring process and, if so, in what capacity?
- How do you give potential candidates a good understanding of the school's curricular focus and the instructional methods used?

12. After new teachers are hired in your school, is there an intentional induction process and do you assign a mentor when a teacher starts their tenure at this school? Can you describe this process?

- How is consideration given for additional training and support for potential academic and behavioral challenges?
- Will you describe this process during a teacher's first two years in the building?
- Do you schedule opportunities for teachers to work with a mentor teacher and other teachers in their grade-level team? Can you give examples?
- Can you explain any opportunities that novice teachers have to observe other teachers in the building or district?

13. Is the professional development specific to the unique needs of your school community, and how is the professional development selected? Is there professional development available for teachers who haven't worked in a high-need, low-income school community, and can you describe what this professional development entails?

- Can you explain how this professional development informs their instructional practice?
- Can you explain how this professional development informs their understanding of student behavior management?
- Can you explain how this professional development involves all teachers at this school?

14. How would you describe your relationships with families and students within the community?

- What feedback, if any, do you give to your teachers regarding family support systems?
- How frequently is this feedback provided to novice teachers?
- Which aspects of the community relationship building process do you feel are most helpful?

15. Describe how your teachers lead instructional and curricular decisions.

- Can you give examples of times your teachers have been given opportunities to influence the school's instructional decisions and behavior management strategies?
- Can you give examples of times teachers have led the learning at faculty meetings?
- Can you give examples of feedback and/or suggestions that you have considered from your teachers?
- Do you receive feedback regarding the types of supports that teachers feel they need in the classroom? If so, can you give an example?

16. Finally, I'm going to ask you a few questions about leadership.

- What would you say is the principal's role in supporting classroom management and instruction in a high-need, low-income school community?
- What recommendations or advice do you have for principals working with high-need, low-income school communities?

17. After reflecting on our interviews, is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Title: Studying Effective Teacher Retention in a High-Need, Low-Income School

Community: Exploring Building Leadership Actions and Practices

Observation Guide

Description of the Observational Approach

I will conduct observations with the principal using a “walk-about” approach.

Observations will occur at different times of the school day as the principal moves throughout the building, interacting with staff and discussing their community. The observations will seek to corroborate what teachers and principals describe in their semi-structured interviews and what I have identified in documents. During observations, I will record my observations on a laptop computer. I will save the notes electronically and upload them to MaxQDA, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package. The stored files will not make reference to individual participants; I will replace participant names with generic identifiers (e.g., classroom teacher, special area teacher, principal, etc.).

It is important to note that due to the current global COVID-19 pandemic, in-person observation may not be permitted at the research site. In the event that the school is still operating in an online format, I will attempt to be added as an observer during online Microsoft Teams collaboration sessions with the building principal and faculty.

Classroom/Building Observations

The purpose of our “walk-about” observations is to document the interactions between the principal and the faculty and students. I will listen to the principal discuss the school setting and note any important human resource actions that the principal notes. I will also observe the

relationships and discussions that the principal has with teachers and students. I will observe and note actions that influence the teachers' working conditions.

Specific data points may include the following:

- Discussions of best practices in strategic human resource management
- Discussions of approaches to support teachers in serving students with higher-than-usual needs

Appendix C

Document Collection Protocol

To: Research Participant

From: Chris Finley

Doctoral Candidate Student at Indiana University

Subj: Documents Requested for Research Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how a principal's strategic human resource leadership actions at a high-need, low-income school community may influence working conditions and the retention of effective teachers. I am requesting that you provide copies of the following documents to assist me with my research. The documentation you provide should not contain identifiable information. The information will be stored on a secure server hosted by Indiana University.

The types of documents to be collected are derived from human resource staffing information over the last four years in this district and building specific student academic and behavioral data:

- Collection of documentation of teachers' years of experience and years of experience within the current school
- Collection of documentation of teachers' years of experience in Title I and non-Title I schools within this district (from 14 elementary schools)
- Collection of professional learning community documentation
- Professional development opportunities within school

- Student demographic data
- Student achievement data over the last four years
- Student behavioral data over the last four years
- Interview protocols or questions from the building principal
- Teacher induction and/or mentoring documentation
- Rubrics used during classroom observations and feedback protocol
- Examples of teacher recruitment documents
- Teacher induction and/or mentoring documents

The information can be sent as a PDF document to Chris Finley via email or U.S. Postal mail. His contact information is provided below.

Chris Finley

2500 E. Bradford Ct.

Bloomington, IN 47401

(812) 327-3892

cfinley@mccsc.edu

I sincerely appreciate your assistance with this research study. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Chris Finley.

Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Indiana University, and I am currently working on my dissertation research. My qualitative case study seeks to identify how school principals in high-need, low-income school settings use their role as the building's instructional leader to create working conditions that support teacher retention. To complete this study, I am seeking input from teachers and the administration team at this school.

I identified you as a potential participant because of your tenure at this school. I would like to conduct an interview with you for up to 60 minutes. I may request an additional follow-up conversation with you if clarification is needed.

I have attached additional information that explains your rights as a research participant. If you are interested in participating in this study, please let me know and provide a few times that might work for you to complete this interview. Your input will be valuable to this study and I greatly appreciate your time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Finley

Principal, Childs Elementary School

Indiana University Bloomington Doctoral Candidate Student

Appendix F**Participant Consent**

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix G

Indiana University Informed Consent Statement for Research

A Qualitative Study on Building Leadership Actions and Practices that Influence Effective Teacher Retention in a High-Need, Low-Income School Community

IRB Protocol Number: 10083

About this Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The goal of this research is to answer important questions regarding principal leadership actions and practices and their relationship to teacher working conditions, and the findings might help change, improve, or inform the way we do things in the future.

This consent form will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form, and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

Taking Part in this Study Is Voluntary

You may choose not to take part in the study or may choose to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to leave the study later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your relationship with school.

Why Is this Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to understand a building principal's strategic human resource actions and practices that may influence working conditions and the retention of effective teachers.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are a faculty member at a school in a high-need, low-income school community.

The study is being conducted by Chris Finley, the current principal at Childs Elementary School and doctoral candidate at Indiana University.

How Many People Will Take Part?

If you agree to participate, you will be one of up to 13 participants in this study.

What Will Happen During the Study?

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:

- Participate in one semi-structured interview lasting up to 60 minutes that will be conducted via Zoom and recorded with your permission.
- Review drafts of the completed research to provide feedback, guidance, and/or verification that the researcher has correctly represented your perspectives in the data.

What Are the Risks of Taking Part in the Study?

While participating in the study, you are not expected to experience any significant risks. However, in very rare cases, a participant in a qualitative research study may experience nervousness, agitation, or anxiety while being interviewed by the researcher or observed in their professional work setting. If this should occur, please tell the researcher that you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer a particular question. You are not required to participate in any aspect of this research that makes you feel uncomfortable.

What Are the Potential Benefits of Taking Part in the Study?

We don't expect you to receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but we hope to learn things that will help educational leadership and school communities in the future.

Will I Receive My Results?

The results from this research study may appear in published research articles, book chapters, books, and other scholarly outlets. In addition, you may request a copy of your completed interview transcript.

How Will My Information Be Protected?

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. No information that could identify you will be shared in publications about this study.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and their research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and state or federal agencies that may need to access the research records (as allowed by law).

Will My Information Be Used for Research in the Future?

Information collected from you for this study may be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers for future research. If this happens, information that could identify you will be removed before any information is shared. Since identifying information will be removed, we will not ask for your additional consent.

Will I Be Paid for Participating?

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

Will It Cost Me Anything to Participate?

There is no cost to you for taking part in this study.

Who Will Pay for My Treatment if I Am Injured?

In the event of physical injury resulting from your participation in this study, necessary medical treatment will be provided to you and billed as part of your medical expenses. Costs not

covered by your health care insurer will be your responsibility. Also, it is your responsibility to determine the extent of your health care coverage. There is no program in place for other monetary compensation for such injuries. However, you are not giving up any legal rights or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are participating in research that is not conducted at a medical facility, you will be responsible for seeking medical care and for the expenses associated with any care received.

Who Should I Call with Questions or Problems?

For questions about the study, contact the researcher, Chris Finley, at (812) 330-7756. After business hours, email the researcher at cfinley@mccsc.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about the research study, or to obtain information or offer input, please contact the IU Human Subjects Office at 800-696-2949 or at irb@iu.edu.

Can I Withdraw from the Study?

If you decide to participate in this study, you can change your mind and decide to leave the study at any time in the future. The study team will help you withdraw from the study safely. If you decide to withdraw, please email the researcher at cfinley@mccsc.edu.

Appendix H

Document Collection Guide

I will collect the following documents throughout the duration of the research study. These documents will be used to corroborate participants' experiences of factors that may influence effective teacher working conditions and retention. I will store all documents on a secure file server hosted by Indiana University, and I will remove any personal identifiable information prior to storing the data.

