

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CULTURE ON TEACHER RETENTION:

A CASE STUDY

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A DISSERTATION

in

Educational Leadership

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Education

2024

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This work is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering love and belief in me has been the foundation of my personal and professional journey. To my parents, your support has been a constant source of strength, and I owe so much of who I am today to the values you instilled in me.

I also dedicate this work to the mentors and colleagues who have guided me along the way. To my union siblings at the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), thank you for your encouragement and camaraderie over the past 20 years. You have played an integral role in my growth as a labor organizer, and I am deeply grateful for your support and solidarity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Dissertation Chair, Dr. John D'Auria, for his unwavering guidance and insightful advice throughout this journey. He took me on as a mentee late in the game and never left my side once he did. His wisdom and leadership were instrumental in shaping not only my research but also my growth as a scholar and educator. I am truly fortunate to have had his mentorship, I certainly would not have been able to complete this journey without his guidance.

To my committee members, Dr. Rand Quinn and Dr. Nyree Dixon, thank you for your consistent encouragement and belief in my ability to succeed. Your thoughtful feedback, combined with your optimism and cheerleading, helped me push through the most challenging parts of this process.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Mary Yee for her invaluable guidance during the research and writing phases. Her expertise and support were crucial in helping me navigate the complexities of the research process.

A special thank you to the staff and faculty at Penn GSE. Ms. Martha Williams, your care and dedication ensured that Cohort 19, myself included, always felt supported throughout our journey. Upon your retirement, Joseph Jackson and Logan Merrill seamlessly continued that support, ensuring that our needs were always met. Your commitment to our success made a world of difference.

To my fellow members of Cohort 19, I am incredibly grateful for the camaraderie and support we shared throughout this journey. You were always there to lift me up, and your encouragement meant the world to me. A special thanks to the guys who were always there for a weekend drink, and to the friends who were quick to answer the phone when I needed to talk

through not only school-related challenges but also professional issues from my full-time job. The friendships and professional relationships we have developed will leave a lasting footprint on my soul for the remainder of my career.

To my colleagues at the UFT, especially the Bronx Borough office, thank you for your help and understanding, especially when it came to balancing my district work with my dissertation. Your support allowed me the space and time to focus on my research. Finally, to my friends and family, particularly my parents, your unwavering belief in me has been a constant source of strength. To all my friends who helped with dog sitting so I could travel to Philadelphia for my classes, thank you for your generosity and friendship. Your support made this achievement possible.

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CULTURE ON TEACHER RETENTION:

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William Woodruff

John D'Auria

This dissertation investigated the role of leadership decisions in shaping school climate and culture, and their consequent impact on teachers retention within a school setting. Through a case study analysis of an elementary school community characterized by high teacher retention, this research aimed to identify the key components of school culture that contribute to that school's stable and committed teaching workforce. The qualitative research methods used included interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Data were gathered to address the following research questions:

1. What are the key components of school culture that influence teacher retention?
2. How do different aspects of school culture contribute to teacher job satisfaction and commitment?
3. What strategies can educational institutions implement to foster a positive school culture that promotes teacher retention?

This study offers valuable insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and practitioners striving to cultivate supportive, inclusive, and empowering environments conducive to teacher satisfaction and long tenure. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the broader discourse on responsive principal leadership and enhancing teacher retention and, in doing so, foster increased student achievement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The idea that high-quality education leads to better opportunities for success has been a long-held tenet of U.S. democracy. The education system must develop and retain high-quality teaching talent to create opportunities for high-quality education for all students. Research in teacher quality has shown that teacher experience profoundly impacts the educational outcomes of students (Adnot et al., 2017; Atteberry et al., 2017; Blizard, 2021). In the United States, it is widely recognized that there are not enough fully trained teachers to meet the demands of the system. While many systems have responded to this need by increasing efforts to recruit talent, the retention of such talent is often overlooked.

In recent years, the issue of teacher retention has garnered significant attention within educational discourse. Across various educational systems globally, the attrition rate among teachers has been alarmingly high, which has led to concerns about its detrimental effects on student outcomes and overall educational quality. One critical factor influencing teacher retention is school culture, which encompasses the values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape the environment within educational institutions. Understanding how school culture impacts teacher retention is imperative for devising effective strategies to enhance teacher satisfaction and longevity in the profession. The present research used leadership and commitment frameworks in a case study approach to understand how school culture influences the professional retention decisions of staff (Anderson et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Haque et al., 2019; Yin, 2018).

In larger educational systems, many of the factors that impact teacher decisions to stay in school communities may be beyond the control of principals. An example is teacher salaries and benefits. Accordingly, this case study focused on critically examining the climate and culture of

a school that has a high teacher retention rate compared to other schools within the district to examine these factors as the principal has.

Background

Differences in student access to quality education professionals are a significant determinant of student success (Atteberry et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hanushek et al., 2016; Kraft et al., 2016). However, ensuring access to quality education through legislation has been difficult to achieve (Libman, 2012). In 1965, the United States started to focus more closely on student outcomes by passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which led to the creation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1969. Since the original act was passed, additional laws and measures have aimed to improve student outcomes in U.S. schools, including the 1969 National Educational Progress (The nation's report card, n.d.). Since the creation of the NEAP, additional reports on the state of education, like the 1980s' *A Nation at Risk*, have triggered a series of policies, including the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act, which were intended to improve student outcomes across the country. As a result, the NCLB and ESSA defined high-quality teachers and disrupted the culture and climate through massive reorganization of schools deemed to be low-performing.

The enactment of the NCLB Act in 2001 marked a significant shift in the culture and climate of schools across the United States, steering them toward a more punitive and test-focused model. Under the NCLB, schools were held accountable for student performance primarily through standardized testing, with significant consequences for those that failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks (Dee & Jacob, 2011). This focus on high-stakes testing fostered a climate where the pressure to perform on tests often overshadowed

broader educational goals, which led to increased test preparation activities at the expense of holistic learning experiences (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Consequently, the punitive measures associated with failing to meet AYP, such as restructuring, state intervention, and potential closure, created an environment of fear and compliance rather than innovation and support (Hursh, 2007). This environment profoundly impacted teacher experience and retention, as the increased pressure and fear of repercussions contributed to teacher burnout and attrition (Ravitch, 2010).

In response to the challenges posed by such policies, principal leadership has played a crucial role in shaping teacher experience and retention. Effective principal leadership can mitigate the negative effects of a punitive culture by fostering a supportive and collaborative school environment. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) issued a report in 1997 advocating far-reaching changes in recruiting and training teachers that highlighted the need for better preparation and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Despite efforts to enhance teacher standards and qualifications, disparities in access to high-quality teachers have persisted, particularly in rural and low-income urban neighborhoods (Blizard, 2021; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2015). Principals who prioritize professional development, create a positive school culture, and support teacher well-being can significantly improve teacher retention and, consequently, student outcomes. Hence, leadership that values teacher development and fosters a supportive atmosphere can counterbalance the test-centric pressures imposed by the NCLB, ultimately leading to more sustainable improvements in educational quality.

