Evaluating the Impact of Mutual Selection in the Hiring Process and Leadership Consistency on Employee Satisfaction with their Leader

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Keywords
leadership succession, mutual selection, hiring, transformation, leadership consistency, satisfaction, teacher, principal

Disciplines
Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Educational Leadership | Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration | Organizational Behavior and Theory | Urban Education

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Evaluating the Impact of Mutual Selection in the Hiring Process and Leadership Consistency on Employee Satisfaction with their Leader

By
Colette Gordon

An Undergraduate Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the WHARTON RESEARCH SCHOLARS

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THE WHARTON SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
MAY 2021
Abstract

This paper uses qualitative data from a 3-year school transformation program to theorize whether mutual selection in the hiring process matters, as well as the potential importance of leadership consistency thereafter. The data consists of interviews from four time periods over the 3-year program. Interviews were coded to uncover themes related to teacher satisfaction with principal, whether the principal was a factor in the teacher’s decision to join that specific school, and whether teachers believe that mutual selection matters. The results show that in schools in which the current principal had personally hired all the teachers, teachers were most satisfied. They had applied to work under the principal’s leadership and did so. They also believed that mutual selection mattered because it allowed for alignment on school vision, teacher autonomy, and more. Conversely, in schools in which most teachers had been hired by a prior principal – not the current principal – teachers were more dissatisfied. At these schools, teachers were more likely to believe that mutual selection doesn’t matter, even if they agreed that the hiring principal was a main influence in their decision to join the school.
Introduction

In organizational behavior, researchers tend to think of hiring as one topic. One aspect of hiring that is often ignored is the relationship between the leader and subordinate as it relates to hiring. This paper will investigate the impact of mutual selection in hiring and how it relates to enthusiasm of support for the leader. The paper will explore this topic through a set of interviews that took place over a three-year period within a large urban school system’s transformation program.

Definitions

Mutual selection: For this paper, mutual selection is defined as a teacher actively choosing to work at a school based on the principal (this being the sole reason or one of the main reasons), and that principal interviews and hires the teacher to work at their school.

Leadership consistency: For this paper, leadership consistency is defined as a specific principal staying in their role for multiple years (>2 years).

Excellent Teacher Assessment (ETA): ETA is a process by which the school district identified teachers who demonstrated leadership, pursued learning opportunities outside of the classroom, made contributions to the profession of education, and promoted academic excellence in their classrooms. This process resulted in labeling “excellent” teachers as “Accomplished II” or higher based on the predetermined criteria. In order to teach at a SAGE school, teachers had to be designated as Accomplished II or higher.

Research Context

This research uses data from a three-year transformation program in a large urban school district. This paper will refer to the program by a different name, Students Achieving Gains in Excellence (SAGE), in order to maintain anonymity for the district and their program.
In the SAGE program, principals were carefully selected to lead a previously failing school. The principal could hire “excellent” teachers and staff of their choosing from the district and beyond to bring to their new school. All teachers were required to go through an application process. All teachers who worked at the SAGE school prior to the program were required to reinterview with the new principal in order to stay there. Teachers were required to be at least “Accomplished” in the ETA process in order to reinterview. Most of the staff were not rehired due to not meeting this qualification or a lack of fit with the principal. Lastly, the principal could bring a number of teachers (between ~5-10) from their previous school to their new SAGE school. These teachers needed to meet the same qualifications as rehired and teachers new to the school and principal.

New teachers were hired in a variety of ways. However, the majority of teachers were hired at large events in which each new SAGE principal gave a presentation on their vision and plans for their SAGE school. Teachers then chose which principals they want to interview with. Other staff came from a more traditional hiring process in which they interview and hear from solely the principal of one school. In subsequent years of the SAGE program, most new teachers were hired to work at the SAGE schools through word of mouth or more organic means.

The research focuses on four elementary schools: Miller, Umpire, Peters, Booker. These school names are pseudonyms created in order to maintain anonymity for the district and their program. These schools were the four elementary schools of the original seven selected to be a part of the SAGE program in 2015. The other three schools were middle schools. All four schools were selected for SAGE because they had been designated by the state’s Education Agency as needs to improve (NTI). NTI implies a significant need to improve academic performance. These schools had not met the state standards set forth by the state Education
Agency. These standards were set and met based on student achievement on standardized testing, student progress in core subjects from year to year, closing performance gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups, and graduation rates (does not apply to the elementary schools). After the three-year SAGE program, all four schools had made it off the NTI list.

Contribution/Significance

The SAGE program had five pillars: strategic staffing, teaching excellence, social emotional supports, longer-day learning, and community partnerships. Strategic staffing was described as a process by which specially selected SAGE principals hand-selected people for every position at their school to guarantee a good fit with their vision for the school. The research investigated the benefits of strategic staffing from the perspective of teacher satisfaction with their principal. Most of the SAGE pillars focused on creating an environment in which students can succeed. For example, social emotional supports were related to better supporting students through non-academic challenges to increase their ability to perform well academically. Most students at SAGE schools came from low-income neighborhoods and many come from difficult home situations. Instructional excellence was about giving students experienced and effective teachers. This was why teachers were required to be at least “Accomplished” in the ETA process to work at a SAGE school. Strategic staffing was focused on choosing the right principal to lead a transformation and having that principal select the teachers that would best execute their transformation vision. One critical aspect of strategic staffing was mutual selection, as it is defined earlier. One goal of my research was to investigate whether mutual selection matters, and if so, how and why. This research will suggest that, beyond mutual selection, principal consistency is a vital component of the strategic staffing pillar.

Beyond SAGE, understanding the answer to this research question is important because it could show us the potential value of mutual selection in the hiring process and leadership
consistency as it relates to teacher satisfaction with their principal. Since the research took place within the context of a public school system, one hope is that school superintendents and principals will find it interesting and helpful, especially in the context of designing transformation programs of their own. While the research focuses on the SAGE context, the findings of the research may also be relevant to organizational leaders in general who are interested in understanding whether mutual selection in the hiring process may matter. As these individuals look for ways to improve employee satisfaction and effectiveness, this research may make the case for certain methods and leadership structures.

I also hope that this research will be relevant to organizational behavior and management researchers. I hope that the findings spark interest from researchers who might be inclined to pursue experimental research in this area. For example, a researcher might want to investigate if it is possible to reap the benefits of mutual selection without implementing such disruptive transformation techniques.

Lastly, this research can supplement a body of research that discusses the importance of quality leader-subordinate relationships and the importance of well-planned K-12 leadership succession for overall school effectiveness. This research is different because it will consider these topics from the perspective of the teacher.

**Research Question**

Based on research about the existing literature and an early analysis of the qualitative data, the research questions were:

- What is the value of mutual selection in the hiring process?
  - Does it make a difference for a teacher if they were hired by that principal, compared to being hired by a previous principal? If so, why?
o Does mutual selection relate to subsequent enthusiasm of support for the leader (principal)?

- Beyond mutual selection, does leadership consistency matter?
  o Does leadership consistency need to occur for mutual selection to make a difference?
  o What happens when mutual selection takes place initially and a leader is immediately switched?

**Background and Assumptions**

The first step was to investigate the existing literature in areas related to the research questions. The investigation was approached by first considering the following questions:

- What research is out there about the influence of working for the person that hires you?
- Does it matter that you work for the person that hired you?

This led to research on other topics and questions. To the best of my knowledge, there is no substantive research that investigates the value of mutual selection whereby a subordinate chooses to work at an organization because of the leader and how this impacts their satisfaction with the leader. Additionally, to the best of my knowledge there is no substantive research about the value of leadership consistency thereafter. There is, however, a body of research about principal turnover and leadership succession, specifically as it relates to the importance of well-planned and deliberate K-12 leadership succession. Another well-developed area of research that is relevant to the topic is the importance of quality leader-subordinate relationships. Both of these research areas are relevant to the research question.

First, I looked at the topic of leadership succession. Allen, Panian, and Lotz (1979) came to six major conclusions about leadership succession through path analysis. The most relevant to this research are:
1. The frequency of managerial succession is negatively related to subsequent team performance.