Examples of documents to be collected:

- Collection of documentation of teachers' years of experience and years of experience within the current school
- Collection of documentation of teachers' years of experience in Title I and non-Title I schools within this district (from 14 elementary schools)
- Collection of professional learning community documentation
- Professional development opportunities within school
- Student demographic data
- Student achievement data over the last four years
- Student behavioral data over the last four years
- Interview protocols or questions from the building principal
- Teacher induction and/or mentoring documentation
- Rubrics used during classroom observations and feedback protocol
- Examples of teacher recruitment documents
- Teacher induction and/or mentoring documents

CHRIS FINLEY

CERTIFICATIONS

State of Indiana Superintendent's License
District Level Administration
State of Indiana Building Administrator License
K-12 School Administration
State of Indiana Teacher License
K-6 Elementary Generalist

EDUCATION

Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Indiana University
May 2022
Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership
Indiana University
Spring 2021
Master's Degree in Educational Leadership
Indiana University
May 2004
Elementary Cert. Graduate Program-Master's Degree in Elementary Education
Indiana University
May 1998
May 2000
Bachelor of Science Degree General Education
Indiana University
May 1993

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Tri-North Middle School Principal| MCCSC
2021-PRESENT| BLOOMINGTON, IN
Childs Elementary School Principal| MCCSC
2010-2021| BLOOMINGTON, IN
Marlin Elementary School Principal| MCCSC
2005-2010| BLOOMINGTON, IN
Clear Creek Elementary School- Assistant Principal| MCCSC
2004-2005 | BLOOMINGTON, IN
Unionville Elementary School- Classroom Teacher| MCCSC
1999-2004 | BLOOMINGTON, IN

Templeton and Clear Creek Elementary- Classroom Teacher| MCCSC
1998-1999 | BLOOMINGTON, IN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT- RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Professional Learning Community Summit, Rick and Becky Dufour- Branson, Missouri
Professional Learning Community Summit, Rick and Becky Dufour- Chicago, Illinois
Solution Tree Professional Learning Community Summit- Phoenix, Arizona
PLC at Work Coaches Academy
PLC Next Steps Coaches Academy
Thomas Many- Inspiring a Lasting Commitment to Learning
Tammy Hefflebower- Formative Assessments and Standards-Based Grading
Robert Marzano-The Art and Science of Teaching
Dr. Tyrone Howard- MCCSC Diversity Training
Dr. Anthony Muhammed- Transforming School Culture
Mike Mattos- Pyramid Response to Intervention
Will Richardson- Learning in a Networked World
Sir Kenneth Robinson-Innovation in Education
Michael Fullan-Leading in a Culture of Change Workshop
Crisis Prevention Intervention Training
Safe Schools-Iloveyouguys.org Training
National Blue Ribbon School Conference- Washington, D.C.
I.B. Conference of the Americas, 2015- Washington, D.C.
I.B. Introduction to the Standards for Administrators new to the PYP, 2015
I.B. Conference of the Americas, 2016- Chicago, Ill.
International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Workshop, 2016
Coordinated 2.3 million renovation, Marlin Elementary School
Chinese Bridge Delegation, 2017- Beijing, China
Kelley School of Business Mentorship Program, IUB- 2019

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Strategic Planning Committee
Human Understanding of Diversity Committee
Equity and Inclusion Committee
Textbook and Resource Adoption Committee
Collective Bargaining Leadership Team
District Discussion Council Leadership Team
Discipline Code Review Team
International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Leadership Team
Coordinated School Health Leadership Team
Instruction and Curriculum Leadership Committee
Development of District Essential Learning Standards and Scale Scores
Development of Writing Rubrics and Scales for MCCSC

Created New Teacher Mentorship Canvas Course
District World Language Committee
Presented and facilitated District-wide Redistricting Community Discussion
District Metrics Committee for Covid Reentry Plan
Community Referendum Committee

AWARDS

Member of 1988 Indiana University Liberty Bowl Champion Football Team
Four Star School Principal- 2010-2018
IDOE-High Growth School in Mathematics -2010-2013
National Blue Ribbon School Principal- 2013
Excellence in Leadership Award-MCCSC- 2018
International Baccalaureate World School Authorized Principal-2017

REFERENCES

JUDITH DEMUTH

Superintendent
Monroe County Community School Corporation
(812) 330-7700
jdemuth@mccsc.edu

DEB PRENKERT

Director of Elementary Education
Monroe County Community School Corporation
(317) 418-4248
dprenker@mccsc.edu

CAMERON RAINS

Former Director of Elementary Education and Assistant Superintendent
Monroe County Community School Corporation and Whiteland School Corporation
Educational Consultant for Solution Tree
(260)251-0155

KRIS STEWART

Instructional Coach/I.B. Coordinator
Childs Elementary School
(812) 330-7756
kstewart@mccsc.edu

MARK FLETCHER

Principal

Bloomington High School South

(812)-330-7714

mfletche@mccsc.edu

CURT MALLORY

Head Football Coach

Indiana State University

(307) 343-5857