Challenges to maintaining high-quality instruction have resulted in the recognition of staffing shortages. In 2016, Linda Martin and Thalia Mulvihill catalogued quotes from experts

such as Linda Darling-Hammond, Roger T. Johnson, and Sharon P. Robinson that highlighted the unmet need for high-quality educators across the United States. These shortages have been attributed to three factors: an aging teacher population nearing retirement (Stucher et al., 2019), fewer individuals entering the teaching profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018), and reduced teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2002, 2003). Multiple studies have shown that high teacher turnover, or *churn*, correlates with low student performance (Adnot et al., 2017; Atteberry et al., 2017; Boyd et al., 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Kraft et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Watlington et al., 2010). Therefore, developing practices that help school leaders retain and develop teaching talent in their school communities is critical.

Principal shortages and shortened average tenures in large urban districts have posed significant challenges to the stability and effectiveness of schools, similar to those of teachers. Data on principals indicated that the average tenure of a principal in urban districts is approximately 3 to 4 years, which is notably shorter than the tenure in suburban or rural districts (Beteille et al., 2012). This high turnover rate can disrupt school culture and long-term improvement plans while negatively impacting student achievement. Frequent leadership changes can lead to inconsistencies in policies and practices, making it difficult for teachers to adapt and for students to experience a stable learning environment (Branch et al., 2013). A study by the Wallace Foundation (2013) highlighted that many districts struggle to find qualified candidates willing to take on the complexities of leading urban schools. This shortage affects the continuity of leadership and places additional burdens on existing principals, who may be required to oversee multiple schools or take on additional responsibilities due to the lack of available leaders.

Context of the Study

New York City (NYC) is home to the largest school system in the country, serving 1,094,138 students, as of December 6, 2021 (NYC Department of Education, n.d.). This system encompasses 1,876 schools, including 268 charter schools within the five boroughs. This case study of an elementary school occurred in the Bronx, the northernmost borough of the city. The Bronx contains six community districts, each with its own superintendent.

District 7, a geographically small school district at the southern tip of the Bronx in New York City (see Figure 1 below), is where School B is located. District 7 is one of three districts in the New York Public Schools (NYCPS) system, with only non-zoned schools or open enrollment. Non-zoned schools mean that all students living in the district have the same level of priority to attend that elementary school, regardless of proximity to the school's campus. In contrast, most NYC schools outside of these three districts are zoned, giving priority to families based on the distance the family lives from the school.

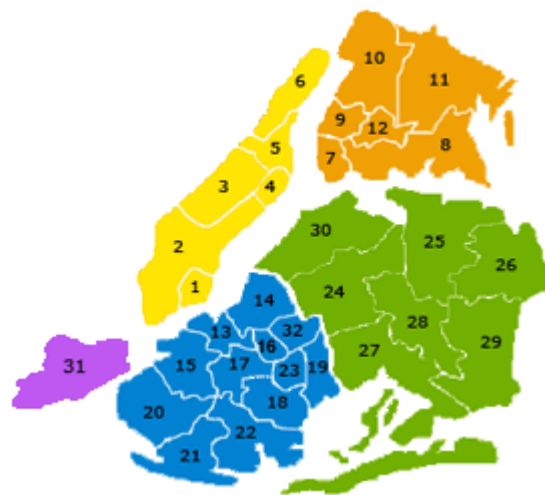
District 7 and School B

District 7 has a large population of low-socioeconomic families (New York State Education Department, 2021). Data from the 2021-2022 school year revealed that 94% of the students in District 7 schools were classified as economically disadvantaged. According to the New York State Education Department, in the 2021-2022 school year, the district served 5,279 students in Grades K-5, although the state did not report data on Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 students for that year. According to the state website, in 2021-2022, the district comprised a population in which 99% of the students were described as being non-White, with 69% identified as Hispanic or Latino and 26% as Black or African American. This study focused on one elementary school that covers Grades Pre-K3 through 5.

School B was selected as an example of a well-run school with stable leadership and staff. The tenure of its principal, as well as the average length of stay of teachers, contrasted with other schools in District 7. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, student performance in both math and English language arts was on the rise but took a steep decline directly after. In the 2022-2023 school year, student performance once again increased in both subjects (NYC Department of Education, 2023). Consequently, understanding what factors contributed to this circumstance merited an investigation.

Figure 1

How New York City Is Divided Into School Districts



Note. Source: <https://teachnyc.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360043956952>)

Impact of School Choice

The premise behind full school choice is that parents vote with their feet and force schools to deliver a better education. However, two reports, one by Danielle Cohen (2021) and the other by a group at the New School (Mader et al., 2018), found that the implementation of the school choice models, including charter schools, has exacerbated segregation racially and socioeconomically. Full school choice in the small geographic area of District 7 creates

competition between the charter and independent schools and public schools as well as between the public schools themselves. Charter operators can operate more than one school site under a single charter. During the time of this research, District 7 had 48 traditionally operated public schools and 41 charter schools.

Studies have shown that the creation of school choice through charter schools and non-zoned schooling has led to NYC's distinction as the most racially and socioeconomically segregated school system in the country (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2016; Mader et al., 2022). Students in the more gentrifying areas of a community are more likely to attend charter schools or other schools perceived as having higher quality than traditional public schools. Other research has shown that poorer parts of a district where family shelters and housing projects are concentrated tend to have lower-performing schools (Cohen, 2021; Mader et al., 2018). The opening of more charter schools has exacerbated the issue by concentrating lower-performing students into older and lower-performing schools (Munteanu, 2021).

Teacher Movement in NYC

Every spring, the NYCPS initiates a transfer system called the Open Market Transfer System (Open Market), as defined in Article 17 of the teacher's contract (United Federation of Teachers, 2018). This open market is a period when staff members can transfer to other schools within the NYC Department of Education. This opportunity gives teachers the chance to move to a new school community while retaining their salaries, seniority, and tenure statuses within the NYCPS system (New York City Department of Education, 2021) to reduce the risks of leaving a school. The ease of movement in the system highlights the importance of school leaders understanding how they can increase staff organizational commitment. Therefore, school leaders need to actively design school culture by influencing the malleable variables over which they

have direct influence to build the stability their schools need for student success. These variables may include the type of professional development opportunities available, school policies, and school assignments. Understanding the influence of school leaders' decisions on teachers' decisions to stay or transfer can help schools retain their most effective teachers.

