

RETAINING AN URBAN SCHOOL'S MOST VALUABLE ASSETS: HOW TEAM  
COLLABORATION SUPPORTS RETENTION IN ONE URBAN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study was a mixed method analysis concerned with explaining trends in urban secondary teacher retention within the Northern California Bay Area. A study addressing how Professional Learning Communities impact urban school organizations is important to the future reform efforts for urban districts. The study focuses on factors that affect teacher retention of urban school environments, including understanding how factors such as teacher collaboration affect urban school working conditions in terms of their impact on teacher retention. Understanding how teacher collaboration programs are effectively implemented and maintained will help urban school leaders better understand how to align resources to support their ability to retain effective teachers.

The reasons urban high school teachers decide to stay or leave their classroom positions is of specific interest to the state of California and the nation as a whole (Danenberg, Jepsen, & Cerdan, 2002). Surveys were sent to 82 teachers from a comprehensive high school located in a large urban district and 29 completed surveys were returned. In addition, two focus groups were conducted to fill holes from the survey data. Lastly, 6 interview participants were purposefully selected from the target population. Data were analyzed

concurrently. All independent variables, gender, ethnicity, and years of experience were found to be significant.

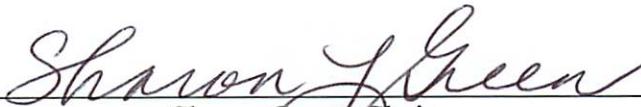
This study supported the claim that as a teacher's spent more time collaborating their willingness look for other positions decreased. The effects of teacher's spending more time collaborating help the teacher teams develop a deeper sense of connectedness as a result of teacher collaboration practices. Additionally, this study supported the notion that transformational leadership, as an element of Professional Learning Communities, is a significant component for improving teacher retention at the local school.

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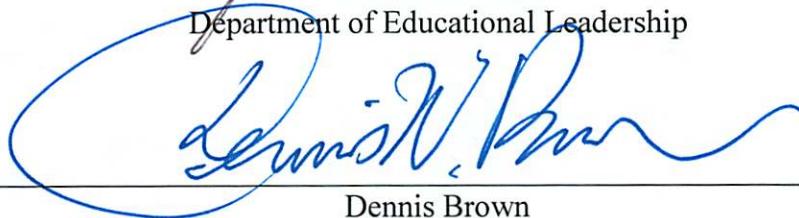
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Administrators and faculty members in public schools across the nation are being challenged to do more with less—teach more students, develop more effective methodologies and recruit and retain quality teachers. Until recently, the focus has been on implementing new processes and procedures at the district, state and even national level to recruit graduates in to the teaching profession and improve educational quality. However, many of these broad programs are costly, and have not been successful in stabilizing teacher retention at the local level.

Most educational systems fail to recognize the direct link between teacher retention rates and the quality of education provided. In a study conducted by Inger (1993), teacher collaboration is identified as an important element contributing to learning and empowerment that positively impacts teacher retention. For any educational system, a low teacher retention rate translates into an increase in expenditures of financial and human resources to recruit, train, and professionally develop new teachers. To urban schools that are already under-funded this situation is especially challenging. Simply put, a low teacher retention rate translates into unnecessary drains on financial and human resources with funds for public education dwindling. Every year, school administrators must thoughtfully explore the options for keeping good teachers in the classroom.

Recent research suggests that teacher retention rates improve when teachers are adequately supported in the challenges that they face working in urban schools (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; NCTAF, 2003). A close examination of how processes such as teacher collaboration impact teacher experience could go a long way toward supporting administrators in urban schools in better managing their organizational systems for retaining teachers. In an effort to address issues of teacher retention in urban schools, this dissertation considers the potential impact that a formalized teacher collaboration structure in one urban school district has on teacher retention.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the biggest problems America's urban public schools currently face is teacher retention. In 2003, the NCTAF conducted a national study that revealed that teacher turnover was 15% in all public schools, compared with 22% in high-poverty urban schools (NCTAF, 2003). This statistic is especially revealing when coupled with the fact that 31% of all the students in the United States are concentrated in 1.5% of urban schools (Fuhrman, 2002). Needless to say, educational systems that fail to retain teachers over time fail their students. Change will not come quickly or easily, however this study explored an approach that can be implemented quickly in order to counter the problems associated with low teacher retention that is cost effective and has proven positive outcomes.

**Plugging the drain on human resources.** Urban School Districts which face low teacher retention rates experience high turnover and lose a significant amount of institutional memory that places an even greater burden on their ability to provide an

adequate education. Although it has been well established that teacher quality has a profound influence on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Haycock, 1998; Rivers, 1999; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997), the formula for recruiting and sustaining an ample pool of effective teachers still eludes public educators and policy makers.

Low teacher retention rates in urban schools have an indirect impact on minority students. Urban schools are characterized by a highly diverse student body including diversity in ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and socioeconomic factors. Statistics from the past five years indicate that urban school districts have had an average minority population percentage of 64% (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006). The impact of low teacher retention rate is felt most keenly by minority students.

**Intern teachers.** One of the ways urban schools are addressing the dearth of available teachers is through the use of “intern teachers”. These individuals participate in alternative teacher certification programs, often referred as fast track programs where they spend a year interning in school districts needing teachers. The goal of the alternative teacher preparation program is to lower barriers to entry and tap previously untapped pools of potential teachers, particularly for hard-to-fill teaching positions like those of urban public schools (Glazerman, Mayer & Decker, 2006). New Teacher Support and Development (NTSD, 2008) has defined an “intern teacher” as someone who is a full time classroom teacher and who also attends courses in a teaching credentialing program at night or on the weekends. Initially, the thought was that “intern teacher” programs would assist educational systems in providing a better education by providing a team site-

based support for beginning teachers. However, today these programs are plagued by a multitude of bureaucratic requirements that inhibit their ability to adequately address the intended goal: getting and keeping good teachers in the classroom. Pouring more teachers into classrooms only to lose them within a few years of service is counter-productive to sustaining a viable and skilled employment base. The influx of intern teachers into urban school districts has resulted in a revolving-door, with more than one million teachers entering or departing school annually (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, NCTAF, 2003).

Based on recent studies and statistics, it appears that the use of intern teachers has become a drain on the human resources of educational systems rather than solving the pressing problem of teacher retention. The constant influx of intern teachers creates an experience gap for schools, which has resulted in an intense decline in teacher quality as measured by experience over time. The NCTAF's (2010) analysis of year 2010 Schools and Staffing Survey reveals that the modal experience level of a teacher was fifteen years in 1988 as compared to only two years in 2008.

Urban school districts are significantly hindered when large populations of their students are educated by the least experienced teachers. The ability to effectively educate urban youth requires teachers to exhibit a multitude of strategies for off-setting external issues that often complicate the learning experience in these environments. This constant urban teacher turnover has several negative effects including:

- disrupting the learning environment for youth who already are faced with other major life altering challenges;

- drastically decreasing or eliminating confidence instilled in the student by the particular teacher, while simultaneously diluting the quality of the available teacher work force because more experienced teachers are being replaced by new teachers. (NCTAF, 2010).

**Star teachers.** Not only are intern teachers diluting the population of experienced teachers, but they are replacing the population of “star teachers” in urban school districts. Haberman (1987, 1995) has coined the term “star teachers” to describe the attributes of successful urban educators. According to Haberman (1995), to be a “star teacher” an urban educator must have a unique set of characteristics, including problem-solving abilities, tenacity, and a sense of urgency, grounding in academic content, and the ability to communicate content to students in engaging and developmentally appropriate ways. “Star teacher” characteristics are typically found in those teachers, who feel invested by way of a personal connection or strong desire to be at a particular school, educating those specific students. Intern teachers typically lack these characteristics.

The results of a research investigation by Glazerman (2008) show no significant impact of intern teacher classroom practices on teacher retention. In most cases, intern teachers also lack the desire to acquire such characteristics because of their temporary contract status. A report conducted by the NCTAF (2010) states that “the current structure assumes a continual influx of new teachers with little attention given to who is placed where and what is needed for teaching to succeed in a particular environment. This results in young, inexperienced teachers often facing assignments in the most challenging schools because that is where the openings are...” (page 10). These types

practices overtime develop intern teachers (as well as school districts), that are primarily concerned with fulfilling a contractual agreement, into employees trying to survive rather than teachers trying to educate.

The urban teacher quality challenge is best summed up by a policy brief produced by the NCTAF (2007) which states that the problem is not finding enough teachers to do the job; the problem is keeping them in our schools. The concept of intern teachers at its core contradicts one of the primary goals of a successful urban school—to retain teachers who have been trained and equipped to successfully educate urban school students while simultaneously addressing and solving the complex system demands. Accordingly, to plug the drain on human resources, less effort and financing should be expended on intern teacher programs and more in quality teacher acquisition and management.

**Teacher retention drain on financial resources.** Low teacher retention rates not only dilute the quality of the teacher pool, it also wastes financial resources. A school system that suffers from low teacher retention is forced to take funds urgently needed for school improvements and spend them instead in a manner that produces little long-term payoff for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In many urban school systems, finances are consistently put toward retaining beginning teachers and then training those teachers to meet the needs of the diverse student population of urban school districts.

Prior to the 1990s, for more than three decades school systems enjoyed the luxury of having a fairly unchanging student demographic (Zimpher, 1989). However, since then there have been notable changes in the population that these teachers now serve. The

student population is growing more racially and ethnically diverse, rising from 22% non-White students in the 1970s to 39% in 2003, with 64% of this increase occurring in urban schools (Strizek et al., 2006). Additionally, the number of school children who speak a language other than English at home increased 118% from the 1970's to 2003 and the number of impoverished students is concentrated in the nation's largest urban schools, with more than 56% of students in those schools on free and reduced-price lunch (Strizek et al., 2006).

As a result of the dramatically changing educational environment, it is critical for urban school districts to implement effective teacher selection processes and teacher support techniques that help attract and retain teachers who are a good fit for districts. Accordingly, our future urban school reform efforts will need to do more with less because schools are now under-funded. Currently, urban school systems hardly ever reap the benefits of talent acquisition and management efforts because of the “revolving door concept” acknowledged by Richard Ingersoll (2001a).

The use of intern teachers negatively impacts an urban school district's budget. Although there are some financial benefits to bringing in beginning teachers because of the lower starting salary, the typical urban school never has an opportunity to benefit from the financial savings because of the constant cost expended on talent acquisition and management.

A study conducted by Linda Darling-Hammond (2003) reported that attrition from teaching bears enormous costs. High turnover schools incur significant costs associated with their constant recruitment, hiring, training, and separation of teachers.

Failure to maintain school systems with the means to address the aforementioned strains on urban school budgets is unacceptable if we are serious about improving the American public school system. High turnover creates a constant strain on funding that offsets savings on low salaries for beginning teachers (Stokto, 2007). Urban schools have an even higher sense of urgency to pay close attention to ways in which they can offset the potential opportunity costs lost as a result of low retention rates.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates that the average cost per teacher lost by urban districts was \$8,750 annually (NCATF, 2007). When urban schools are compared to suburban schools, their net loss is over \$2,000 more than that incurred by suburban districts. Low retention means that schools must take funds urgently needed for school improvements and spend them instead in a manner that produces little long-term payoff for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The impact of low teacher retention on urban schools is significant because it constrains schools' fiscal resources by forcing them to continuously replenish their most valuable resource, teachers which ultimately saps their ability to adequately support student achievement.

**The importance of effective teacher retention systems and processes.** The selection of quality teachers is essential to the success of the mission of urban public schools, namely student achievement. Student achievement is typically measured by student's performance in the core subject areas on state standardized exams. Sanders and Horn (1994) found three years of effective teaching accounts on average for an improvement of 35 to 50 percentile points. Haycock (2005) has found that five years of

instruction from an above average teacher could eliminate the achievement gap for students. Haycock and Huang (2001) showed that the best teachers in a school have six times the impact relative to the bottom third of teachers.

Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) investigated the effects of teachers, intra-classroom homogeneity, and class size on achievement gain. The study revealed that the two most important factors impacting student achievement are differences in classroom teacher effectiveness and the prior achievement level of the student. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) report shows that what teachers know and can do is one of the most important influences on what students learn. Using the knowledge of teachers will be the key to effectively recruiting, preparing and retaining them for our urban public schools. Our future educational and global competitiveness will depend on how well we educate and retain the teaching professionals needed to fill the teacher vacancies in urban public schools.

**Factors that contribute to retention.** Research in the field of urban public education has identified four conditions that account for a significant proportion of the nation's urban teacher retention crisis (NCATF, 1997). These conditions are (a) climate and culture, (b) inequitable pay scales, (c) working conditions, and (d) professional support.

Exploring teacher satisfaction, especially in high-demand settings such as urban school districts, is important because teachers' satisfaction with their careers has been shown to be associated with teacher retention, commitment, and school effectiveness (Shann, 1998). Additionally, studies have found that beyond financial incentives,

improving work conditions and supporting professional development programs and teacher collaboration would contribute to retaining teachers (Bradley & Loadman, 2005). Other studies have shown that teachers who obtained induction and mentoring support in their first years of teaching were less likely to leave teaching or change schools (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Poor working conditions exacerbate urban school leaders' ability to improve their learning environments by securing effective teachers. In 2002, a California study conducted with over 1000 teachers discovered researchers found that teachers who rate their professional development opportunities as poor are also significantly more likely to say they plan to leave their school soon (Harris, 2002). Urban school leaders need to use this knowledge to design and implement induction programs and collaboration structures in order to manage teacher retention. Leaders need to find ways to stimulate, support, and satisfy teachers so that the drain on finances in struggling victimized urban school systems can be redirected to more directly support students.

**Racial, social and economic considerations.** It is essential that the selection process be examined in relation to teacher retention acknowledging that a large number of teaching candidates do not want to teach students who are socially and/or economically different from themselves (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Social and economic disconnect is not the sole cause of low teacher retention rates in urban schools, but, studies have shown that it is a critical factor (NCATF, 1997). Therefore, social and economic experiences should be given more focused consideration by urban school administrators and districts when considering educators to hire for urban schools. Low teacher retention rates are also directly related to the diverse population of the urban

school district student body. A number of recent studies provide evidence that Caucasian teachers are much more likely to transfer out of urban schools with higher percentages of African-American and Latino students (Boyd et al., 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Johnson et al., 2005). Urban public schools need to reassess their staffing plans to ensure they recruit and hire teachers that best fit their organizations.

**Costs and working conditions.** Compensation does play a role in teacher retention. The higher the salary, the lower the likelihood that a teacher will quit or transfer (Baugh & Stone, 1982; Boyd et al., 2005; Hanusek et al., 2002; Ingersoll, 2001). It is no surprise that teachers respond positively to increased salaries and compensation packages. Teaching has historically been viewed as low-paying work especially suited for young women and mothers raising children, but insufficient for men dependent on incomes to support their families (Laird, 1988). Salary policies often exacerbate the inequitable distribution of teachers because the highest poverty schools tend to offer the least attractive salaries (Goldhaber, 2008). These practices place enormous strains on urban schools to develop creative methods to ensure that their students are educated by qualified, motivated and inspired teachers despite their financial restrictions.

Districts use teaching certification to determine whether teachers are qualified. Urban secondary schools are challenged to find and retain certified teachers working within several fields. A study conducted by Ingersoll (2001a) found that teachers of mathematics and science are more likely to leave than teachers of other subject areas. Urban schools face significant bureaucratic demands, including teaching more students per day, needing more materials to support students, and dealing with higher cost

associated with teachers and students. Savings associated with reduced pay levels are offset by the higher costs. The high costs associated with maintaining urban schools affects the working conditions of teachers. Good working conditions have a positive impact on teacher attendance, teacher morale, and a sense of efficacy in the classroom (Corcoran, Walker, & Caucasian, 1988). Stokto (2011) defines a good working environment as one that includes a strong supportive principal leadership, an attractive and safe environment, staff collegiality, opportunities for teacher influence on school decisions, and high levels of teacher control of curriculum and instruction.

In a study of more than 2,000 teachers, Kim and Loadman (1994) cited five significant predictors of job satisfaction that included interactions with students and colleagues, professional challenges, professional autonomy, working conditions, and opportunities for employment growth. Practical factors such as working conditions need to be better understood if we are going to improve the quality of teachers who educate urban public students.

**Professional support.** Ascher (1991) suggests that retention of effective teachers can be improved by helping teachers function as continuous learners and by providing administrative support for teachers trying out new instructional strategies. Improving the learning environment for teachers helps to empower teachers while reducing administrative bureaucracy.

Improving professional development for teachers is also a key mechanism for improving classroom instruction and student achievement (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Corcoran, Shields, & Zucker, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995;

Elmore and Burke 1997; Little, 1993; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Although calls for improving quality professional development for teachers are perennial, there remains a shortage of effective programs that are characterized by coherence, active learning, sufficient duration, collective participation, a focus on content knowledge, and a reform rather than traditional approach (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Birman et al., 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Using the Schools and Staffing Survey in the 1980s and 1990s and the Teacher Follow-up Survey in 1991–1992, Ingersoll (2001a) found that schools providing greater autonomy, influence, and administrative support (as reported by the teachers themselves) and schools with fewer disciplinary problems had lower levels of teacher attrition. To successfully secure and support the teachers currently teaching in urban schools, professional development systems must be in place.

**Professional development and retention.** Seymour Sarason, an educational psychology researcher, reported that teachers do most of their teaching in isolation, cut off from the support of colleagues with whom they work (Sarason, 1966). This isolation results in a disconnect between the individual goals of the teacher and the school wide goals of the school. An alternative to the isolated activities found in many situations is the use of Professional Learning Communities that bring teachers together to operate openly and collegially to meet needs of students. Teachers in professional learning communities recognize they cannot accomplish their common objective of high levels of learning for

all students unless they work together collaboratively (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2006). Collaboration is a learned process for many teachers and time must be provided to allow them to embrace and learn the systematic process.

Another common professional development retention strategy that encourages collaboration is the use of induction programs that assign individual mentors to beginning teachers (Stotko, 2007). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2005) asserts that to prepare students for the 21st century, we must develop the capacity of teachers to "become members of a growing network of shared expertise" (page 1). Michael Fullan (2001) argues that finding the single factor common to successful change initiatives is that relationships improve by describing the impact of a powerful collaborative culture on the relationships of the professionals within a school.

**The urgency of the urban teacher retention crisis.** Due to our fast growing global economy, a sound education is extremely important. Most education reform leaders agree that schools must change in fundamental ways if they are to accomplish the goals society has set for them: teaching our diverse student population for higher order thinking and deep understanding (Darling-Hammond, 1997). As a result, of our vast failed reform efforts of urban schools we have continued to fail urban teachers and youth.

In *The Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Education and Excellence, 1983), the current schooling system was blamed for a general societal decline. The report further stated that problems in schools stemmed from a focus on equity. These arguments lead to a new way of thinking that was grounded in equitable principles aligned with a new

emphasis on high expectations and standards. The most recent and concerning school reform effort is the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act, which was implemented in 2001.

Since 2000, the driving force behind high school reform has been the federal mandates found in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. *Recognizably one of the most challenging mandates of NCLB is that by 2014 school year, public schools are required to close achievement gaps that exist between minority students as well as students who are and are not socio-economically disadvantaged. Schools that successfully meet the mandate typically satisfy the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) guidelines of NCLB. Schools which fail to meet the strict guidelines of NCLB, commonly referred to as Program Improvement (PI) schools, may receive federal sanctions causing their school district to lose resources. As such, designating schools for Program Improvement (PI) followed by specific, progressive, and corrective actions, will likely create a climate of high stakes accountability and stigmatize such schools as failures.*

Consequently, some urban researchers argue that “for our emerging multiethnic democracy, a floor condition must be present in all schools...Specifically, fully adequate education must be put in place for youth and children who – owing to racialized conditions, economic poverty, and gender, linguistic, and cultural discrimination – have been rendered disadvantaged in today’s schools systems” (Arriaza & Henze, 2012 page 119). Our quest for competing in global world will greatly depend on the steps we take to mend our broken education system.

One of the other primary concerns of NCLB is the mandate that requires all states certify that all core subject matter teachers are highly qualified; that is, they have

obtained a bachelor's degree, validated mastery of content knowledge, and are certified by the state (Jacob, 2007). While teachers should be held accountable, accountability becomes problematic when teachers are not adequately supported in meeting those expectations of the classroom.

This study is necessary and compelling because a formal collaboration system can assist schools in the immediate satisfaction of NCLB's AYP requirements. A formalized collaboration structure provides a platform for different urban teachers to share their varying and effective strategies as a means for supporting professional growth and continuous improvement.

Urban public school students are likely to have higher rates of mobility, absenteeism, and poor health. A research study conducted in an urban school district in Texas revealed that urban students are less likely to have health coverage, which decreases attendance and reduces funding based on attendance-based formulae (Hooker, 2001). The methods that urban schools implement to counteract their funding inequities will need to be cost efficient, transparent, and supportive, and embedded within cycles of continuous improvement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study addresses urban teacher retention through implementation of a form of teacher professional learning commonly known as teacher collaboration. A better understanding of how teacher collaboration impacts the retention of urban teachers can aid in supporting effective ways urban schools can better manage their organizational systems for retaining teachers.

The goal of this study was to add a better understanding of the factors contributing to teacher retention, and specifically to explore alternative strategies for improving teacher retention in urban public high schools. The study sought to develop an in-depth understanding of the unique relationship between teacher professional learning practices and urban teacher retention.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions informed the research study:

1. How are current working conditions perceived by teachers in the urban school being studied?
2. What are the key components of teacher collaboration that positively support teacher retention at the school?
3. In what ways has teacher retention been impacted by teacher collaboration at this school?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to explore factors of teacher collaboration that create and sustain healthy learning environments which can lead to greater retention of teachers. The funding available to urban schools is limited, creating a shortage adequate teacher development needed to successfully meet their students' needs. Designing and testing models to provide that support at the local level is important for developing frameworks that continuously improves teacher retention rates.

Investigating how teacher collaboration efforts impact urban schools is important to future reform efforts for urban district central office leaders and site principals.

Teacher retention is not simply a staffing problem. High teacher turnover can destroy a school's environment and negatively impact student performance. Unequal access to high quality teachers is one of the key factors contributing to demographic disparities in student achievement prevalent in American schools (Nieto, 2000). Further research looking at the relationship between professional learning, urban leadership and teacher retention is clearly needed.

My study is based on the premise that school improvement efforts should be focused on three primary objectives: (a) to systematically record efforts that impact learning; (b) to examine and report these efforts in order to precisely describe the context and circumstances that support change; and (c) to recommend policy based on the research findings.

This study is also based on the assumption that gaining a deeper understanding of the practices that support teacher retention at the local school level will result in effective changes in structures and practices that are needed to adequately serve all students.

This will be supported by a review of the literature related to teacher collaboration as it pertains to teacher retention and an exploration of how, and to what extent, collaborative practices of teachers relate to the successful retention of teachers.

**Setting.** The study took place at one urban high school located on a 45-acre campus at the crest of a Northern California Bay Area hill. The population of the urban city is over 390,000. African Americans, Hispanics and Asians represent 28%, 25.2% and 16.8% of the population respectively. There are financial disparities in the average household income of residents of \$49,721 compared to \$60,833 documented as the state

average household income. The graduation rate for citizens 25 and over is 78.9 %, almost two percentage points below the state average.

The district operates 133 schools (73 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, 28 high schools and 15 alternative education schools that educate 46,584 students (Ed-data, 2012). The school population is 1,900 representing grades 9 through 12. Of the 1,900 students, 9.8% are White, 34.7% are Black, 28% are Hispanic, 20% are Asian and 7.5% other ethnicities (District Data Office, 2012).

The faculty is compiled of 6 administrators, 82 full time credentialed teachers, no school counselors and 36 licensed paraprofessionals or specialists. More specifically, the school of study went under a comprehensive school reform as a result of being in Program Improvement for over 5 years as a result of low student performance. Prior to the 2011, school year the school of study had undergone six different principals in five year period (District-Data Office, 2012). Currently, the school has implemented small learning communities throughout its campus as a means for overhauling the curriculum and instruction.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

This study encompassed terms unique and specific to the factors that were examined. To provide clarity of the context in which these terms were intended to be understood throughout this study, important terms have been defined below.

*Processes:* Process is the how of professional learning (Dufour, 2001).

*Professional Development:* Professional development includes theoretical as well as practical concepts and activities that will broaden and deepen both pedagogy and

content in an individual teacher's classroom instruction in order to increase student learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001).

*Teacher collaboration:* Teacher collaboration involves teachers working together with a shared purpose for improving professional practices that improves student learning.

*SMART goals:* SMART goals are an integrated step-by-step process for setting team goals to include specific, measurable, reasonable and timely.

*School atmosphere:* The school atmosphere is a unique mix of environmental factors in a school that establishes the climate and influences the behavior and attitudes of the members.

*Systems:* A system is an organized collection of parts working together to accomplish a goal or goals.

*Teacher attrition:* Teacher attrition refers to teachers who leave the education profession for employment in another industry.

*Teacher retention:* The ability to keep a teaching staff involves policies that adjust rewards. Teacher retention differentiates factors associated to teacher attrition, such as retirement, changing professions, or switching to another school or district (Ingersoll, 2001a)

*Working conditions:* The conditions in which teachers must succumb in order to perform satisfactorily and productively made up of physical, social, political and economic issues

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to the impact that teacher collaboration has on urban teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to better understand how alternative professional learning processes such as teacher collaboration can impact urban teachers' willingness to remain at their school. An historical context for urban schools is provided in the first section of the chapter. The second section discusses the various ways the research has defined, accounted for, or measured teacher retention in America. The third section defines the components of urban school leadership that are relevant to teacher retention. The fourth section reviews the concept of continuous learning organizations and highlights the characteristics and benefits of teacher collaboration as presented by the literature. A conceptual framework is proposed at the end of the chapter to describe the relationship of school leadership, teacher working conditions and the professional learning community model reviewed in this chapter.

#### **Urban public schools**

Urban schools, for the purposes of this study, are defined as educational institutions that tend to have larger enrollments, low-income and low-achieving students, high percentages of behavior problems in the areas of absenteeism, classroom discipline,

drug possession, and student pregnancy, more teachers teaching out of field, fewer instructional resources, and less teacher control over curriculum (Project Site Report, 2003). This study attempts to identify and define effective school-level practices for positively impacting a school's ability to retain effective teachers by utilizing the knowledge of the disenfranchised teachers.

Teachers are the fundamental issue of redistribution of economic issues. It is well proven that good teachers support uplifting students out of poverty. Berliner (2006) argues that the structural basis for failure in inner-city schools is political, economic, and cultural, and must be changed before meaningful school improvement projects can be successfully implemented. Our society is filled with major social and economic challenges that our public schools are not equipped to sufficiently address. An adequate education will be a must for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where jobs of tomorrow have yet to be discovered but will require critical thinkers to fill them.

The role poverty plays in urban public schools is significant and it has a notable impact on their students' lives after school in the real-world, because it is a factor that determines their place in our society. Doing nothing can no longer be an option especially considering the ongoing practices that resulted in a lack of success for urban schools over the past four decades. Political-economic researcher Jean Anyon (1997) found evidence that supports the notion as middle and upper-class communities consistently and powerfully exercise their political influence to garner more than their fair share of education dollars.

Conversely, research has also shown that “...as poor families went from poor to a lot less poor, for whatever reasons, their children’s performance began to resemble that of the never poor children with whom they were matched (as cited in Berliner, 2006, page 982). Therefore, urban schools of the 21st century must be equipped with effective teachers as a means of reversing this historical inequity. Teachers are the most valuable resource urban school districts can offer to support the student learning process. A teacher’s effectiveness is the most important factor in a school’s ability to improve student achievement (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern & Keeling, 2009).