2. Inside succession is less likely to disrupt team performance than outside succession.

From this research we assume that schools perform worse when principals turnover more. We also assume that schools perform better when new leaders come from within the school. This was confirmed by the review of the principal turnover literature by Rangel (2018). Their review touched upon the consequences of principal turnover and briefly discussed the consequences as they relate to teacher turnover and school culture. These two topics are relevant to the research I explore. A study by Mascall and Leithwood (2010) looked at the relationship between turnover and school culture, defined as “shared values, norms, and contexts”. The study found a direct and negative relationship between principal turnover and school culture. According to Rangel, this was because “school staff were concerned about the organizational instability that turnover often led to because new principals introduced too many changes at once, including changes to policies and practices that staff, in many cases, perceived as successful,”. This paper explored how the tensions between a previous principal’s vision and a new principal’s vision are further exacerbated by teachers’ alliance to the previous principal that they mutually selected. Rangel concludes by stating research is needed to explore our understanding of the potential moderators and interactions of principal turnover. My paper does exactly that as it begins to understand how frequent principal turnover eliminated some of the intended benefits of strategic staffing.

Another review of the principal succession literature looked at the impact of principal succession on teachers (Aravena, 2020). The review mentioned a few studies (MacMillan et al., 2004; Northfield, 2014) that examined the impact of principal succession on trust. These studies considered “whether the rate of principal turnover influence whether trust between principals and teachers progresses along the continuum or becomes stalled”. This is relevant as my paper
considers a school context in which principal turnover led to somewhat stalled trust development between teachers and their new principal. The review noted that no studies identify the extent to which related factors, and what these factors might be, affect trust. This shows that there is a gap in the literature regarding the influence of mutual selection in the hiring process and how principal turnover limits the benefits of mutual selection. Finally, the review suggested that it is important to study this topic from the bottom up, rather than from the top down, considering teacher voice. My paper’s research is solely from the teacher perspective.

Next, I looked at research that evaluated leadership succession in a general context. Gordon and Rosen (1981) found that succession can be evaluated based on pre arrival and post arrival elements. Their paper considered the screening procedure by which the group may or may not have a part in selecting a new leader and how this may relate to group effectiveness. Another factor was the new leader’s mandate which includes things like expectations, plans, functional changes, etc. When the new leader arrives, a mutual observation process takes place in which subordinates will compare the new leader to the old one. Subordinates also go through the process of getting acquainted to the new leader. Additionally, the successor’s actions and reactions are evaluated. Subordinates and the leader go through a process of “coping with discrepancies between the successor’s and the members’ path-goal perceptions”. Eventually, power and influence come into play. This entire process is extremely relevant to what took place in two of the SAGE schools. At Peters, teachers went through the process of evaluating and “accepting” the new leader after the initial change. At Miller, teachers and principals were constantly going through this with barely enough time to go through the entire succession process before a new leader was introduced.
Next, I specifically looked at leadership succession in K-12 schools. Macmillan (2000) found that teachers cope with principal turnover very differently when succession is a “frequent and predictable occurrence”. They also mentioned that in schools with high turnover teachers often omit references to principals altogether explaining that “the basic running of the school carries on no matter who’s here”. Additionally, frequent and predictable succession leads to teacher apathy and an attitude that principals are a “temporary aberration”. Furthermore, principals are temporarily tolerated and accommodated without teachers agreeing to comply with the new leaders’ change agenda (vision). This description of leadership succession matched what took place in the SAGE schools with frequent principal turnover. Additionally, it took place to a lesser degree when the principal is switched at the very beginning and teachers must work for the leader that did not hire them.

Other research went in-depth on the importance of K-12 succession planning and how to successfully strategize succession (Renihan, 2012). This research is more relevant to a context beyond ACE. Finally, some research focused on how increased succession over time leads to the belief that principals have a decreased ability to exercise autonomy on behalf of their school community. This leads to cynicism about the principal role that undermines the belief that quality leaders can have a positive influence on the school community (Fink and Brayman, 2016). This research is relevant to the conditions under which SAGE was formulated with the belief that leaders should have a high level of autonomy over the transformation agenda.

One article published recently investigated factors that influence a teacher’s intent to leave a school (Da’as, Schechter, and Qadach, 2020) Earlier literature investigated that, among other factors, strong leaders establish a shared vision (Hallinger et. al, 2015). This article is specifically interesting because it investigated the importance of shared vision in a school
context through an experiment. This paper found that a principal’s instructional leadership decreases a teacher’s intent to leave because of the way it influences collective teachers’ efficacy and shared vision (Da’as, Schechter, and Qadach, 2020). While this paper investigated these factors in a different context than ACE, it provides supporting evidence that these things matter in terms of teacher satisfaction and turnover intentions. Twelve additional papers have cited this paper, but none are relevant to this research topic which supports the belief that there is limited research in this area.

Another area of research that this paper indirectly investigated is the perceived challenge leading individuals that you did not inherit. SAGE interview data has anecdotally revealed, through a small sample of schools, that principals who were unable to hire their staff perceive and experience challenges with their staff. There is very little, if any, available research on this topic. There is a small number of non-academic managerial recommendations for leading created versus inherited teams. These readings highlight the challenge of inherited teams but do not explore why these teams are challenging. My research touched on this topic when we considered the cases in which principals were replaced or left before the end of the SAGE program.

Finally, we evaluated existing research about leader-subordinate relationships. There are a few major theories in this area that influence the topic. The first is Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Erdogan and Bauer, 2014). This theory examines leader-subordinate relationships from the perspective of exchanges between the two parties rather than from one side or the other. It directs attention to the differences that might exist between the leader and each of the leader’s followers (Northouse, 2018). In this case, differences may exist because of the hiring circumstances. For example, a principal may have a different relationship with a teacher they hired versus a teacher that they inherited. This example is relevant to the question
proposed and the results presented. LMX also considers the natural formation of “in-group” and “out-group” which leads to deeper relationships between a leader and those in the “in-group”. Instances of “in-group” and “out-group” are relevant to the research because of variance in hiring conditions and leadership consistency.

There is a large body of literature that further explores LMX. One valuable study examined the relationship between leader-subordinate value congruence and a subordinate’s perceived role stress (Dale, et al. 2018). It found that having congruence on the role achievement value is critical to reducing the role stress that a subordinate experiences. This study relates to the research question because it assumes that teachers were less stressed when role expectations were communicated prior to hiring and that teachers and principals were aligned on expectations prior to hiring.

Methods

This paper used interview data. The interviews were conducted at four separate time periods from 2015-2018 with 166 employees of four elementary schools. These time periods are referred to as Time 1, Time 2, Time 3, and Time 4. The SAGE program began in the fall prior to the first time period and concluded shortly after the fourth time period.

The table below specifies the specific year and month of each time period (Appendix B):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below shows information about the time periods and number of teachers at each school interviewed at each period (Appendix C):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umpire</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To better understand the qualitative research evaluation process, I consulted “Analyzing Interview Data: The Development and Evolution of a Coding System” (Weston et al. 2001, 381-400). I coded the interviews using the Atlas software. In order to understand how to write an academic paper guided by qualitative interviews, I consulted existing qualitative papers provided by my research advisor.

Before the coding process, I reviewed a smaller sample of interviews to uncover themes related to hiring dynamics and mutual selection and the principal-teacher relationship. From the onset, I was particularly focused on the potential importance of working for the person that hired you. I created codes that broadly related to these topics. A sample of the interview codes are available in Appendix A. The most common, exigent, and specific themes are the basis of this research and guided the creation of the assumptions. Next, I coded all interviews from Time 1 and Time 3. These are the time periods in which the themes are referred to the most in natural and deliberate questioning. Any quotes used in this paper from Time 2 or 4 were chosen at random to read during the early review stage and then coded.
The rest of the qualitative process consisted of the following stages. The first stage was to create “thought units”. Thought units are the shortest number of sentences one can meaningfully interpret out of context. Thought unit quotes were grouped together to understand the experiences of teachers at each school. The next stage was to generate narratives that describe the collective experience of teachers at each school. The research also considered “thought units” that were outliers and investigated the possible contributing factors that led to these differences.