Story of the Question

My journey led me to the research questions I aimed to understand better through this study. I have taught in the district for 2 decades. As part of that experience, I have also served as a union leader and an organizer. The experience of teaching in the district and participating in union activity has shaped my deep investment in school faculty retention, partly due to the direct correlation between teacher retention and student outcomes, especially in urban schools. I have seen that long-term retention of teachers fosters stability, consistency, and a stronger school community, which are critical for creating an effective learning environment that supports student outcomes. Research has consistently shown that high teacher turnover disrupts the continuity of instruction and negatively impacts student performance (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). In urban schools, where students often face additional socioeconomic challenges, the need for stable and experienced educators is even more pronounced. Based on my experience and research studies, I believe that a stable faculty can better understand and address the unique needs of its students by creating a more supportive and effective educational environment (Ingersoll, 2001).

Moreover, I have anecdotally witnessed how experienced teachers contribute to the overall improvement of school culture and professional development. It has been shown that when teachers remain in a school for extended periods, they build strong relationships with their

students, families, colleagues, and the community, all of which enhance their ability to collaborate effectively, share best practices, and replicate effective school culture and climate (Boyd et al., 2011). This collaborative environment leads to higher morale among teachers and better academic outcomes for students. My background as a union leader underscores the importance of advocating for policies that support teacher retention. By better understanding how school culture stabilized the teaching staff in this case study, I aimed to identify how school leaders can create a more stable and effective educational environment that ultimately benefits student outcomes in urban schools.

Problem Statement and Rationale

The segregation in NYC public schools has exacerbated District 7's difficulty in filling staff vacancies for many years (Cohen, 2021; New York State Education Department, 2021; U.S. Department of Education & Office of Postsecondary Education, 2017). Stories employees have shared with their respective unions and supervisors reveal a similar narrative: It is difficult to recruit teachers to work in the South Bronx as well as retain them after administrators invest time and money in developing their pedagogy. Given the research that has positively correlated teacher retention with student outcomes, the importance of understanding what school leaders can do to improve retention becomes clear (Boyd et al., 2011; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Goldhaber et al., 2015). This issue gains further importance in the context of the ongoing principal and teacher shortage, which experts have indicated is becoming more acute (Cohen, 2021). Through this research, I aimed to understand the relationship between school climate and culture, leadership attributes and decisions, and the decisions faculty and staff make to leave or remain in the school over the long term.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to better understand the key leadership attributes or decisions that influence school climate and culture and, consequently, the decisions of staff, especially teachers, to stay at or leave a school. Through this study, I sought to provide insights that can inform policy and practice interventions aimed at creating a positive school climate and culture with high levels of staff satisfaction and commitment to improve teacher retention rates.

The research of Viano et al. (2021) highlighted three types of variables impacting school leaders' decisions: fixed, structural, and malleable. Fixed and structural variables are largely beyond the control of school-based leaders in a system as large as NYC. Thus, the focus here was on the malleable variables—that is, factors and decisions that building-level leadership can influence or affect. By analyzing the school culture of a school community with a high rate of teacher retention, I attempted to identify aspects of the school culture that can be used in other schools to reduce faculty turnover.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posited to guide the inquiry:

1. What are the key components of school culture that influence teacher retention?
2. How do different aspects of school culture contribute to teacher job satisfaction and commitment?
3. What strategies can educational institutions implement to foster a positive school culture that promotes teacher retention?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders involved in shaping the educational landscape.

By identifying the specific elements of school leadership that shape the culture and climate in which teachers affect their retention decisions, this research can inform the development of targeted interventions to enhance teacher satisfaction and retention. It can also provide a window on what teachers in a school with high teacher retention value about their school culture and climate for those like me, who are tasked with negotiating and enforcing teacher working conditions through contracts. By understanding the factors that influence teacher decisions to stay, efforts can be made to support school buildings in replicating that climate and culture. Ultimately, improving teacher retention rates through a purposeful, focused understanding of a positive school culture and climate can contribute to greater stability within educational institutions and foster better learning outcomes for students.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Just as families and community members value a welcoming environment at their children's school, teachers and staff seek schools where morale and job satisfaction are high. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing school climate and culture, including collegiality, communication, and psychological safety. Effective leadership at the school level, particularly by principals, plays a significant role in shaping these factors. The principal's ability to build strong relationships with teachers and staff, manage conflicts, and foster a collaborative environment is essential for effective leadership. Numerous factors (e.g., the principal's leadership philosophy and management style) influence teacher and staff decisions to remain at or leave a school, which subsequently affects the school's stability and student outcomes. Hence, this literature review explored previous research on school leadership, teacher and staff retention, and school climate and culture to gain a deeper understanding of the school dynamics that impact the commitment of teachers and staff to their schools.

School Leadership

A consensus exists in the literature that creating a positive school culture and climate is essential for enhancing teacher satisfaction, retention, and, ultimately, student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Louis & Lee, 2015; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Effective school leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the culture and climate of educational institutions because it influences the professional experiences of teachers and the academic outcomes of students. The actions of school leaders, particularly principals, can significantly influence the creation of a positive and supportive environment that fosters collaboration, communication, and a shared vision among staff members (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The decisions and actions of the principal set the tone for the entire school community and influence

the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of all other stakeholders within the organization (Louis & Lee, 2015). By prioritizing the creation of a healthy and inclusive school culture, leaders can cultivate an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and empowered to excel in their roles (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Responsible Leadership Theory

Regarding teacher retention, school leaders face many challenges when managing the multitude of stakeholders in their care. While the primary goal of schools is to create positive student learning outcomes, leaders must navigate many moving parts and stakeholders to achieve this objective. Several theories have examined how leaders manage these stakeholders, such as servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf (2007) highlighted that in servant leadership theories, leaders are servants first. In education, I have found that this idea means that leaders often justify actions as benefiting the students and the communities they serve. However, servant leader theory does not consider all of the other relationships that school-based leaders must consider. Schools have many stakeholders, including teachers, which necessitates a more comprehensive theory when pondering the complexities of schools. Responsible leadership theory (RLT) addresses these complexities (Pless & Maak, 2011).