In our quest to improve urban public schools, all stakeholders must review and assess ongoing practices used to support learning in their organizations, particularly, the methods employed to retain effective teachers. A study by the Council of Great Schools (2000) explains how urban public school systems are failing today’s youth through their inadequate recruitment and retention of quality teachers. Berliner (2006) asserts that

“When we push for more rigorous standards in our schools we should also push for a raise in the minimum wage, or better yet, for livable wages. If we do not do this then we will ensure that the vast majority of those meeting the increasingly rigorous requirements for high school graduation will be those student fortunate enough to be born into the right families” (page 987).

This quote implies that the push for greater accountability should be counteracted with some form of reward to reinforce the request for an increase in student academic performance. Therefore, educational leaders must think more systematically about the emerging tensions between race and class in school reform. As de-segregation and

affirmative action policies lose their favor researchers argue a need to refine our focus to help support disenfranchised students and teachers of our urban schools.

### **Critical Race Theory and Social Identity Theory**

Several theoretical models acknowledge that racial identity plays a significant role in teacher experience. Critical Race Theory provides a framework to this study to define urban school challenges within their social context. A basic assumption of this research holds that the development of effective sustainable urban school level practices has to be guided by diverse representation. These practices are typically supported by structures that were contextualized in racial and social inequities. By permitting a more democratic representation of voice it results in the empowerment of teachers.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) contextualizes the failure of urban schools to hire and retain quality, suitable teachers by providing a method of address the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people (Yosso, 2006). In relation to education, CRT is built on a body of theory and research regarding political rationality as a means for contextualizing the political and economic foundations of urban life.

Addressing the teacher retention issue through a CRT lens provides a framework for better understanding the systemic cultural constraints that reduce most urban school districts' ability to successfully retain effective teachers. Critical Race Theory inserts race into the conversation about urban teacher retention by integrating the following three points:

- The historical impact of race on inequity in urban public schools;
- The concept of race and inequitable access to resources including human and financial resources
- Discussion of the intersection of race in urban schools, school resources, and the need to improve teacher retention practices that reconnect teachers to urban school districts in which they were educated.

Based on these points, CRT leads to three central propositions:

- Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
- There still exists privilege in the United States based on property rights.
- The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social inequity (Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995).

As acknowledged in CRT, oppressive educational systems of the 1980's have impacted the economic base of urban America. Urban America began to deteriorate and several trends accelerated: (a) "Caucasian flight" from urban to suburban residential areas; (b) neglect of downtown commercial centers; and (c) the movement of school districts into first or second place as primary employers in urban centers (Stotko et al., 2007).

CRT acknowledges that marginalized teachers in urban schools are losing hope that they can adequately educate our youth given the current social and economic structures they are expected to perform within. The process of awareness, transformative action, and reflections is what Freire (1970) refers to as: praxis "reflection and action

upon the world in order to transform it” (page 33). How we bridge the gap of the institutional powers of education and the teachers who are the front line will be critical to our future success, and the historical and cultural foundations of the current situation must be acknowledged.

There are numerous rationales that might explain the failure of our urban school’s inability to successfully educate students. Some researchers believe the teacher retention issue is a by-product of working conditions that result from teachers feeling more or less at ease with students similar to themselves (Strunk, & Robinson, 2006). Social Identity Theory sheds some light on the differential effect of minority versus non-minority teacher retention outcomes in urban settings.

The literature defines Social Identity Theory as individuals seeking to maintain positive self-images associated with their (ethnic) identity group by minimizing potentially image damaging situations with members of other groups and by seeking out interactions with one’s own group members (Garcia & Crocker, 2004; Tajfel, 1982). Contextualizing this social phenomenon within the locus of urban teacher retention superimposes the importance of recruiting, selecting, and placing teachers in positions where they are considered best-fit employees for the organization. Empirical support for Social Identity Theory in the workplace exists in research that has found that higher job satisfaction and lower turnover among workers of homogeneous characteristics (Jackson, 1991). The ability to hire and retention more underrepresented ethnic groups could help address trust issues between teachers and students that contribute to the imbalances within the many urban school’s organizational culture.

## Teacher retention in America

The literature addressing teacher retention incorporates research on recruitment, selection, and turnover. Richard Ingersoll's research in 2001 helped to frame the language used to describe an individual's teaching status. Ingersoll coined the phrase "teacher-turnover" to describe "the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs (Ingersoll, 2001, page 500). The term "teacher-turnover" is then broken-down into subcomponents: (a) teachers who leave the teaching profession altogether, referred to as attrition; and (b) teachers transferring to another school, referred to as migration (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). In order to be consistent with the literature and clear in the use of concepts, the term retention is used in this discussion to provide a positive modifier in describing teacher turnover.

Discussions of teacher retention include references to various forms of attrition. Teachers who remain in their teaching positions are called *stayers*; those who transfer to a new school or teaching position are *movers*; and those who leave the teaching profession completely as *leavers* (Luekens et al., Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Although the evolution of common terms is apparent in the literature, the use of these common terms for evaluation has not been reliable in research. Fleener and Dahm argue that the "variance in teacher attrition rates, as found in the literature, offers what might first appear to be conflicting information, which may be attributed to two factors: the definition of attrition and the statistical method being used" (2007, page 267). The variation is often impacted by the personal experiences of the researcher. For example

Ingersoll (2001) focuses on the sociology of organizations and employment, seeing individual schools as organizations, with the analysis being on whether teachers stay in their teaching position with the organization (school) as opposed to where they are relocated. Using this logic, a mover and a leaver create the same drain on a school's ability to improve by adding the burden of finding another teacher to fill a vacant teaching position.

Some studies have treated the stayers, movers, and leavers as three separate groups. This analysis recognizes that the influences that motivate a teacher to transfer schools may be different than the influences that motivate them to stay. Harris (2007) used Florida public school teachers' academic backgrounds, demographic make-up, and school achievement level to predict subsequent teacher status. A similar mixed method study was conducted by Swars et al., (2009) to examine the career paths of teachers within a single school to help explain the migration and attrition patterns of the teachers in the study.

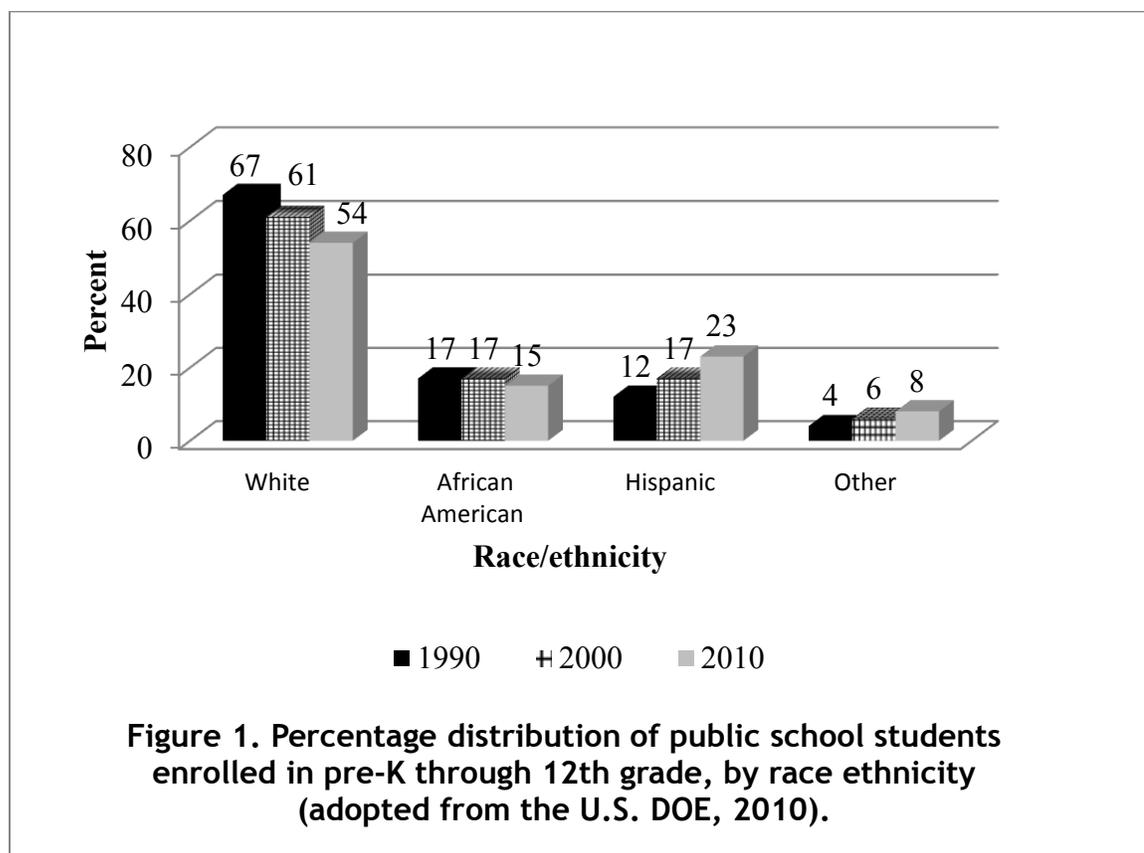
The literature presents the treatment of stayers, movers, and leavers in a variety of ways. Fleener and Dahn (2007) warn that results are both inconsistent and frequently conflicting. However, a closer look reveals that a major part of the inconsistency is a product of the researchers' worldview. Researcher Cannady (2011) describes the labor force perspective as being able to offer insights about local staffing concerns, whereas the labor force perspective better serves policy makers seeking to adjust policy levers to improve the overall quality of the teacher workforce (page 22).

An alternative approach used to study teacher turnover has been to consider the teacher workforce as a labor force. This view places a focal point on whether a teacher will stay in or leave the workforce not whether they transfer schools. Qualitative studies (e.g. Gonzales, Brown, & Slate, 2008), quantitative (e.g., Kreig, 2006; Lathem & Vogt, 2007), and mixed method studies (e.g., Scheopner, 2009) have investigated teacher turnover using a labor force perspective

***Demographic Retention Trends.*** Historically we have seen a trend that suggests that women are more likely to enter teaching than men. A longitudinal study of more than college graduates from the class of 1992-1993 found that women were more likely than men to enter the teacher pipeline (Henke, Chen, Geis, & Knepper, 2000). The trend of female teachers entering the teaching profession has weakened over time. Researchers Broughman and Rollefson (2000) conducted a descriptive analysis of the Schools and Staffing Surveys and found that 78% of new teacher hires were female in 1987 – 1988 and 73% were female in 1993 – 1994. Flyer and Rosen (1997) reported that nearly half of women graduating from college in 1960 went into teaching, whereas fewer than 10% went into teaching in 1990. The researchers deemed this anomaly was primarily due to the increase in the female labor force participation rates and the opening of a wider variety of job opportunities to women.

***Student Enrollment Ethnicity.*** Minority student enrollments have shifted significantly in American public schools. The U.S. Department of Education published a report called *The Condition of Education* which reveals that “From 1990 through 2010, the number of White students in U.S. public schools decreased from 29.0 million to 27.7

million, and their share of enrollment decreased from 67 to 54 percent as shown in Figure 1. In contrast, Hispanic enrollment during this period increased from 5.1 to 12.1 million students, and the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 12 to 23 percent” (page 26).



In an analysis of the supply and demand of minority teachers, researchers Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999) found that the recruitment of minority individuals into the teaching profession was not keeping pace with enrollment increases of minority students in the 1980s and early 1990s. Researchers Broughman and Rollefson (2000) found disparities in their descriptive analysis of the Schools and Staffing Survey 1993-1994, outcomes revealed that 84% of new hires in 1993 self-identified as White Non-Hispanic.

Interestingly, the researchers also discovered that from 1987-1988 and in 1993 and 1994 the proportion of new minority teachers in public schools doubled.

Some research studies have revealed disparities among ethnic groups taking the test for admission to schools of education. Researchers, Gitomer, Latham, and Ziomek (1999) examined over 88,000 Praxis I test outcomes and found that White candidates passed at the highest rate (87%) and African American candidates at the lowest rate (53%). In another study, researchers Rong and Preissle (1997) analyzed 1990 census micro data representing 5% of the U.S. population and found that Hispanics were underrepresented in teaching—they make up 7.5% of the U.S labor force but only 4.7% of elementary and secondary teachers. In 1994 Gordon (1994) revealed his work, which examined 140 interviews from California minority teachers. Outcomes highlighted the notion that students of color were being discouraged from entering the teaching profession by institutionalized myths of the education system. These myths reinforced negative experiences in school, were concerned about the lack of student discipline, and among other things, perceived the image of a teacher to be a White, middle-class female.

It has been well documented that attrition is high for young or new teachers and lower for older or more experienced teachers until they reach ages at which retirement is a desired outcome. The aforementioned idea produces the well documented U-shaped plot of attrition against age or experience. Richard Ingersoll (2001a) first recognized the U-shaped pattern of attrition versus age and experience in his analysis of over 6,000 teachers using the Schools and Staffing Surveys during the late 1980s and mid 1990s. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) analyzed data on more than 300,000 Texas teachers

from 1993-1996 and discovered that teachers who left Texas Public schools were generally either very young teachers in their first two years of teaching or very experienced teachers entering the years of their retirement eligibility. Another Texas study conducted by Kirby et al. (1999) found that approximately 16% of those who entered teaching in Texas between 1987 and 1996 left the public school system by the end of their first year and 26% left within two years.

*Poverty's impact on teacher retention.* When deciding whether to continue teaching, teachers make ongoing evaluations of their willingness to continue teaching in relation to leaving for other occupations. Thus, the school environment plays a large role in these assessments. In this section, the researcher has chosen to consider an external characteristic of schools—not generally considered within the control of the Local Education Agency (LEA) but one that creates a significant impact because of the people it serves. Thus, the external impact of poverty on teacher retention is reviewed.

The high teacher migration and attrition rates exacerbates an urban school's ability to adequately educate its youth. Researchers Smith and Ingersoll (2004) analyzed data sets from 1990-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey and its Teacher Follow-up Survey and discovered that teacher attrition and migration to different school varied by school characteristics according to their sample of over 3000 beginning teachers; their investigation documented public school teachers in high-poverty schools were more likely than their colleagues in medium-poverty schools to leave (16% versus 9%) and less likely to move (13% versus 19%).

Researchers Lankford et al. (2002) used personnel data on all teachers in New York state who started teaching in 1993 and discovered that by 1998, less than 40% of those teachers remained teaching in the school where they originally had started teaching.

An analysis of over 300,000 Texas teachers from 1993-1996 revealed that school characteristics played a large role in influencing teacher movements for movers and leavers (Hanushek et al., 2004). Guarino et al. (2004), in their review of teacher retention empirical literature, reported on Hansushek's findings as "Schools serving low-achieving students (as measured by district test scores) and greater proportions of minority students had greater difficulty retaining teachers than high achieving low-minority schools" (page 190). This created a trend of White teachers migrating toward higher paying low-minority schools (suburban), while African Americans drifted toward the lower paying high-minority schools (urban). Richard Ingersoll (2001a) analyzed the Schools Staffing Survey in the 1980s and 1990s and found that wealthier and rural schools report lower rates of teacher turnover than their urban counterparts.

In reviewing the literature on teacher retention, several studies investigated in-service policies' impact on teacher's perceptions of their working conditions (Paynter 2003; Garet et al, 2001; Guriano 2006). Site-based induction and mentoring programs seem to display a significant role in a teacher's willingness to remain in their position, transfer, or quit. Guriano (2006) summarized the findings of their study by suggesting that "the types of induction support that had the strongest positive association with retention were having a mentor in the same field, having common planning period with

other teachers in the same subject, having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being a part of an external network of teachers” (page 198).

*Alternative Certification Programs.* Smith and Ingersoll (2004) used data from the 1990–2000 Schools and Staffing Survey and its Teacher Follow-up Survey and found that, in the sample of more than 3,000 beginning teachers, those who experienced induction and mentoring support in their first year of teaching were less likely to leave teaching or change schools. They also found that the more types of support teachers experienced, the lower the likelihood of their leaving or changing schools. On average, twenty-nine (29) percent of beginning teachers either changed schools or left the teaching profession (14 percent). Sixteen (16) percent received none of the identified induction or mentoring supports, and the predicted probability of their leaving was 40 percent. The types of induction support that had the strongest positive association with retention included 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 (Ingersoll, 2001).

A key strategy for effectively developing teachers involves the notion of process. Process refers to the act of engaging in a professional learning experience. Professional development experiences must address how teachers learn to be effective. Therefore, opportunities for active learning or “sense making” are important (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). Modeling the sought after practices and constructing opportunities for teachers to dialogue and reflect on the new collaboration practices have been identified as

the most effective ways to develop teachers' knowledge and skills (Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garet et al, 2001).

In a study on teacher motivation and incentives, Paynter (2003) found that teachers in low-performing schools (i.e., urban) expressed a higher preference for moral motivators (e.g., an opportunity to help others).

***Teacher working conditions and morale.*** An examination of the elements that can be controlled by schools in term of their working conditions are examined in this section. The body of literature encompassing teacher working conditions examines the intersection of teacher working conditions and teacher morale. This study refers to teacher working conditions as an environment that includes the physical features of the workplace, the organizational structure and the sociological, political, psychological, and educational features of the work environment (Johnson, 2006; Johnson et al., 2005).

Most of the research on the topic “working conditions” is used to describe the state of the environment at the school, such as the safety of the school, the quality of fiscal resources, compensation packages, and relationships among all staff. The current areas of knowledge regarding compensation packages and fiscal resources were excluded from this examination primarily because these areas are not often controlled by the local school site.

***Discipline and safety.*** Several studies have documented a positive correlation between student issues, particularly student discipline issues, and teacher morale (Haberman, 2005; Katkus, 2007; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Loeb et al., 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005). Researchers Abel and Sewell (as cited in

Woods & Weasmer, 2004) have identified stress as a leading complaint among teachers and student misbehavior as a driving force propelling the stress.

The researchers Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2005) examined a convenience sample of 449 elementary and secondary teacher surveys that addressed the factors that destabilizes a teacher's sense of morale and job satisfaction. The findings of this study highlighted the notion that a lack of student motivation and student discipline issues, along with disappointment, isolation, and uncertainty not only negatively affected teacher morale, but were reasons also cited for leaving the profession.

Other studies have shown that although discipline issues are important, teachers are also concerned with meeting the basic needs of their students like having adequate supplies, providing a safe space for learning, and student class size (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Haberman, 2005; Leithwood, & Mcadie, 2007; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Sprague & Walker, 2005; Xiaofu, & Qiwen, 2007).

***Teacher collegiality.*** An increasing body of knowledge in terms of teacher working conditions are the factors which describe the collegiality of the workplace which, generally defined, includes the relationships between school administrators and teachers and interactions among teachers. Several studies cite teacher collegiality, collaboration, and professional interaction as having a significant impact on teacher morale (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Flores, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Professional support was found to be highly correlated with increased teacher morale, as presented in a study conducted by Weiss (cited in Liu & Meyer, 2005).

In a study administered by The Center for Social and Emotional Education (2007) researchers asserted that connectivity is a fundamentally important aspect of the school climate. Furthermore, in Gumbayi's (2007) quantitative study, teachers were asked to comment on and rate seven distinct organizational factors; researchers found a relevant link between school climate, teacher morale, and commitment (CSEE, 2007). Other qualitative studies, such as Flores (2004) and his work on the impact of school culture and leadership on teaching, have reported collegiality linked to teacher morale.

It is important to note that the qualitative studies presented in this section converge with Gumbayi's quantitative findings and the qualitative findings of Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006), who facilitated a qualitative study that investigated the practices of 25 administrators revealing links to school atmosphere and teacher isolation. Bridges (2011), in her dissertation on the aspects of teacher working conditions that affect teachers, stated "school climates and working conditions that fostered individualism and competition, rather than collegiality and group goals, were intrinsically related to teachers feeling isolated, separated, lost, and discouraged" (page 15).

The research in this area also supports the notion that "collegiality is not a fully legitimate end in itself unless it can be shown to affect, directly or indirectly, the nature or the degree of pupil development" as purported by Haberman (as cited in Flores, 2004 page 301). Hargaves adds to this body of knowledge by arguing that some teachers enjoy collaboration and benefit from it, while other teachers simply enjoy the autonomy of professional independence. The diverse views of this section present a reaffirmation of the unique individual needs of both teachers and of their work environments.

*School atmosphere.* Understanding the complex nature of teacher working conditions and its relation to teacher morale can be a daunting task because of myriad issues that must be adequately managed. For example, teachers often cite the preservation of instructional time as a key factor of the school working conditions (Leithwood and Mcadie, 2007). The researchers work exposes the notion that teachers on average work 53 hours per week and teachers are asked to perform extra duties or work that may impede on their instructional time, or take them away from completing tasks necessary to their work; when this happens their morale begins to dissipate and their stress level begins to rise.

Excessive paper work and the burden of such non-teaching demands as hall monitoring, bus duty, and lunch room supervision also add to teachers' feeling of stress, reduces their morale and commitment to the school, and increases the likelihood of moving to another school or another line of work (Leithwood & Mcadie, 2007, page 43).

Furthermore, job satisfaction studies have investigated the relationship between teacher morale and teachers' locus of control (Crossman & Harris, 2006). The findings from this study suggest that how teachers view their relationships (either internally or externally within their control) can impact morale. Additionally, results showed that teachers who viewed their relationships as internal to their control experienced higher levels of morale and job satisfaction in contrast to their colleagues who viewed their relationships as being external to their control. Nevertheless, teachers are asked to change the minds of our bright children, and, despite that they have the constant daily reminders

that they make less than most other professions (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Zembylas & Pampanastasiou, 2005), they must remain resilient and motivated.

Ingersoll (2001), using the Schools and Staffing Survey in the 1980s and 1990s and the Teacher Follow-up Survey in 1991-1992, found that schools providing greater autonomy, influence, and administrative support (as reported by the teachers themselves) and schools with fewer disciplinary problems had lower levels of teacher attrition.

**Urban leadership in learning organizations.** Leadership is a key component of organizational improvement (Collins, 2001; Fullan, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2009; NAESP, 2002; NASSP, 2009; Sparks, 2005). Several of the studies that addressed specific factors, such as teacher morale and retention, have identified administrative leadership as a major influence (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Leithwood, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006). The notion that school leadership does not exist within a vacuum is a widely accepted concept among the education professional community. Therefore, leadership has been identified as a key variable in the body of research regarding both teacher collaboration and retention.

Emerging organizations have a locus of three key elements—leadership, structure, and relationships. Lambert (2012) suggests emergence arises from the experiences that interact and create conditions greater than the sum of the parts. Therefore, leadership characteristics are important but more important are the structures that are put in place that meet the relational needs of the employee through positive interactions.

***Distributive leadership.*** Several researchers share the common view that teachers' commitment toward their school is affected by the leadership in schools (Koh, Steers, &

Terborg, 1995; Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). Most of the past studies have focused on the teacher's commitment toward the school and not the impact of a particular leadership style (e.g., scientific management and machine theory). However, in more recent research literature, the traditional leadership studies are being replaced with studies investigating the collective-leadership models which stress the sharing of leadership and decision making practices (Bush & Glover, 2003; Goleman, 2002; Gronn, 2000). While the role of the formal leader is significant, the hallmark of the successful distributive leader is their ability to influence members of the organization to collectively accomplish meaningful work toward the organization's goals.

Researchers' support the claim that leadership can no longer be regarded as an important characteristic of one individual school leader, but rather as a process shaped by daily interactions between the school leader and members of the school organization (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004). More specifically, urban schools cannot afford to permit their principals alone to provide the leadership needed to effectively supervise and manage their unique and complex schools.

There has been an intense ongoing trend examining the impact of morals and ethics as an essential component of effective urban school leadership for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. This is a radical move away from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century leadership worldview that emerged the thinking for the professionalization of education leaders. Commonly, referred to as transformational leadership, James Burns (1978) is best known for the origins of transformational leadership as a moral and ethical approach for leading organizations.

The challenges our urban public schools face are superimposed by the reality that our competitive globalized economy makes it imperative that future urban schools are led by caring and competent leaders who understand the importance of shared leadership. Transformative leadership requires leaders be equipped with the ability to identify and develop shared values. The result of transformative leadership is a community in which members are more motivated, desire the same outcomes, and where leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of vision, performance and motivation (Burns, 1978)

***Urban transformational leadership.*** Researchers Arriaza and Henze (2012) have identified four approaches for guiding the actions of urban transformational leadership to build and sustain healthy conditions for student learning. The transformational leadership movement conveys the assumption that the school leader understands his/her role as an agent and is willing to rise up against social and cultural inequities. The literature defines agency along two distinct elements, structure and culture. To understand the element of structure, we should refer to Habermas (1987), who lends the idea of a “systems world” where school leaders use their agency to plan the arrangement of school functions directed by specific objectives and strategies. Simply put, structures are diverse roles that enable an organization to execute its set goals. To understand the element of culture we have to refer to the broad definition developed by researchers who refer to culture as the material, mental, social, and behavioral products that humans collectively create (Mukhopadhyay, Henze & Moses, 2007). The literature implies that schools in many

ways are a microcosm of our society and are significantly influenced by school leadership decisions.

An analogy of the work that needs to get done in urban public schools could be seen as the old African proverb which asserts “it takes a village to raise a child”. It is ignorant to place the blame of underachieving students on the children themselves or their families. Schools must accept some responsibility and implement processes that will allow for qualified teachers to effectively teach urban school students.

To successfully engage the challenges of today’s urban public schools, a new type of educational leadership is in high demand, one that approaches education with a twin vision that includes equity and adequacy (Arriaza & Henze, 2012). The new type of leadership is referred to as transformation leadership.

Transformative urban leaders oppose the deficit attribution model, the core of which posits that the genetics, culture and social class of a person is determinative of their ability to excel academically (Arriaza & Henze, 2012). Essentially, the deficit attribution model is founded on scientifically disproved theories such as; the human species is made up of superior and inferior races (id.) Although disproved, this theory remains present in academic discourse (id.). Urban schools are primarily composed of minority students who are students of the inferior races, according to those who buy into the deficit attribution model. Followers of the deficit attribution model place the burden of responsibility for a student’s failure to excel academically exclusively on the children’s and families shoulders while relieving the educational institutions of any

responsibility (Arriaza & Henze, 2012). Transformative urban leaders differ, in that they lay bare deficit attributions and shift responsibility to the institution. (id.).

The linking of transformational leadership and urban schools has the impetus to immediately begin the healing process for many of our more challenged urban schools. Four approaches are summarized to guide effective transformational leadership practices for urban leaders as proposed by Arriaza and Henze (2012) 1) a commitment that culture is not operationalized through a deficit model, 2) a commitment that builds healthy intergroup relations, 3) a commitment that recognizes one's self both in the local and global aspect, and 4) a commitment that academic and applied preparation is enhanced. These commitments need to be reconciled continuously with the understanding of the impact social, cultural and intellectual capital transposes in daily interactions within an urban school environment.

Our American history over time has placed the burden of educating low-income youth citizens solely on the backs of teachers. The first approach for transformative urban leaders to begin to shift their organizational school cultures is to incorporate healthy intergroup relations, as presented by Arriaza and Henze (2012). Generally speaking, this typically includes removing both physical and emotional harms from the school. As a result, four dimensions for improving interethnic relations were presented that include affirming identity, building community, cultivating student leadership, and addressing root causes of conflict.

The first dimension for improving internal ethnic relations primarily involves emphasizing how we are different, and that these differences are valued, important

resources (Arriaza, & Henze, 2012). Next, the idea of building community helps the employees see how they are alike and how purpose is used to obtain teacher ownership of the school's outcomes through shared practices. The notion of cultivating student school leadership is another important dimension for building healthy interethnic relations among schools. The assumption is that by identifying a group of students who can adequately support the voices of their student body, the organization is able to include all voices in the conversation for future improvement.

Henze et al., suggest that if some of the school staff exhibit racist attitudes, if tracking of certain groups places them in less demanding classes, or if informal segregation prevents individuals from coming to know members of other groups, transformative leaders must find ways to bring these issues to the surface and engage the school community in finding solutions (Henze, et al., 2002). The school community will benefit from the positive interactions described in the work of the transformational urban school leader. The framework presented describes the organization as being out of balance when only one dimension is activated.