There were two categories of qualitative data. The first was unprompted quotes that were generated without being provoked or without a line of questioning related to the topic. These quotes referenced topics like mutual selection, leadership consistency, and how teachers feel about their principals. For example, if we asked a teacher to describe what they liked about the school and they responded by talking about their principal, this would be unprompted. The second category consisted of questions that were prompted and deliberately asked a teacher about a topic. For example, teachers were asked about whether it matters that a teacher works for the person that hired them and that they chose to work for. This mutual selection question asked teachers to theorize based on their experiences at their SAGE school.

An initial review of the interviews led to the research question. This paper uses qualitative methods to theorize an answer to this question. First, I laid out the foundational details of the leadership dynamics at each of the four schools. These details created critical context for understanding the qualitative differences that emerge at each school. Second, I presented interview data regarding teachers’ support for principals at each school. Third, I presented findings regarding teachers’ descriptions of the extent to which they considered the principal’s identity when deciding whether to join their SAGE school. Finally, I explored whether teachers think that mutual selection between a principal and a teacher mattered. At some
schools this was more of a theoretical question because the intended benefits of mutual selection did not come to fruition because principals were not consistent. At other schools where mutual selection did take place and there was principal consistency, teachers were still theorizing but able to draw upon their own experiences.

The section below explains the leadership dynamics and changes at each school so that readers understand the context of the results (Parts 1, 2, and 3) later in the paper. The differences between the schools’ leadership dynamics were the basis for understanding what I theorize in the conclusion of the paper.

**Research Context: Better understanding leadership dynamics at each school**

The research focused on four elementary schools: Miller, Umpire, Peters, Booker. The leadership dynamics at each school during the program were as follows:

- **Umpire** - The strategic staffing goal was fulfilled. The principal who hired everyone, Ms. Baker, stayed so leadership was consistent for the entire program. This principal brought the largest pool of teachers from her previous school relative to the other three schools.

- **Booker** - The strategic staffing goal was fulfilled. The principal who hired everyone, Ms. Gold, stayed so leadership was consistent for the entire program. This principal brought a number of teachers from her previous school.

- **Peters** - The strategic staffing goal was partially fulfilled. The principal who hired everyone, Ms. Price, was replaced by a new principal, Ms. Carter, prior to the beginning of the school year and Time 1. This means that the initial intended benefits of the mutual selection process didn’t occur because there was never a working relationship between the teacher and principal who had mutually selected each other. Leadership was consistent after the switch which means that Ms. Carter was the principal for the entire SAGE program. Later in the program, Ms. Carter was able to select some teachers for the
school based on fit because some of the teachers hired by Ms. Price had left the school. Mutual selection occurred between Ms. Carter and teachers hired after Time 1.

- Miller – The strategic staffing goal was never fulfilled. The principal who hired everyone, Ms. McDonald, left for medical reasons after the first year of the program and leadership was inconsistent thereafter (principal changes at least once per year). The hiring principal was replaced by an interim principal, Mr. Walker, who was an assistant principal at Time 1. During Time 2, the district was in the process of finding a new permanent principal for Miller. Mr. Walker was considered but does not receive the position. The position went to Ms. Diamond. Ms. Diamond worked at the school for one year during Time 3. She was then replaced by Ms. Zimmer for the last year of the SAGE program. Ms. Zimmer was principal during Time 4.

Table clarifying the name of the Principal at each school before Time 1 and during Time 1, 2, 3, and 4 (Appendix D):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Umpire</th>
<th>Booker</th>
<th>Peters</th>
<th>Miller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Principal (Spring/Summer 2015)</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>McDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 (December 2015)</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>McDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2 (May 2016)</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3 (May 2017)</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>Diamond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4 (May 2018)</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>Zimmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

The results consist of three sections that build on each other. Results in Part 1 reveal the enthusiasm of support for the principals at each school. The responses to the principal support question show that teachers had differing feelings about each of the four principals at the time. Part 2 explores one of the potential reasons why: whether the principal influenced the teacher to join the school, thus allowing for the mutual selection process. Finally, Part 3 asks teacher to theorize based on their experiences at each school whether mutual selection matters. To acknowledge the differences in leadership consistency between the schools, the results section concludes by considering responses to the mutual selection question that discuss the experience of working with principals that you didn’t mutually select.

Part 1: Understanding enthusiasm of support for the principal at each school

Part 1 is intended to understand how teachers feel about their principals with the goal of understanding if teachers had differing feelings about their principals from school to school. This section provides a summary of the responses to questions related to how teachers perceive their principals. The responses came from all four time periods with a strong emphasis on the third time period because this was when questions about principals are most frequently asked. The exception was Peters where responses are distributed among the first three time periods because at each time period there is a different principal.

Some examples of how the question was asked in the interviews:

- Let's talk a little bit about the Principal. How would you describe her?
- How would you describe her greatest strengths as a principal and what are her weaknesses?
- How would you describe what you are seeing in the principal's leadership style and approach? How would you describe that, and has that changed?
Evaluating Responses School-by-School

**Booker - Principal Gold**

**Main Takeaways:**

Comments about Principal Gold were mostly positive. Teachers at Booker were chosen by Gold and they had the opportunity to choose her. The more negative comments were about her personality and being intimidating, especially at first. This being said, there were also comments about her being very caring and warm. It seems that the difference in these comments was more so about the teacher’s personality and individual relationship with Principal Gold rather than her leadership ability. Even though some teachers cited a less strong relationship with her, they respected her and felt a high level of trust and autonomy. Though some comments referenced being occasionally “pushed” and “judged”, teachers never feel controlled and micromanaged. This is likely because they felt control over their classrooms and work and interpreted principal feedback as guided suggestions rather than orders.

**Selected Quotes:**

- “I think that she's a very good leader, and she definitely knows what she's doing. She's got a long history of success, and I think she's also just very good at developing people. Getting people what they need to become good at what they do. I think she comes off as very intimidating. So when I first met her I was extremely intimidated by her but I think once you get to know her, you develop a relationship. I've always had a good relationship with her.” -Teacher 1, Time 3

- “Tough woman. A highly effective principal, leader. A true leader. It's somebody that cares about you. Caring, I would say, a strong leader, and somebody that is obsessed with achievement, with data – she actually loves data. I feel that she's a caring woman but a strong leader at the same time.” -Teacher 2, Time 3

- “One, she leads by example... she's in the fire with us. You know, I think that that's really important. She is not someone who's always in her office. And she's really into what you need. It's almost, you know, sometimes you'll get administration, or once again
to me, a lot of fresher principals who are learning. You learn what works, I think when you know, and when you've been an administrator for a long time, you know that you have to get in there with them. You'll see her working with the students and what do you need? It's almost always about “what do you need from me?”.” – Teacher 3, Time 1

● “I do have the freedom to teach the way that I desire to teach. Teachers cannot be forced into a cookie cutter mold. And we're allowed autonomy, freedom to do what we'd like to do. I enjoy that. As far as over the past three years I've had that freedom. There were many times that they tried to force us into being a certain way. And they didn't pursue it or continue to make us be that way. So I enjoyed that.” – Teacher 4, Time 4

● “I think she's a very fair leader. I believe she cares. She's tried to make as many things work as possible. She's been a sensitive ear to what ... She's, on occasions perhaps, pushed a little harder than what we're wanting to be pushed. I think that perhaps sometimes if you are told you're a great teacher, if you have credentials and scores of being a great teacher, then there's ... I've heard this from many teachers, not only myself.” – Teacher 5, Time 1

● “I think sometimes I don't know if she's great at relationships with everyone. I don't know if that makes sense. Personally I have a good relationship with her but I know other people just don't or maybe it's because she comes off as intimidating or something like that.” - Teacher 1, Time 3

● “I think a lot of us just feel like almost ... She might not even be doing it, but when you're talking to her sometimes, I feel like it's constant judgment. So it makes it hard to kind of honestly tell her how we're feeling and what's going on.” - Teacher 6, Time 1

Umpire - Principal Baker

Main Takeaways:

Feedback about Principal Baker was extremely positive. In the review of interview responses, there were no negative comments about her. There were a few neutral comments that related more to confusion and inconsistency among her and her leadership team. Teachers at Umphrey were all hired by Principal Baker or brought from her previous school. From the responses, teachers appeared to have a high level of respect, admiration, and appreciation for
Principal Baker. They also felt seen for their effort and hard work. No responses mentioned feeling controlled or micromanaged. At the same time, many of the interviewed teachers described experiences in which Principal Baker was heavily involved in their classroom and day-to-day operations.