RLT acknowledges that nonprofit organizations such as schools rely on more than just traditional employer-employee relationships. These organizations must extend past traditional work relationships to include volunteerism for success and sustainability (Ronquillo et al., 2012). RLT emphasizes not only the measurable outcomes but also requires a look at the moral and ethical ways in which leaders make decisions to get to those outcomes (Pless & Maak, 2011). In 2006, Nicola Pless and Thomas Maak defined RLT as “a relational and ethical phenomenon, which occurs in societal processes of interaction with those who affect or are affected by

leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship” (p. 214). It requires that leaders move away from the idea that leadership is values-free since the values of the leader directly impact the organizational culture, especially when the subordinates are themselves stakeholders. The context where the subordinates are themselves stakeholders is the context of a school where teachers and other faculty members are stakeholders in the school community who benefit from positive outcomes. In the school context, this definition broadens the work environment and responsibilities of educational leaders (e.g., principals) to include the needs of not only students but also their families, politicians, the greater community, and teachers or other faculty under their direction.

Through an RLT lens, it becomes apparent that the decisions that leaders make impact the organizational commitment of teachers to their school communities and, ultimately, their decision to remain, seek opportunities elsewhere, or leave the profession (X. Zheng et al., 2022; Y. Zheng et al., 2022). Organizational connection is important to retain talent in an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). RLT focuses on the development, communication, and demonstration of shared values, vision, and ethical behavior within an organization (Holmes et al., 2021). An employee’s perception of a supervisor’s RLT is an antecedent to when that employee loses commitment to the organization and, ultimately, influences professional decisions (Brown, 2003). Scholars agree that fostering strong organizational connections and ethical leadership can enhance employee retention.

The more connected employees are to their community, the more likely they are to share the community values, increasing their chances to remain and persevere through challenges (Mowday et al., 1979). A leader who is adept at fostering a sense of belonging and attachment to the community increases the likelihood that a community member will stay. While Meyer and

Allen (1991) and Mowday et al. (1979) both highlighted the importance of connection in retaining talent, Mowday et al. emphasized the broader community context and suggested that strong community ties also play a critical role in employee retention.

To keep employees and make a return on their investment, employers should aim to create environments that improve employee commitment because committed employees perform better (Fukami & Larson, 1984). This application from the business world matches the understanding that teachers who are more satisfied with their work are more likely to exhibit a stronger commitment to their organizations (Cayak, 2021; Cerit, 2010; Haque et al., 2016; Ronquillo et al., 2012; X. Zheng et al., 2022). Given the looming teacher shortage and the evidence that teacher experience has a positive correlation to student achievement, school leaders must understand organizational commitment, how to foster it, and which factors influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave. Both business and educational research converge on the idea that fostering commitment and satisfaction is essential for organizational success and employee retention.

The Importance of a School Leader's Emotional Intelligence in School Culture

Emotional intelligence (EI) in school leadership is crucial for fostering a positive school culture. John Saphier, John D'Auria, Matt King, and Roland Barth have extensively highlighted the role of emotionally intelligent leaders in shaping the educational environment while describing the underpinnings of school culture (Barth, 2002; D'Auria; 2021; Saphier, 2019). Saphier's (2019) works emphasized that leaders with high EI are adept at recognizing and managing their own emotions and those of others, which creates a supportive atmosphere where students and staff feel valued and understood. This emotional attunement enables leaders to

navigate the complexities of school dynamics to promote a culture of trust and collaboration through the three strands of school leadership that develop culture (Saphier et al., 2006).

Roland Barth (2002) underscored the significance of school culture as a determinant of academic and social outcomes. He argued that leaders who exhibit high EI can effectively influence the school's cultural norms, values, and practices (Barth, 2002). These leaders model empathetic and ethical behavior while encouraging similar conduct among teachers and students. Leaders can mitigate conflicts, enhance communication, and build stronger relationships within the school community to enhance overall school effectiveness when they foster a culture that values EI.

The interplay between EI and effective leadership is evident in decision-making processes. Leaders with high EI are better equipped to handle stressful situations and make informed decisions that consider the emotional well-being of their staff, even while centering on the institutional main goal of positive student outcomes (Saphier, 2019). This EI capability is essential in times of crisis or change, where emotionally intelligent leaders can provide stability and reassurance to help the school community navigate uncertainties with resilience. Like all humans, teachers and other school faculty cannot fully leave their personal lives outside the school building. Hence, the EI abilities of leaders to balance a community of psychological safety with accountability is important (D'Auria, 2021). The ability of principals to maintain composure and demonstrate empathy can significantly impact the morale and motivation of teachers and students through the purposeful creation of a positive school culture.

Furthermore, emotionally intelligent leaders play a pivotal role in professional development and teacher retention. Barth (2002) highlighted that such leaders are skilled at recognizing the needs and potential of their staff and offering support and opportunities for

growth. Leaders can mitigate teacher burnout and turnover, which are fueled by feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and a lack of support, by fostering a nurturing and affirming environment (Mahwinney et al., 2021; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2011; McKee, 2018). The investment in EI training for school leaders, therefore, can yield substantial benefits in terms of staff satisfaction and retention while, ultimately, contributing to a more stable and productive school culture.

School leaders' EI is a critical factor in shaping a positive school culture. Leaders who possess and demonstrate high levels of EI can significantly influence the emotional climate of their schools. They foster environments of trust, empathy, and collaboration, which are essential for teacher retention, the development of pedagogical practices, and student outcomes.

Characteristics of Effective School Leadership

Effective school leadership is critical in shaping school culture and climate, which in turn has a significant impact on teacher retention and the overall success of educational institutions. Hoy and Miskel (2010) categorized leadership into three primary types: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Each leadership type has distinct characteristics and implications for school culture and teacher performance.

1. Transformational leadership places the development of individuals and human values at the forefront. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate staff by fostering a shared vision and encouraging professional and personal growth. This leadership type significantly enhances the perception of the school image among teachers by positively contributing to the adoption of the institution's goals and the realization of student achievements (Kalkan et al., 2020). Transformational leaders exhibit effective leadership behaviors that support the opinions of educational stakeholders and foster

- a commitment to the school's mission (Shivers, 1999). Furthermore, transformational leadership has a substantial effect on employee performance and organizational functionality, so it outperforms transactional leadership in contributing to the effectiveness of educational institutions (Piccola & Colquitt, 2006; Pillai et al., 1999).
2. Transactional leadership, in contrast, operates on a system of conditional rewards and management by expectancy. While this approach can be effective in achieving short-term goals and maintaining order, it often lacks the inspirational and developmental focus necessary for long-term commitment and satisfaction among teachers. Transactional leaders manage by establishing clear roles and expectations while providing rewards and punishments based on performance outcomes. Although this leadership type can ensure compliance and performance to a certain extent, it does not foster the same level of intrinsic motivation and professional growth as transformational leadership.
 3. Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by an absence of active leadership, where leaders take a hands-off approach that leaves employees to fend for themselves. This lack of guidance and support can lead to disorganization, low morale, and a decline in teacher efficacy and retention. In such environments, the absence of strong leadership can result in a lack of direction and accountability that negatively impacts the overall school culture and effectiveness.