**Professional learning organizations.** As a means of standardizing the teacher learning process, the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development was selected as the accountability instrument used to validate the professional development initiative (NSDC, 2003). The criteria used to establish effective professional learning in education is benchmarked using 12 standards grouped into three strands: (a) context, (b) process, and (c) content.

The first strand sets the conditions in place for professional development to function, often referred to as the context (NSDC, 2003). Organizations that effectively establish an adequate context for professional learning perform a dual role of aiding both the adult and organizational learning processes (Easton, 2004). Plainly stated context is the landscape for professional learning (DuFour, 2001) and it is the most important factor for improving student learning (Sparks, 2003).

The second strand (process) suggests that the best way to improve professional practice depends a lot on context (Easton, 2004), which includes the parameters and instruments for quality professional learning. The tools of process often include but are not limited to, data collection and analysis; shared decision making; collaboration knowledge, and skills; and system learning. Richard Dufour (2001) asserts that process is the “how” of professional learning.

The third strand (content) focuses on standards that ensure professional learning is focused on improving student learning, and emphasizes that the focus must be clear for progress to occur (Easton, 2004). Content is often referred to as the environment for schools to operate (Dufour, 2001). In a report on powerful designs for professional learning, Easton (2004) summarizes the content process:

Help prepare educators to understand and appreciate all students, create supportive learning environments for them, and have high expectations for their achievement; Help deepen educators’ content knowledge and ability to provide instruction and assessment so students can meet high academic standards; and

Help provide educators with knowledge and skills to appropriately involve stakeholders outside the classroom (page 5).

**Professional learning community systems.** Through a review of the literature the researcher discovered four professional learning community systems. The systems include: (a) Dufour and Eaker's (1998) PLC model, (b) Hord's (1997) PLC Model, (c) Marzano, Waters, and McNully's (2005) purposeful community model, and (d) Wenger and Snyder's (2000) communities of practice model. For the purposes of this study we will only focus on Dufour and Eaker's (1998) model when referring to professional learning communities.

***Dufour and Eaker model.*** The Dufour and Eaker professional learning community model is based upon three fundamental principles: (a) ensuring all students learn, (b) continuous collaboration, and (c) focusing on results.

First the fundamental principle of ensuring all students learn is a vague outcome; however it requires a process of healthy courageous conversations to obtain. It is vitally important for the school leadership to assess whether or not the staff accept the notion that all students can learn. Peter Senge (1990) asserts that one way leaders can accomplish this task is by incorporating the discipline of mental minds. Other experts claim that a comprehensive, relevant data overview revealing school-wide performance outcomes must be shared with teachers (Thompson et al., 2004). The primary goal is to find a viable platform for helping teachers discover some of the gaps (in their thinking) and biases that often hinders them from changing their behaviors.

The second fundamental principle of a professional learning is creating a culture of continuous collaboration (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Several studies (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Donner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008; Graham, 2007; Little, 1982) support the importance of collaboration. The development of high-performing teams is a by-product of collaborative professional communities. Researchers support the claim that in successful schools, teachers reflected on instruction and worked collaboratively (Little, 1990). The body of research on the concept of collaboration is growing dramatically, however meeting the high expectations of this organizational model stills remains a mystery. In a quantitative study examining collaboration, Tschannen-Moran (2001) found that trust is a necessity if schools plan to reap benefits from collaboration.

The third principle of a professional learning community focuses on student results through the use of a variety of commonly agreed upon assessments and data (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The common assessments are often referred to as formative assessments. These formative assessments permit teachers to see outcomes to identify learning gaps during a unit of study, by allowing for instructional modifications that are deemed necessary to improving learning outcomes (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). This process continues as learning outcomes are reached and new goals are set.

***Professional support for teachers.*** Teachers emerge as professionals through the daily activities they facilitate in the classroom. Recent studies show that a “new paradigm” for professional development has emerged from the ineffective traditional one-day model workshop model to one that provides greater opportunity for teacher learning (Stein, Smith, & Silver, 199). Professional development for teachers is more

than scheduling an outside expert or arranging a set time for teachers to meet, it must foster an understanding that every day is a professional development day (Tienken & Stonaker, 2007).

Researchers Moller and Pankake (2006) refer to professional learning as “tools to be used, but the real learning happens in the cycle of conversations, actions, evaluations, and new actions that is supported through intentional leadership that gently pressures and nurtures teachers. This inquiry process must be organizationally embedded rather than externally imposed to build teachers knowledge and skills or increase human capital within the school’s social networks” (page 128-129).

The implications for urban school leaders is that effective professional development helps us better understand how to deal with change and the steps needed to adequately respond to the change. Research on effective professional development practices for teachers identify key principle learning experiences that impact teacher’s knowledge and practices (Hawley & Valli, 1999; NSDC 2003). The literature supporting effective professional development of teachers for this study focuses on three intertwined themes that include content, process, and context.

The idea of content highlights the substantive information that prepares, deepens, and provides educators with the knowledge to improve learning for all students. Linda Darling-Hammond (1995) articulates that in terms of the content of professional development it is most useful when it emphasizes “concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation and reflection (page 598). Professional development focused on deepening teacher content knowledge and instructional practices have also shown to

improve student outcomes when teachers are engaged in sustained, collaborative professional development (Saxe, Gearheart, & Nasir, 2001).

The literature on effective professional development suggests that the organizational culture should be collegial and friendly. Researchers Elmore and Burke (1997) found that professional development is more effective when it is not performed in isolation. The isolated opportunities often are not coherently linked to an overall school professional development plan and often do not provide enough sustained support. Furthermore, research on effective professional development emphasizes the importance of collaborative and collegial learning environments and communities of practice in schools (Knapp, 2003). Urban schools can definitely benefit from healthier and friendlier learning environments for their students. Additionally, it should be noted that collaborative practices have been found to be effective in promoting school change that extend beyond the individual classrooms (Hord, 1997; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996).

The future of urban public schools will be significantly impacted by how teachers are supported in their efforts to educate tomorrow's youth. Johnson and Birkeland (2003), in their descriptive analysis of a small sample of 50 first- and second-year teachers in Massachusetts public schools, found that the 22 percent of teachers who resigned felt that they had not received adequate support or resources to perform their jobs successfully. In general, teachers were more likely to stay in schools with "integrated professional cultures" organized around collegial efforts rather than schools organized around veteran- or novice-oriented activities. Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999), using longitudinal data on public school teachers in Texas from 1980 – 1996,

found that higher per-pupil expenditures and increased professional support staff were associated with reduced attrition from teaching. It is widely recognized that professional support for teachers is important to their professional growth.

***Teacher collaborations impact on teacher working conditions.*** It is highly recognized in the field of education that teachers rarely see each other in professional settings, speak to each other using professional language, or interact with each other in professional ways (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Mullen & Hutingler, 2008). Educational expert Richard Dufour refers to high school teachers as a collection of independent contractors connected by a common parking lot (as cited by Dumas, 2010). The relationships teachers establish are highly significant to the overall climate of the school and the ability to optimize performance.

Our urban schools of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must develop vibrant and healthy learning environments for students. Meaningful professional dialogue, focused on improving student learning, is a key ingredient for improving schools (Schmoker, 2006). The American public school system must find more creative ways to support urban school success. Schmoker (2006) refers to teacher isolation as one of the greatest barriers to improving student learning.

Evidence shows that “the single most important factor for successful school restructuring, and the first order of business for those interested in increasing the capacity of their schools, is building a collaborative internal environment” (Eastwood & Seashore Louis, 1992, page 215). Teachers hold a wealth of knowledge in terms of content and experience within the field of education. Therefore, getting teachers to embrace the

significance of collaboration can go a long way toward meeting the schools' expected goals.

*Characteristics of effective teacher collaboration.* The Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, University of Wisconsin (1995) published a report that expressed collective autonomy as being a combination of four key areas of collaboration. As summarized in their report, the three key elements include: (a) teachers who work productively—to participate in reflective dialogue to learn more about professional issues, (b) observe and react to one another's teaching, curriculum, and assessment practices, and (c) engage in joint planning and curriculum development (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995, page 31).

The report facilitated by researchers Newmann and Wehlage (1995) goes even further to describe the three key areas of collaboration as implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment (page 31). When groups are able to function at high levels in the three key areas previously mentioned, it facilitates the development of shared purposes. Therefore, it appears that the basic elements of curriculum, instruction, and assessment are the driving forces of collaboration that, when done effectively, lead to the development of collective autonomy.

Schools often lack the necessary structures to support healthy collaborative environments. Effective collaborative requires environments to go beyond encouraging the idea; they put systems in place to support the change effort. Richard Dufour (2011) warns school leaders against mandating collaboration for fear of what he identifies as “contrived congeniality,” which simply means teachers agree with the concept but rarely

will put the concept into practice (page 58). It should be understood that teachers are professionals who have a vested interest in their career; therefore improving their professional craft should be designed in a way that is connected to their interest.

Individuals of mandated collaborative groups have been found to have a limited sense of efficacy resulting in feelings of powerlessness (Bebout et al., 1992). The implication here for school leaders is that they must do a thorough assessment of their school culture in order to coherently align their collaborative structures. A study of teacher efficacy revealed that teachers primarily lack support from colleagues and administrators (Goodard et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been found that top-down changes to education have not been found to be conducive to promoting educational changes (Thang et al., 2011). When school leaders impose high collaborative expectations for their teachers they must ensure their efforts include the teacher's voice and provide adequate support systems to transfer the change.

A 2006 investigation of the relationships of adults in schools acknowledges that interactions among teachers and administrators are linked to school culture (Barth, 2006). The interactions of teachers and administrators are the driving forces behind healthy and cooperative relationships in schools. Several researchers who have produced seminal work on collaborative organizational structures support the assertion that teachers need ample opportunity for collaboration with peers and adequate time to reflect on their philosophical views of the teaching and learning process (Chai et al., 2009; Drag-Severson, 2007). Other researchers assert that finding the time for collaboration in schools is "both a necessity and a responsibility" (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007 page

15). As instructional leaders, site level school administrators must understand that collaboration is a cyclical process that continuously engages teachers in dialogue about instructional strategies and student performance.

Banathy (2003) defines dialogue as “a disciplined, consensus-building process of collaborative communication” (page 11). The consensus-building process as described by Banthy’s (2003) work identifies the primary two types of dialogue as generative and strategic. “Generative dialogue evolved from campfire talk and the practice of storytelling by our ancestors long ago. It reveals shared values and viewpoints of individuals involved in the dialogue. Strategic dialogue involves work using a common strategy or plan of action on a particular issue” (as cited by Jacobs, 2011, page 29 diss.) For example, researchers Warger and Pugach (1996) presented a four-step plan for collaborative teams to function effectively:

- Step 1. Participating teachers establish trust among one another and set the group’s expectations.
- Step 2. Group decides together on the problem, issue, or goal that will serve as the common focus for the team regarding students or curriculum.
- Step 3. All participants engage in a brainstorming session in an effort to generate solutions for the team’s chosen issue.
- Step 4. The group formulates a plan to be implemented and later discussed with regard to how the plan’s effectiveness will be assessed. (as cited by Jacobs, 2011)

Several researchers in the field support the notion that effective collaboration requires shared decision making for curriculum and instruction issues and also warrants a joint

agreement about the exact problems they are addressing using collaborative structures (Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillio, & Urban, 2011; Clift & Say, 1988). More importantly, school leaders need to establish the trust of their faculty. For example, a study conducted Lick (2005) on Whole-Faculty Study Groups, found that a critical piece of the collaborative workplace environment process is that principals must make it abundantly clear to teachers that it is not a choice as to whether they will collaborate with colleagues on how to improve student learning. Creating this organizational norm helps to establish the defined playing field for the collaborative process to be put in practice.

The process of teachers working in their silos has proven over time to be an ineffective process for harboring teacher effectiveness. Schmoker (2005) supports the notion that teachers do not learn best in traditional forms of professional development. Learning is an active process which often is not supported in traditional forms of professional development. Researchers Joyce and Showers (1995) found many that ideas and activities are learned and implemented at some level as a result of workshops, conferences, in-services, and trainings (a.k.a. traditional professional development) (Joyce & Showers, 1995). Conversely, Schmoker (2005) contends that, in comparison to traditional professional development, teachers learn best in job-embedded environments-- in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching (page 141).

The process of teachers teaching each other, supplemented by external and traditional forms of professional development, has the greatest potential impact for creating a collaborative environment (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Other researchers explain that the use of teams is critical in creating a collaborative environment (Youngs & King, 2002). The

shared experience teachers obtain through structured and unstructured collaborative teams creates opportunities to help them develop and construct innovative ideas and solutions. For example, a study focusing on teachers learning to collaborate discovered that sharing and maximizing resources among teachers allowed the decrease of costs associated with teacher professional development while maintaining increased performance (Baldwin & Chang, 2007).

*Potential benefits of collaboration relevant to education.* McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) found that teacher collaboration in strong professional learning communities improves the quality and equity of student learning, promotes discussions that are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion, and fosters collective responsibility for student success (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The challenge for most professional learning communities often stems from the lack of clear goals and expectations. Chenoweth (2009) acknowledges that

“high-performing, high-poverty schools build deep teacher collaboration that focuses on implementing student learning into the culture of the school. Structures and systems are set up to ensure teachers work together rather than in isolation, and the point of their collaboration is to improve instruction and ensure all students learn” (page 17).

Teacher collaboration supports professional development by providing the platform for teachers to co-construct knowledge, share innovative ideas, design implementation plans, and reflect on their actions. Stancil’s (2011) research on team teaching revealed that teachers working together get better results with students. Other

studies such as Piercey's (2010) found that "Teacher collaboration is a prime determinant of school improvement" (page 54). A sense of belonging is created by teachers when structures permit them to collaborate on a regular and consistent basis. In a study investigating the elements of teacher collaboration that impact teacher effectiveness, researchers found that when teachers share their ideas and have the opportunity to reflect on these ideas and instructional practices the results lead to improved instructional strategies, student performance and colleague-to-colleague support (Jacobs, 2011).

Furthermore, studies support the claim that students overwhelmingly benefit when their teachers collaborate (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Sleinger, & Beckingham, 2004; Dufour, 2007). More specifically, a study conducted by Hattie (2009) revealed that collaboration among teachers benefited student academic achievement and teacher instruction (as cited by Jacobs, 2011, page 45).

Other research by Little (as cited by Plauborg, 2009) reported that when teachers observed each other they gained awareness on issues impacting the learning organization and great insight into each other's classroom practices. It should be noted that collaboration is not a sanctuary for teacher socialization. Dufour (2011) cautions teachers not to make collaboration a getting along affair; rather they need to maintain a continuous focus on getting results. Structured opportunities for teachers to engage in the process of sharing ideas impose different perspectives which may come in conflict with those of other teachers. This form of conflict when controlled can evolve into faculty trust which has been identified as a critical element in developing and maintaining collaborative structures (Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillio, & Urban, 2011).

Professional development has been a central part of school reform over the past three decades. Many researcher's support the notion that, when teachers develop consensus on what good teaching practices look like, teaching and learning can be enhanced (Barber & Mourshed, 2009; Goddard et al., 2007). For example, a study conducted by Shavelson et al., (2009) involving aligning teacher practices found that teachers appreciated "the importance of teacher engagement for any education innovation no matter how transparent it seems" (page 310).

In a 2007 study on professional learning, findings substantiate the importance of common planning time among collaborating teachers; For example, it is widely accepted in the K-12 literature that high school environments are particularly constrained by their common core class structure; however, some researchers support the notion that higher levels of consistency among teacher common planning helps to facilitate curriculum development (Graham, 2007). Another study conducted by Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillio, and Urban (2011) reveals that teachers were more motivated to meeting the needs of all students and showed clearer vision of their schools pedagogy design.

Research conducted by Snow-Gerono (2005) revealed findings that suggest teacher collaboration is a low-cost and greatly beneficial form of teacher professional development that satisfies teachers and transcends great benefits to all parties engaged. More specifically, an empirical study on teacher collaboration practices acknowledged findings that support improved efficacy, attitudes towards teaching and levels of trust as a means of teachers engaging in collective efforts to support student learning (Dumas, 2010).

In a study looking at the benefits of collaborative communities, Barth (2006) recognized four different levels of collaborative relationships among teachers; parallel play, adversarial relationships, relationships, and collegial relationships. “Parallel play is the level at which teachers do not collaborate and rarely interact intentionally with one another...the adversarial level of relationships represents teachers that put forth some effort in collaboration but see it as a competition for recognition...Congenial are personal and friendly relationships... Collegial require collaboration among educators, observations of one another, and the sharing of craft knowledge for meaningful improvement” (as cited by Jacobs, 2011, page 48).

Evidence also shows that teachers benefit from observations of other teachers’ successes and failures by forcing them to examine their own strategies for teaching. This study also provides findings that support the notion that teachers observing practices of other teachers increases social trust, teacher efficacy, and teacher effectiveness (Fischer & Firestone, 2006). Therefore, if we are going to be successful at educating tomorrow’s urban youth we will need to creatively design and implement systems that support and secure the teachers we currently have in the system.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Figure 2 illuminates the proposed model tested using the data gathered, organized, and analyzed in this study. The model demonstrates the interconnected paths of urban leadership traits, PLC characteristics, and positive teacher working conditions as they

pertain to supporting learning environments for increased teacher retention. The proposed model postulates the critical ebbs and flows necessary to create a health working environment that establishes the conditions necessary to increase teacher retention.

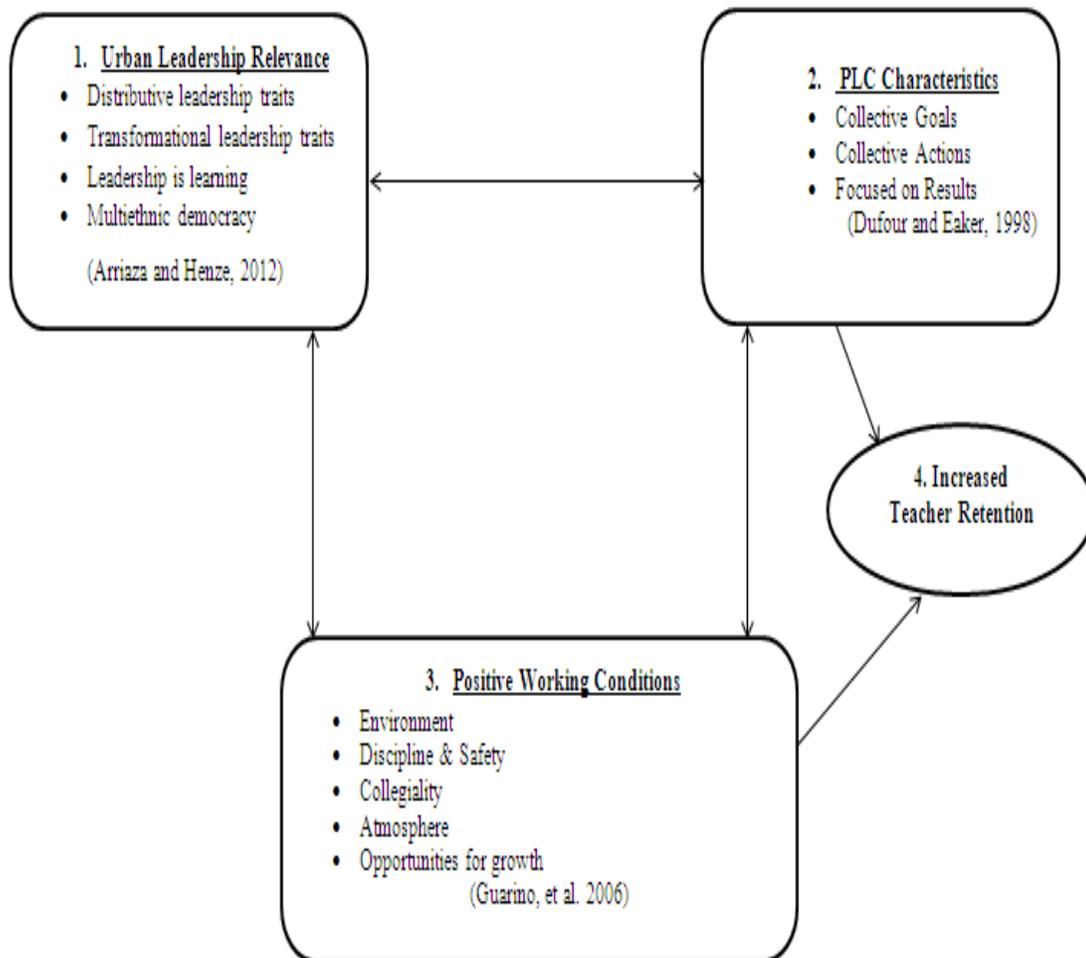


Figure 2. Teacher Collaboration Evaluation Framework used to depict the interactions among urban leadership, PLC Characteristics, and positive working conditions necessary to improve teacher retention.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This exploration focuses on factors that affect teacher retention of urban school environments, including understanding how factors such as teacher collaboration affect urban school working conditions in terms of their impact on teacher retention. As a result, a mixed-method analysis was implemented as a platform to highlight root causes and to help change the patterns of educational inequalities that have plagued urban schools. According to Yin (2005), the most important condition to consider when choosing a research data collection method is to identify the type of research question(s) being asked. How and why questions are more explanatory in nature. A case study is the preferred research method when “how” or “why” questions are being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2003). This research asks teachers to define the nature of their working conditions. As such, case studies were conducted to specifically answer in what manner does teacher collaboration positively impact teacher retention in urban school environments.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study incorporates the pragmatic worldview as the lens for better understanding the complex issues urban schools face in terms of retaining effective

teachers. The pragmatic worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions and solutions to problems (Creswell, 2010). It can be inferred that this approach offers more than a documentation and record of previous experiences. The ultimate goal of the pragmatic approach is to focus on methods; researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). In order to effectively reverse urban school failure, school leaders will need to incorporate more effective social inquiry tools that focus on methods as a means for counteracting the multilayered challenges their students face that impede their ability to be successful in school.

Researchers Tashakkori and Teddie (1998) assert that the pragmatic worldview focuses attention on the research problem in social science research and then uses pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about a problem. I have made a conscious decision not to commit to any one system of philosophy and reality, thereby creating a more flexible response. A noncommittal approach is hoped to allow me to appropriately address the complex nature of the urban teacher retention problem by incorporating a multiple case study. Pragmatists take seriously the assumption that we are historically and socially situated, that when we read the world we can never be quite sure if we are reading the world or reading ourselves (Cherryholmes, 1992). Therefore, to unravel some of those hard-to-resolve issues I believe that a varied research investigation approach is best equipped to help identify viable alternatives for urban school improvement.

## **Research Methodology**

As stated above, the methodology used in this dissertation is a case study. In researching the literature on teacher retention it was deemed necessary to use a case study due to the complex nature of the issue. Merriam (2001) describes a multiple case study process used to gain an understanding of complex issues of concern. This inquiry tool was preferred because its design permits close examinations of the selected variables. A sequential multiple case study approach was used which incorporates survey, focus groups, and face-to-face interviews. This strategy permitted me an opportunity to capture data from different data sources at different points in time, which allows for a better understanding of the complex nature of teacher retention dynamic in an urban high school setting.

Incorporating a sequential multiple case study helped to construct a strategic data management system to aid the unraveling of the teacher retention phenomena. This study was designed in three phases: In Phase 1, I conducted a survey. The preliminary findings were filtered into the focus group semi-structured data collection process. During Phase 2, I facilitated two focus groups to fill in missing information about how teachers defined teacher collaboration and its impact of teacher retention. Lastly, during Phase 3, outcomes from the focus groups were interwoven into the face-to-face interview questions and presented to participants as a means of developing a deeper understanding of how teachers view the impact of teacher collaboration on teacher retention. Phase 3, of

this study permitted the gaps of unanswered information from Phase 1 and 2 to be filled with first-hand teacher experiences.

This study seeks to legitimize its framework for designing and testing effective models for improving teacher retention using teacher collaboration as the medium to investigate teacher retention practices in an urban high school setting. The goal ultimately is to establish a foundation for addressing the inequitable institutionalized practices and structures that have over time resulted in higher levels of teacher turnover and ultimately urban school failure.

**Procedures.** This research was implemented to go beyond merely understanding the impact urban teacher collaboration efforts have on teacher retention by conducting the following acts:

- Phase 1—survey administration
- Phase 2—focus group interview facilitation
- Phase 3—face to face interviews

***Phase 1 - Survey Administration.*** During Phase 1 of this research design, a survey was implemented as the primary source of quantitative data to be collected. Fact-gathering was the primary focus for this segment. Incorporating Oppenheim's (1992) idea of surveys was a prolonged and arduous exercise. It included cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires for data collection with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Babbie, 1990). Surveys helped quantify the teachers' perceptions of teacher collaboration and its relationship to teacher retention.

***Survey design.*** Survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population (Creswell,

2010). A 67-question self-administered survey was distributed to 82 credentialed teachers with one or more years of experience in urban schools. The survey was intended to capture the teachers' understanding of teacher collaboration and its impact on teacher satisfaction and/or retention in an urban high school setting. The survey was composed of three different types of questions, which allowed the researcher to triangulate the data by asking the same question in three different ways (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using a 5-point Likert scale multiple-choice as well as open-ended response questions, participant results were presented within the context of the central themes which ground this research study. The themes included teachers' current perceptions of their working conditions, key aspects of teacher collaboration that support teacher retention, and the impact teacher collaboration has on teacher retention.

***Survey instrument.*** A school-wide survey was administered to frame an understanding of the various factors that impact teacher retention including collaboration during phase one (see Appendix 1). A compilation of a national staff instrument (NSDC, 2003) and a California state wide teacher retention instrument (Futernick, 2007) was used to design the Teacher Working Conditions Survey instrument. The survey was organized into six general domains: Demographic, Professional Learning, Collaboration, Leadership, Internal Environment, and External Environment.

The goals of the NSDC (2003) inventory were to provide a voice for teachers and administrators' allowing them to frame what is important in regards to areas in need of improvement, to provide school characteristics, and to provide data on working conditions to local school leaders. The goal of NSDC was to reveal the teachers' insight

of the key terms that had the greatest impact on school reform. It should be noted that this research also helped improve the school of study's ability to identify professional development that positively impacts teaching and learning (see appendix 1 for survey tool).

Questions 1-12 addressed demographic information about the participants. Particularly, questions 13 – 46 of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey required teachers to use a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was *strongly disagree*, 2 was *disagree*, 3 was *agree*, 4 was *moderately agree*, and 5 was *strongly agree*, to identify their level of agreement. Five of the most significant variables are presented. The variables evaluated include (a) Retention, (b) Satisfaction, (c) Professional Development, (d) Teacher Collaboration, and (e) Leadership.

Questions 47 – 67 categorically addressed retention issues and used the Likert-response range “never to always” to determine their relative scoring rating. The Teacher Working Conditions survey used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extreme negative*) to 5 (*extreme positive*) to determine each element's rating. The significant variable examined in this range of questions addresses both the internal and external environment.

***Variables.*** Ten variables are used in this analysis. The dependent variables are teacher satisfaction and teacher retention. Three demographic variables are used: gender, ethnicity, and experience. The five working condition variables are professional development, teacher collaboration, leadership, internal, and external environment.

***Satisfaction.*** Satisfaction in this study is used to gauge the strength of the teachers' perceptions in terms of their willingness to remain at the school of study. The

emphasis on job design theory integration helps identify key internal factors that support retention. Consequently, the strength of a teacher's willingness to stay is used as the dependent variable to represent teacher retention in this study.

***Retention.*** The purposeful collaborative approach is used to integrate a diverse selection of teacher retention research-based inquiry questions along with the researcher's knowledge as a means for providing a more relevant instrument to study the school's unique environment. This section was created to obtain teachers' willingness to remain at their current site.

***Professional learning.*** Our teachers need to continuously improve their teaching skills and knowledge in order to teach our increasingly diverse students in their complex natural environments. Therefore, obtaining a more in-depth comprehension of teachers' views as they pertain to professional development issues could provide more effective ways of supporting teacher growth.