**Selected Quotes:**

- “She's my fourth principal, and out of my four, I would say, if she's not my first, she's in close with my first, because if I need something, she's right on it. She'll tell you, "Well, write it down, or text me, or email me," but whatever it is, if you let her know you need it, she'll usually get it. Now if it's something with SMART boards and stuff like that, it's out of her hands. She's like, "Well, you've got to deal with the tech," but she's very blunt and I like that, because I'm blunt. I don't want you to walk around the corner and tell me what you need, just be straightforward with me.” - Teacher 7, Time 1

- “I think she's a great leader. Actually, I'm taking some courses for my Master's program, also in educational leadership, so I'm able to see why she does certain things the way she does, and I think she's doing a great job. I think she has a good administrative team. I think she's able to divide that team into groups, to be focusing on other teachers. Because of being a campus with so many teachers, you cannot oversee each and every single person. You do need to divide responsibilities, and I think it's great that she does that.” - Teacher 8, Time 3

- “I haven't found one [weakness]. I really haven't found one because if I tell you, she makes sure we're okay. I'm talking throughout the year. She doesn't wait till no teacher appreciation week or anything like that. Throughout the week, throughout the month, she's doing something for us, for all of us. She'll have something on her counter, a big box full of stuff. Just grab it. She just does so many nice [things]... She may come around and bring us a little treat. It just means a lot to me. I've not ever seen that happen, ever, ever. To make sure your teachers are okay, to let them know you appreciate them. Let me tell you, this has come out of her pocket. This is coming from her, this is coming from her. Her mom was here, I think ... I don't know exactly. See, there's how much I don't know ... I think she's from Louisiana, but her mom was here for the holidays. Her mom came and cooked for us for lunch.” - Teacher 9, Time 3
• “I would describe her leadership as very positive. She comes in as ... I have to honestly say, she demands a lot, but it's good demands. She's very competitive, good competitive. You know, she'll let you know first and foremost it's about the kids, but she shows through her actions that she not only cares about them but she cares about her staff as well. I would say a lot of ... Of course, that's what they have to say. It's about the kids. She shows through her actions that, "I care about you, as teachers, as a staff, as well." - Teacher 10, Time 1

• “They have this little superhero camp [in reference to the time before a student achievement testing period] and they learn all this stuff. And they even have like their little sky diner where they ... You know during lunch time and they all eat together. So they really believe they're super heroes. They have these names and everything. I was like the day of the test, the kids believe that the capes give them power. Like for real, it's ridiculous! I know it's super ridiculous! Ms. Baker went and bought enough capes so every kid could have a cape. I think she spent $80 on capes!” - Teacher 11, Time 3

• “You will feel her sting even when she's not trying to be mean or anything, she's just letting you know this is what it is. This is what has to be done if we're going to be on top. She doesn't like being number two, number three, she says she wants to be number one and she means that.” - Teacher 12, Team 4

**Peters - Principals McDonald, Walker, Diamond**

Main Takeaways:

By Time 3, Peters had experienced a relatively high rate of teacher turnover. This means some teachers interviewed during Time 3 had been hired by Principal McDonald, some by interim Principal Walker, and a couple by his replacement Principal Diamond. The majority of the below responses come from Time 3 with some coming from Time 1 and 2. This means that when the teachers were asked about their principal, they usually discussed the principal at the time of the interview, but often discussed a past principal. All responses about Principal McDonald came from teachers who were hired by her. Responses about interim Principal Walker in Time 2 came from teachers who were hired by McDonald and knew Walker when he was
their assistant principal during Time 1. Finally, responses about Diamond came from individuals hired at a variety of time periods with the majority hired by McDonald. Feedback about the first two principals was very positive and then it became more negative for the third principal (Diamond).

Beyond mutual selection, teachers at Time 3 were still upset that interim Principal Walker had not been selected for the principal position and instead had to acclimate to a third completely new principal. When considering the responses, it seemed that it was very difficult for teachers who were hired by Principal McDonald to acclimate to Principal Diamond because of their very different leadership styles and strengths. They felt that Principal Diamond was much more controlling, micromanaging, and unable to focus on the aspects of the school they (and previous principals) think are important, such as student behavior.

Selected Quotes:

Discussing McDonald (Principal at Time 1):

- “First thing, she let you be you, but she knows how to motivate you from where you are. She knows how to build you from where you are. She knows how to have you self-reflect, she's provided the research sources to be able to ... I mean we should be professionals to begin with, and so I say that because that's my personal perspective of her since she's been here.” – Teacher 13, Time 1 (Hired by McDonald)

- “Really good. She doesn't micro-manage. She seems to really care about what we as individuals want and how we want to go about it. She's kind of laid back. She just ... I don't know. She's probably ... I've had many principals, but she's probably the top, as far as listening to us and really considering where we're coming from and trying to work things out with us.” – Teacher 14, Time 1 (Hired by McDonald)

- I mean, you know, and my other principal [prior to Peters], she was good. But Miss McDonald is a true, true passionate people-person. The kids are number one, no matter what. She'll... a kid having a bad day, "Come on in, come on in. So we'll talk." And then even if it's a pre-K, she'll get on her knees and talk to the pre-K. Or she'll sit on the floor with them, "Okay, let's talk about it." Who does that? So, yeah. Yeah. And I didn't know
her. So, to come in and to actually meet her, and to get the good vibe that I have ... and it has not quivered at all. She is consistent, and she is genuine. -Teacher 15, Time 1 (Hired by McDonald)

**Discussing Walker (Principal at Time 2)**
- But they brought him in [after McDonald]. He took over, he got those kids ... He made a difference in the behavior. And he was so supportive, "What you all need? What do you all need for me to do? What do you need? You need this? Okay, we gon' get this." And he met with us, "Okay now, if you do this, I'm going to need this from you." So, he told us what he needed from us. And we told him what we needed from him. And he really did that. We really loved him. And we loved the way he came in and just got the school under control.” -Teacher 16, Time 4 (Hired by McDonald)
- “More so than anything else, I think they valued him having ... Walker's sense of wanting to kind of control the student population and supporting the teachers to kind of do their job, had very high expectations with students. You're not going to be allowed to be disrespectful to your teachers; you're not going to be allowed to do X, Y, and Z; basically, these are my expectations, and the students are supposed to follow them, as compared to this year, where it's kind of been a little hands-off with the student population and what they're allowed to do, and their level of expectation.” -Teacher 17, Time 3 (Hired by McDonald)

**Discussing Diamond (Principal at Time 3)**
- “I would say her greatest strength is the fact that she has a lot of systems in place, but it's also her weakness. Her greatest strength is her weakness, because it's a level of control that goes into it. With the systems, there's no other input into how the system works.” -Teacher 17, Time 3 (Hired by McDonald)
- “It [the leadership] has made me feel defeated, disappointed, disgusted, frustrated. The environment has been hostile. It hasn't been hostile directly toward me, but, of course, with my colleagues, it may not be done directly but I could still feel it indirectly. Kind of made me feel lonely sometimes. Sad, worried, so all of those things. We're supposed to be a family. We would expect that you at least take our opinions into consideration. Take our feelings into consideration because we're human. Everybody wants to be heard, loved, and cared for. We didn't really receive a lot of that this year. It was an eye-opening
experience for me, because having to deal with that, it kind of put in perspective how the kids felt sometimes, especially with their home life. I was able to approach things differently because I didn't want my students to feel uncared for, unloved, or like nobody was listening. Now, I take some time to just talk, sit with them, see what's going on, because everybody needs that. I know if I need it as an adult, and I know how I feel when I don't get it. Again, it put me in the student role. If I feel like you're not on my side or you don't support me or you're not listening, I'm not going to perform for you.” -Teacher 18, Time 3 (Hired by McDonald)