Research by Kalkan et al. (2020) highlighted that the strongest aspects of school culture emerging from their study were cooperation and trust. A robust school culture, demarcated by these aspects, significantly improves efficacy and productivity in educational institutions. Cooperation and trust are fostered through strong leadership and relationship building. An

administrator, through transformational leadership, plays a crucial role in constructing a sustainable and effective structure within the educational institute. Transformational leaders build trust and cooperation by engaging with staff, understanding their needs, and supporting their professional development, thereby creating a positive and collaborative school environment.

A summary of the extant literature shows that effective school leadership, particularly transformational leadership, is essential for building a strong school culture and climate characterized by cooperation and trust. This culture enhances the perception of the school among its teachers while contributing to their retention by creating an environment where they feel valued, supported, and motivated. Strong leadership, therefore, is a key determinant in the success and sustainability of educational institutions.

School Culture and Climate

School culture and climate are integral to understanding the overall environment and functioning of educational institutions. School culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions and behaviors within a school community (Sergiovanni, 1994). It encompasses the norms and expectations that guide how teachers, students, and staff relate to each other and their work. “A positive school culture fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect,” which, in turn, “promotes a cohesive and supportive community” (Deal & Peterson, 2016, p. 89). Moreover, Deal and Peterson (2016) emphasized that “a strong school culture is characterized by a shared vision, collaboration among staff, and a focus on student success” (p. 112). This culture is built over time through consistent practices, traditions, and the collective commitment of the school community.

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life as experienced by its members. It encompasses various dimensions, including the physical environment, social relationships among students and staff, and the emotional well-being of individuals within the school. “A school’s climate is the heart and soul of the school” and can significantly influence how students and staff feel about their daily experiences (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 181). A positive school climate is associated with higher levels of student engagement, academic achievement, and staff job satisfaction. According to Thapa et al. (2013), “positive school climates are characterized by strong relationships, a sense of safety, and a supportive learning environment” (p. 358). Additionally, research has shown that “when students perceive their school climate to be positive, they are more likely to be engaged in learning and less likely to engage in risky behaviors” (Thapa et al., 2013, p. 359). Similarly, staff members working in a positive climate have reported higher job satisfaction and are more committed to their roles (Cohen et al., 2009). Cohen et al. (2009) emphasized that multiple factors, including the quality of leadership, communication patterns, and the presence of a safe and inclusive environment, shape school climate. An effective school climate promotes psychological safety, where individuals feel secure enough to express themselves without fear of negative consequences, which enhances overall school performance and teacher retention.

According to Saphier et al. (2006), strong cultures produce teachers who constantly improve their practice. Therefore, the present qualitative case study investigated the school culture of a specific school site to understand how it and the school climate created through leadership decisions correlated with the type of commitment indicated by the teachers. However, understanding the concepts of culture and climate is necessary to lay a foundation.

Implications for Teacher Retention

As mentioned earlier, school culture and climate play fundamental roles in the shaping of the environment and the functioning of educational institutions. Positive school culture and climate are associated with higher levels of student engagement, academic achievement, and staff job satisfaction that promote a supportive learning environment (Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013; Wang & Degol, 2016; Yli-Panula et al., 2022). Effective school leadership is crucial for fostering a positive climate, enhancing psychological safety, and improving overall school performance (Barth, 2002).

The connection between school culture and teacher commitment underscores its significance for teacher retention. Supportive school environments that value collaboration and shared decision-making contribute to teacher satisfaction and retention (D'Auria, 2021). Principals play a pivotal role in shaping school culture by creating trusting and motivating work environments that foster teacher engagement and commitment (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Positive school cultures facilitate professional growth and development, which are crucial for retaining teachers and ensuring positive student outcomes (Louis & Lee, 2015; Saphier, 2019). Moreover, meaningful student-teacher relationships within a positive school culture reinforce teachers' sense of purpose and contribute to their decision to remain in the profession (Hargreaves, 2000).

Influences on School Culture

Fixed, structural, and malleable characteristics influence school culture (Viviano et al., 2021). Fixed factors (e.g., student demographics and staff commutes) are beyond the school's control, while structural factors (e.g., salary and benefits) are system-built but outside of building-level control. Malleable factors directly influenced by school leaders, like principals,

encompass class sizes, administrative support, professional development, and disciplinary policies (Viviano et al., 2021). Notably, malleable factors significantly influence teacher considerations for employment (Viviano et al., 2021).

While salary remains a top consideration for teachers contemplating leaving the profession, a lack of professional prestige and administrative support also ranked high on the list (Frustration in the Schools, 2019; Wynn et al., 2007). School-level principals may not have the ability to influence salary. However, other factors (e.g., prestige and administrative support) are within their control to influence by manipulating the school culture. Recognizing and addressing these factors, coupled with fostering a supportive school culture and effective leadership, are crucial for improving teacher retention and ensuring the stability and success of educational institutions.

The underpinning theory for addressing teacher retention lies in understanding the considerable influence school leaders wield over organizational teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017). Satisfaction with principal leadership is strongly correlated with teachers' decisions to stay in the profession (Loewus, 2021; Wynn et al., 2007).

Principals' decisions directly impact school culture, and these decisions are pivotal for retaining teachers (Viviano et al., 2021). Effective leadership fosters a supportive environment by reducing feelings of micromanagement and burnout while increasing teacher retention (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Quinn & Carl, 2015). Teachers value respect and professional agency, which influence their decisions to remain in their current positions (Frustration in the Schools, 2019; Viviano et al., 2021). Additionally, ongoing mentoring and professional learning, coupled with quality leadership, positively impact teacher satisfaction and retention (Frustration in the Schools, 2019; Wynn et al., 2007).

Summary: Emphasizing Continuous Improvement and Educational Equity in School Leadership

In summary, the role of principals in shaping school culture and climate is pivotal to fostering an environment conducive to continuous improvement and educational equity. Effective leadership is not just about maintaining the status quo; it requires a commitment to ongoing development and the creation of a supportive learning environment that prioritizes the well-being of all students and staff. As Marzano et al. (2018) emphasized, “leading a high-reliability school involves a relentless focus on continuous improvement and the establishment of a safe and supportive environment” (p. 35). This commitment to improvement is closely linked to the ability of school leaders to foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared vision, which is essential for both teacher retention and student success.

Moreover, educational equity must be at the forefront of school leadership. Noguera (2020) argued that “addressing structural inequities within schools is crucial for creating a truly inclusive environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed” (p. 42). Principals who actively work towards promoting equity can significantly impact the school’s culture, making it more inclusive and supportive for all members of the school community. By prioritizing equity, school leaders can ensure that all teachers feel valued and supported, which is essential for improving teacher retention. As Noguera and Noguera (2018) noted, “mutual accountability between school leaders and teachers is key to addressing disparities and promoting fairness within the school community” (p. 117).