***Collaboration.*** Retaining and developing teachers already in the workforce is the path to improved teacher workforce (Ingersoll et al., 2001a; NCTAF, 2003). Therefore the professional development plan for each urban school of the future will need to be uniquely designed to meet the needs of the local environment created and implemented by its collaborative teams of teachers.

***Leadership.*** Leadership was chosen as a significant variable because it directly impacts a school's ability to create and maintain positive working conditions for teachers. The principal is considered to be the locus of control for schools. By better understanding

teachers' perceptions of their leaders we can better understand the working conditions of the school.

***Environment.*** The study's final survey inquiry tool is a combination of both internal and external factors that impact the teacher's working environment.

***Identification of sample.*** This study incorporated a Single-Stage Random Sampling approach. A single-stage random sampling approach is a practical solution for conducting a reliable survey, where the idea of taking a simple random sample of individuals across a large geographical location would be practically impossible (Cresswell, 2010).

Each participant was identified through a random selection procedure to participate in this study. Random sampling is the process of selecting a sample in such a way that all individuals in the defined population have an equal and independent chance of being selected for the sample (Cresswell, 2010). The random selection process for this study was established by emailing the 82 full-time credentialed teachers employed at Barack Obama High School a study participation invitation.

In an attempt to safeguard against issues of access regarding the technology digital-divide, a paper copy of the email was placed in each teacher's mailbox extending an offer to take a paper version of the survey. No request for paper surveys were received from any eligible participant. All participants who completed 100% of the survey questions were included in the final sample. Of the 82 potential participants, 29 (35.4%) completed 100% of the survey questions which make up the final sample.

The beginning section of the survey included demographic questions about the study participants; a breakdown of this information is provided. The survey participant's teaching subject area are displayed in Table 1. The sample population of high school teachers is diverse, with teachers representing seven different subject areas. One of the objectives of the research was to ensure a diverse collection of knowledge and information from a diverse set of sources. Close to one-third of the teachers (31.3%) were identified as being special education teachers. The Special Education teachers sampled in this study over represent the target population. The core subjects of Math, English, Science, and Social Science comprised a total of 59.5% of the survey participants.

Table 1

<i>Teaching Subject Area</i>						
Special Education	English	Math	Science	Social Science	Elective	Other
31.3%	12.5%	18.8%	6.3%	21.9%	3.1%	6.3%

Table 2 reveals the survey participants gender breakdown identified by question 6 as 40.6% and 59.4%, respectively, in terms of female to male. The survey window was reopened in an attempt to improve the gender population stratification for the survey participants. However, final results did not display any changes in the gender population rates.

Table 2  
*Survey Participants Gender Breakdown*

Female	Male
40.6%	59.4%

Participants recorded a relatively high average in the percentage of teacher's earning graduate level degrees. Table 3 shows that over 50% of the teachers completing the survey earned a master's degree.

Table 3  
*Survey's Participants Highest Degree Obtained*

Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree
36.4%	54.5%	9.1%

Table 4 illustrates the ethnic representation in the sampled group. White teachers represented almost 60% of the sample population, while African American teachers were the second highest ethnic group to complete the survey, representing 25% of the sample population.

Table 4  
*Participant's Ethnic Breakdown*

Asian	African American	Hispanic	White	Multi-ethnic	Other
9.4%	25.0%	0.0%	56.3%	6.3%	3.1%

The sample population of high school teachers was quite diverse in their experience as shown in Table 5. Out of the 29 participants who were selected, 51.6% of them indicated having 8 or fewer years of experience, while 48.4% of the teachers

reported having 9 or more years of experience. Approximately, one-fourth of the participants were identified as having 20 or more years of experience. Less than 15% of the survey participants had 4 or fewer years of experience teaching. Almost 40% of the survey participants were identified as having between 5 to 8 years of experience.

Table 5  
*Participant's Years of Experience Teaching*

1st Year	2 - 4 Years	5 - 8 Years	9 - 14 Years	15 - 19 Years	20 + Years
3.2%	9.7%	38.7%	16.1%	9.7%	22.6%

Statistical analysis revealed that the characteristics of the sample group were closely related to the statistics of the population in the areas of experience and ethnicity.

The survey window reopened in an attempt to improve stratification of the population in the areas of gender and ethnicity of the potential participants. Stratified sampling is the process of selecting a sample in a manner that identifies subgroups in a population that is representative of the sample in the same proportion that they exist in the population (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 592). Stratification can be understood to mean that specific characteristics of individuals are represented in the sample and the sample reflects the accurate proportion in the population of individuals with certain characteristics (Fowler, 2002).

Although the response rate of 35.4% appears relatively low, a low response rate is typical for a web-based survey (Nair & Adams, 2009; Shih & Fan, 2009). Shih and Fan

(2009) performed a meta-analysis of several dozen large studies and discovered that the average response rate to email surveys was 33%. As a point of comparison, this study has a response rate 2.4%, higher than the average reported by Shih and Fan.

Additionally, researchers have investigated methods for improving response rates to web-based surveys (Trouteaud, 2004). The study's findings reveal that the style and number of invitations and reminder emails were critical to successful response rates. The findings report that the optimal number of reminders was two, and this is one less than the number of reminders I employed as part of this research study.

**Phase 2 - Focus Group Interview Facilitation.** Focus group conversations were used to collect secondary qualitative data during Phase 2 of this study. As the researcher, I chose to use focus groups as discussions organized to explore and examine teachers' reactions to the relationships between teacher collaboration and teacher retention. Additionally, the focus groups were used to help ground the study by filling in holes in collection of data from the survey instrument. This inquiry strategy helped the researcher better understand teachers' views and experiences in relation to teacher retention issues.

The qualitative tools are designed to set the boundaries for the study, collect information through unstructured or semi structured observations and interviews, and documents and visual materials, in order to archive information. Qualitative research is a more subjective form of research. Its nature is exploratory and open-ended. There were four central methods used to conduct this phase of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

- Participating in the setting;

- Observing directly;
- Interviewing in depth; and
- Analyzing documents and materials.

***Focus groups.*** The teacher focus groups were used to clarify information from the survey inventory. In Phase 2, the perceptions of the teacher's intent to stay in their teaching position, professional development, local school provisions and teacher collaboration were explored to better understand the connection between teacher collaboration and teacher retention (see Appendix B). Additionally, during this phase issues involving the two strands "process" and "content" of the National Professional Development Standards are addressed as a way of contextualizing a discussion around effective teacher professional learning practices that impacts teacher retention, while permitting open and honest discussions regarding teacher collaborations connection to work.

During the focus group participant responses were checked for accuracy and revised if necessary. Focus groups were audio recorded, notated, and transcribed. The thorough feedback was verified through triangulation. Triangulation was accomplished by checking interpretations with individuals interviewed, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, involving the participants in the research analysis phase, and clarifying biases and assumptions. Once the transcription was completed it was authenticated by the participant and coded for final analysis preparation. One copy of each audio and transcription was kept in the home of the primary researcher in a vault and will be destroyed after this dissertation is completed.

**Phase 3 - Face-to-face Interviews.** The purpose of the interviews in Phase 3 was to highlight the root causes of the complex issues and provide recommendations for increasing teacher retention in urban schools. This study incorporates the Qualitative Research Method of In-depth Interviewing (Creswell, 2010), which allowed me to further the body of research that previously existed on the positive effects of teacher collaboration and the various ways to improve teacher retention in urban school districts. A major principle of qualitative research for this study was to purposefully select questions that best help the researcher understand the issue or problem.

Each participant was engaged in a dialogue interview that extended 60 to 90 minutes in duration. Thus, the dialogue consisted of specific interview questions designed to uncover some of the undisclosed issues surrounding teacher collaboration and its impact on teacher retention that has evolved from multiple step case study methodology.

Face-to-face participant interviews were used as the primary qualitative strategy exercised to collect data. I used this method to help foster a better understanding of the variables involved in the study. These interviews involve semi-structured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2010). The face to face format allowed participants to recount their experiences and stories providing the researcher with opportunities to document and record their attitudes and perceptions in an organic, open, and non-threatening manner.

As the primary researcher, I chose to reach out to teachers working in my school to create a site-based action oriented study. After contacting each participant in person to

solicit their approval to participate in the study, they were asked if their preferred means to schedule interview sessions was via email or phone. A structured interview protocol was created by the researcher. The protocol included an interview agenda as well as a set of detailed questions addressing the following topics: teacher retention, working conditions, leadership, and professional learning.

The dialogue began with a brief welcome, introductions, and sharing of an appreciation for participating and contributing towards improving the working conditions for teachers. I reminded participants that the information obtained from the interview was confidential and their identity would not be made public in any way. It was also made clear to participants that direct quotes would be disguised by a pseudonym. Each question was read by the researcher while allowing appropriate wait time for a response.

Throughout the interview, I probed and prompted the participants towards vibrant and rich descriptions of how they defined and understood teacher collaboration and/or its impact on teacher retention. The information gathered in this stage was obtained by the primary researcher and transcribed by his lab assistant during January 2012. The lab assistant was bound by privacy constraints which required the assistant to sign a sworn affidavit validating the accuracy and confidentiality agreements.

After the interview, participant responses were checked for accuracy and revised, if necessary. Interviews were audio recorded, notated, and transcribed. The data was verified through triangulation. Triangulation was accomplished by checking interpretations with individuals interviewed, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, and involving the participants in the research analysis phase to clarify biases

and assumptions. Once the transcription was completed it was authenticated by the participant and coded for final analysis preparation. One copy of each audio and transcription was kept in my home in a vault and destroyed via fire after this dissertation was completed.

**Participants.** The principal acts as the chief executive officer of the school. They have the overall responsibility of providing leadership and direction for the school. The principal is also responsible for effectively managing staffing, budget, facility, and other administrative responsibilities along with ensuring that every child receives an excellent, free, public education. The principal delegates leadership responsibilities to his/her administrative staff in order to increase the probability of ensuring all students receive an adequate education. Therefore, how teachers perceive their leadership has many implications on their willingness to continue with their employment at the school.

In a study of how teacher collaboration impacts school-level retention practices in urban schools, the principal's role is vital because it is the principal who leads the institution. The long term success of the principal and their administrative teams will have a significant impact on the working conditions of the teachers, thereby validating the need to include information from teachers to better understand the dynamics at work for the selected school.

The teacher serves to make the dream of academic achievement and educational opportunity real for every child. Therefore, obtaining a better understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of teachers could lead to a more efficient allocation of

resources. Furthermore, a better understanding of teachers' perceptions could lead to a healthier working environment that could help support student learning.

*Participant selection process.* The primary researcher for this study has identified his school of employment as a purposeful school site for this study. The intention behind purposeful selection was to obtain participants, documents, and other forms of materials that will best help me understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2010). Emphasis was placed on Miles and Huberman's (1994) four identified aspects of selecting qualitative participants: setting, actors, events, and process.

An initial meeting was scheduled for each selected participant. The primary purpose for the initial meeting was to establish a relationship with the selected participants. During the meetings, the primary researcher provided a brief overview of what was being studied. Additionally, the meeting provided participants with the rationale, process, and risk/benefits involved in conducting the study.

Permission and confidentiality documents were explained according to the Social and Behavior Science IRB guidelines. Permission was granted to tape record the interviews, which were later transcribed and made available to participants. At the end of each initial participant meeting a consent letter was obtained from each participant (see Appendix D)

Qualitative research, such as a case study, is based on different assumptions than those presented in traditional quantitative research. Merriam (2001) asserts that qualitative research findings must be real, believable and trustworthy. The validity standards include but are not limited to verifying and checking interpretations with

individuals interviewed, soliciting peer reviews on emerging findings, and clarifying biases and assumptions. This study presents findings that meet the validity standards of qualitative research.

The results from this study support the framework for a teacher collaboration rubric aligned with effective teacher retention strategies to help enhance professional practice in urban school settings.

### **Rationale for Mixed-Method Study**

This study incorporates the pragmatic worldview as a lens for better understanding the complex issues many urban schools are faced with in providing healthy working environments that support teacher retention. The pragmatic worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions and solutions to problems (Creswell, 2010).

The ultimate goal of the pragmatic worldview is to focus on methods; researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). Researchers Tashakkori and Teddie (1998) assert that the pragmatic worldview focuses attention on the research problem in social science research and then uses pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about a problem. On the other hand, Patton (1990) suggests that there is a concern in terms of the application of what works and solutions to problems.

This study makes the assumption that, by not committing to any one system of philosophy and reality, it can better address the complex nature of the problem – teacher retention in urban school districts. School districts are organized and managed in loosely coupled departments. Therefore, to unravel some of those hard-to-resolve issues it is believed that a varied research investigation approach is needed to identify viable alternatives for improvement.

Additionally, this process makes the claim that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts—which include a postmodern turn and a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice and political aims. The impact that quality teachers play in the lives of their students is a major equity issue. When viewed from the perspective of the disenfranchised students who attend our nation’s failing urban public schools, one is able to see the lack of access and opportunity that is imposed upon these students by not being educated by highly effective teachers. The consequences of our actions in terms of addressing the urban teacher retention problem will be critical to the success of the schools that employ these teachers.

### **Summary of Methodology**

Pragmatism predisposes the assumption for the mixed-methods researcher that multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collection and analysis are a highly viable form of reputable research. It is important to note that mixed-method research studies by design are geared toward

illuminating a more holistic picture of phenomena. Therefore this study has deemed it vitally important that a sequential multiple case study methodology be used to guide this exploration.

The inquiry strategies used in this study will integrate the data from (a) surveys (b) focus group interviews, and (c) face-to-face interviews. The data was verified through triangulation. Triangulation was accomplished by checking interpretations with individuals interviewed, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, involving the participants in the research analysis phase, and clarifying biases and assumptions. Generalizations, as a result of a study based on specific cases, are problematic. The results of this study are seen to enhance the practice of a professional in the field of education. The generalizability is limited to schools of similar demographic and geographic characteristics in regards to the teacher retention findings.

The impact of the revolving teacher in their profession transcends to the lives of urban students as a major equity issue for most states and is the cause of many underperforming urban school districts. Urban school districts over recent times have been plagued with the epidemic of being staffed with the least qualified teachers. Quality systems aligned with legitimate accountable and sustainable structures are the interconnected themes argued to improve urban public schools ability to retain teachers. Illuminating real world experiences are necessary preliminary steps toward effecting change. However understanding awareness of a problem rarely changes outcomes, this study is an attempt to go beyond explaining and thus seeks to provide practical tools for improving urban schools.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

As described in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to explore teacher collaboration as an approach to increase teacher retention. Thus, this study set out to examine the possible relationship and role the construct of teacher collaboration plays in a professional learning community as defined by Dufour and Eaker (1998), as well as how it impacts sustaining effective teacher retention practices (Sunil & Ramlall, 2004). This chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey instrument explained in Chapter Three. Chapter Five presents the qualitative data collected from focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The purpose of conducting the mixed-methods was to explore not only if there is a relationship between teacher collaboration and teacher retention but also to understand how these two variables interact.

The study began with a survey instrument that presented demographic, teacher working conditions, professional learning, and teacher collaboration and teacher retention questions. The survey addressed all three research questions postulated. All teachers were invited publically to voluntarily participate in this study at a faculty meeting during the 2011 school year. Each teacher was identified to participate in this study through a random selection procedure. The random selection process for this study was established by emailing each of the 82 full-time credentialed teachers of the target population an

invitation to participate. To seek more depth in survey responses, once the surveys were returned and documented, the survey window reopened for all participants who had not already completed the survey. In addition, two focus groups were conducted to clarify information from the quantitative data and provide a deeper understanding of the issues in practice. Also, six one-on-one interviews were facilitated to help expand the knowledge regarding the connections between teacher collaboration and teacher retention.

Following a narrative of the participants, quantitative data from participant surveys were organized into four themes which address the three research questions presented: community, structure, action and accountability. The last section of Chapter Four contains the researcher's summary of the data. Chapter Five presents the qualitative data from participant interviews along with document analysis that supported the survey and interview data. Chapter Six presents conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research.

### **Analysis of the Quantitative Data**

In sum, to analyze the quantitative data and answer all three research questions, a variety of statistical analyses were implemented including calculating differential and inferential statistics, performing validity tests, and creating rating values for data sets. All of the statistical procedures were conducted using the statistical pack embedded in the

Microsoft Excel 2010 software program. The functionality of these statistical evaluations allowed the researcher to analyze the data in depth.

*Survey participants.* The quantitative phase of this study included invitations to all credentialed teachers at an urban high school in Northern California's Bay Area during the 2011 school year. These teachers were selected because the school had successfully implemented the Dufour and Eaker (1998) PLC model of teacher collaboration three years ago. The results of the school wide reform effort included reduced student and teacher absenteeism and improved teacher-student relationships. The total number of 2011 school teachers targeted for this study was 82. Teachers at the school of study received an invitation for the voluntary study during a faculty meeting, followed up by an email on December 12, 2011 detailing the nature of the survey and a direct link to the website for the survey.

Of the 82 potential participants, 34 high school teachers started the survey. However, participants who failed to complete 100% of the questions were eliminated from data analysis, leaving the total survey sample population at 29 participants (35.4% of potential participants).

Because a 35.4% survey response rate barely exceeds the minimally adequate standard to reflect the perceptions of the target population (Nair & Adams, 2009; Shih & Fan, 2009), additional steps to support internal validity of the participant outcomes were taken. Outcomes of the online survey were compared by creating a contingency table from the responses of the men and women participants. Chi-square statistics were calculated for 28 out of the 41 relevant survey questions. The other 23 questions were not

used because they either contained demographic information or not related to the central issues of the study. The Ethnicity demographic group was excluded from this analysis because it failed to obtain a minimum threshold of 30% of the sample population.

No significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found for the Gender (men and women) groups on 1 of 2 satisfaction issues, 4 of 18 working conditions sources and 3 of 6 environmental issues as reported by Table 6. In other words, 50% of the retention participant responses did not vary significantly on the two relevant questions. 22% of the teachers' responses did not vary significantly for question 18 which addressed the teachers' working conditions (see Table 6). Additionally, 50% of the responders' selections for the 6 questions addressing the school's environment did not vary significantly (see Table 6). Conversely, 100% of the teacher responses did vary on the 2 questions involving job satisfaction. These actions lend the study to a 68% chance that the outcomes are biased. In other words, the probability of getting outcomes significantly different is 32%.

When the chi-square analysis was calculated for the survey participants experience groups, no significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found on 1 of 2 satisfaction issues, 1 of 2 of retention sources, 10 of 18 working conditions items, and 3 of 4 of the environmental issues as reported in Table 7. Results reveal that 50% of the satisfaction and retention survey responses did not vary significantly for their two relevant questions, respectively. 45% of the teachers' responses did not vary for the 18 questions relating to working conditions. Lastly, 25% of the teacher's responses did not vary for the six environmental questions presented. A summary calculation of these findings shows the

study lends itself to a 57% chance that outcomes are biased. This primarily means that the probability of getting outcomes significantly different is 43%.

Table 6

*Chi-square Findings of Men and Women Participants Whose Responses Differed Significantly.*

Issue	Men		Female		Combined	
	%	Actual	%	Actual	%	Actual
Satisfaction (8, 51)	50%	1	100%	2	75%	3 out 4
Retention (11, 12) Working Conditions (14, 17, 20, 24, 27, 30, 31,31,33, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46)	50%	1	0%	0	25%	1 out 4
Environment (49, 54, 56, 64,67, 69)	0%	0	22%	4	22%	4 out 18
	50%	3	50%	3	50%	3 out 6

\* critical value of chi-square = 1, df = 1,  $p < 0.5$

The probability rate for this study was set at a 95% standard; as a result there is a 5 % chance outcomes vary significantly. A 5% (0.05) can be looked at as a 1 in 20 chance of an outcome occurring. Because my chi-square analysis revealed a value greater than 0.05 (0.32 and 0.43 to be precise), I accept the null hypothesis as true and that the survey outcomes are valid.

Table 7

*Chi-square Findings of Participants sorted by Years of Experience Whose Responses Differed Significantly*

Issue	8 or less years' experience		9 or more years' experience		Combined	
	%	Actual	%	Actual	%	Actual
Satisfaction (8, 51)	50%	1	50%	1	50%	1
Retention (11, 12) Working Conditions (14, 17, 20, 24, 27, 30, 31,32,33, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46)	50%	1	50%	1	50%	1
	17%	3	38%	7	55%	10
Environment (49, 54, 56, 64,67, 69)	75%	4	50%	3	75%	4

\* critical value of chi-square = 1, df = 1,  $p < 0.5$

**Teacher satisfaction.** Table 8 displays the outcomes in terms of responses about whether teachers are satisfied with their current school; 90% of the 29 participants who completed question 8 of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey selected agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree. Table 9 reports the sample mean rating for the presented question as 2.90; this represents the third highest sample mean rating for questions completed by the 29 participants. The African American teacher group (n =7) records the highest demographic subgroup mean rating at 3.0 and the lowest standard

deviation rating at 0.97 for question 8. The demographic independent variables of white (n=16) and women (n=12) recorded the highest mean ratings at 3.11 and 2.08, respectively.

Table 8  
*Descriptive Job Satisfaction and Retention Statistics*

Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8 - Satisfaction	36.7%	23.3%	30.0%	10.0%	0.0%
11 - Mover	12.9%	9.7%	9.7%	35.5%	32.3%
12 - Leaver	0.0%	6.5%	22.6%	29.0%	41.9%

Table 9  
*Descriptive Statistics Job Satisfaction and Retention*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African Am. n = 7	≤ 8 years exp. n = 17	≥ 9 years exp. n = 12
8 - Satisfaction	2.90	2.93	2.89	2.93	3.00	2.90	2.90
11- Mover	1.33	1.18	1.36	1.34	1.07	1.29	1.38
12 - Leaver	0.97	0.89	0.96	0.93	0.93	0.94	1.00

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

**Teacher retention.** A simple description of the patterns showed the general teachers' perceptions of their working environment within the construct of teacher

collaboration and its impact on teacher retention. Question eleven of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey asked participants to indicate the extent to which they have seriously considered leaving their present position for another position. Of the 29 participants who completed the survey, over 67% of them disagreed with looking for another position. The African American teachers ( $n = 7$ ) recorded the lowest mean rating at 1.07 among the demographic variables for this element as shown in Table 9. Additionally, this question records a relatively high sample population standard deviation rating at 1.37 when compared to other questions in the survey.

Table 10

<i>Descriptive Professional Learning Statistics</i>					
Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8 - Practice	20.0%	16.7%	23.3%	40.0%	0.0%

Question 12 of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey questioned participants ( $n=29$ ) on whether they have seriously considered leaving the teaching profession. Over 70% of the 29 participants who completed question twelve disagreed with seriously considering leaving the teaching profession. The men group ( $n = 17$ ) recorded the lowest group mean rating at 0.89 for the demographic variables for the presented question. Teachers with more than 8 years of experience reported the highest mean rating at 1.0. The 29 participants who completed this question consistently provided low responses as seen by the lowest overall sample mean rating at 0.97 among all Likert scale questions presented in the Teacher Working Condition Survey. Additionally, it should be noted that

the participants for this question consistently recorded similar responses as seen by its relatively low standard deviation rating of 0.95.

***Professional learning.*** Question 14 of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey posed the statement “We have opportunities to practice new skills gained during staff development” to participants of the study. As seen in Table 9, 60% of the 29 participants who completed the survey question agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with having opportunities to practice new skills gained during staff development.

Teachers with 8 or less years of experience posted the lowest mean rating at 1.71 for the demographic experience variable in terms of the teacher’s ability to gain new skills during staff development, as shown in Table 6. Also shown is the subgroup for teachers with 8 or more years of experience; African American teachers act as outliers as they recorded the highest mean ratings at 2.77 and 2.73 respectively. The teacher experience variable records a relatively high mean value variance for the question presented at 1.06. The demographic variable of experience shows that teachers with more than eight years of experience reported a relatively high mean rating at 2.77. The strong positive perceptions of teachers with more than eight years of experience was offset by a relatively low mean rating for teachers with eight or less years of experience.

Table 11  
*Descriptive Statistics Professional Learning*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African America n n = 7	≤ 8 years exp. n = 17	≥ 9 years exp. n = 12
14 - Practice	2.17	2.14	2.25	2.21	2.73	1.71	2.77

**Structure – descriptive statistics.** As seen in Table 12, question 30 provides a baseline for how teachers define teacher collaboration at the school of study as viewed by their perceptions on the statement that “Teacher collaboration is viewed as a form of professional development by our faculty?” Out of the 29 sample participants who completed the question, 90% agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with the premise of the presented question that teacher collaboration is a form of professional development.

The demographic variables gender, ethnicity, and experience, record standard deviations values below 1 for this question. Additionally, it shows that African American teachers (n = 7) report the highest mean rating at 2.87 followed closely by teachers with more than 8 years of experience (n = 12) at 2.85.

Question 31 presented participants with the statement “The teachers in my school meet in small groups to discuss ways to improve teaching and learning?” Out of the 29 sample participants who completed question 31, over 90% agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with the statement that teachers meet in small groups to improve their

professional learning. Further, 43% of the previously mentioned group strongly agrees with using small groups to improve teaching and learning.

Table 13 shows that question 31 records the highest relative sample mean rating for all questions presented to participants among all the six components. The table also shows that the men and African American subgroups record the highest mean rating among all demographic variables at 3.0 and 3.07, respectively. Additionally, findings reveal that 50% of the reported standard deviations are equal or less than 1 and African American teachers (n=7) report a relatively small standard deviation at 0.77.

As seen in Table 12, question 32 addressed the notion of prioritizing its values by presenting “My school structures time for teachers to work together to enhance student learning?” The table shows that almost 50% of the 29 participants selected strongly agree with the notion that the school of study structures time for teachers to work together to enhance student learning. Question 32 also records the second highest sample mean rating 2.93 for all questions presented to teacher participants (n=29). Additionally not shown were records of a relatively high sample standard deviation at 1.24. The women (n=12) demographic variable records the highest standard deviation at 1.25. Standard deviation is used to measure the variation teacher responses within a given data set.

Teachers with more than eight years of experience (n=12) record the highest mean rating at 3.31 for question 32 when compared with all demographic variables, followed by the African American teachers (n=7) at 3.13. A significant mean average difference is shown among the teaching experience variable where teachers with less than eight years of experience (n =12) report a sample mean rating of 2.65 compared to teachers with

more than eight years of teaching experience (n=17) who report mean rating at 3.31. The difference of the two previously mentioned outcomes creates a variance with a 0.66 mean rating value.

Table 12 reveals outcomes for the presented question 49 which asks “Enough time was available for planning and collaboration with colleagues?” A combined total of over 50% of the participants identified with the choices of always and frequently.

Table 12  
*Teacher Working Conditions Survey Question Outcomes – Structure*

Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30 - Collaboration	20.0%	36.7%	33.4%	6.7%	3.3%
31 - PLC	43.4%	23.3%	26.7%	3.3%	3.3%
32 - Time	46.7%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%
49 -Time	24.1%	27.6%	41.4%	6.9%	0.0%

As seen in Table 13 question 49 survey participants (n=29) recorded a relatively large sample mean rating at 2.69 and a relatively small standard deviation at 0.91, not shown. Teachers with more than eight years of experience display the highest mean rating at 3.08, followed by the African American teachers at 2.93. On the other hand, teachers with 8 or less years of experience (n=17) reported the lowest group mean rating at 2.41; The differential outcomes of the teacher experience variable result in a relatively high mean variance of 0.67 for teachers perceptions towards having enough planning and collaboration time.