- “She's knowledgeable, and me as an individual teacher, I don't have any problems with her, but just seeing on the outside ... cause like when I have feedback sessions with her, things that she says makes sense. So, she's very knowledgeable and she comes up with different ideas for me to improve things in my classroom, just like little small things, it doesn't have to be this grand finale of a lesson. Just little things that tweak it to make the lesson better.” -Teacher 19, Time 3 (Hired by McDonald)

- “She's very structured, and I think that's good. I come from the military, so structure, I think, is good. She put a lot of systems in place. Even though we were like, “Ahh ugh,” at the beginning, I think they end up working well for us in the end.” -Teacher 20, Time 3 (Hired by Walker)

**Miller - Principal Carter**

**Main Takeaways:**

The majority of teachers at Miller did not choose to work under Principal Carter. This was because they were hired by Principal Price prior to the ACE program starting. Most responses cited a neutral or somewhat negative relationship with Principal Carter while a small majority provided a lot of praise. At Time 3, which is the time period in which the majority of these responses were gathered, teachers had worked under Principal Carter for 1-3 school years. A few teachers had engaged in the mutual selection process as teacher turnover occurred after Time 1 and Time 2. These new teachers were hired by Principal Carter. The responses from teachers who were hired by Principal Carter were more positive than those hired by her
predecessor. Considering that nothing had changed about Principal Carter, besides any feedback that she was receiving and using to adjust her leadership from Time 1 to Time 3, mutual selection appeared to make a difference in how teachers at Miller felt about their principal. For example, someone hired by her calls her “easygoing” and said very positive things about how she told them how to get things done. On the other hand, someone hired by her predecessor said they feel she couldn’t trust anybody and “had to control everything”. It is hard to reconcile these two very different descriptions of the same person without considering the context in which they came to work with Principal Carter.

Selected Quotes:

- “I haven't heard about any issues, but I love her to death. She's awesome to me. She's very laid back, easygoing, and very levelheaded. She tells you exactly what she wants done and how it should be done and she always tells you if you are not in here for the teachers, I mean, for the students, it's not a good thing because students come first. I don't have a problem with her so it's hard for me.” -Teacher 21, Time 3 (Hired by Carter)
- “I like my principal. I always like my principals, though. But, so, my view is she does her job, okay? I can only imagine what she gets from the top leadership. So, when it's a trickle-down effect, you're going to feel certain pressures, because it's just how the pyramid structure works, just like our students.” -Teacher 37, Time 3 (Hired by Carter)
- “To me, she's a jewel. Here I go. She's very helpful to me. She actually is one of those ones where if you need to call her, you have her number. If you don't get her right away, she'll call you back. I haven't had any issues with her at all, and I haven't heard about any issues, but I love her to death. She's awesome to me.” -Teacher 38, Time 3 (hired by Carter)
- “I've been under her helm for three years and we've never had a confrontation. It's always, "Hey, what do you want me to do?" kind of thing. We have no relationship. She doesn't know anything about me, personally. I mean, I told her I was a photographer and a caterer last year. She's like, "Oh." You should know that. My old principal knew stuff like that, and was like, "Can you bring your camera up here?" I mean, you have to know
people personally to know, "What skill can I steal from them for my school to succeed?"
No personal nothing.” -Teacher 23, Time 3 (Hired by Price)

- “Her weaknesses; she doesn't listen and she takes everything personal.” -Teacher 24, Time 3 (Hired by Price)

- “I don't think she has plenty of leadership qualities. She has led us nowhere. I mean, I think excellent teaching gets test scores, but I don't think she's led us to be dynamic. I think you would see people that are skilled being promoted and going further on in their careers, I mean, somebody. Nobody.” -Teacher 25, Time 4 (Hired by Price)

- “Teachers say verbatim that the difference between this school and their other [district] schools is that the old principals that they had, or whatever, had their back, or that they were more supportive. Versus the principals here, they allege that they feel like they don't have their support.” -Teacher 26, Time 1 (Hired by Price)

- “I think there was a trust factor when they were out of the system and the new Principal came in, so I think it was a trust issue. And I feel like this Principal is very controlling. Like she has to control everything, I'm not sure what pressure she's under, I'm not in those meetings.” -Teacher 27, Time 1 (Hired by Price)

**Summarizing Part 1: The Principal Support Question**

The responses to the principal support question showed that teachers had differing feelings about each of the four principals. At Miller, there was also a difference of opinion between teachers at the same school talking about the same principal. There are a variety of reasons why this might be the case. Part 2 explores one of these potential reasons: whether the principal influenced the teacher to join the school.

**Part 2: Did the principal influence teachers to join their school?**

This question was not intended to understand the motivation for joining the SAGE program but rather whether the principal’s identity was how they chose their specific SAGE school. This question assumed that most teachers already intended to join the SAGE program (for a variety of other reasons) and that they then had to choose a SAGE school to apply to. The
question was asked to understand if the principal influenced teachers’ decision to apply to the SAGE school and then join the school once they had received a job offer.

**Some examples of how the question was asked in the interviews:**

- “How big a factor was the prior principal in your decision to work here? Here’s this scale.”
- “What role did she kind of play in your decision, if at all, to stay at [school]? So, would you say she was all the way from being negative to being positive?”
- “And you've spoken to this a little bit but just so I have it, how big of a factor was she in your initial decision to work here?”

Responses in Part 2 have been divided into two categories: affirmative or neutral. I report the raw number of responses and a percentage that showed the percentage of affirmative responses to the total number of responses.

**Evaluating Responses School-by-School**

**Booker**

14 affirmative/4 neutral: 78% affirmative

**Main Takeaways:**

Many of the teachers at Booker referenced either a previous positive relationship, positive word-of-mouth, or a positive experience with Gold’s hiring presentation. For example, some referenced the principal's perceived leadership style and acumen while others mentioned appreciating the feeling of being chosen by Gold. All neutral responses mentioned not knowing who Gold was prior to the selection process and/or the interview process not revealing enough about her and her leadership style and acumen for her identity to matter. As a result, her identity had no influence on their choice.

**Selected Quotes**

Affirmative:

- “I mean I've known Miss Gold for a long time, so that's one of the reasons, I ... I mean I
trust her. I like the way she works with people. I know she has really high expectations, so I guess I wanted to be part of that and see how it works. Last year, I was a teacher and she asked me if I wanted to do this. I'm like, "Let me give it a try." With anybody, I would probably try with her because I know that I trust her.” - Teacher 28, Time 1

- “I would say a moderate positive, actually because I had heard a lot of really good things about her. I heard that she came from another struggling campus, but she had turned it around in two or three years, and that her teachers were happy to work with her.” - Teacher 29, Time 3

Neutral:
- “Yeah, I know she picked me for sure. Right, but to be honest, I didn't know who Ms. Gold was. I came to the interview, and there she was. It could be Ms. Williams, it could be a different person behind the desk. It could be a man, it could be anybody. I wouldn't mind. The decision to come here was mostly the SAGE school.” - Teacher 8, Time 3

**Peters**
12 affirmative/1 neutral: 92% affirmative

**Main Takeaways:**

Most responses to this question came from teachers who were hired by Ms. McDonald. This could’ve skewed the sample because she only hired teachers prior to Time 1. A few responses were from teachers hired by Mr. Walker. All of these responses were positive and cited a positive spirit and attitude, his energy, approachability, and passion. Mr. Walker’s gender and directness being a positive came up as well. The responses at Peters were fairly affirmative even though principal consistency for the entire program was not possible. This was possibly because mutual selection still took place. First, Ms. McDonald was principal for nearly a year. Second, as principals and teachers left over the four time periods, new teachers were typically selected by new principals, and vice versa which allowed for mutual selection. Another potential reason was that the sample of teachers interviewed may have been representative of all of the teachers at Time 3 (i.e. more teachers who were hired at Time 1 by McDonald than
representative of all teachers at Peters during Time 3).