Finally, the organizational image of a school is intricately linked to the leadership style of the principal. A positive organizational image, reinforced by a strong and equitable school culture, not only attracts high-quality teachers but also fosters greater community support.

According to Day et al. (2016), schools led by visionary principals who emphasize continuous improvement and equity “saw a 15% increase in parent and community engagement, further enhancing the school’s reputation and success” (p. 258). This reinforces the idea that effective school leadership is central to creating a stable, successful, and equitable educational environment.

School culture and climate are integral to understanding the overall environment and functioning of educational institutions. School culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions and behaviors within a school community. It encompasses the norms and expectations that guide how teachers, students, and staff relate to each other and their work. A positive school culture fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect that promotes a cohesive and supportive community. According to Deal and Peterson (2016), a strong school culture should include a vision that is shared by all parties, as well as staff cooperation and collaboration and a clear emphasis on helping students succeed. This culture is built over time through consistent practices, traditions, and the collective commitment of the school community.

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life as experienced by its members. It includes aspects such as the physical environment, the social relationships among students and staff, and the emotional well-being of individuals within the school. A positive school climate is associated with higher levels of student engagement, academic achievement, and staff job satisfaction. Cohen et al. (2009) enumerated many factors that included leadership quality, communication patterns, and a safe and inclusive environment to shape school climate. An effective school climate promotes psychological safety, where individuals feel secure enough to express themselves without fear of negative consequences, thus enhancing overall school performance and teacher retention.

According to Saphier et al. (2006), strong cultures produce teachers who constantly improve their practice. Therefore, this qualitative case study investigated the school culture of a specific school site to understand how it and the school climate created through leadership decisions correlated with the type of commitment indicated by the teachers. However, understanding the concepts of culture and climate is necessary to lay a foundation.

Teacher and Staff Retention

Retaining a skilled and motivated workforce is essential for fostering a positive school culture and climate. Research on the retention of school staff has predominantly focused on teachers and principals while leaving a gap in the literature recording for other critical school personnel. However, well-documented research has highlighted the impact of teacher retention on student achievement and school stability (Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfelt et al., 2013).

Teachers who feel valued and supported are more likely to engage collaboratively with their colleagues and contribute to a professional learning community that emphasizes continuous improvement and innovation (Johnson et al., 2012). This collaborative environment enhances teacher morale and job satisfaction while positively impacting student achievement, as teachers are more effective when they work in supportive, collegial settings (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Effective school leadership plays a crucial role in this dynamic, as leaders who prioritize teacher well-being and professional development can significantly reduce turnover rates and improve overall school performance (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Although limited literature exists on other school titles, we can generalize theories about how school culture and climate retain teachers to other roles within the school community.

Understanding School Culture and Climate: Implications for Teacher Retention

School culture and climate play fundamental roles in the shaping of the environment and the functioning of educational institutions. Positive school culture and climate are associated with higher levels of student engagement, academic achievement, and staff job satisfaction that promote a supportive learning environment (Yli-Panula et al., 2022). Effective school leadership is crucial for fostering a positive climate, enhancing psychological safety, and improving overall school performance (Barth, 2002).

The correlation between school culture and teacher commitment underscores its significance for teacher retention. Positive school cultures facilitate professional growth and development, which are crucial for retaining teachers and ensuring positive student outcomes (Louis & Lee, 2015; Saphier, 2019). Supportive school environments that value collaboration and shared decision-making contribute to teacher satisfaction and retention (D'Auria, 2021). Principals play a pivotal role in shaping school culture by creating trusting and motivating work environments that foster teacher engagement and commitment (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Moreover, meaningful student-teacher relationships within a positive school culture reinforce teachers' sense of purpose and contribute to their decision to remain in the profession (Hargreaves, 2000).

However, sustaining a positive school culture and climate requires addressing multifaceted challenges. Teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by working conditions, professional development opportunities, and leadership support (Johnson et al., 2012). Thus, schools must prioritize ongoing professional development and mentorship programs to empower teachers and enhance their skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Effective communication and collaborative decision-making processes foster a sense of ownership among teachers that

increases their commitment to the school community (Moolenaar et al., 2010). Additionally, supportive leadership that recognizes and celebrates teachers' achievements contributes to building morale and job satisfaction (Boyd et al., 2011).

Creating and maintaining a positive school culture and climate is essential for teacher retention and student success. By fostering supportive environments that prioritize professional growth and collaboration, schools can empower teachers and enhance their commitment to the profession. Effective leadership, ongoing professional development, and meaningful student-teacher relationships are key elements in sustaining a positive school culture that promotes teacher retention and overall educational excellence.

Teacher Shortages

For years, U.S. schools have cited a greater demand for qualified teachers than the supply (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001, 2002; Lankford et al., 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2017; Wallington et al., 2010). However, recent trends have shown that fewer people are choosing to enter education (Billingsley et al., 2019; Pawlewicz, 2021; Ritter, 2022; Stucher et al., 2019). Understanding what compels teachers to stay in the profession is the first step to developing strategies to retain them long term. Individuals who choose to become teachers are typically highly community service-minded and altruistic (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017). They enter the profession without expectations of financial wealth.

Adoptaclassroom.org surveyed a group of teachers and reported that in the 2020-2021 school year, on average, teachers spent \$750.00 of their money on classroom supplies (Hruza, 2021). In public schools and those with high poverty, teachers tend to spend more than their private school or low-poverty counterparts (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017). Hence, while salary is one reason that teachers leave the profession, it is not the sole reason. The 2019 PDK poll

“Frustration in Schools” supported this conclusion: It indicated that while teacher salary is a major contributor to why teachers leave the profession, respect from the community, discipline, and stress also factor largely into such decisions.

Multiple factors beyond salary contribute to the chronic stress and burnout teachers feel in the profession (Camacho et al., 2021). Demands on educators and schools are increasing, such as the need to meet higher standards and improve student performance. Nevertheless, the lack of a corresponding increase in resources contributes significantly to teacher burnout levels. An example is the area of discipline. A teacher may work diligently to design instruction to meet the needs of each student in the classroom. However, the level of individualization needed for some students to improve comes from the limited amount of time and resources available in an individual classroom. As administrators increase job demands without adequate resources, teachers feel demoralized and are more likely to leave the profession (Camacho et al., 2021; Noonoo, 2019; Santoro, 2020).