Table 13  
*Descriptive Statistics - Structure*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African American n = 7	≤ 8 years exp. n = 17	≥ 9 years exp. n = 12
30 - Collaboration	2.63	2.68	2.68	2.69	2.87	2.47	2.85
31 – PLC	3.00	3.07	2.93	2.97	3.07	3.06	2.92
32 – Time	2.93	3.00	2.86	2.90	3.13	2.65	3.31
49 – Time	2.69	2.74	2.63	2.68	2.93	2.41	3.08

***Structure – inferential statistics.*** Table 14 shows the Pearson correlation outcomes categorized into six demographic variables. For example, question 20 puts forth the notion of school wide decisions being influenced by faculty input and has been correlated with question 8 which addresses the concept of job satisfaction. A relatively strong positive correlational relationship exists among all variable outcomes regarding question 20 which focuses on the notion of diverse learning opportunities being provided for teachers, and number 8 which is primarily centered on job satisfaction. The highest P value trending toward rejecting the null hypothesis is reported by both teachers with less than eight years of experience and teachers with more than eight years' experience, displaying outcomes of 0.419 and 0.440 values, respectively.

Table 14  
*Survey Participants Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlations*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 years exp. n = 17	≥ 9 years exp. n = 12
20 – Diverse Learning Opportunities	0.405	0.398	0.397	0.404	0.419	0.440
8 – Job Satisfaction						
23 - Time Collaborating	0.547*	0.440	0.473	0.390	0.619*	0.313
8 - Job satisfaction						
32 - Structures Time for Collaboration	0.091	0.042	0.075	-0.115	-0.086	0.244
8 - Job satisfaction						
49 - Adequate Planning Time						
8 - Job satisfaction	0.505*	0.438	0.467*	0.297	0.419	0.557*

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

The demographic subgroup for teachers with more than eight years of experience reports the highest P value at 0.440 which is close to obtaining a level of significance for the subgroup. The men, African Americans, and teachers with more than eight years of experience demographic subgroups report relatively strong relationships based on all their calculated P values being above 0.4 reporting at 0.405, 0.404, and 0.419 respectively.

On the other hand, a strong trend is shown when question 20 is correlated with question 11. The demographic group of teachers representing teachers with more than eight years of teaching experience established signs of significance by rejecting the null hypothesis when correlated with question 11 which highlights the notion of teachers seriously considering other positions. A moderately strong negative trend is also

developing for the demographic group representing African American teachers who report a P value of -0.380. P values display the relative strength of a correlation. As the absolute value of the outcome approaches 1 the stronger the relative relationship between the variables. All other demographic variables show a relatively small negative relationship based upon their calculated P values as shown in Table 15.

Question 23 addresses the amount of time spent collaborating and question 8 number deals with job satisfaction. Table 20 shows that when question 23 was correlated with question 8, levels of significance were met by the subgroups men and teachers with less than eight years of experience reporting relatively high P values of 0.547 and 0.619, respectively. The variable subgroups for women and White also reported P values at 0.440 and 0.473 which are approaching levels of significance. Two demographic variable categories report relatively strong P value trends which are projecting toward rejecting the null hypothesis at values currently over 0.400.

Furthermore, a relatively high negative correlational relationship is seen among participant's perceptions of their ability to meet in small groups to discuss ways to improve teaching as correlated with teachers seriously considering other teaching positions were shown in Table 15. The table shows that teachers with more than eight years of experience report a relatively strong negative correlation with their perceptions in terms of questions 23 and 11 as reported by the P value of -0.460.

Table 15  
*Survey Participant Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 years n = 17	≥ 9 years n = 12
20 – Diverse Learning Opportunities 11- Mover	-0.213	-0.247	-0.247	-0.380	-0.045	-0.597*
23 - Time Collaborating 11 - Mover	-0.346	-0.379	-0.372	-0.320	-0.291	-0.460
32 - Structures Time for Collaboration 11 - Mover	-0.021	-0.173	-0.178	0.080	0.141	-0.613*
49 - Adequate Planning Time 11 - Mover	-0.372	-0.428	-0.426	-0.277	-0.183	-0.786*

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

When question 32 presenting the notion of a school's teaching and learning goals depending on the ability of the staff to work well together was correlated with question 8--the concept of a teachers' willingness to remain at their school-- outcomes show small, and in some cases small negative, relationships. More specifically, all other variables showed an either positive or negative small insignificant relationship based upon their calculated Pearson correlation. On the other hand, outcomes of the calculated Pearson correlation for questions number 32 and 11 resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis for demographic subgroup teachers with more than eight years teaching experience, recording a calculated P-value of -0.613 as shown.

Question 49 put forth the notion of teachers having enough time for planning and collaboration with colleagues to survey participants and correlated it with job satisfaction; outcomes show a strong positive relationship. More specifically, the calculated Pearson correlation for the demographic categories of men and teachers with more than eight years of experience rejected the null hypothesis. Also worth noting is that P-values for the women, White, and teachers with less than eight years of experience subgroups, reported outcomes approaching significance at 0.438, 0.467 and 0.419 respectively.

On the other hand, when question 49 was correlated with question 11, a significant negative correlation was identified in the experience demographic variable. Teachers with more than eight years of experience was the only demographic variable that rejected the null hypothesis, reporting a P value of 0.786 as seen in Table 10. However, it is also important to acknowledge that two other subgroups displayed strong negative trends approaching significance; this included the women and White subgroups reporting P values of -0.428 and -0.426 respectively.

***Community – descriptive statistics.*** Table 16 reports that over 82% of the 29 participants agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with question 33 which presents the idea that “Our school’s teaching and learning goals depend on staffs’ ability to work well together?”

Table 16  
Teacher Working Condition Survey Question Outcomes – Community

Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
33 - Teamwork	28.6%	21.4%	32.1%	14.3%	3.6%
52 - Positive Morale	0.0%	37.9%	55.2%	6.9%	0.0%
53 - Family	17.2%	34.5%	37.9%	10.3%	0.0%

A moderately high sample mean rating is recorded for question 33 which addresses the surveyed teacher's perceptions of the staffs' ability to work together, as displayed in Table 17. Teachers with more than eight years of experience (n=12) report the highest mean rating at 2.92, followed by African American teachers (n=7) at 2.64. Whereas, teachers with eight or fewer years of experience recorded the lowest mean score value at 2.31. On the other hand, teachers with nine or more years experienced a relatively low mean rating creating a significant variance and reporting a mean rating differential of 0.61.

As seen in Table 16, question 52 presented the statement "There is a positive morale among staff?" Of the 29 participants who answered, 37.9% of them selected agree as their most frequent choice. On the other hand, over 65% of the survey participants either agreed or moderately agreed with the presented statement.

Table 17 reveals the outcome data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Question 52 records a sample mean rating of 2.31. African American teachers (n=7) record the highest of all subgroups for the presented question recording a 2.43 mean

rating. It should be noted that all of the subgroups record relatively small standard deviations at or below 0.64 for question 52.

Question 53 posed the statement that “I have close personal relationships with other members of the staff?” to 29 of the survey participants selected for the sample population. Over 40% of the participants identified with either always or frequently, signifying a strong positive trend toward the presented question.

Table 17 shows that, for question 53, teachers with eight or less years’ experience recorded the highest mean rating at 2.71, while teachers with more than eight years of experience reported the lowest group mean rating at 2.42 in terms of their perception toward having close personal relationships with other members of the staff.

Table 17  
*Descriptive Statistics Mean Values – Community*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African American n = 7	≤ 8 years experience n = 17	≥ 9 years experience n = 12
33 - Teamwork	2.57	2.58	2.46	2.52	2.64	2.31	2.92
52 - Positive Morale	2.31	2.30	2.33	2.36	2.43	2.24	2.42
53 - Close Relations	2.59	2.63	2.56	2.61	2.50	2.71	2.42

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

***Community – inferential statistics.*** Table 18 presents the Pearson correlation outcomes for questions focusing on the idea of teamwork, positive morale, and close

teacher relations as they relate to the issue of job satisfaction. A relatively strong positive correlational relationship exists among teachers with more than eight years of teaching experience, reporting a P value of 0.432 when question 33 is correlated with question 8. The P values for the remaining demographic variable trends show a pattern of small significance. However, when question 33 was correlated with question 11, outcomes in Table 14 show that two demographic variables show strong patterns of behavior in different directions. More specifically, teachers with more than eight years of experience display relatively strong positive significant relationship by reporting a P value at 0.431. On the other hand, teachers with eight years or fewer experience reported a strong negative significant relationship with their calculated Pearson correlation value equaling -0.528.

Table 18  
*Survey Participants Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 yrs. exp. n = 17	≥ 9 yrs. exp n = 12
33 - Teamwork 8 - Job satisfaction	0.199	0.149	0.195	0.189	-0.043	0.432
52 - Positive Morale 8 - Job satisfaction	0.333	0.202	0.238	0.289	0.298	0.251
53 -Close Relations 8 - Job satisfaction	0.359	0.315	0.354	0.218	0.391	0.346

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

The calculated Pearson correlation results for the survey participants' perceptions toward question 52 and 8 are shown in Table 18. A moderate positive trend was displayed for the outcomes regarding the notion of staff morale; and the question posed

about teachers considering other jobs in the demographic subgroups men, African Americans, and teachers with less than eight years' experience recording P-values at 0.333, 0.289, and 0.298, respectively. On the other hand, when a Pearson correlation was calculated for question 52 and teachers considering other teaching jobs (question 11), the outcomes displayed moderately negative trends for the demographic variables men, women, White, African Americans, and teachers with more than eight years of experience.

Pearson correlations outcomes are reported for question 53 and 8, respectively as the statement "I have close personal relationships with other members of the staff?" and "I am satisfied with my working conditions?" As seen in Table 18, moderately strong P values are obtained when the questions were correlated. The highest calculated P value was obtained by the subgroup of teachers who identified as having 8 or fewer years of experience yielding a 0.391 outcome. Also worth noting are the other demographic subgroups which displayed moderately strong correlations; this included men, women, White, and teachers with more than eight years of experience reporting P values of 0.359, 0.315, 0.354, and 0.346 respectively. No signs of moderate or high levels of significance were shown when question 53 was correlated with question 11 as shown in Table 19.

Table 19  
*Survey Participant's Mover's Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 yrs. exp. n = 17	≥ 9yrs. exp. n = 12
33 - Teamwork 11 - Mover	0.066	0.033	0.021	-0.094	0.431	-0.528
52 - Positive Morale 11 - Mover	-0.279	-0.271	-0.276	-0.206	-0.228	-0.282
53 - Close Relations 11 - Mover	-0.025	-0.093	-0.104	-0.112	0.024	-0.226

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

*Action – descriptive statistics.* Question 17 of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey asked participants whether teachers at the school of study learn how to use data to assess student learning needs. The findings in Table 20 show a combined total of over 44% of the 29 participants that completed the survey question 17 moderately disagreed or strongly disagreed with the general statement teachers learning to use data to assess student learning needs.

Table 20  
*Teacher Working Conditions Survey Question Outcomes – Action*

Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17 - Data	10.3%	17.2%	27.6%	37.9%	6.9%
35 - Feedback	20.0%	16.7%	30.0%	26.7%	6.7%

Overall, the demographic variables mean ratings of all the components fall below the relative numeric average of 2 except for the African American teachers (n = 7) and the teachers with more than eight years of experience group (n = 12) which report relatively low mean group averages of 2.07 and 2.15, respectively. Consequently, the teacher experience variable recorded the highest mean value variance (the amount of spread among values) for the question presented at 0.52.

Question 35 presented the survey participants with the statement “We receive feedback from our colleagues about classroom practices?” The outcomes from Table 20 report that, when summed together, over 65% of the participants agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with the concept of accepting feedback from colleagues.

Table 21 reports a relatively low sample mean rating at 2.17 for question 35 in comparison to other sample questions presented in the table. In terms of the demographic variables, the women group recorded the lowest mean rating at 2.04. However, the African American teachers (n=7) posted the highest mean rating (2.33), followed closely by teachers with more than eight years of experience at 2.31.

Table 21  
*Descriptive Statistics - Action*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African American n = 7	≤ 8 yrs. exp. n = 17	≥ 9 yrs. exp. n = 12
17 - Data	1.86	1.81	1.85	1.86	2.07	1.63	2.15
35 - Feedback	2.17	2.14	2.04	2.10	2.33	2.06	2.31

*Action – inferential statistics.* Table 22 displays the calculated Pearson correlation for question 19 which purports the teacher’s perceptions on their ability to make decisions about professional development based on research. When correlated to question 8 a positive trend approaching significance was identified for the demographic variables consisting of gender and experience. Table 24 displays the calculated Pearson correlation for the men variable in regard to questions 19 and 8 at 0.239. Additionally, Table 24 shows an even higher relationship exists between teachers with fewer than eight years of experience (n=17) reporting at 0.345. Teachers with more than eight years report

Table 22  
*Survey Participants Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlations*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n =16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 yrs. exp. n = 17	≥ 9 yrs. exp. n = 12
19 - PD driven by research 8 - Job satisfaction	0.239	0.101	0.147	-0.062	0.345	-0.097
20 - Diverse PD 8 - Job satisfaction	0.405	0.398	0.397	0.404	0.419	0.440
35 - Feedback 8 - Job satisfaction	0.329	0.280	0.322	0.212	0.429	0.020

the lowest Pearson correlation for the questions presented at -0.097.

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

The calculated Pearson correlation for question 20 purports the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of their learning being supported by a combination of strategies and their job satisfaction as shown in Table 22. The outcomes show that a relative trend approaching significance is occurring in all demographic areas; For

example, the gender variable report P values of 0.405 and 0.398 respectively for the men and women groups.

Table 22 shows outcomes from question 35 involving the statement about receiving feedback from their colleagues about classroom practice correlated with question 8 regarding the notion of job satisfaction. Outcomes show that 50% of the subgroups display moderately strong positive significance. Teachers with less than eight years of experience reported the strongest level of significance at 0.429. Whereas the men and White subgroups reported moderately strong positive relationships, displaying calculated P values of 0.329 and 0.322, respectively.

On the other hand, when question 20 is correlated with number 11, a level of significance is obtained for the demographic variable experience. Teachers with more than eight years of experience rejected the null hypothesis by reporting a P value of -0.597 as shown in Table 23. All other demographic groups displayed relatively small levels of significance.

Table 23  
*Survey Participant's Mover's Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8 yrs.	≥ 9 yrs.
					exp. n = 17	exp. n = 12
19 - PD driven by research 11 - Mover	-0.150	-0.065	-0.074	0.009	-0.084	-0.066
20 - Diverse PD 11 - Mover	-0.213	-0.247	-0.247	-0.038	-0.045	-0.597
35 - Feedback 11 - Mover	-0.275	-0.227	-0.230	-0.093	-0.370	-0.103

The Pearson correlation for question 35 and 11 also showed moderately strong negative relationships. For example, the subgroup teachers with fewer than eight years of experience reported a P value of -0.370. Table 18 displays the strongest negative P value as -0.230 for the men subgroup when question 35 is correlated with number 11. Also worth noting a relatively small negative relationship occurred among the men, women and White subgroups reporting P values of -0.275, -0.227 and -0.230 respectively.

*Accountability – descriptive statistics.* As observed in Table 24, question 40 helps to establish an understanding for the teachers' perceptions of the school leadership by presenting "Our principal believes teacher learning is essential for achieving our school goals?" Of the 29 participants who were selected into the sample population, over 80% of them agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree. Also more than 75% of the survey participants either agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree with premise of question 43 which states "Our school leaders encourage sharing responsibility to achieve school goals?"

Table 24  
*Teacher Working Condition Survey Question Outcomes - Accountability*

Item #	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40 - Goal Driven	27.6%	24.1%	34.5%	10.3%	3.4%
43 - Shares Responsibility	10.3%	27.6%	37.9%	20.7%	3.6%

Table 25 reveals a moderately high sample mean rating at 2.62 for question 40. The African American teachers and teachers with more than eight years of teaching experience groups recorded the highest mean rating with 2.86 and 2.92, respectively; the two previously mentioned variables also reported the smallest standard deviations at 0.91 and 0.95. With question 40, results show a large variance among the mean ratings for the demographic variable teaching experience. Teachers with fewer than eight years of experience report a mean rating of 2.92 compared to 2.41 for teachers with more than eight years of teaching experience, resulting in a calculated mean rating variance of 0.51.

Table 25  
*Descriptive Statistics – Accountability*

Item #	Sample Total n = 29	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	African Am. n = 7	≤ 8 yrs. exp. n = 17	≥ 9 yrs. exp. n = 12
40 - Goal Driven	2.62	2.63	2.67	2.68	2.86	2.41	2.92
43 - Shares Responsibility	2.21	2.22	2.15	2.18	2.43	1.94	2.58

Table 20 shows a moderately low sample mean rating at 2.21 of the sampled population for question 43. Additionally, the outcomes not presented here displayed a relatively low standard deviation at 1.0 for the question of topic. A relatively high sample mean is recorded for the demographic variable experience. Teachers with more than eight years of experience (n=12) reported the highest subgroup mean rating at 2.58. On the other hand, teachers with fewer than eight years of teaching experience reported the lowest mean rating for question 43 at 1.94.

*Accountability – inferential statistics.* Question 40 was correlated with question 8 and the outcomes are shown in Table 26. The null hypothesis was rejected at 0.491 for the subgroup of teachers with fewer than eight years of experience. Moderately high positive correlations were also recorded by the men and White subgroups as 0.418 and 0.308, respectively. Conversely, the calculated Pearson correlation for question 40 (goal-driven) and number 11 (seriously considering leaving for another teaching position) shows a relatively strong negative correlation as reported by its P value of -0.379 in Table 22.

Table 26

*Survey Participants Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlations*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8	≥ 9
					yrs. exp. n = 17	yrs. exp. n = 12
40 - Goal driven 8 - Job satisfaction	0.418	0.169	0.308	-0.156	0.491	0.084
41 - Values sharing decisions 8 - Job satisfaction	0.352	0.287	0.288	0.154	0.439	0.060
43 - Share's responsibility 8 - Job satisfaction	0.336	0.302	0.324	0.079	0.376	0.160
54 - Values teachers input 8 - Job satisfaction	0.166	0.105	0.092	0.218	0.218	0.016

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

The Pearson correlation outcomes for question 41 (which addresses the notion of school wide decisions being influenced by faculty input) and question 8 (which addresses job satisfaction) shows the demographic subgroup for teachers with less than eight years of experience reports the highest P value at 0.439 which is not far from reaching a level of significance for the subgroup. The men, women, and White demographic subgroups also report relative strong relationships based upon their calculated P values of 0.352, 0.287, and 0.288 respectively.

Additional trends are shown when question 41 is correlated with question 11. All subgroup variables show a relatively strong negative relationship based on their calculated P values as shown in Table 26. The Table also reports a relative high P value for the subgroup variables men, women, White and Teachers with fewer than eight years of teaching as -0.360, -0.370, -0.371, and -0.356 respectively.

The Pearson correlated outcomes for question 43 show several results trending toward significance when calculated against questions 8 and 11. The notion of the school leaders sharing responsibility to achieve school goals reported the highest P value at 0.376 for the demographic variable teachers with fewer than eight years of experience when correlated with the concept of job satisfaction, as shown in Table 26. The variable groups men, women, and White display relatively high relational trends reporting P values of 0.336, 0.302, and 0.324 respectively. Consequently, the variable subgroups African American (n=7) and teachers with more than eight years of teaching experience show almost no relational significance, reporting P values of 0.079 and 0.160 respectively.

Teachers with fewer than eight years of experience hold a marginal edge over teachers with more than eight years of experience in terms of the calculated Pearson correlation, reporting strong negative P value at -0.357 and -0.354 respectively for question 43 and 11 as seen in Table 27. It is noteworthy to document the strong negative trends for the demographic variable groups men, women, and White reporting P values of -0.299, -0.301, and -0.305, respectively for the two questions previously mentioned.

The concept that teachers have an opportunity to choose the types of professional development activities they participated in trended moderately low among all variables when correlated with job satisfaction. The subgroups African Americans and Teachers with fewer than eight years of experience reported the highest P value at 0.218. However, when question 54 was correlated with question 11, two demographic variables reported strong negative trends approaching a level of significance. The demographic variables

include the women and White subgroups who recorded the strongest P values at -0.293 and -0.289, respectively for question 54 and 11, as displayed in Table 27.

Table 27  
*Survey Participant's Mover's Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

Item #	Men n = 17	Women n = 12	White n = 16	Black n = 7	≤ 8	≥ 9
					yrs. exp. n = 17	yrs. exp. n = 12
40 - Goal driven 11 - Mover	-0.021	0.080	0.083	0.137	0.119	-0.379
41 - Values sharing decisions 11 - Mover	-0.360	-0.370	-0.371	-0.237	-0.356	-0.382
43 - Share's responsibility 11 - Mover	-0.299	-0.301	-0.305	0.027	-0.357	-0.354
54 - Values Teacher Input 11 - Mover	-0.106	-0.293	-0.289	-0.201	-0.248	-0.248

\* Denotes outcomes that reject the null hypothesis

### Summary of Quantitative Findings

Chapter Four presented an analysis of the data from this study that surveyed teachers from an urban high school regarding their perceptions of the degree to which they rate various areas that make up their working conditions. A low response rate is typical for a web-based survey (Nair & Adams, 2009; Shih & Fan 2009); as a result the response rate for this study reports at 35.4%. The mean rating range for all questions

presented ranged from 1.18 to 3.00 with 4 being the highest possible value, indicating the diverse pool of questions had a significant impact on teacher responses.

The highest mean rating, 3.0, was recorded for question 20, “The teachers in my school meet in small groups to discuss ways to improve teaching and learning?” Additionally, over 93% of the survey participants agreed with this concept on some level as recorded by their responses.

When survey participants were presented with the statement “I am satisfied working in my current school,” more than 90% of participants agreed with the statement on some level. Question 8 also recorded the second highest mean value at 2.90. Consequently, a moderately strong level of significance was displayed when question 52 concerning positive staff morale was correlated with question 8 purporting the idea of job satisfaction. Additionally, the morale question reported a relatively low mean rating at 2.31.

The descriptive statistics showed that over 40% of the survey participants disagreed with the notion that: “Teachers at our school learn how to use data to assess student learning needs?” as reported for question 20. Furthermore, the mean rating value is relatively low as well, reporting at 1.86.

In terms of the statement “We receive feedback from our colleagues about classroom practices?” outcomes display a relatively low mean rating at 2.17 with over 45% of the participants disagreeing with the statement altogether. However, a moderately strong relationship was displayed when correlated with question 8 regarding job satisfaction for the men, White, and both Teacher experience subgroups.

A statistical correlation was discovered when correlating teachers' levels of perceived job satisfaction within the context of teacher collaboration and teacher retention environments. The quantitative research findings of this study support the hypothesis of the research question analyzed in Chapter Four. Teacher collaboration does indeed appear to positively impact teachers' willingness to remain at their current site. The implications of these findings are discussed in Chapter Six. Chapter Five presents the qualitative data collected through focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews and helps to further address research questions two and three.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

As stated in Chapter One, this study examined the possible relationship between teacher collaboration (as defined by DuFour and Eaker, 1998) and developing and sustaining effective teacher retention practices (Sunil, Ramlall, 2004) through the lens of the practical experiences of a teacher at a typical urban school. This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data collected for this study.

**Analysis of qualitative findings.** The following qualitative analysis used a logical chain of evidence to support the findings drawn from the two focus groups and the six one-on-one interviews. The focus groups were facilitated at a designated location set by the participant; all were performed at some location on the school site of study. Data was coded and notated to help understand the unique patterns or themes. Then information was clustered into small groups based on similar area of interest. Counting was then incorporated to help highlight qualitative the general theme from the transcribed data. The goal was to provide an explanatory map of the relevant findings of this study

The descriptive statistics were conducted to establish each participant's overall demographic characteristics as explained in Chapter Three. The descriptive data revealed that the school in this study had mean scores showing high levels of job satisfaction and low levels of willingness to leave. In addition, teacher collaboration key areas were

explored as a result of the varying degrees of outcomes. Years of teaching for the participants in this phase of the study ranged from 3 years to 31 years.

The study participants are all urban credentialed public school teachers within the ABCD Unified School District. The researcher decided to use only teachers who had two or more years of experience in teacher collaboration structures. A review of the literature on teacher collaboration primarily revealed studies of collaboration at the high school level. Teachers from the grade 9 Atlas teams were used as focus group participants and interviewed one-on-one by the researcher. Dufour and Eaker (1998) identify six important characteristics of professional learning communities to include: a) shared vision and goals, b) small team grouping, c) collective inquiry into “best practices”, d) taking action, e) continuous improvement, and (f) focus on results.

Interview data was transcribed and examined using Atlas Ti, then codes relevant to teacher collaboration, professional learning community, teacher and urban leadership characteristics were identified and used to sort and categorize data.

As presented in Chapter Four, the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development was selected as the accountability instrument used to validate the professional development methods used in this study. The three strands of the rubric standard were combined into three elements: Context, Process, and Content. Similarly, retention characteristics were combined into two subcomponents: Internal Factors and External Factors.

Generally, the codes used from interviews revealed that the teachers were familiar with the body of research regarding professional learning communities and showed

higher levels of perceived job satisfaction. Teachers with two or more years of teacher collaborating experience were purposefully selected as a means for identifying a well-informed selection of participants. The qualitative data were collected over a one-week period in February 2010 with the researcher visiting four sites during the teachers' instructional day to conduct one-on-one interviews with teachers and with site principals to collect relevant documents.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study incorporates a sequential multiple data gathering process to help construct a better understanding of the teacher retention phenomena. The qualitative data gathering was facilitated in two phases: 1) facilitated two focus groups to fill in missing information about how teachers defined teacher collaboration and its impact of teacher retention, and 2) conducted six one-on-one interviews inquiring about teacher collaboration that impacts their morale and willingness to stay, as a means of developing a deeper understanding of teacher's understandings of teacher collaboration's indirect and direct impact on teacher retention. Using one simple data source goes against the principles of the researcher. Thus, data points from the survey instrument, focus groups, and one-on-one interview were used to elaborate and triangulate the collected data and to answer the how and why questions regarding the connection between teacher collaboration and teacher retention.

***Qualitative participants.*** Results from Table 28 show that, when combined, over 60 % of the interview participants were from the core subject areas of English, Math, Science, and Social Science. A closely matched balance of men and women outcomes are shown in Table 29, whereas women recorded the highest participation rate at 54%.

Table 28  
*Interview Teaching Subject Area*

Special Education	English	Math	Science	Social Science	Elective	Other
8.0%	24.0%	15.0%	8.0%	15.0%	0.0%	30.0%

Table 29  
*Interview Participant Gender Breakdown*

Female	Male
54.0%	46.0%

The breakdown of the participant's highest degree earned is reported in Table 30. Teachers earning bachelor's degrees represent 69% of all participants interviewed in this study. The White and African American teachers represented the top two ethnic groups participating in this study, making up 38% and 32%, respectively, as shown in Table 31. Also, a relatively equitable displacement of teachers is shown for the participants in regard to their number of years of experience, as seen in Table 32.

Table 30  
*Interview Participant's Highest Degree Obtained*

Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree
69.0%	23.0%	8.0%

Table 31  
*Interview Participant's Ethnic Breakdown*

Asian	African American	Hispanic	White	Multi-ethnic	Other
15.0%	32.0%	15.0%	38.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 32  
*Interview Participant's Years of Experience Teaching*

1st Year	2 - 4 Years	5 - 8 Years	9 - 14 Years	15 - 19 Years	20 + Years
0.0%	30.7%	30.7%	7.9%	0.0%	30.7%

**Structure - Time.** During a one-on-one one interview with Ms. Angelo, one of the Atlas teachers, she was asked to express her views on whether she considered collaboration to be a formal or informal structure at Barack Obama High School and she shared:

“A combination of both. I would say it is formal because our master schedule is built so that each teacher has a collaboration period. But I would say it’s informal because in terms of accountability. Like, I’m just speaking for myself, like as a teacher I don’t remember my admin checking on us. Or say we did pass on the meeting minutes we never got feedback from it.”