**Selected Quotes**

**Affirmative:**

- “I would honestly say [Miss McDonald] was a big positive. She had a very genuine spirit, and she just wanted to know a lot about me as a teacher, and she wanted to know about me personally, and she wanted to know about my personal focus and goal. Even when she came in, or when she had me come into the interview, she made sure that I knew that the work would be hard. She was like, "The work is going to be hard, and I'm looking to hire the best of the best, and I see something in you that I would like to develop over the next few years as your principal." That really stuck with me because she invested in me. Like I said, she saw something in me that would be an asset to her campus having just only talked to me for 30, 45 minutes. So, having such a kindhearted, genuine person did wonders for me going into a very scary, new, and potentially stressful environment because I knew if anything happened, I would have Miss McDonald to lean on. She was human. She understood that the work was going to be hard, but she supported me 100%, and we had only just met.” -Teacher 38, Time 3

- “Mrs. McDonald wowed me at the end of it. And she felt like she really wanted me to be on her team. And I was ecstatic about her energy and her vision at the time of the interview and the first couple of weeks of this school year or the first couple of months.” -Teacher 30, Time 3

- “I had gotten four different positions at the time, but Ms. McDonald and I seemed to hit it off better. I also wanted to come to Peters because Peters is at the bottom. I want to go to the top with it.” -Teacher 30, Time 1

- “Actually, [Ms. McDonald] was a big positive reason why I chose to stay, because, at the time, I was on medical leave and then I came back, so I actually had secured a job at another location. So it had a big impact. She pushed for it, for me to be able to still be here at the school. It was awesome. Hate that she didn't stay. [Ms. McDonald] was awesome. She was very approachable. She expected nothing but the best as well, but her delivery and her approach was kind of like the warm fuzzy feeling. Like, okay, I understand. I don't know. I loved it.” -Teacher 37, Time 3
• “I would say, [Mr. Walker] had an interesting personality, I could tell from the interview. He was a kind of person that just kind of says what he felt. Sometimes it could be a good thing, sometimes it could be a bad thing. So, I knew going then, I'm like, alright, I got a principal who just doesn't kind of mind speaking his mind, but I can work that because that means I have a voice too.” -Teacher 31, Time 3

Umpire
23 affirmative/ 2 neutral: 92% positive

Main Takeaways:

There were a lot of responses available for Umpire. Umpire appeared to have the highest population of teachers “brought over” from Ms. Baker’s previous school. Apart from citing previous working or personal relationships, responses highlighted her positivity, vision, and leadership style. Neutral responses cited not knowing Ms. Baker or her reputation.

Selected Quotes

Affirmative:

• “At that point, I had made up my mind that I would leave Bell as well because I thought if I won't be under Ms. Baker's leadership anymore, then there's no reason for me to stay at Bell either. So then actually the next day, she comes to my classroom and she says, "Actually, I was hoping that you'd come over to my school as well." So, I didn't think about it, I didn't hesitate, and I said, "Yes".” -Teacher 31, Time 1 (worked at Ms. Baker’s previous school)
• “When I did an interview with Mrs. Baker at the place, I wasn't really looking for a job. I just wanted to see what it was about. When I got to interviewing with her I saw that she was very committed to her schooling, to excellence. So that's what really got me on board.” -Teacher 32, Time 1

Neutral:

• “No, she didn't [influence me to stay at the school]. I think that myself and maybe one other teacher had the choice to leave or just stay because we were excellent teachers and so we chose to stay. And so no, she didn't hire me. I wonder sometimes if she wanted to
kick me out, but she hasn't yet, so I guess she'll let me stay. I came with the territory.”
-Teacher 33, Time 1 (This teacher was at Umpire prior to it becoming an ACE school but was able to reinterview to stay because she was a “excellent” teacher)

Miller
12 affirmative/11 neutral: 52% positive

Main Takeaways:

The majority of affirmative responses were in reference to choosing to work at Miller based on interactions with Ms. Price while a couple responses were from teachers hired by her successor, Ms. Carter. Responses highlighted that Ms. Price seemed like a good match and would create the environment that they wanted to work in. The neutral responses mentioned not knowing either principal and/or if they were offered a job, they would’ve taken it regardless of who the principal was. It seems relevant that the intended mutual selection process took place at Miller, but it was never able to have the intended benefit because of the principal switch. It appeared that never working under Ms. Price makes it less likely for teachers to think that mutual selection mattered at the time of hiring, especially when they are asked this question two years later in Time 3 having never worked under Ms. Price. Finally, it seemed relevant to this question that teachers spoke more negatively about Ms. Carter and her leadership abilities.

Selected Quotes
Affirmative:

- “Yeah, she made you feel like she wanted you there and that we were actually the ones that she wanted. And so that made us feel like, you know what, this is the place that we needed to be.” -Teacher 34, Time 1 (Hired by Price)
- “She was the reason why I came here. It was her way of speaking, you know? I mean, she's a good leader. She has a good heart. I want to be with her. Even if I don't know the neighborhood, I want to give it a try.” -Teacher 35, Time 1 (Hired by Price)
- “At that time, she seemed very …well nice, appealing as far as her personality. I didn't
get a bad vibe, like “I don't know if I want to work for this person because they seem to have a certain demeanor.” It was very appealing with the personality. And she, the lady, at that time, who was supposed to be the principal, said that she would trust us and our abilities and that's why we're here, because we're a select group and would be willing to…she would be willing to listen to our ideas and appeal to our strengths and to be able to shape the school.” -Teacher 40, Time 1 (Hired by Price)

Neutral:

- “I would say that both of them [the principal and vice principal] would be neutral. You know, I was all about the kids. I didn't care who was the principal because in my prior experience, I've never worked with a principal like this before. From first impression, because Ms. Zimmer [the vice principal] interviewed me first, and then Ms. Price and I talked for a second. I was trying to leave, and she wanted me to sign immediately, so she took me up the hall and signed. I didn't know her from the parking lot guy, so I don't know.” -Teacher 39, Time 3 (hired by Price)

- “I mean, ... the principal really had nothing to do with it. They say you got the job, I was gonna take it.” -Teacher 36, Time 3 (Hired by Carter)

**Summarizing Part 2: The Principal Influence Question**

In most instances, teachers responded that their principal was a positive influence in their decision to join their SAGE school or was the main reason they joined the school. In schools with inconsistent or changed leadership, there was a relatively smaller proportion of positive responses. This is important because every school hired teachers in the same way. In Part 2, I explored the degree to which each school’s assigned SAGE principal influenced teachers’ decision to join that SAGE school. If their answer was yes, this means that a mutual selection process (as defined earlier in the paper) had taken place between the teacher and the principal. In Part 3, I explore whether teachers think that mutual selection matters.
Part 3: Do Teachers Think Mutual Selection Matters? (theorizing based on their own experiences)

Finally, teachers were asked to theorize based on their own experiences whether mutual selection mattered and/or made a difference. The question was purposefully broad, and teachers could determine for themselves what “matters” and “makes a difference” means to them.

Some examples of how the question was asked in the interviews:

- “We're interested in whether teachers feel a difference when they're working with the principal who hired them versus working with a principal who didn't hire them. Do you think that matters to teachers? Or does it make a difference here?”
- “We're interested in whether teachers feel a difference when they're working with a principal who hired them versus when they're working with a principal who didn't hire them. So, in the first case, it would be like you. [Principal] picked you. You picked [Principal]. In the second case, it doesn't look like that. It's like “Oh, someone else hired you and then a new principal came or whatever.” Do you think that matters to teachers, or makes a difference?”
- “So, in the first case, there's mutual selection. [Principal] picks you, you pick [Principal]. Second case, there's no mutual selection essentially. Do you think that matters to teachers or makes a difference?”