Principals also express concern over retaining teachers in their schools and the impact that has on their learning communities (Brown & Wynn, 2009). In a qualitative study, Brown and Wynn (2009) interviewed 12 principals from schools with relatively low teacher attrition rates compared to schools with similar demographics to understand how these schools retained their staff. One of the big takeaways concerned providing a supportive and respectful climate. Notably, the principals spoke about their desire to create a positive environment by establishing a strong community through honesty and relationship-building to fulfill the desire to feel respected. The findings echoed those of a later PDK poll (2019) that highlighted that teachers want to be respected.

Various factors (e.g., job satisfaction, working conditions, professional development opportunities, and school culture) influence teacher career length (i.e., the duration a teacher remains in the profession). Research has indicated that the average career length for teachers in the United States is shorter than in many other professions, with a significant number leaving within the first 5 years (Ingersoll, 2001). This trend raises concerns about the stability and continuity of teaching staff, which are crucial for maintaining educational quality and fostering student success. Factors contributing to shorter career lengths include high stress levels, a lack of support, and insufficient compensation.

One major factor affecting teacher career length is job satisfaction. Teachers who find their work rewarding and feel valued are more likely to remain in the profession (American Federation of Teachers, 2022; Ladd, 2011). Job satisfaction can be enhanced by supportive school leadership, opportunities for professional growth, and a positive school culture (Johnson et al., 2012). Conversely, teachers who experience chronic stress, burnout, and a lack of professional respect are more likely to leave the profession prematurely. Hence, addressing these issues through systemic changes in school policies and practices is essential for increasing teacher retention and career longevity.

Working conditions also play a critical role in determining teacher career length. Schools with adequate resources, manageable class sizes, and a safe and supportive environment tend to retain teachers longer (Simon & Johnson, 2015). In contrast, schools with high levels of student misbehavior, insufficient materials, and poor administrative support face higher turnover rates. Improving working conditions by addressing these challenges can help to extend teachers' careers and ensure that experienced educators remain in the classroom to the benefit of the students due to their teachers' accumulated expertise and stability.

Professional development opportunities are another significant factor influencing teacher career length. Teachers who have access to ongoing training and development are more likely to feel competent and confident in their roles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Effective professional development that is relevant, collaborative, and embedded in daily practice can enhance teachers' skills and knowledge, which makes them more effective and satisfied with their jobs. Schools that invest in their teachers' continuous learning improve educational outcomes and foster a more committed and stable teaching workforce.

Finally, school culture and leadership significantly impact teacher career length. Schools with a positive culture characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared goals are more likely to retain their teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Transformational leadership, in particular, has been shown to increase teacher commitment and reduce turnover by promoting a sense of purpose and community (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Leaders who respond to teachers' needs, provide recognition, and involve staff in decision-making processes contribute to a supportive environment that encourages teachers to remain in the profession for longer periods.

Factors That Affect Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition is the largest factor contributing to annual teacher demand (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll, 2002; Stucher et al., 2019). Attrition accounts for nearly 90% of the annual teacher demand (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Consequently, the rate at which teachers leave exceeds the rate of new teachers entering college preparation programs and those reentering the profession. Reducing attrition by even a modest 4% would reduce vacancies in the field by approximately 130,000 teachers annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Stucher et al., 2019). While this reduction would not close the supply gap completely, it would allow for more school leaders to be more selective in hiring,

thereby improving student outcomes. Such a change would further facilitate an understanding of how school leaders, such as principals, can actively create an organizational culture that supports and retains their teaching staff.

The data have shown that a lack of trained teachers is not the cause of teaching shortages; rather, the issue is the inability to keep those teachers in the profession (Ingersoll, 2001, 2002; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Teachers can be categorized into three groups: stayers (those who remain at their current school); movers (those who continue teaching but leave schools); and leavers (those who exit the profession; Boyd et al., 2008; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Kalogrides et al., 2013; Lankford et al., 2002; Luschei & Jeong, 2018).

The pool of teachers categorized as movers or leavers is estimated nationally to be approximately 16% annually. This overall turnover rate comprises an estimated 8% of teachers leaving the profession each year, with another 8% moving to different schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). This exodus of teachers in the leaver category includes those who leave voluntarily, are terminated, or retire. Thus, these reasons are crucial to understand.

Notably, of the 8% who leave, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) found that 82% cited reasons other than retirement that included a range of influencing factors like low salary, respect, and teacher preparation and mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Frustration in the Schools, 2019; Stucher et al., 2019). Low salaries were the most common factor of the three.

Because the U.S. education system is decentralized with regard to funding, poorer neighborhoods tend to pay teachers less than communities where more affluent families live. This disparity is compounded by systemic issues such as “white flight” to the suburbs, leading to the concentration of poverty in communities of color. Consequently, schools serving

marginalized communities have fewer qualified teachers (Scott & Holmes, 2016; Stucher et al., 2019).

Title 1 schools, such as those in District 7, traditionally enroll non-White and low-income populations. For example, in the 2021-2022 school year, District 7 enrolled 14,242 students in Grades K-12, 94% of whom qualified as economically disadvantaged (13,387 students; New York State Department of Education, 2021). Moreover, every public school in District 7 qualified as a Title 1 school, with the federal government describing that threshold as having a population of more than 40% of the students qualifying as economically disadvantaged.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) additionally found that Title 1 schools' turnover rate is nearly 50% higher than their non-Title 1 counterparts. These Title 1 schools tend to hire more alternatively certified teachers, so the turnover of experienced teachers is at a rate nearly 80% higher than in schools not classified as Title 1. The Learning Policy Institute suggested that in 2018, the U.S. shortfall of teachers was approximately 112,000, with many of those positions in high-needs urban schools (Walker et al., 2019; Yan et al., 2019).

As cited in the prior section, the lack of teacher availability has created the need for alternative pathways to develop a workforce large enough to service the number of students in U.S. public schools. Programs such as Teach for America and the New York Teaching Fellows have emerged in response to offer alternative certification to teachers for a brief tenure in their schools. In their 2023 paper for the Learning Policy Institute, Margurite Franco and Susan Kemper Patrick described a teacher who did not meet the state's minimum licensing requirements for the position as "underqualified." Thus, teachers entering the profession through the reduced credential pathways, as described above, would be considered part of the underqualified teachers described in Franco and Kemper Patrick's (2023) work. According to

their research, approximately 286,290 underqualified teachers are employed in the United States (Franco & Kemper Patrick, 2023). These estimates were derived from the published data from the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. Their research specifically found that in the 2021-2022 school year, of the 215,092 teachers in New York State, 298 were underqualified for their current teaching assignments.