The same question was presented to Ms. Rodham and she responded:

“It is supposed to be formal—it is not. I don’t think it has to be taught but it should be discussed and educated formally. It is somewhat expected that here is our meeting agenda and now you can be effective because here is something for you to record. I think it is self-explanatory to a certain extent but it doesn’t seem to play out that way. So, I think it is formal in its creation, it is formal in its documentation, but it is informal in its accountability and it is informal in its actual practice.”

When Mr. Chavez was presented the leading question he explained:

“Right now Barack Obama is set up time for collaboration but there hasn’t been a lot of training on how teachers should collaborate or at least it is not widespread, every teacher knows what to do. I feel like in our various teams that are happening on a daily basis, you might see something that feels formal it has been set up and structured. You might also see teachers just sitting around having a conversation. So it is probably a mix of both at the moment. I think that is how it will be to start off because it needs time to develop. I think it is easier with something like ATLAS where you have just 16 teachers. But when you have 100 teachers involved in something new then it is difficult to expect it to happen right away. It would be great but it would be miraculous.”

During the focus group, Mr. Abdullah was asked what he liked about teacher collaboration at Barack Obama High School and he stated:

“I think giving us an extra period so that we can meet, now whether we are utilizing the time the best way possible is another subject matter. But at least they have provided that opportunity we have a period where we can meet.”

Ms. Thomas incorporates her input into the discussion as we continue to discuss the things teachers like in terms of teacher collaboration and she suggests:

“I think having the common prep time your interdisciplinary group and the common prep time with your single subject group really helped. I know this year I was struggling to find time to meet with the teachers who teach the same content as I do and it is really important for us because we are trying to teach these students study skills, while trying to figure out what study skills they need and how we can best teach them most effectively and it is hard when we can't find the time to plan together.”

While discussing the need for improving retention, Mr. Chavez talked quite a bit about support. I asked him to describe that support and he commented: “Collaboration within the school day is great!” However he went on to comment:

“I've experienced collaborative teams where you go into meetings without an agenda and it becomes just kind of a conversation which is okay but it is not what collaboration could be...It is not just automatic to give teachers collaboration time to meet and expect that good collaboration will happen. I think a lot of great things can happen when teachers are meeting regularly, even when it is just an hour a day.”

While discussing effective collaboration practices with Ms. Rodham she shared:

“People are okay with leaving in 15 minutes with nothing accomplished. I think that could be another mindset thing...I wish that emotions were removed when someone was like dude you’re not doing what you’re supposed to be doing without someone being offended that you’re not letting them have their space to speak. I just want to have an outcome and feel good about the time we just spent together.”

When probed to provide ways of addressing our collaborative concerns she asserted:

“I feel there needs to be systems in place at our meetings where during professional development time we are almost forced to interact. Sometimes it has to be because otherwise people are going to go into their cliques...Regardless of how we want to think about adults being able to just do what their supposed to do, we don’t and there needs to be accountability.”

Mr. Lane shared the following statement when discussing some of his woes about collaboration: “We had to start using a timer in the meeting. We had to, it was rough.”

**Structure - small grouping.** During a one-on-one interview Mrs. Davis shared reflection of her experience working in small groups at Barack Obama High School:

“I mean we all came together and worked in different groups it wasn’t even like we stayed in our little neighborhoods and I thought that was awesome and I was really glad to be a part of this.”

One of the focus group conversations captured Dr. Abdullah’s sentiments about both single-subject and interdisciplinary teacher collaboration:

I think it is very important to be able to collaborate with your single subject, to be able to work with people who teach the same subject; to create assessments, analyze those assessments and track student progress. I think is a lot easier when you are collaborating with the same-subject teachers.”

Later in the discussion Mr. Bush argued that:

“The pillars of collaboration: I think when we look back at the freshman house, especially the way we broke it up for addressing the student’s needs. You had four interdisciplinary teachers all analyzing their dealings with the same students. We could determine who was having success? Who was not, and what had worked? I think there was nothing better than that support system for the students. And every two weeks calling home with progress reports to families students’ did not have a long time to get in a hole.”

Dr. Abdullah later expresses the comment:

“Because when collaborating with my colleagues we can pace; for example, we can sit down and plan. This week we are going to cover such and such and such material. So that when a student leaves my room and go to Brandon’s room who is teaching the same student that student will not be at a disadvantage. When we collaborate there are other things that we can also do. We can make a common test and we can test across from teacher to teacher, and if my students do badly on a particular question in comparison to Brandon’s then we could ask Brandon ... Can you tell us what the secret is?”

Mr. Chavez’ expresses his idea of effective collaboration features:

“Collaboration is most effective when you have a small team of just 4 teachers, where if you have a big school of 100 and you want to implement something new it is tough to get that through. If it is just four of you and you share all the same kids then it is easier to agree on a new policy or a new idea and all four of you try to implement it together.”

Chavez expands on a question regarding how to use collaboration to support the needs of both young and veteran teachers by suggesting:

“I think that’s been happening in some fashion in ATLAS. Last year, you had two new biology teachers working with two veteran biology teachers, and they worked together every Tuesday and Thursday, twice a week, in their science teams and by default, those new teachers were getting support because they have those meeting times that were embedded within the school day.”

Mr. Lane expresses his experiences of positive teacher collaboration occurrences:

“We both had a good work ethic and so we both brought an equal amount of things to the table. For example, he was bringing me his experience, and he’s bringing me his ideas that have worked with him in the past. I’m more on the tech side, and so I’m bringing stuff to the table that he doesn’t know about in terms of technology.”

Additionally, Mr. Lane shares:

“Two years ago, during my first year of ATLAS, my team all had an understanding of the time for the 'mic' (insinuating group talk-time) and were able

to get data and analyze it for our students to really see what was going on with our kids.”

During one of the focus group conversations, Dr. Abdullah, a two year Atlas veteran teacher of African descent with more than 20 years of teaching experience, responded to how working in small teams at the school of study supports his professional growth:

“We actually used it as professional development where we observed teachers together. The following day we would only talk about things that we liked and how we would implement in our classroom.”

This form of peer observation and positive feedback cycle seems to certainly impact teacher satisfaction within the working environment. Later, Dr. Abdullah is asked to describe the different types of teacher collaboration structures he has worked in that have informed his practice with the Atlas program:

“There were two types of collaboration primarily when you’re in single subject teams... it is more curriculum based and when you move to the more interdisciplinary it moves to more of a student focus.”

During a focus group, Mr. Lee, a White 12 year marine veteran who has two years of Atlas teaching experience and four total years of experience, describes an initiative implemented by a small team of 9<sup>th</sup> grade Atlas social science teachers during the program’s first year in 2009:

“We (social science teachers) all agreed on things we were going to look out for in our students’ writing and we looked at some of the weaknesses that we thought

we needed to support. We chose bias because we wanted to do history and we came to a consensus history is always filled with bias. Thus trying to challenge students not just to read and accept it but to find out what's wrong with what they are observing also. Our main goal was to teach bias and we worked on it and we worked on it; then developed common assessments on reading a variety of other subject matter with the intent of reading for bias or what bias is.”

Ms. Monroe, a three year Atlas 9th grade social science/ (T-Bolts) teacher, enters into the focus group topic conversation about the social science teacher's single-subject collaboration effort by adding:

“I think those assessments definitely showed us that bias is a really hard to teach and that most students don't get it. I think the first round of assessments that we did we came back and realized that our kids just didn't know what the term means so we had to go back and re-teach. We talked together about different strategies to re-teach bias that was effective in showing us what we needed to do differently.”

Being intrigued by Ms. Monroe's response I probed her to tell me more about the group feeling of failure as compared to teaching in a silo and failing to meet an expected goal?

Her response:

“It would have been worse (referring to coping with the failure if experienced alone). I mean collectively we had a sense of well we tried these strategies, we thought they were going to work and they didn't so what's wrong. We all did them we all failed, so it wasn't just me that I couldn't teach my students about bias it was all of us. So we sat down together and asked ourselves what did we do

and how could we do something differently to see if that works. And I think we came up with a couple good activities after the fact.”

**Community - relationships.** When asked “What do you like about teacher collaboration at Barack Obama High School?” Ms. Rodham responded:

“The relationship part I am sold on here at this school. I’m not sold on teaching so like if I can stay here I will teach for longer and I think that has a lot to do with the relationships. More specifically, like people in the Science department who really helped me upon arrival and were like this is how the science department is organized and conduct business.”

Mrs. Davis connected teacher collaboration to retention by suggesting:

“I mean when you feel engaged on that level. I don’t mean to be cliché but that ‘village’ level where there is a sense of connectedness and enrichment that extends beyond the paycheck or the role or the responsibility; it gets into our ethical and principled well-being which extends beyond the professional and it calls us to task... I feel that it is more enriching so you are compelled to engage in something where you find an intrinsic sense of fulfillment.”

Mr. Nelson shares an experience from his 9<sup>th</sup> grade small learning community two years prior as he responds to the impact of teacher collaboration:

“I mean it’s like family, take for instance Mr. Rawlings who wants to have us over for dinner. I mean definitely, working with Kat and Phil, working with them for two years in a row, you know it’s like I definitely feel like I’m on a career path here at Obama High and, that’s as a result of collaboration. Especially

ATLAS, you know that kind of like collaboration we were doing in ATLAS where we were so close, you really create a family.”

Mrs. Davis describes the reciprocal behavior of collaboration:

“It is like saying you love your children but then you’re fighting as parents in front of them. If I’m yelling at my husband and fighting my husband in front of my kids and we don’t have a sense of harmony as to what they are looking up to then the kids feel frightened, they are going to feel a lot of anxiety and they are going to feel discouraged. In essence, what I think most teachers feel is that the district and administration, the system, we love these children, we love these children but so often the teachers don’t feel loved, so it is like you are saying you do and it is a perfect analogy because I can say that I love my kids until the cows come home but whatever personal frustrations that that they have is that they don’t see the consistency.”

When asked how the school can improve retention Mrs. Davis replied:

“Improve the sense where teachers feel empowered...It’s just like with our students with meaningful curriculum. Once you engage them on that meaningful humane level and not just the dry curriculum, fusing how does this have any connection to me personally it’s not this is not working for me. I don’t even understand what you are talking about it’s not clicking for me, then right, they disengage but as soon as you engage them on a more personal level with the curriculum you capture them, they are compelled like oh that’s interesting it inspires something and compels them to want to go further professionally. The

main reason why teachers disengage is they feel disempowered, they feel that their professional expectation is not meaningful.”

During an interview, Ms. Rodham highlights some of the power dynamics that play out in teacher collaboration:

“Sometimes I wish I could be like, we need to move on, but I don’t feel like it is my place and I sometimes worry about if I speak up where would that take us in our next meeting? Or, what would our collaborations look like from there on?”

Mr. Lane expressed his continued appreciation of Barack Obama’s collaboration development by commenting:

“I really think the teachers and administration here have really developed into a great community.”

Mr. Chavez’ embellishes his profound desire to help other young teachers:

“I think for myself, as a mid-veteran teacher, I’ve been teaching for five years, I feel that anytime there’s a new teacher I wanted to look out for them, like checking in and just seeing how they are doing or just sharing everything I’ve created with them.”

Ms. Rodham shared the importance of relationships and the need for continued improvement by communicating:

“I feel like when I came I did get a great orientation with friendliness, but there was no formal thing (induction). For example, here is how you sign your timesheet or other really simple things. Since I was a brand new teacher, not just a teacher new to Barack Obama, there was a lot of logistical information that I was

just unaware of and figuring that out while being a first year teacher was challenging. Also, couple in my group of students and you can see how overwhelming the process could be. Thus being made aware of the services that are available to students on our campus is vitally important because I think we offer such wonderful services, but it is also like very much a reality that if I don't know what they are I can't utilize them.”

During an interview Mrs. Davis reaffirmed her claim about the importance of developing and sustaining healthy professional relationships:

“I believe and I could be completely naive and Pollyanna as I’ve been told, I believe that when you have the opportunity to engage in your community that it touches you on a level that is more profound than professionally. I think that it captures people, if you can engage people on a deeper and profound level in any context you know logically. Look at everything you are doing if it reaches you on a more profound, I guess humanistic level then you tend to be locked in. If it is something we feel like we can’t connect with we are like why bother what is the buy-in... Create an environment where professionally we are not just here in a dry professional type of climate, we need to engage in meaningful type ways.”

Although Dr. Abdullah seemed rather passive throughout the focus group discussion, he showed initiative in clearly stating his perception about collaboration and retention by suggesting:

“I don't think that teacher collaboration is actually the only that thing that supports people’s willingness to staying longer than they want. I mean they didn't have all

this collaboration stuff when I first arrived, but still I keep coming back to Barack Obama. This is my 15th year teaching here at Barack Obama; I want to continue teaching here so in addition to collaboration there is also the love of the place and a love of the people that you work with.”

**Community - climate.** Ms. Thomas, a teacher with three years of classroom experience, responds to a prompt about her beginning experience as a teacher:

“The first year in Atlas was my first year teaching and I think it was really important to have that support network to deal with the frustrations and with all the new things you have to deal with being a first year classroom teacher. It did help to have the veteran or teachers with just more years of experience to be able to counsel you and help you get through those difficult times. I think those experiences were very useful in helping me want to continue working in the Atlas program and stay here at this school.”

Mr. Bush followed her by suggesting:

“Young teachers feel they’re in the jungle or out in the savannah ready to be picked off by the lions because they are young and they are wide-eyed. If you really want to save a teacher then put him in with a strong group of collaborators where they share the same ideals. They will feel protected from the administration and parents; as well as, being helped with student problems and things, which is the best of teacher collaboration.

Ms. Davis expresses her appreciation for collaborative structures by suggesting:

“It’s enriching as an educator in terms of the literal process of developing your skills personally and the knowledge to share as an educator... We learn through our individual life experiences but when we engage in education we are able to include not just our own experience but the experience of several others within the world, which kind of constitutes us with being educated... On a more direct and practical scale, teacher collaboration is sharing not only your own perspective of teaching processes but it also is sharing the experiences that your colleagues have had to strengthen your understanding of the teaching process.”

During the focus group, teachers wrestled with the notion of improving their professional learning community impact by embracing parental involvement. Mr. Bush commented:

“It's hard because of our location and the social economic level of our students. For example, some of my students parents don't have cars and you know they work and so it's hard for them to take the bus up here in a timely manner to meet with teachers so I think a lot of its our location and our population but I think there are more things that we could do to involve parents.”

Ms. Thomas follows up his statement by suggesting that:

“I think being up on the top of a giant hill and East Chicago Hills makes it difficult with only one bus line that runs up the hill every hour and doesn't always come on the hour. I think and you know the lack of reliability and AC- transit makes it difficult for parents to travel up here and then a lot of our parents are working so they don't get off work until five or six. I don't know about the rest of

you guys but I don't. I'm not going to stay up at school to 6 or 7 (p.m.) to meet with a family at 6:30, that's just not feasible so mainly that's one of the big problems.”

Mr. Bush re-iterates his point by saying:

“I also think it is uncomfortable for so many of our parents who live in real poverty to drive up here and not matter which road they take they're driving by a whole lot of nice houses and things that people have and once again it's a message to them that I don't belong here I live down here in the bottom, this is the Hills I hope my kid will get there but it's a very strong subliminal message that especially if you're a newcomer or just being poor people will have generations of Americans will hear it's like a message do I really belong and I think that affects kids.”

The idea of building community was raised during an interview with Ms. Rodham and her remarks were:

“I think so much of it is relationships and that's really hard to quantify or to create and that's what I feel has been huge for me at Barack Obama. I feel that there are extremely positive relationships, everyone has been supportive kind, welcoming, and helpful to me...I didn't know every person and I felt uncomfortable approaching them whether it was because I'm young... I think the people here are really great but it is just that there are so many, that there need to be some systems where everyone can get to know each other, not best friends but professionally

and by name because there are some people, partially my fault, but there are some people who still like think that I am a student or don't know who I am.”

When Mrs. Davis was asked how we can improve collaboration, she replied:

“Improve the sense where teachers feel like they are empowered.”

The notion of effectively supporting both young and veteran teachers through teacher collaboration was mentioned during Mr. Chavez’s interview:

“If veteran teachers feel that they have community that they’re working for, not just kids but other teachers and the school and that there’s a mission, an overarching goal that’s not just from August to June, then it is more likely that a teacher will seriously consider returning to their school.”

When asked in a focus group discussion, “What would you identify as the key factor for improving teacher retention at Barack Obama High?” Mr. Bush responded:

“As a first-year teacher, I know it is intimidating coming to a school with over 100 faculty and 2000 students. It can be intimidating and I think breaking it down into a small level where we do have the support of your team to help you through some of those tougher issues is one of the things that keeps me coming back here... It is the feeling that there are people that have your back, that do recognize the work that you do, that want to help you and will support you.”

Later in the discussion Mr. Bush expresses a positive experience with teacher collaboration:

“When we were in Atlas, we were (portables) close together. Thomas was across from me, Ruth was just over there and Ortega was just down the way. We were all

within shouting distance of each other. Seeing each other in the common cause was a beautiful thing.

Ms. Thomas interjects:

“Yeah I would hear him out there yelling at students to get to class; it will make me get out there and yell at kids to get to class. Because, if Mr. Bush was out doing it then you know that Ms. Thomas should be out there doing it too. So it's like the whole community feeling that was good down there in the portables.”

During an interview, Mr. Chavez expressed his perceptions about how, if at all, teacher collaboration has supported his professional growth:

“I think it's helped me a lot. I think the best PD is observing another teacher. I think when you're part of a community you feel more value in working hard. I feel like it (teacher collaboration) has recognized me more. I feel like I have transferred more impact. For example, say you're out sick, if you're just one teacher in a pool of 100 it is like no one really notices. But when you are one teacher out of four everyone feels it and everyone recognizes your absence. So, I feel that a lot being a part of an ATLAS team.”

When the 14-year veteran teacher was asked what has grounded her in the work here at Barack Obama over the past six years, she said: “As a teacher, what I find keeps me committed to my role as an educator is the family effort.”

**Action - Data.** Ms. Monroe enters the focus group conversation about the Social Science teacher's single-subject collaboration effort by describing her emerging state of teacher collaboration satisfaction:

“I think some of the steps we have taken this year have also been helpful. For example, having an essential question that you follow in the meeting is good. Having the templates to take notes-on is useful. I think it norms the procedures and I know that my group (Atlas Team) specifically has been able to select essential questions that are relevant to our students and relevant to our topics we are dealing with; to have that be the backbone and skeleton of the meeting helps to keep it productive so that you don’t just keep rambling about one thing for the entire meeting. I really like the common meeting agenda and the essential questions that we have implemented this year.”

In an interview, Ms. Angelo described her experience with collecting data to drive decisions:

“It helped that we shared the same 150 students. It also helped that we had a common prep period and we actually used our prep period to plan out lessons for the entire week. So I would have my target goals for that week. Coon would have her target goals for that week. We would share that with Knox, that way Knox could come up with his lesson plans because as the Tee-bolts (study skills) teacher he was supporting us.”

Additionally, Mrs. Davis shares how she was pleased with collaboration at Barack Obama, and why, when she asserts:

“We broke into teams, which we had to select. Each teacher had to commit to a certain area, a certain focus area (WASC). I thought that was brilliant Barack Obama work in motion. I mean we came together some reluctantly, some more

enthusiastically, some deeply engaged and some contributing superficially their minimal efforts but all together each of us participated in something.”

Chavez shares the common thread for effective collaborative teamwork by asserting:

“The students are always the center focus and anytime we saw something happening with our students, we all came together and agreed upon a plan of action to address the concern.”

Mr. Lane interjects what he upholds as the primary factor for effective collecting and analyzing data as he states:

“We have a nice chemistry where we work well together. So we’re able to talk about what’s working for our students, what’s not? And how we are able to measure what’s working. It just comes very naturally.”

Bush exclaims his positive expression about the significance of data collection by suggesting:

“So for the student there is nothing better when you can have this type of collaboration, not saying we saved them all but I’m sure we saved a lot of students who would have been lost. They (students) knew we were going to make the phone calls home and they knew that we were checking their grades because when we had them in Advisory they knew they were ours and they were our responsibility and that helps a student...So, when you can have several teachers that can talk about the same students it really helps in shaping what you are doing well.”

Ms. Thomas follows Mr. Bush's lead during the focus group with another positive expression of teacher collaboration, asserting that:

“On my team we chose focus students and we would sit and talk about, in terms of what we think were their strengths and what their concerns would be; then we would distribute a student survey. If necessary, we would then call the student in for a little teacher-student conference. The conference would be based upon what we have learned from the overall process. Then we would come up with some type of action plan, for how to address the needs of a particular student whether there were attendance issues, language issues, behavioral issues, or other student need concerns.”

Mrs. Davis shares a transformative collaborative experience aligned with adequate data collection processes when she shares:

“For instance the situation regarding Paris; he is new to our program this year and in fact just arrived within the last couple of months. He came in late and we noticed when we were sitting down for a meeting we were all talking about him. So we decided to talk about Paris for a second. We asked the group do we really think he has Asperger's syndrome or is he just feminine and kind of flamboyant in his mannerisms. Or is that the same for people with Asperger's syndrome? We were kind of considering whether or not his diagnosis was accurate because his behaviors are definitely atypical but does not display the same type of behaviors that we have seen in other students. So for a while we were kind of on the let's observe him mode, to see if he just was kind of out there! Or on the other hand,

does he really have Asperger's syndrome? Through some observations from each of us we found that yes, yes, yes he does actually fit the criteria. More specifically, his characteristics are consistent with the field knowledge about rigidity. For example, it is really difficult for him and hard for him to change a plan in the middle of a task and he is not flexible, so through collaboration we were able to obtain those multiple perspectives of the same student. I find the process useful because we each had a different point to make and we collectively contributed in a deeper way. I guess to think about the issue not just from our own perspective but from the perspectives of one another you contributed to the reason they stayed (especially because we all know that their salary is not very, not even as a teacher's salary which is terrible within itself) it's because they do have that sense of comfort and family."

Another data collection practice is shared by Dr. Abdullah:

"We actually came up with power standards. The goal was to develop a test to test for them (students). To create power standards here is what we did, let's say Ms. Mason was planning to test on this particular subject. Then, the four of us in the math department would provide questions. We would later come back and sit down and look at those questions. Afterwards, we would come to a consensus on the question for the test and make an agreement to administer the test on a particular day. Upon obtaining the results we would look for patterns in the results. Next, we would identify certain questions that were not well handled so what we would do involved going back to reteach some of concepts again... Since

that time we have not come up again with power standards and we have not determined how we're going to assess the students and I thought that was very useful...I mean a power standard for me is when you come together and decide on the curriculum. I mean when you look at the Algebra curriculum there are a whole lot of things that they expect you to teach but the point is you don't have time to teach everything, but there are certain things that you think that the student should know before they should go to the next level and that's when we decide to sit down and decide. If you're moving from Algebra 2 to Geometry we expect you to know ABC and D with a select few of those key standards that need to be addressed. Therefore, we are going to emphasize the appropriate time to introduce new concepts to students. The power standard process involves breaking down the whole curriculum and selecting a few of the topics that the team feels are most relevant for the next level. Actually, as a matter of fact at the end of the day we are going to be looking at what are going to be the power standards for each of our Math classes, power standards for Geometry, for Algebra and so-on.”

Mr. Bush's expresses his appreciation for power standards as a collaborative protocol during the focus group when he states:

“I know you want to move on but I love power standards because I think that really helps to move kids to the next level so that they are not lost. Furthermore, it is the idea of coming together to make curricular decisions that I enjoy the most.”

Ms. Thomas follows up by suggesting we use collaboration as a means for increasing our ability to use appropriate instructional strategies when she presents:

“We would look at various learning strategies like some of the Kagan strategies and we would choose one of those instructional structures and tests it out and then talk about how effective it was in the classroom during our collaboration time. So, we would pick one of the strategies, try it and report back to the group whether we wanted to continue to use it or not. I mean this year I teach the study skills class so I often use learning strategies to teach things and then when they work I share them with my collaborative team. I say hey I did this in my class, you can tell kids to do this and they will know what you are talking about, so it works well for sharing good ideas, applying knowledge about human learning and change.”

Later in the focus group discussion, Ms. Thomas shares another intervention for accessing and analyzing student data and thereby indirectly helping to support a positive working environment for teachers when she states:

“On my team we chose focus students and we would sit and talk about what were the student’s strengths and what concerns do we have. Afterward, we would distribute a student survey to the student and call them in for a little teacher student conference. Whether it was attendance, language, behavioral, and/or health issues, based upon what we learned from our interactions we would come up with some type of action plan for how to address the needs of the particular student.

**Action - diverse learning opportunities.** During an interview, Ms. Angelo reflected on her experience as a first year teacher by sharing:

“When I was a first year teacher I wasn’t even there yet to ask questions about curriculum. I needed the day-to-day guidance, like how do I take role? How do I fill out a referral? Where do I get my class set of books? Thus, those were the type of questions that would arise for Knox and because of the bell schedule, because of the team he was put in, we were able to answer those kinds of questions and do professional development at the same time.”

A first year teacher reflects on what she perceives is a key factor for improving teacher collaboration at the school of study when she exclaims:

“Third party evaluators that could give people feedback on their collaborative skills and the team effectiveness of collaboration could be a way to move them in a positive direction so they’re more effective.”

Ms. Thomas discusses how peer observations are arranged with other teachers during a focus group conversation:

“I haven’t really come across too much of a problem with that I mean most people have been pretty open about having us in their classroom. Of course you set it up by establishing that it’s not a punitive observation and you are not going in your classroom to look at how you teach. I could care less what your style is, we are looking at specific strategies and things that you are doing to further a goal. We try to frame it as we are going into it with an open mind and we are not looking to put down anybody. Yeah, we are not evaluating no offense replies another from the group we are not going in there to say great job teaching today or you did a bad job teaching today, we just document what did we see, how has it helped,

what could be done differently. So basically we are trying to frame it in a positive way.”

After reflecting on her beginning years as a teacher, Ms. Angelo later describes some positive teacher collaboration experiences by stating:

“I know that one time when I observed Tyson’s AP class for juniors I was able to look at the technique he used with his AP class and Coon, Knox and myself, we were able to take that same technique, tweak it a little bit and try it out in our own classes and we were able to talk about it that following week... I’ve learned that a functioning collaborative department permits learning from the veteran teachers as well as the new teachers. I think it could be a positive thing. Like if, let’s say for instance, if teachers actually observed teachers once a week instead of meeting with their collaboration group they use that time to observe a teacher, they could gain some valuable insight, valuable techniques.”

Mrs. Davis highlights her collaboration team’s diverse backgrounds as a contributing asset to their ability to function effectively by asserting:

“For instance my staff and my program with the Asperger’s inclusion program is an extraordinary group of professionals that come from different talent areas. For instance, I have a staff member that has a master’s in Drama Therapy, another one who has her credential in History, another one who is a minister, so when we come together and you know the whole expression we embrace a lot of different cultures.”

Although Ms. Thomas only has three years of teaching experience she has been exposed to a plethora of diverse learning opportunities:

“Atlas had a special professional development day last year. They gathered us all together to talk about effective group collaboration and how to work with different personalities. Different chemistry I think it (professional development) was called. In my opinion it was semi useful in bringing to our attention that people have different ways of collaborating and different strengths that they can provide to your collaborative group.”

Ms. Rodham reflects on the question of how teacher collaboration impacts teacher retention by suggesting:

“The PLC that we’re starting with WASC is really exciting because there is a choice in what you are able to work on as opposed to accountability coming from the administration...As a new teacher it (collaboration) gives you a feeling of belonging. So, if you collaborate you have people to discuss things with, people that you can ask for help in terms of either developing strategies and/or planning.”

**Accountability – goals.** When asked how can we, best improve teacher collaboration here at Barack Obama High School, Mr. Chavez stated:

“I think that teachers need to be trained. I think that every collaborative meeting needs to be intentional. Like there needs to be a motive behind why we’re pairing up, this group of 3 or 4 teachers or whatever it is. I think teams should be at least four teachers large, if it becomes 3 or 2 it becomes more difficult to set up a good team. And I feel like there needs to be a purpose for every meeting so that it

doesn't feel like you're just meeting for meeting's sake. There is a set goal. So if teachers were trained to set up goals, like these are the things we will accomplish by certain milestones, then maybe more effective collaboration would be more widespread."