Responses in Part 3 were delineated by being either affirmative (yes, mutual selection matters), neutral (maybe), and negative (no). I report the raw number of responses and a percentage that showed the percentage of affirmative responses to the total number of responses.

Evaluating Responses School-by-School

**Booker**
10 affirmative/2 neutral: 83% affirmative

Main Takeaways:

All teachers at Booker were hired, or rehired, by Ms. Gold. In response to the questions above, most Booker teachers emphasized the importance of knowing what they should expect,
feeling chosen, feeling valued, and having shared expectations as a result of the mutual selection process. The few Booker teachers who had neutral responses mentioned being chosen based on their brief interviews and resume/numbers, not an actual relationship or connection that they had with the principal at the time of hiring.

**Selected Quotes**

**Affirmative:**

- “I think it does. I think on this base level of being human, having someone want you and value you and choose you, I think that makes you unconsciously work a little bit harder for them. I think we're all very vulnerable people who have our own set of issues, and whether we choose to address them or not, we have this vulnerability and we have this need to feel accepted as humans. I think if we're not chosen, and we know we're not chosen, we were randomly placed somewhere as a placeholder like, "Oh, we'll just put you here." I think that really does affect your attitude towards being somewhere, working for someone.” -Teacher 41, Time 3

- “Just so you understand that so, but, yeah, being able to speak on not being chosen, just kind of being sent somewhere and not ... Yeah that’s, I think, very common, especially from what I've heard. I mean, there's vacancies and they need to be filled and people end up wherever they can end up basically, and I think that doesn't always create for a good work environment or a good situation for the students because it ends up being inefficient if people don't get along, people don't work well together, people aren't buying into or don't understand the expectations that are set. I can see how that would create problems because I've seen it.” -Teacher 42, Time 3

- “I think it would because last year was so challenging and so much effort that I had to really think, did I want to come back for a third year here? I'm obviously going to say that next year I have to think that through, do I want another year of extended hours and everything. At the end of the day, it's knowing I'm working for Ms. Gold, and knowing that I'm going to have the support that I have now, that even though this is a challenging environment, still makes me want to stay. If I was jumping into a school where I didn't know the Principal, I don't know if I'd be as likely to take this challenge. Because I've already had the experience, and I know what it takes to be here, and if I didn't have a
supportive Principal, I don't think I would want to continue working here.” -Teacher 43, Time 3

Peters
1 affirmative/6 neutral or negative: 14% affirmative

Main Takeaways:

Teachers at Peters were hired by various principals with a small majority originally hired by Ms. McDonald prior to Time 1. This group of teachers was small because significant turnover had already taken place by Time 3 when this question was asked. The only affirmative response did not mention McDonald. This is important because they were answering purely based on experiences prior to coming to Peters and not their experience at the school. The neutral or negative responses focused on issues with the Time 3 Principal Ms. Diamond, frequent turnover not allowing for mutual selection to have any potential benefits, and principal identity not mattering regardless of circumstances.

It is worth noting that responses to the principal influence question at Peters were generally affirmative with most teachers saying the principal at the time had somewhat of an influence or very significant influence on their decision to join the school. However, when asked them to theorize about whether mutual selection matters, their opinions appeared to change. It appeared that these teachers were never able to experience the potential benefits of mutual selection, so they were more likely to not think they exist.

Selected Quotes

Negative:
- “If Walker hired somebody and they saw Diamond. It's two completely different ... they would probably almost run.” -Teacher 44, Time 3
- “I don’t think being hired by someone makes a difference, not with Ms. Diamond. Nope. Just her personality style. I don't think it would've made any difference.” -Teacher 45, Time 3
Neutral:
- “No, because I feel like a great principal is just a great principal. It doesn't matter if you were hired by that person, or not. If they are really well at what they do, to me a great principal ... I am not saying that everybody may agree, but if you have the majority of your staff likes the way that you run a school, then you will be fine. I don't know, I just feel and believe that everybody here, we all feel the same.” -Teacher 46, Time 3
- “I think maybe early on in my career it probably would have mattered more. But, as I said, like [school district] especially in high needs campuses, you just get used to having so many changes that, literally, change after change after change. There's one teacher who booked a student, then the next day, that person is not there, you hadn't clue that they are not going to be there.” -Teacher 31, Time 3
- “I don't think it made a difference for me. I didn't come here to work with the principal, it's more so about the kids.” -Teacher 47, Time 3

**Umpire**

9 affirmative: 100% positive

**Main Takeaways:**

Teachers at Umpire were all hired by Ms. Baker and went through the mutual selection process with her. They emphasized heightened enthusiasm, autonomy, shared expectations, feeling supported, and feeling chosen as the main reasons for why it mattered. While all responses are affirmative, they vary in terms of enthusiasm.

**Selected Quotes**

Affirmative:
- “I will say yes, I think when she's having the opportunity to select your staff, most of your staff, I think it's at the beginning, has set more enthusiasm, to be more enthusiastic, she's the person that's selected you. And also, you're more engaged to the project if she selected you, and then you are more, I think it's a big influence. We know that she selected all of us, I mean last year, with the help of her other assistant principals, so you know that will help a lot to interact with others for the culture.” -Teacher 48, Time 3
- “I think it does. Because you want to put your best foot forward and the mindset that, like you said earlier, we're here to reset. And as a leader, especially if you get to hand pick, you're looking for specifics. And that makes you, as a teacher, feel they're looking for specifics and I met that specific criteria. I'm one of the chosen.” -Teacher 49, Time 3

- “I do think it matters, because human nature is to be loyal to something. When a principal hires you, you feel a loyalty to that principal. You feel like, "I have to do everything in my power," because again ... just like we have [the excellent teacher initiative], they have a principal appraisal system as well. Part of that is what we say about them. So you feel ... "Okay, I have to do my best, because she believed in me. She took a chance on me. She thought enough of me to hire, so I've got to do my best as well, for that." When somebody else hires you, or when you're left and everybody else that you worked here with has gone, it can create that feeling of ... I can't think of another word, but isolation. You kind of feel like, "I'm the only one that she didn't hire." You do think about stuff like that, as a teacher.” -Teacher 50, Time 3

**Miller**

8 affirmative/7 neutral or negative: 53% positive

**Main Takeaways:**

Some of the teachers at Miller were hired by Ms. Carter so mutual selection did take place but the majority were hired by Ms. Price, so they did not work with a principal they selected. This is one of the reasons why there were a few different perspectives. A prevailing view was that the school would’ve been difficult regardless of the principal because of the challenges that came with the SAGE program and that there were other factors that mattered just as much (when it comes to success/satisfaction).