After hearing Mr. Chavez talk about goals, I probed by asking "Have goals always been a part of the teacher collaboration experiences you've been in?"

"Oh yeah, I mean it is just natural. We have target goals as teachers just like we have target goals for our students, because if we don't set target goals day by day, as I said we are not going to be focused, we're not going to know what our end result is, and we're just going to end up talking about our weekend or some student that got on our nerves earlier that day... We need to have those specifics; we need to use words like what are our target goals for this meeting? What are, what do we want to accomplish by Friday? I think just like with students how you need to be explicit; I think teachers need to be explicit as well."

During a one-on-one interview, Ms. Angelo described her experiences of effective teacher collaboration, as she suggests:

"I feel like collaboration really works if you have an end goal in mind because if you go into the meeting without a goal you're tempted to just complain about students, about teachers, or about the administration."

Ms. Angelo is later asked to clarify what she perceives is the purpose of goals, and she states:

“For instance take Themis (9<sup>th</sup> grade house name), well we decided that every Monday we would be sharing the target goals, so we would go around sharing the target goals. Tuesday we would talk about our lesson plans for the week and then suggestions on how to reinforce skills and what the Tee-bolts teacher could do. Wednesday we liked to focus on students that were earning 2.0 G.P.A’s (grade point average) and below and try to figure out techniques to help them. Thursday was the day that we observed teachers together and then Friday we had a two part meeting session, part 1 was going over the observation that we did on Thursday and then the second half was figuring out what worked, what didn’t, and sharing student work. So each day had a focus. I feel like collaboration really works if you have an end goal in mind. You have your high performing teachers that will create these goals on their own. And then you have other teachers who really need that explicit direction and I really felt that there are some teacher groups here that really needed some they needed good examples of what other groups do.”

Mrs. Davis shares her thoughts on the need for structured collaborative processes, by asserting:

“We need some basic commonalities right to as why we are here and then encouraging and guiding the discussion towards being productive and respectful because even though people may be compelled to vent and that’s okay but obviously within some limits. You know to maintain that is a productive experience and not just some big ole cry fest-shout fest...I think that sometimes it can be challenging for teachers because we have this, you know, culture of

isolation and control over our classroom and how it is that we teach and I think that given the opportunity to share our, so in other words, we don't have to completely sacrifice that sense of individualism and isolation because I personally do feel very comfortable in knowing that I have the freedom to work independently.”

Chavez inserts his passion for benchmarks and/or objectives to shoot for in terms of setting the expectations for collaboration to prosper by suggesting:

“Sometimes it was anticipatory because some of us had experience being on teams and working with freshmen so we would set something up before the issues even arise. But we always had a structure to our conversations and I think that's what made the collaboration productive...like we knew what to expect when we met on Monday, when we met on Wednesday, and when we met on Fridays.”

In an interview, Ms. Rodham shared her summarized thoughts for implementing and improving collaboration:

“To improve collaboration, I feel like for some reason, it needs to come from a teacher otherwise people are going to be like this is just another top down thing they're trying to get us to do.”

***Accountability - Leadership.*** Ms. Rodham, shares more of her thoughts for improving teacher collaboration by suggesting:

“If we want to improve collaboration there needs to be a way to provide feedback on how, how we're doing...I really think like feedback. Some sort, whether it is another teacher, an administrator, or a third party observer strictly for the sole

purpose of discussing how collaboration is going and to provide feedback... When I say accountability it's also feedback like someone coming in and being like this is what I see about your collaboration that's good and this is what you guys need to work on.

Mr. Chavez during an interview responds to a question about traditional professional development versus collaboration:

“Since no one was really checking on me to see if I’m actually using those techniques, I really didn’t use it. But now that I’m actually in a group where we agree on something together, we do it. Before I felt the need to do it for myself, and for my students, now I feel more motivated when I work in a group... So it has forced me to become better and I feel like we (collaboration team) came up with a lot of innovation... I think part of it’s like the sense of community that you feel in a small learning community.”

Ms. Angelo provides advice for school leadership to improve teacher collaboration impact:

“Actually following through with teacher collaboration groups, administration actually popping in, they don’t need to stay for the entire meeting but just their presence alone I think would make a really big impact. I know this is hard but just actually looking at the minutes, that way you’re providing some type of feedback. Whether it is just like a comment here or there. Just like bullet points.”

Mrs. Davis shares experiences of the dynamic teachers working together creating tension to propel their professional growth by sharing:

“With my co-special education teachers there is a level of professional expectation that I am held accountable for by my colleagues, never mind so much the administration, but also the administrators, but even colleague to colleague...I have gotten phone calls from my colleagues (general education teachers) with questions about my students. If I haven’t proactively taken the time to reach out to them because they can visibly see my students are engaging, visibly different in the classroom than the other students; then sometimes they (regular education teachers) will call me before I have a chance to call them and there is a tone of professional dissatisfaction. Why haven’t you gotten in contact with me and given me a heads up about this student. On the other hand, when I call and avail my support to them in advance and give them an explanation of who the student is and what to expect you know there is such a tone of professional appreciation like thank you for doing what you were supposed to do so that I can do what I am supposed to do.”

During a one-on-one interview with Mr. Chavez he shared his sentiments for not performing in a group setting, by stating:

“If it felt like I wasn’t doing my part or pulling my weight (as a solo teacher), I could feel that even more so when I was in that community meeting regularly with those teachers, where as if I wasn’t part of a team and I’m just going through my Monday through Friday and not even interacting with anybody, I would feel I could just do whatever I wanted and not feel like its holding anyone or anything back.”

## **Summary of Qualitative Findings**

This chapter brings together the qualitative data from the 13 teachers who participated in this phase of the study. A critical finding from this study is that all teachers who have been using Dufour, & Eaker (1998) PLC model for teacher collaboration have achieved significant increases in discussions around student data to drive curricular and instructional decisions.

The theme structure reveals similar findings to those reported in the quantitative chapter in regards to teachers' appreciation of the time provided to support teacher collaboration. Findings for this theme also show an increase in the potential for teachers to share work-loads, ideas, and skills. Additionally, findings show a trend toward helping teachers build collective purpose.

In terms of community, results show that the collaborative teacher structure helped to foster healthy relationships centered on student learning. Similar results were supported by quantitative findings. On the other hand, when the action theme is closely examined, quantitative results showed that teachers' perception of their ability to use data was low; however the qualitative data presented in this chapter mostly supported findings reported in Chapter 4. Qualitative trends conveyed patterns of needed improvement with the teacher's ability to use data to drive instruction. Results also illuminated that as teachers shared more time together their willingness to share common practices also increased.

Interestingly, findings for the accountability theme show that more attention needs to be paid to developing and communicating clear goals and expectations for

teachers in terms of their collaborative expectations. This finding was consistent with the quantitative findings presented earlier. Chapter 6 begins with an overview of the study and provides an analysis of the findings of the research questions. Chapter 6 presents conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Presentation of Research Questions**

The three questions presented below guided the research process:

- How are current working conditions perceived by teachers in the urban school being studied?
- What are the key components of teacher collaboration that positively supports teacher retention at the school of study?
- In what ways, has teacher retention been impacted by teacher collaboration at this school?

### **Discussion of Findings**

Three themes are introduced below as a means for summary and discussion of relevant findings to answer the three research questions. The themes have been identified as Action, Accountability, and Structure. Each theme was supported by relevant data sources. Specific questions regarding job satisfaction and teacher retention were analyzed using demographic and statistical data. Throughout each theme qualitative findings were triangulated with quantitative findings to provide a more in-depth description of trend patterns.

Qualitative transcripts were coded for patterns and grouped into the previously mentioned themes. At least two supporting qualitative clusters were used to provide

supporting evidence for their respective themes. Lastly, the most adequate quotes were selected that best reflect the qualitative findings of the group, such as quotes that 1) most appropriately displays the qualitative trend and 2) further substantiates evidence found in the quantitative results. I integrated the participants' quotes relationship into their respective themes as a means for developing a logical chain of evidence to help better understand the complex urban school working conditions.

### **Structure**

The structure theme identified in this study was comprised of a component analysis of the amount of time teachers spent collaborating and the manner in which teachers were grouped to collaborate with each other. An analysis of outcomes presented in Chapter Four and Five revealed findings that a positive impact on the school's culture has resulted due to the time committed to collaboration daily and how teams are purposefully grouped. These findings support teachers feeling more of a willingness to remain teaching at their current school of study. Findings discussed in this section were obtained by triangulating quantitative and qualitative data sources, types and methods.

**Finding 1 - time.** An analysis of quantitative findings revealed time as highly appreciated by teachers. This finding is evidenced by the relatively high mean rating value trend. More specifically, two of the three questions analyzed that related to time, recorded high mean rating values for school's structured time for collaboration (question

32). Additionally, trends for question 49, regarding the issue of adequate planning and collaboration time for teachers, report a high mean rating.

Correlational trends reveal a significant relationship between the issues of time spent collaborating (question 23) and job satisfaction (question 8). Moreover, support for this trend was established by inverse correlational patterns observed in responses to question 23 and question 11 involving seriously considering other jobs. It is plausible to assume that the inverse trend can be understood to mean that as the teacher's perception of time spent collaborating increases, their willingness to pursue other jobs decreases.

Findings from the notion of teachers having enough time for planning and collaboration with colleagues and job satisfaction revealed outcomes of positive significance. This trend provided additional evidence to support the claim that as a teacher's perception of time develops it could lead to a positive impact on teacher satisfaction.

Accordingly, when the idea of teachers having enough time for planning and collaboration with colleagues is correlated with teachers' serious considerations of pursuing another position, a significant negative correlation was identified in the experience demographic variable; thereby, this trend transcends the message that the amount of time that teachers are permitted to collaborate does have a positive impact on teacher working conditions. A significant negative correlation implies that as a teacher's perception of time spent collaborating increases, it can lead to decreases in the teacher's willingness to look for other positions.

Since the amount of time teachers spend collaborating is directly connected to the principal's concerted commitment to collaboration, it can be said that the amount of time teachers spend collaborating is a construct of the school leadership decision-making process. Therefore, these patterns support the finding that leadership is a key component of the working environment for teachers. Furthermore, school leaders need to design and implement a clear path for the decision-making process of the school.

The qualitative data supported the survey results and provided a consistent understanding of how teacher collaboration time impacts teacher working conditions in a practical sense. The true relevance of time was primarily highlighted in the Action and Accountability theme.

**Finding 2 - teacher collaboration.** Findings for the collaboration trend report relative high mean rating values for questions which purport the notion of small team grouping. Similar trends were observed for questions regarding the perception of a teachers ability to work together. When a question regarding teachers working together was correlated with job satisfaction, a relatively strong positive correlational relationship was discovered. Consequently, when the idea of teachers working in small groups was correlated with the issue of teachers seriously considering leaving, outcomes showed a strong inverse relationship. The body of research regarding a teacher's experience, supports those teachers with more teaching experience significantly different from teachers with less experience (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

When the survey participants were presented the notion of a school's teaching and learning goals depending on the ability of the staff to work well together, and that was correlated with job satisfaction, the results showed relatively little significance.

However when the issue of a school's teaching and learning goals depending on the ability of the staff to work well together was correlated with teachers seriously considering other positions, a rejection was observed. The rejection resulted in a strong inverse relationship indicating that as a teacher's perception of their ability to work well together increased their desire for looking for other jobs decreased.

Trends indicate that teachers develop a deeper sense of connectedness as a result of teacher collaboration practices. Teachers are able to learn through practice and interactions with other teachers (National Research Council, 2000). Teachers need appropriate learning opportunities to cultivate and hone their expertise (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Levin, 2002).

### **Action**

The action theme identified in this study was comprised of a component analysis of student data/feedback and diverse learning opportunities. The term data here is used to characterize a teacher's ability to gather and analyze student information. Diverse learning opportunities are used to describe the various types of learning opportunities schools provide for their teachers. While outcomes presented in chapter four and five revealed findings that support a need for continued support in these areas for the school

of study, summary evidence presented here supports a connection to the teachers' willingness to remain teaching at their current school. Findings discussed in this section were obtained by triangulating quantitative and qualitative data sources, types and methods.

The first element of the action theme was comprised of a two component analysis of student data and feedback. The term "analysis of student data" refers to the teacher's ability to identify, collect, analyze and communicate student data in a manner that supports learning. "Feedback", on the other hand, deals with the continuous communication efforts necessary to highlight continuous learning. A summary of the findings along with a logical chain of evidence is presented below to help better understand the urban action collaboration theme component.

**Finding 3a - data.** Quantitative trends show that teachers need to learn how to use data to support student learning needs. Over 44% of the 29 participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the general statement that "teachers learn to use data to assess student learning needs". Supporting descriptive trends show those teachers' perceptions regarding collecting and using data to support decision making is low. A low perception of data, stemmed from teachers inadequate training and support using data to drive classroom decisions. These findings highlight a need to for administration to take a closer look at the developing patterns as the school strives towards continuous improvement.

The quantitative and qualitative findings presented here show that teachers are not well equipped to use student data. More specifically, qualitative findings highlight the

trend that teachers are engaging in using student data analysis more wide-spread than quantitative outcomes present. Trends show that Atlas (9<sup>th</sup> grade house) teachers are engaged in multiple diverse professional learning opportunities to use data.

**Finding 3b - feedback.** Relatively low patterns of support were found in terms of the teachers' perception of feedback from their colleagues and administration. Feedback trends show patterns that provide evidence of the teachers' perception of their ability to use student data to improve student performance at the school of study. More specifically, when the idea of obtaining feedback from colleagues was correlated with job satisfaction, a moderately strong positive relationship was observed. This type of relationship indicates that as their perceptions of them obtaining feedback increases, it can lead to an increase in job satisfaction.

Additional patterns of support displayed a relatively strong inverse relationship when the idea of teachers obtaining feedback was correlated with the notion of teachers seriously considering other positions. It is plausible to conclude that data analysis and feedback play a significant role for providing healthy working conditions for teachers.

More evidence is needed to qualify the interaction of the data and feedback elements impact on working conditions for the school of study. These trends translate to a need for something for teachers and will require more evidence to confirm, how, if at all, the action theme impacts working conditions for teachers. Therefore, based upon the presented information it is reasonable to assert that teachers and administrators at the school of study are in need of additional support for using data and providing adequate feedback. Rothman (2005) suggests that "Being considered a high quality teacher doesn't

matter much if no one recognizes the teacher's expert ability to contribute to the educational process" (as cited by Melocik, 2009 page 53). This statement implies that teachers need to be structured in systems that permit them to be able to receive support from their peers in alignment with the leadership's collaborative vision.

**Finding 4 - diverse learning opportunities.** Teachers generally defined teacher collaboration as a form of professional development based upon both qualitative and quantitative data sources. Descriptive data points revealed trends of low patterns of diverse professional learning opportunities by survey participants. Of the 29 teachers surveyed about having enough diverse professional learning opportunities, 40% disagreed with the statement.

A relatively strong positive correlational relationship exists among the teachers' perceptions of diverse professional learning opportunities and job satisfaction. This suggests that as teachers perceive their working conditions as supportive of offering diverse learning opportunities, there exists a parallel positive perception of job satisfaction.

Supporting evidence confirmed a strong negative correlational trend between diverse learning opportunities and teachers seriously considering other jobs. These patterns suggest that as teachers are exposed to more diverse professional learning opportunities their willingness to pursue other jobs decreases.

The professional learning category recorded an overall mean rating of 1.88 for the five questions analyzed which was well below the expected average of 2.0. The mean rating value was the lowest of the five categories examined by the survey. The evidence

supporting diverse learning opportunities for teachers in the study is well represented by qualitative findings of teachers being offered diverse opportunities to learn.

The strong positive correlation between diverse learning opportunities and job satisfaction found in this study is well documented by the research on teacher morale. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that if schools want to enhance their organizational capacity for teacher learning, they should work on designing professional learning that is characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility. An interview quote helps to reveal the personal aspects of teacher collaboration by sharing:

“I’ve learned that a functioning collaborative department permits learning from the veteran teachers as well as the new teachers. I think it could be a positive thing. Like if, let’s say for instance, if teachers actually observed teachers once a week instead of meeting with their collaboration group they use that time to observe a teacher, they could gain some valuable insight, valuable techniques”.

The qualitative data findings revealed high accounts of the different types of professional learning opportunities implemented by teachers (e.g., peer-observations, team meetings, cycle of inquires). However, when calibrated with the school wide effort the quantity of teacher collaboration existing at the school posed a concern. A one-on-one interview participant describes the general qualitative trend found to support collaboration analysis by stating that:

“It’s enriching as an educator in terms of the literal process of developing your skills personally and the knowledge to share as an educator...I believe we learn through our individual life experiences but when we engage in education we are

able to include not just our own experience but the experience of several others within the world, which supports the holistic approach for being educated”.

Another qualitative interview quote is shared to help enrapture the practical essence of the impact diverse learning opportunities for teachers have on a teacher’s willingness to remain at their school. When interviewing Mr. Chavez, he was asked to share the impact teacher collaboration has had on his professional growth and he stated:

“I think it’s helped me a lot. I think the best PD is observing another teacher. I think when you’re part of a community you feel more value in working hard. I feel like it has recognized me more. I feel like I have transferred more impact. For example, say you’re out sick, if you’re just one teacher in a pool of 100 it is like no one really notices. But when you are one teacher out of four everyone feels it and everyone recognizes your absence.”

The qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of how teacher collaboration positively supports teacher retention at the school of study. Evidence showed trends of increased, diverse learning opportunities for teachers, leading to increased opportunities for teacher’s to improve teaching practices, thereby creating a feeling of ease and trust. Findings indicate that a teacher’s ability to learn from another teacher is significantly increased by teacher collaboration.

Evidence shows trends of increased teacher self-efficacy as a result of the unique teacher collaboration structure; this was attributed to the school’s unique use of teacher time. Time was found to aide teachers’ perception that they could meet deadlines, plan lessons and analyze student-data with other colleagues. Many researchers have found that

school climates and working conditions that fostered individualism and competition, rather than collegiality and group goals, were intrinsically related to teachers feeling isolated, separated, lost, and discouraged (Gunbayi, 2007; Bridges 2009).

A significant pattern that emerged for the Action theme shows that more information regarding teachers using student data to improve instruction is needed. Trends show that immediate needs include professional training for teachers to support their ability to effectively implement student data analysis that support student learning. The research confirms evidence of a significant positive relationship where teachers have the opportunity to work together and exercise some control over their learning environment (Nietfeld & Cao, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stockard & Leman, 2004). Additionally, findings provide evidence to support a school wide need to improve feedback communication.

### **Accountability**

The accountability theme was primarily focused on the school's ability to adhere to an inclusive leadership management philosophy. The general quantitative trends show that teachers' perceptions were mixed toward their school's leadership and moderately low in the areas of shared decision-making and providing feedback. The qualitative data sources reaffirm these findings by presenting a logical chain of evidence that identified an area of needed improvement of the site leadership's presence in coaching and supporting teachers' professional growth within the teacher collaboration process.

**Finding 5 - leadership.** The six questions examined for the leadership category recorded an overall mean rating of 2.13. The question regarding teachers' perception of their principal's belief that learning is essential for achieving school goals, recorded the highest mean for the category at 2.62. The lowest mean rating value for the category was recorded at 1.72 by the question that put forth the notion that teachers perceive their leader as being empowering.

Further evidence showed that of the 6 questions analyzed to help better understand the leadership trend, 4 (66.7%) of them communicated a relatively low perception of the school site leadership based on their mean rating values. When teachers were asked "would they use the word empowering to describe their leadership", 48.3% of them disagreed with the presented statement and recorded a mean rating value below average; question 41, which presented that "school-wide issues and practices are influenced by faculty input" also produced below average mean rating outcomes, coupled with 38% of teachers disagreeing with the premise of the statement. Other supporting evidence such as question 46 regarding the issue that the "principal models effective collaboration" report an average mean value, while almost half of the 29 participants surveyed disagreed with this statement.

Correlational observations of the leadership theme show quantitative trends that support a strong positive relationship between the teacher's perception of their leadership's ability to focus on teacher learning as its school's goal (question 40) and job satisfaction (question 8). These patterns were further supported when question 40 was correlated with question 11 which involves teachers seriously considering other jobs.

Results revealed a significant inverse relationship, which could be understood to mean that as leaders at the school of study are able to improve their ability to communicate and implement their vision, an improved feeling of job satisfaction for teachers will likely result. The inverse relationship can be understood to show that as the teacher's perceptions of leadership's willingness to collectively set and achieve goals increases, in return, the teacher's willingness to seriously look for other positions decreases.

Additional correlational patterns help to support the teacher's perception of leadership. Results revealed a strong positive relationship when correlated with job satisfaction and a strong negative relationship when correlated with teachers seriously considering other jobs. The strong positive relationship suggests that as teachers' perceptions of leadership's ability and willingness to share responsibility for meeting school goals increase, teacher job satisfaction will also increase. Accordingly, the inverse relationship described above suggests that as a teacher's perception of leadership becomes more positive the teacher's willingness to look for another job decreases.

Another supporting tendency revealed that the leadership trend used to help define the teacher's perception of decision making was influenced by teacher input. The correlational outcomes reveal that the overall perceptions for a teacher who perceives leadership to include their input in decisions presents strong positive patterns. When correlated with job satisfaction, while presenting strong negative patterns when correlated with the teacher's eagerness or willingness to seriously consider other jobs.

The qualitative data trends for the leadership theme confirmed the quantitative findings. Analysis of transcribed focus group and interview data showed patterns of

needed improvement in including teachers in the decision-making process and providing feedback to teachers. Of the six interview participants, 75% (4) of them revealed that leadership's ability to model teacher collaboration practices and provide continuous feedback was needed. Results from qualitative trends questioned the school's leadership authenticity towards incorporating shared decision-making strategies into their daily practices. The conversational data supports the claim that in order for teachers to successfully integrate teacher collaboration strategies into their professional growth framework, they will need the ongoing support of the school's leadership.

It is then plausible to purport that teachers who have a low perception of leadership's willingness to model effective collaboration practice are less likely to trust the school's administration. A school's administrative team's failure to include teachers in the decision-making progress could cause teachers to feel disconnected in terms of the vision and daily practices of the school's administrators. Furthermore, failure to effectively provide feedback to teachers can lead to reductions in teacher morale.

In summary, there was a rejection of the postulation that no significant relationship exists between leadership and a teacher's willingness to remain at their school as presented by the quantitative data and supported by the qualitative data. This finding supports the trend that leadership, as an element of teacher collaboration, is a key significant component for improving teacher retention at their local school.

### **Intersection of Theory to Practice.**

As a means for arguing “radical possibilities” as presented by researcher Jean Anyon (2005), this researcher raises the contention that urban school reform and educational policy has been re-theorized to include necessary reform of the public policies that cause the social problems that constrict educational possibility (Anyon, 2005). My investigation of teacher collaboration at the school of study placed me up close and personal with one of the biggest elephants in the room regarding urban school reform, commonly referred to as school culture.

School culture is a vitally important aspect for urban schools. Arriaza & Henze (2012) defines culture in schools as “the way people talk and define the way things are usually done, how people are categorized both formally and implicitly, and how relationships are sustained” (page 124). It was evident by the data presented that teachers in this study valued the teacher collaboration time. However, the concept of collaboration is an inclusive process that when done democratically seeks to place all representative bodies at the table, creating a more equitable outcome. The equity aspect of teacher collaboration was not regularly practiced at the school of study.

Through my interviews, I began to better understand the teachers’ sentiments toward the administration. Agency Theory elucidates the power dynamic being played out here by the school administration and teachers. Parsons & Shils (2001) define agency as “people’s deliberate daily labor or action organized around social systems, personalities, and cultural norms” (as cited by Arriaza & Henze, 2012). Teachers in this

study are the agents who were mandated by NCLB sanctions to adopt a comprehensive reform model or reconstruct the school by terminating all staff. The top-down mandate from the federal government was attempting to be equitable. However, this decision places some unique constraints on the school of study by failing to adequately support the school's ability to meet high standards set by the federal and state governments.

The four principles for improving interethnic relations are presented here as a means for better understanding the current relationship among the teachers' perception of their current site and leadership's impact on their willingness to remain at the school to include:

- affirming identity – emphasizes how we all are different, and these differences are valued, important resources;
- building community – places a focus on similarities, how we are the same, and how unity of purpose helps us work together toward common goals;
- cultivating student leadership – highlights student voice, democratic participation and continuous development of student leadership
- addressing root causes of conflict – the most essential, addresses the structural and institutional problems that cause ethnic and other kinds of intergroup conflict (Arriaza, & Henze, 2012).

My observations revealed that the teachers - in many ways - have begun to shift their thinking in terms of their new teacher collaboration model. However, teachers feel that the leadership needs to improve their ability to align their daily practices by including them more in the decision making process. Building community as a big part of

the school leader's role often goes unnoticed. My findings showed that teachers wanted to see their leaders modeling the collaborative practices they expected to see teachers implementing daily. It was evident that the ability of the school to meet its vision of collaboration at the school of site was constrained by the teachers' view that the site leadership was unreceptive to their professional input. Analysis of triangulated data types show that teachers at this school firmly demanded to see more improvement by the leaders in terms of there being more teacher voice involved in the decision making process.

Additionally, I observed a need for the school leadership to address root causes of conflict. For example, I commend the leadership's commitment to ensure adequate time for teacher collaboration during the school day. However, because school leadership is human work and can be personal, urban school leaders should be conscious of performance stagnation that may be lingering below the surface. Teachers are humans who desire to feel valued and appreciated for their efforts. Based on the evidence presented, leadership can be seen as a key component of the teacher collaboration process that impacts a teacher's willingness to remain at the school of study.

Furthermore, researchers have found that a commitment to teacher collaboration by the leadership can transcend the message of confidence in one's employees that inhibits trust, confidence and loyalty towards the employees' working conditions (Ross and Gray, 2006). This finding supports the claim that the working conditions, as perceived by the teachers, at the school of study are currently not in balance. The school

site leadership needs to improve their ability to address the root causes of conflict or risk mistrust and potential sabotage of the comprehensive reform movement.

James Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as a leader's influence on followers to act on behalf of the mutual goals of both the leader and followers (as cited by Keiser, Kincaid, & Servais 2011). Rather than traditional top-down authority, transformational leaders identify shared values and develop relationships with followers that result in trust. The trust inhibits shared values and results in a community where members are more motivated and desire similar outcomes. Burns (1978) suggest that leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of vision, performance and motivation (as cited by Keiser, Kincaid, & Servais 2011).

The data presented in the section represents the voice of teachers reaching out for support in the area of data analysis and feedback. Raelin (2003) coined the phrase "leaderfull approach" to involve four components: concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate. The collective approach is being used to further describe this relationship. Raelin (2003) suggests collective leadership involves multiple members participating in organizational tasks and decisions.

The point of concern for this school involves the tasks central to support teacher collaboration that positively impact the working conditions for teachers. It is one thing to support the PLC model however it is a totally different challenge to put the theory of PLC into practice. The leadership at the school of study will be required to continuously define and clarify the expectations for teacher learning at the school. Additionally, it will be

important to purposefully implement strategies that counteract the unconnected teacher collaboration practices that have emerged over time at the school of study.

### **Recommendations**

**Structure.** Teachers and administration should work together to co-create protocols for data sharing with clear expectations. The protocols should be coherently linked to the overall vision of the school. The principles of fun-at-work should be integrated through the design of the protocol model. Donna Berg (1998) asserts that “having fun at work increases creativity, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention of talented people” (Berg, 1998 page 54). The objective needs to center on sharing new milestones and unexpected outcomes as they occur in positive ways to build community and healthy relationships with a collaborative learning environment.