**Selected Quotes**

Affirmative:

- “I think it matters a lot because you get a feel for people. When we sat and we listened to all these principals talk, we had to get an opinion of them. Some people had this wonderful presentation. Some people were just straightforward, the principals I'm
speaking of. Then you go to their little classroom because they did presentations in a
classroom and you meet, then you get a sense of who they are. The difference, I really
didn't know, I think her name was Price. Then Ms. Carter, I think they're so different. Ms.
Carter is a hoverer. She likes to be into everything. She's a micromanager. Now the other
lady, I remember her saying, "You are the experts. I'm going to be looking to you to tell
me." -Teacher 51, Time 1

- “Well just like a coach in the NFL and the NBA. You want to bring some of your people
with you. I mean it's understandable. Pros is you know your people, they know how you
operate. I don't know necessarily know the cons, unless you already have like a school
that's already succeeding and ... or a football team that already won 5 Super Bowls, but
you got a football team that hasn’t won any games in 5 years and you want to get rid of
everybody and bring in your own people. Do it. The same thing with the schools.” -
Teacher 52, Time 3

- “Yes, I think it is very, very important because I think there's different types of leaders.
And, as the leader type that you are, you're going to choose the people that work with
your type, and I think that is where we bumped heads. I think she prefers to work with
people that will follow what she says. And so I think last year she encountered some
people that weren't like that, including myself. And those were the people she kept
bumping heads with. But I think this ... if she would have had, I think it would be very
important if she would have had the freedom, I think she would have chosen the people
that would work with her better.” -Teacher 53, Time 3

Neutral:

- “I don't think it makes a difference because, you know, I believe you're not really here for
the principal per se. Of course, she's your guide and she's your leader, but I believe that
you're not here for just one reason.” - Teacher 38, Time 3

The mutual selection question responses require acknowledging the two schools where
mutual selection and leadership consistency didn’t occur in the intended way, like it did at
Umpire and Booker. At Peters, responses showed that leadership consistency became an even
bigger potential issue. At Miller, the mutual selection element of SAGE was not entirely possible
because of the principal switch. To acknowledge these differences, I considered responses to the mutual selection question that discussed the experience of working with principals that you didn’t mutually select:

**Peters which experienced inconsistent leadership:**

Quotes:
- “It does because if you're just thrown into some place, and they don't know you. She doesn't know me. She isn't what I'm about. All she knows is I'm going to do this and tell her to do that and that and that. You don't know anything about me, so there's no real relationship that we have. We don't have a relationship at all. You don't try to get to know me really. You just want to tell me, oh I'm a new teacher, so I don't know anything. That doesn't help. That's just my situation, I guess.” -Teacher 17, Time 3
- It's not a negative surprise, because it almost feels like a leadership thing, they hold these important facts into the last minute. Usually, it happens because of contracts and they wanted you to stay. So, if you're always saying, "Oh, this principal isn't going to be here next year." You might have that to say, "I don't want to be here." So, you are going to kind of hold on to that piece of sensitive information because it affects life. It affects retention. But as teachers, you would just get used to it. We're just so used to what's happening. That's nothing that I can do to control it. I don't really like to hold on to a lot of negative information, so I just say, "Okay, well, that's what it is. This is life and I just kind of move forward.” – Teacher 31, Time 3
- “Being hired by a principal but then having another principal. 'Cause one, it could be a real good match of personality, "Oh, I really believe in their values, I'm on board with everything that they're saying." And then you get another principal and it's like, "I don't know what I got myself into, I wouldn't have came here if I knew it was gonna be like this." 'Cause sometimes the first impression sets the tone.” -Teacher 45, Time 3

**Miller which experienced an immediate principal switch:**

Quotes:
- “I don't think it matters because you really don't have a choice of who your principal is. We know that at any given time they could change principals, so that's something that's not new. I don't think that matters.” -Teacher 24, Time 3
- “You know, to be honest, maybe. I don't know how big of a difference, but I think once you've sat and interviewed somebody and heard their expectations, you know, we received the email that Mrs. Carter was coming, but we didn't know what to expect. With Ms. Price, we at least knew this is the game plan and everything. I would have to be honest, sometimes I've questioned what if Ms. Price was still here, but I think just being at a SAGE campus in itself, I know pretty much it would have been the same, data driven, closing the gaps and everything. But I think that relationship was already built, because I was hired from a previous position. But it wasn't saying I wasn't going to give Ms. Carter a chance, because she's been very supportive of me.” -Teacher 54, Time 3

- “My impression of her, because we had another principal before, and that principal said, like coming in, "Oh, you are the experts. We're going to let you do what you do." But then when we got here with a new principal, my impression of her, I had ... I took away a good impression. I took away that we were on the same page. I took away that she was going to be a good leader… I even came up here and met with her before school started, to give her some of my ideas. Things that we've done at the other school when I was moving into the year wanting to do, she was so open to it. She still is open. But she's not going to tell you no. She's going to say, "Okay. That's definitely something to think about." Then a decision will be made. But she's ... yeah. She won't tell you no. She'll listen to what you have to say, but they will make the decision on what they want and do. We had to do it and that's just what we had to do. But leadership-wise, I don't know. It's a little shaky to be honest.” -Teacher 51, Time 1

To sum up these quotes, I found that teachers in schools that have been able to execute strategic staffing as intended theorized that mutual teacher-principal selection matters for teacher satisfaction with principal insofar as the selected principal was consistent throughout the program. In contrast, teachers in schools that did not experience mutual selection, typically suggested that mutual teacher-principal selection was not very important or beneficial. The effects of mutual teacher-principal selection for less than half of the SAGE program were somewhat inconclusive as some teachers theorized that it mattered while others do not.
Teachers theorized that mutual selection was less important and consequential if they never worked for the mutually selected principal, like in the case of Miller, or if they left shortly into one’s tenure, like in the case of Peters. It is clear from this research that teachers selected principals based on a number of factors, including a perceived alignment with their vision and plan for the school. To put it simply, when teachers chose to work for one person and then were faced with someone else, it was some level of a disappointment. It depended on the individual and their experience level how they adapted to this change. We also notice differences between cases in which principals were frequently changing and when principals were switched and consistent.

Conclusion
What do Parts 1, 2, and 3 tell us? What can we learn from this?

I conclude by providing a more general narrative and lay theorizing about the key question based on the qualitative data. The key questions were:

- What is the value of mutual selection in the hiring process?
- Beyond mutual selection, does leadership consistency matter?

In order to answer these questions, I used a three-step process. First, I explored teachers’ satisfaction with their principal through questions that asked about their principal’s leadership abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Next, I explored whether a principal influenced a person to join (therefore allowing for the process of mutual selection). Finally, I explored answers to a question in which teachers were asked to theorize about whether they thought that mutual selection between principals and teachers mattered. Through this process, I came to the following general conclusions:
a. Yes, mutual selection mattered. But leadership consistency mattered too. There is a difference between mutual selection without principal consistency and mutual selection with subsequent principal consistency. The core takeaway is that there is no perceived benefit to mutual selection if a teacher never works for that person, like in the case of Miller, or if they left shortly into your tenure, like in the case of Peters.

i. We can generally conclude this based on the sentiment of responses provided to Part 3.

1. At Booker, 83% of teacher agreed that mutual selection matters.
2. At Umpire, 100% of teachers agreed that mutual selection matters.
3. At Miller, 53% of teachers agreed that mutual selection matters.
4. And at Peters, 14% agreed that mutual selection matters.

b. I theorize based on the responses of teachers at Booker and Umpire, that mutual selection mattered because it allowed teachers to choose a school leader that they liked, and when the process occurred as intended so principals are consistent, it allowed for teachers to:

i. Choose a leader with shared expectations and vision

ii. Feel “chosen” by the leader and a subsequent desire to prove oneself

iii. Establish feelings of trust and autonomy more easily

c. I theorize based on the responses of teachers at Peters and Miller, that a lack of mutual selection seemed to more likely lead to the following:

i. Teachers not feeling positively about the principal

ii. Feelings of micromanagement
iii. Difference in vision and frustration around how to achieve mutual goals like student achievement and behavior improvement
d. When we compare responses of teachers hired by the original principals at Peters and Miller to responses of teachers hired by the newer principals, especially by Principal Carter at Peters, the benefits of Part B are somewhat apparent, and the consequences presented in Part C are less severe.

In order to verify and test the assumptions made in this paper, experimental research needs to be done.

**Future Research Questions**

Finally, some potentially useful and adjacent research questions are:

i. How can we replicate the benefits of mutual selection without the disruptive SAGE transformation process?

ii. What are the quantified academic advantages of mutual selection? What about principal consistency? What about both? How much of a difference does it make?

iii. If a mutually selected leader leaves, does teachers having a say on their replacement replicate the advantages of mutual selection enough for it to have the same benefits?
Appendix A:

Interview Codes

This image shows some of the codes used that feature the principal.

Appendix B:

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<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
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<td>December 2015</td>
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<td>May 2017</td>
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Appendix C:

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<td>Miller</td>
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### Appendix D:

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References


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