Provide a realistic teacher induction program at the school. Not everyone can or should be responsible for effective transition and induction of new teachers to the school, but the more people that are involved, the easier the workload. The teachers interviewed indicated that as a first year teachers or veteran teachers new to the school site, they lacked a formal orientation or transition period. Since you can only make a first impression once, it is beneficial to the schools that they have an action plan for how new teachers are received and orientated. Researchers have found that the right system of support can help new teachers grow into their profession and suggest a strong induction program where teacher effectiveness can be created and maintained (Kardos, 2005;

Ingersoll & Smith 2004). Teacher effectiveness should increase teacher self-efficacy, which should increase teacher retention. A quote from a one-on-one interview helps to highlight this issue:

“I feel like when I came I did get a great orientation with friendliness, but there was no formal thing (induction). For example, nowhere is how you sign your timesheet or other really simple things. Since I was a brand new teacher, not just a teacher new to Barack Obama, there was a lot of logistical information that I was just unaware of and figuring that out while being a first year teacher was challenging. Also, couple in my group of students and you can see how overwhelming the process could be. Thus being made aware of the services that are available to students on our campus is vitally important because I think we offer such wonderful services, but it is also like very much a reality that if I don't know what they are I can't utilize them.”

**Action.** Use the voices of teachers to redefine the school's vision. Align the school's vision to the school wide instructional focus for the upcoming year. Use a collaborative protocol to solicit teachers' input for clearly defining the instructional focus decisions that can be supported by teachers at the school of study. Align all strategies to a school wide instructional focus roadmap that is aligned to the school-wide master calendar. Additionally, there needs to be a clear focus on linking teacher collaboration goals with the overall vision of the school.

Teachers will need more training in creating SMART goals: identifying adequate accountability measures, sharing data and using data to drive decision making. More

specifically, research has found that having a common vision, deprivatizing teaching practices, promoting supportive conditions and sharing leadership were the main characteristics that helped to sustain the school process (Boyd and Hord, 1994).

Moreover, the system needs to place an emphasis on developing and implementing continuous feedback loops throughout the process. The intent is to help reduce wasted energy, bring clarity to their quest, and provide information regarding the support needed to ensure the action plan meets its target goal. Additionally, the road map needs to systematically align to the school-wide master calendar.

**Policy recommendations.** In order to improve our thriving urban schools researchers argue for a critical set of conditions to be in existence. Arriaza and Henze (2012) purport that “fully adequate education must be put in place for youth and children who – owing to racialized conditions, economic poverty, and gender, linguistic, and cultural discrimination – have been rendered disadvantaged in today’s school systems” (Arriaza & Henze, 2012 page 119). This construct helps to identify the policy issues that need to be addressed in order to provide urban schools with an adequate level of resources and assure appropriate daily professional practices needed to improve their schools.

The school district needs a policy for pre-service induction programs to be created and implemented at every school. In order to maintain quality teachers who are committed to classroom teaching, teachers need to be trained to access the unique resources that are offered at each school. This study showed that teachers who

experienced site-based teacher induction value were less likely to seek other jobs and obtained higher levels of job satisfaction.

The school district needs a policy supporting district personnel teaming with schools to establish sustainable comprehensive school reform. Currently, in local school districts across the country, there exists a break in the chain in terms of the support for collaborating teacher retention efforts at the school level and the district level. Rorrer (2008) argues that “In an environment driven by a ‘bang for a buck’ mindset, acquiring, aligning, and distributing human resources consistent with reform goals, including central office administrators as well as teacher quality, is oft-overlooked, under-recognized element of the district’s role in reform” (page 326). Local schools and districts need to be able to develop teams to inform both parties about past, current and upcoming events as a means for continuous improvement through a fluid exchange of knowledge from both sides to drive future decision-making efforts.

### **Limitations**

**Methods.** Another area of potential concern for this study was its reliance on survey outcomes; although Gall et al. (2007) argued respondents’ answers in survey research are generally valid and reliable, the findings of this study relied heavily on the honesty and accuracy of the participants. The survey findings were limited by the ability of the respondents to accurately recall specific feelings and perceptions pertaining to job satisfaction and teacher retention over a career span. With the exception of a few multiple

choice and free-response questions, the findings were primarily based on Likert scale responses, thus not allowing participants the ability to construct their own response. The study was purposefully narrowed in scope, and therefore constrained by the population, which included teacher's designated full-time holding a valid teaching license, and who had been employed at the school since August 2011.

Another limitation of this study arises from the nature of qualitative research which can present significant problems in terms of validity and reliability because it depends heavily on the interviewing and interpretive skills of the researcher. To help improve the validity and trustworthiness of this study, multiple types, methods and sources of evidence were used to triangulate data (Yin, 2003). To help increase the reliability, the procedures were well documented allowing the researcher to arrive at the same findings and conclusions if the same case was repeated.

**Demographics.** Because this study was conducted in one high school within a limited geographical area, the findings are not statistically generalizable, so the research findings cannot be assumed for the larger population of all teachers. The range of teachers that were surveyed, 9-12 public high school teachers in one state in the United States, will limit the study because the sample will not represent teachers from all states or other countries, nor will it represent teachers in higher education. However, the study does have the potential to add and support the theoretical framework of Positive Working Conditions (Guarino, et, el., 2004), Professional Learning Communities (Dufour & 1998) and Urban Leadership Principles (Arriaza & Henze, 2012). Additionally, the framework

offered by Dufour & Eaker does not include urban leadership principles, in a professional learning community as a means for better understanding teacher retention.

Another area of potential concern was the time of the year this study was conducted. The literature reveals that a teacher's sense of job satisfaction diminishes as the school advances towards the end of the year. By collecting data on the teacher's perception of their job satisfaction and willingness to remain at their current school during the winter months, the study may have over-estimated teacher's sentiments. However, understanding the nature of work demanded of teachers, it seems appropriate to gather data from teachers when they function at their best.

### **Implications for Practice**

Several implications for practice can be drawn from this study. First, site and district leaders should search for innovative ways to connect the PLC work of their local schools with work of the district office personnel. This change in behavior will require an intensive on-going learning process that could lead to increases in the level of efficacy for local school and district personnel.

Another implication for practice should be that urban district leadership needs to consider urban leadership principles along with positive teacher working conditions as interactive and complementary components. Embracing the concept of nurturing thus permitting the ability for all kids to obtain a quality education is a key trait of the PLC model. Thus, teachers need to be continuously supported. By being actively engaged in

reflective dialogue, adults become more complex in their thinking about the world, more respectful of diverse perspectives, more flexible and open toward new experiences (Lambert, 2003). Thus, it becomes important to collect authentic data that accurately assesses the school's true needs. The process needs to be collaborative and viewed as a platform for future school reform efforts. It is important to note that the process must be understood to be organic and not top- driven. The evidence shows that a significant positive relationship exists between school leadership characteristics of meeting the employees' needs and leadership decisions to change infrastructure to support teachers' abilities to collaborate more within the school day.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

**Professional learning communities impact on school culture.** Urban school leaders must become action researchers – constantly seeking to improve their overall performance through data driven decision-making opportunities. Many researchers have found that grounding educational decisions in evidence can help remove politics and ideology from those decisions and other influences that may threaten efforts to focus on teaching and learning (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy; Slavin, 1989). Thereby, through a continuous process of dialogue, reflection, action, and feedback, school leaders can foster healthy learning environments by leveraging effective teacher collaboration systems to meet the diverse needs of teachers.

When organizational systems embrace this type of structure at the highest level of the bureaucracy, they send an important message in terms of the utilization of power and authority. It is here where I feel critical race theory intersects this study. As Americans we have a distinct past that we cannot separate from that involves the disenfranchisement of individuals as a result of ethnic differences.

Several researchers have supported the claim that the perceived lack of respect felt by teachers is in part due to a lack of shared decision-making for school programs and policies and a lack of support (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Grossman, 2005; and Ingersoll, 2003). For example, in our urban school systems we have teachers who feel despair, overwhelmed, hopeless and powerless. Regardless, the institutional actions of the district, state and federal leadership has been to continue to increase the expectations without providing necessary support or resources.

Berliner (2006) asserts that when we push for more rigorous standards in our schools we should also push for a raise in the minimum wage, or better yet, for livable wages. This implies that the push for greater accountability should be counteracted with some form of reward which validates the request for an increase in performance. Therefore, it is very important for us to examine the impact poverty plays has on urban public schools and avoid implementing practices and policies that only exacerbate the daily experiences of our urban students.

A picture of what is happening in terms of the institutional dominance of our educational systems' ability to impose status quo policies upon teachers is best captured

by the notable scholar Carter G. Woodson when in 1933 he identified the school's role in structuring inequality and demotivating African-American students:

“The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought the he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other people” (page xix).

These practices are often enacted and develop into informal rules overtime, thereby constraining the impact urban teachers have on the students they serve daily. In practical terms the stigmatized behavior of NCLB sets a standard for excellence without identifying a plan of action and or adequate resources for success. The impact described here and by Dr. Woodson is power which can be understood as the resource that can be called upon through a relationship interaction wherein one individual causes another to act a certain way.

As more disparities of resources arise between the two parties, the more likely it is that one will be able to cause the other to act as desired (Harris, 1999). Therefore, the future of urban education will rest in the hands of institutional leaders' (i.e. superintendents, directors, board members, principals, and teachers) abilities to embrace and model collaborative professional learning in order to legitimize effective urban school reform efforts. The stakes are high; however the possible outcomes are well worth the challenge of fighting from the ground up as street-level bureaucrats.

This study serves as a plea to our urban public school leaders to act now towards designing, implementing and sustaining healthy learning environments grounded in effective PLC practices that can lead towards a reduction in the number of disenfranchised urban teachers and students in our urban public schools. Doing nothing can no longer be an option especially considering the ongoing epidemic of urban school failure our country has endured over the past four decades.

**Teaming for equity.** The ability to integrate the PLC model into the daily interactions of our urban classrooms will require help from the district level leadership and maybe even state and federal leaders with modeling collaboration practices. Urban leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need more than ever to roll their sleeves up and get involved in the process of developing leadership capacities using models grounded in professional learning organization's principles guided by a shared vision.

The issue that matters most when dealing with policy is the ability to connect locally and establish the will of the constituents. Therefore, understanding that the human resources in most cases are already in our urban public schools, the challenge will be spreading the wealth of knowledge and skills necessary to adequately support and sustain their efforts. McLaughlin (1992) argues that relationships between schools and districts that have little to do with hierarchical structure controls and everything to do with the norms, expectations, and values that shape a district's professional community have powerful influences on institutional performance.

Our urban schools are diverse organizations needing to be resourced with a variety of knowledge and skills. Although this is a shift from the traditional top-down

management practices, the data is clear in terms of the outcomes we are receiving from our urban school performance. Now it is time for everyone to reflect on their practices and respond differently to ensure that no child is left behind! This dissertation has provided support for the argument that teacher collaboration is one effective strategy for responding to the urban teacher retention crisis.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study highlight several areas for further research. First, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies using the framework developed by this study. In particular, future studies can provide further support that the PLC model positively impacts teacher retention.

A second area for further consideration is to study the impact implementation of the PLC model has on an urban school district's ability to retain teachers and personnel. How does altering the model language impact organizational performance?

A third area of consideration is urban school leaders' awareness of the need to ensure that their schools hire incoming teachers who are a good fit for the organization. It is the fiduciary responsibility of leadership to ensure that their employees' needs are adequately met to optimize performance.

A fourth area to consider is that urban leaders need to be educated in higher education programs that are grounded in principles for developing collaborative leaders

for equity. The more leaders are educated with shared decision-making principles, the more teachers can be exposed to positive working conditions.

A final area worth exploring will be to connect teacher retention efforts of the district with retention efforts at the local schools to discover better ways to synergize collective efforts and their impacts on the organization. What are the key variables for linking school leadership teams to District leadership teams that supports teacher retention? As schools increase the amount of time they spend collaborating, they can decrease their risk of teacher turnover. Research, shows that administrators providing teachers with release time that can be used for reflection, study, or discussion with other teachers promotes a healthy school climates (Rothman, 2005). Healthy schools are likely to attract and retain the teachers who can best meet our urban students' needs.

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## APPENDIX A

**Teacher Retention****Statement of Consent**

Consent to Participate in Research

Project Title:

"An In-depth Analysis of Urban School Professional Development Practices and Their Relation to Teacher Retention"

Researcher: Vinnie Blye

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sharon Green

Introduction:

Congratulations you have been purposely selected to participate in a site-based mixed-study examination of urban professional development experiences and their relation to teacher retention! Your knowledge and first hand experiences involving the professional development practices and their relation to the critical issue of teacher retention is greatly valued this research project

You are being cordially asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Vinnie Blye for his dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Green in the Department of Education at California State University Eastbay.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.  
Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how urban school teacher retention outcomes are impacted by teacher professional development practices in urban high schools.

Procedures:

If you approve consent to conduct this study you may be asked to:

- Complete a National Professional Development Assessment Inventory (62 – Question online survey)
- Possibly be selected to participate in small focus group
- Possibly be selected to participate in a face to face interview

It should be noted that face to face interview and focus group will be audio recorded. Each interview and focus group duration is estimated to be about 60 - 75 minutes. Additional, the interviews and focus group will be audio taped, notes taken and transcribed. Throughout the interview and focus groups responses will be checked for accuracy. All participants of the interview and focus groups will have the opportunity to revise, if necessary data collected. Once the transcript is in a final stage, it will be coded and prepared for final analysis. All documents will be destroyed after the final report is prepared.

Risks/Benefits:

- Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of the participants. To alleviate any risk from giving an honest response, neither participant names, nor references to individual schools or the district will be name in any written publication or report of this research.
- There are not direct benefits to you from participation, but this study will add to the body of research in leadership and education.
- Additionally, this project will serve to guide current site leadership's future decision making efforts.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Each respondent will receive a unique indemnification number. All data will be analyzed/coded using the identification number.
- To further protect the confidentiality of the responses, written publication or reports including this research will NOT contain any participant names, references to individual schools or the district name/area.
- The data collected for the survey will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will have access to the data, notes and other uses of the collected information. Once the final writing of the research is completed, the survey data will be destroyed.

## Teacher Retention

### Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

### Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:

Vinnie Blye at vblye@horizon.csueastbay.edu or

Dr. Sharon Green at sharon.green@csueastbay.edu

**\* 1. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may wish to contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, LI 2400, CSUEB. Phone: (510) 885-4212 Fax: (510) 885-4618 or email irb@csueastbay.edu.**

### Statement of Consent:

**By selecting yes from the answer choices below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. A selection of NO Indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and do not agree to participate in this research study.**

YES

NO

## Teacher Retention

### Demographic

#### 2. Please select your teaching subject area.

- Special Education
- English
- Math
- Science
- Social Science
- Elective
- Other

Other (please specify)

#### 3. Indicate your gender.

- Female
- Male

#### 4. What is the highest degree you have attained?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate

#### 5. Please indicate your ethnicity. (Select one)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnicity
- Other ethnicity

Other (please specify)

**Teacher Retention**

**6. How many total years have you been employed as an educator? (Round up to the nearest year.)**

- First year
- 2-4 years
- 5-8 years
- 9-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20+ years

**7. How many total years have you been employed in the school in which you are currently working? (Round up to the nearest year.)**

- First year
- 2-4 years
- 5-8 years
- 9-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20+ years

## Teacher Retention

### Satisfaction

#### 8. I am satisfied working in my current school.

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

#### 9. Which aspect of your work environment most affects your willingness to keep teaching at your school? Select your top three choices.

1. School facilities
2. Instructional resources
3. School leadership
4. Professional growth opportunities
5. Compensation package
6. School climate (i.e. discipline, safety)
7. Collaboration
8. Workload
9. Collegiality
10. Location
11. Other

Rank your top three choices in order of impact from greatest to least (i.e. 3, 8, 1).

## Teacher Retention

**10. Which aspect of working conditions is most important to you in enhancing student learning? Select your top three choices.**

- 1. School facilities
- 2. Instructional resources
- 3. School leadership
- 4. Professional growth opportunities
- 5. Compensation package
- 6. School climate (i.e. discipline, safety)
- 7. Collaboration
- 8. Workload
- 9. Collegiality
- 10. Location
- 11. Other

Rank your top three choices in order of impact from greatest to least (i.e. 3, 8, 1).

**11. I have seriously considered leaving my present teaching position for another teaching position.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**12. I have seriously considered leaving the teaching profession.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

### Professional Development

**13. Fellow teachers, trainers, facilitators, and/or consultants are available to help us implement new instructional practices at our school.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**14. We have opportunities to practice new skills gained during staff development.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**15. Teachers are provided opportunities to gain deep understanding of the subjects they teach.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**16. Teachers at our school have opportunities to learn how to use technology to enhance instruction.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**17. Teachers at our school learn how to use data to assess student learning needs.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**18. We use several sources to evaluate the effectiveness of our professional development on student learning (e.g. classroom observations, teacher surveys, conversations with principals or coaches).**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**19. We make decisions about professional development based on research that shows evidence of improved student performance.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**20. At our school teacher learning is supported through a combination of strategies (e.g. workshops, peer coaching, study groups, joint planning of lessons, and examination of student work).**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**21. We receive support implementing new skills until they become a natural daily practice.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**22. We set aside time to discuss what we learned from our professional development experiences.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**23. Teachers at our school determine the effectiveness of our professional development by the amount of time spent collaborating with their peers.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**24. Our professional development promotes deep understanding of a topic.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**25. Teacher professional development is part of our school improvement plan.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**26. At our school, teachers can choose the types of professional development they receive (e.g. study group, action research, observations).**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**27. Our school's professional development helps me learn about effective student assessment techniques.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**28. Teachers receive training on curriculum and instruction for students at different levels of learning.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

### Collaboration

**29. Our faculty learns about effective ways to work together.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**30. Teacher collaboration is viewed as a form of professional development by our faculty.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**31. The teachers in my school meet in small groups to discuss ways to improve teaching and learning.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**32. My school structures time for teachers to work together to enhance student learning.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**33. Our school's teaching and learning goals depend on staff's ability to work well together.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**34. Beginning teachers have opportunities to work with more experienced teachers at our school.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**35. We receive feedback from our colleagues about classroom practices.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**36. At my school, teachers learn through a variety of methods (e.g. hands-on activities, discussion, dialogue, writing, demonstrations, practice with feedback, group problem solving).**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**37. When teachers collaborate they analyze classroom data with each other to improve student learning.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**38. We are focused on creating positive relationships between teachers and students.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**39. Teachers examine student work with each other.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

### Leadership

**40. Our principal believes teacher learning is essential for achieving our school goals.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**41. Our principal's decisions on school-wide issues and practices are influenced by faculty input.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**42. Our principal is committed to providing teachers with opportunities to improve instruction (e.g. observations, feedback, collaborating with colleagues).**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**43. Our school leaders encourage sharing responsibility to achieve school goals.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

**44. I would use the word, empowering, to describe my principal.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**45. Our administrators engage teachers in conversations about instruction and student learning.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

**46. Our principal models effective collaboration.**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Agree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Teacher Retention

### Retention Internal

**47. The curriculum is too narrow and overly-scripted.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**48. The principal is a supportive and effective educational leader.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**49. Enough time was available for planning and collaboration with colleagues.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**50. The administration and teaching staff are given appropriate authority over curriculum, instruction strategies, school governance, and budgeting.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

## Teacher Retention

**51. The staff, as a whole, works effectively as a team and relationships generally are strong.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**52. There is positive morale among staff.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**53. I have close personal relationships with other members of the staff.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**54. Teachers have an opportunity to choose the types of professional development activities they participated.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**Teacher Retention**

**55. The educational mission and goals of the school are understood and widely shared by the administration and staff.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**Teacher Retention****Retention External**

**56. There are too many bureaucratic impediments (e.g., paperwork, interruptions, and unnecessary meetings) in this school.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**57. Standardized testing of students is productive.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**58. Most parents are involved in school activities or their child's education at my current school.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**59. Accountability pressures are too great.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

## Teacher Retention

**60. I am assigned to classes that are appropriate given my credential and/or subject matter preparation.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**61. My student teaching experiences prepared me to be successful in this school.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**62. My credential program coursework prepared me to be successful in this school.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**63. The district, county, & state provide professional development that supports my teaching.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**Teacher Retention**

**64. The district office does provide reliable and appropriate administrative support.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**65. The school receives adequate resources to achieve its educational mission.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**66. Students have access to appropriate textbooks and learning materials at my current school.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

**67. The school environment is clean, safe, and conducive to learning.**

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

## APPENDIX B

## TEACHER COLLABORATION FOCUS GROUP

**Purpose**

- To permit teachers the chance to define teacher collaboration by their own personal accounts
- Provide teachers the opportunity to learn and refine their thinking about effective professional development practices
- To better understand the relationship between teacher collaboration and teacher retention

**Time**

The focus group will be at least one hour and fifteen minutes.

**Participants**


**Focus Group Questions**

1. What do you like about teacher collaboration at ABCD High School?
2. If you could improve teacher collaboration at ABCD High School, what would you identify as the key factor? Why?
3. Why did 89% of teachers surveyed at ABCD agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree that teacher collaboration is a form of professional development?
4. Use the Rubric for the Standards for Effective Professional Development and provide at least one example for each of the elements listed under the three major headings?
5. How, if at all, does teacher collaboration impact teacher retention at ABCD High School?

## Script

### **Opening:**

#### **Welcome**

Introduce the purpose and context of the group

- The purpose of this focus group is to gather information that will help us better understand teacher collaboration and its relation to teacher retention

#### **What is a focus group?**

Focus groups are an effective means of collecting qualitative information that can be used to guide improvement planning efforts. For example they:

- Go beyond typical surveys in providing rich, insightful data
- Provides a venue that draws out varying experiences
- Permits in-depth discussions around specific issues
- Quick turnaround from implementation to findings

#### **How it will flow?**

- This focus group is designed to last for 75 minutes
- Whatever you say here will remain confidential. That means that we won't reveal what was said here by individual name, although we will share the information you give in general. It is also means that all of you agree not to share the comments made here with others outside this group. It is extremely important that we all understand the nature of this confidentiality since it will help us to get as clear and honest a pictures of our school practices as possible.
- I will tape this focus group and transcribe the tape. Where needed, fictional names will be substituted for the names mentioned here.
- Since each of your perspectives is important, we need to make sure that everyone gets a chance to express their opinions and no one takes too much of the air time. I will take responsibility for time keeping and making sure that we address all of the questions. Use your best strategies to express your opinions with making others feel uncomfortable.

## Make introductions

- At this time we will conduct a quick whip around to permit everyone the opportunity to introduce themselves

## Questions

1. What do you like about teacher collaboration at ABCD High School?
  - a. Probes – Tell me how... Are there
  - b. Clarification – What does teacher collaboration look like ...
2. If you could improve teacher collaboration at ABCD High School, what would you identify as the key factor? Why?
  - a. Probes – Tell me more...
  - b. Clarification – Would it be helpful if...
3. Why did 89% of teachers surveyed at ABCD agree, moderately agree, or strongly agree that teacher collaboration is a form of professional development?
  - a. Probes – Give me a specific example of why you agree or disagree...
  - b. Clarification – What would better support teachers in your opinion that can be controlled by a school and or school district
4. Use the Rubric for the Standards for Effective Professional Development and provide at least one example for each of the elements listed under the three major headings?
  - a. Probes -
  - b. Clarification -
5. How, if at all, does teacher collaboration impact teacher retention at ABCDHigh School?
  - a. Probes – Tell me more specifically how this plays out...
  - b. Clarification – Could you explain what that looks like

## Closing

Thank you for your participation, your input will be valuable. Remember that what has been shared here must remain confidential.

## Location:

ABCD High School Library

- Food will be provided prior to the meeting
- The meeting will begin at promptly at 3:30 pm and end at 4:15 pm sharp

## APPENDIX C

Vinnie Blye  
Assistant Principal – Barack Obama High School

Greetings Dr. Tony Smith,

I have been employed in the field of Education for over 15 years, primarily working in large urban school districts. This fall I started the final stages of my Ed.D. at California State University Eastbay, in the Department of Educational Leadership.

My dissertation proposal, “Retaining An Urban School’s Most Valuable Assets: How Team Collaboration Supports Teacher Retention in One Urban School” will explore teacher collaboration in the field of education, specifically asking urban school teacher and administrative professionals to participate because of their professional experiences, knowledge and the fact that they share first hand daily experiences involving the critical issue of teacher retention.

I hope that you will agree to allow your district to participate in my research. The Internal Review Board at California State University Eastbay requires a signed letter of cooperation, prior to my contacting any individuals. To facilitate this, I am asking that you copy the attached form on your letterhead and mail back to me.

For your information, I have attached some sample questions that I propose to use in my research interviews. These interviews will be open-ended questionnaire format and last about 60 – 75 minutes. The location and time of the interview will be at the participants’ convenience.

I will conduct a document review of district policies and practices that impact teacher retention. All interviews will be audio recorded, notes taken and proof checked for accuracy. Each participant will have the opportunity to revise my notes at that time, if they think it’s necessary.

All responses will remain confidential. No identifiers (individual names, names of the schools, district name or even city) will be mentioned in the final writing. I am the only one who will have access to the data. Even when reviewing with my graduate advisors, the material can only be identified with a unique number. If you have questions, please call or email me.

Many thanks and kind regards, Vinnie Blye, [vinnie.blye@barackobama.org](mailto:vinnie.blye@barackobama.org)

## APPENDIX D

***Consent to Participate in Research*****Project Title:**

“Retaining An Urban School’s Most Valuable Assets: How Team Collaboration Supports Teacher Retention in One Urban School.”

**Researcher:** Vinnie Blye

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Sharon Green

**Introduction:**

Congratulations you have been purposely selected to participate in a site-based mixed-study examination of urban professional development experiences and their relation to teacher retention! Your knowledge and first hand experiences involving the professional development practices and their relation to the critical issue of teacher retention is greatly valued this research project

You are being cordially asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Vinnie Blye for his dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Green in the Department of Education at California State University Eastbay.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to explore how urban school teacher retention outcomes are impacted by teacher professional development practices in urban high schools.

**Procedures:**

If you approve consent to conduct this study you may be asked to:

- Complete a National Professional Development Assessment Inventory (62 – Question online survey)
- Possibly be selected to participate in small focus group
- Possibly be selected to participate in a face to face interview

It should be noted that face to face interview and focus group will be audio recorded. Each interview and focus group duration is estimated to be about 60 - 75 minutes. Additionally, the interviews and focus group will be audio taped, notes taken and transcribed. Throughout the interview and focus groups responses will be checked for accuracy. All participants of the interview and focus groups will have the opportunity to revise, if necessary data collected. Once the transcript is in a final stage, it will be coded and prepared for final analysis. All documents will be destroyed after the final report is prepared.

**Risks/Benefits:**

- Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of the participants. To alleviate any risk from giving an honest response, neither participant names, nor references to individual schools or the district will be name in any written publication or report of this research.
- There are not direct benefits to you from participation, but this study will add to the body of research in leadership and education.
- Additionally, this project will serve to guide current site leadership's future decision making efforts.

**Confidentiality:**

- All responses will remain confidential. Each respondent will receive a unique indemnification number. All data will be analyzed/coded using the identification number.
- To further protect the confidentiality of the responses, written publication or reports including this research will NOT contain any participant names, references to individual schools or the district name/area.
- The data collected for the survey will be kept in a secure location in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will have access to the data, notes and other uses of the collected information. Once the final writing of the research is completed, the survey data will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:

Vinnie Blye at [vblye@horizon.csueastbay.edu](mailto:vblye@horizon.csueastbay.edu) or

Dr. Sharon Green at [sharon.green@csueastbay.edu](mailto:sharon.green@csueastbay.edu)

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may wish to contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, LI 2400, CSUEB. Phone: (510) 885-4212 Fax: (510) 885-4618 or email [irb@csueastbay.edu](mailto:irb@csueastbay.edu).

**Statement of Consent:**

By signing your name below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

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Signature

Date

If you agree to take the survey use the web-address:

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BLWSFD9>**