Since alternative-certified teachers have an exit rate much higher than their traditionally trained peers, the recruitment effort concerning these teachers becomes an annual cycle. School districts continually divert scarce funds away from teacher professional learning and classrooms to recruit new teachers to fill the projected staffing gaps. For instance, a Texas study found that schools that did not retain teachers spent significantly higher amounts on teacher recruitment than on professional learning (Watlington et al., 2010). Thus, this continual turnover impacts the quality of instruction students receive in the classroom, as it takes an estimated 4 to 5 years before a teacher's experience level no longer adversely impacts student outcomes.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) found that teachers working in schools with 25% or more students of color were more likely to change schools or leave the profession than their counterparts. While low salaries are often cited as a major reason teachers leave, another less-researched variable may be how teachers are hired for a particular school community. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (Characteristics... [COE], 2021), in the United States, 80% of teachers identify as White, compared to only 46% of the student population identifying as White. This dynamic illuminates why teachers who are selected from outside of the school community are less likely to stay for the long term (Wronowski, 2018). This tendency may be because these teachers enter the classroom less prepared to understand the cultural values of the communities they support.

Cultural competency is a critical factor that positively impacts student achievement (Kalogrides et al., 2013; Lankford et al., 2002; Mawhinney et al., 2021). Teachers recruited from outside the community must simultaneously learn the community culture, identify community resources, and learn how to build their professional teaching skills. Thus, teachers who focus on creating cultural competency have less time to develop the other professional skills needed for success.

This development of teacher identity is especially pervasive among new teachers, as identity-making is a part of the career of an early teacher (Giroux et al., 1988; Mawhinney & Rhinke, 2020; Thomas & Mockler, 2018). Understanding the culture of a school takes time. Teachers need to learn where they fit in the dominant and subordinate school culture (Giroux et al., 1988). Their process includes understanding the interplay of the community, how they fit in with their colleagues, and the best way to disclose political and personal stances in discussions (Journell, 2016). According to Giroux et al. (1988), the development of a strong teacher identity and connection to the community should increase the likelihood that a teacher will remain in the school community.

Teaching and teacher identities can never be fully distinguished (Lia & Jin, 2021). Every day, teachers make decisions on what, how, and whom to teach that their values deeply influence (Lampert, 1985). These personal values are what motivate instructional decisions on when to go deep into a topic and when to omit a topic completely (Giroux, 1988). How teachers construct and disclose their identities to students can significantly affect student learning (Journell, 2016). Moreover, according to Mawhinney and Rinke (2020), solidifying one's teaching identity can be a factor that helps to reduce burnout in teaching.

If principals and other school-level leaders want to maximize the return on their investment, they must learn what structures in their school buildings and strategies to leverage to retain the teachers they recruit. This knowledge is especially important for teachers who are alternatively certified since additional time and money must be invested early on. This aspect is one area where this study may be able to assist principals in identifying organizational structures in their schools that support teacher retention by actively working to develop and shape a positive teacher identity.

Impact of Teacher Retention on Student Outcomes

Teacher retention has emerged as a critical issue in education that has directly influenced the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Ingersoll, 2003; Stucher et al., 2019). High teacher turnover disrupts educational continuity, affects student achievement, and poses financial burdens on school systems. Conversely, retaining experienced teachers is associated with improved student outcomes. This section explored the mechanisms through which principal leadership creates a culture that positively affects teacher retention. Understanding this is important, given the link between student academic performance to teacher retention that a principal can influence through their explicit design of school culture and climate.

Student Academic Achievement

High teacher turnover negatively impacts student academic performance, particularly in schools serving low-income populations, where it leads to a 1.3-point decrease in math test scores (Atteberry et al., 2017; Blizard, 2021; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Papay et al., 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Wallington et al., 2010). Continuity of instruction, essential for effective teaching, is disrupted by high turnover, as teachers need time to refine their strategies and understand the curriculum to meet students'

diverse needs (D'Auria, n.d.; Johnson et al., 2012). Veteran teachers, more adept at curriculum delivery and classroom management, contribute to better student engagement and learning outcomes, which is a benefit lost with frequent teacher changes.

Moreover, teacher retention enhances relationship-building, which fosters strong, trusting connections with the school community that boost student motivation and engagement (Hughes, 2012). Stability in the school environment provides the psychological safety for students necessary to improve their focus on academics while contributing to their socioemotional development. Long-term teacher relationships support emotional stability and social skills, which are crucial for students facing adverse conditions (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Additionally, schools with high teacher retention have fewer disruptions and more consistent instructional practices, which lead to improved academic performance and higher student satisfaction (Henry et al., 2016).

Socioeconomic Development

One of the economic challenges that school leaders face is delivering high-quality professional learning. Consistent and long-term professional learning has proven to be the most effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Teachers who remain in their positions longer are more likely to engage in continuous professional development that further improves their instructional skills and effectiveness. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) highlighted that experienced teachers have more opportunities to participate in professional learning communities and training programs, which enhances their teaching practices and, consequently, student outcomes. Retention of the teaching force improves the overall ability of a school community's accumulation of professional expertise among retained teachers, which leads to higher quality instruction and better student performance.

Additionally, high retention rates allow teachers to act as mentors and transmit culture and pedagogical knowledge to new members of the community. Experienced teachers serve as mentors and role models for students and less-experienced teachers. This mentorship is crucial in creating a supportive and productive learning environment. Guarino et al. (2006) argued that veteran teachers provide valuable guidance and support to new teachers that help them develop effective teaching practices. This mentorship improves the quality of teaching across the board and contributes to a more stable and cohesive school community that enhances student outcomes.

Why Teachers Stay

To reduce teacher turnover, school leaders must understand students' needs and what it takes to create an environment where faculty remain committed to the school's long-term mission. Teaching is a highly emotional profession, so it results in high levels of burnout (Maslach, 2003, 2018; McCarthy et al., 2016). By understanding the three types of commitment, burnout and the symptoms of burnout, and how they relate to culture building, this research will support school leaders in their ability to use their emotional intelligence to create a school culture that reduces teacher turnover.

Commitment Theory

In this study, I define commitment using Howard Becker's 1960 analysis of the concept of commitment as a foundation. Becker's (1960) work described commitment as the mechanisms that create an environment that fosters consistent human behavior. Commitment can be explored by examining the "side bets" an individual makes and the value these bets have for the individual and the larger organization. These "side bets" are essentially wagers that consistent behavior will either support or contradict personal values.

A wide body of work shows that more committed employees are also more productive (Linggiello et al., 2020; Mowday et al., 1979). This relationship can be demonstrated through the measures and applications of burnout in employees, where increased cynicism toward an employer corresponds with reduced productivity (Bakioğlu & Kiraz, 2019; Maslach et al., 2001). This phenomenon is due to cynicism being one of the indicators of increased burnout, as discussed previously. Accordingly, how leaders create structures to improve commitment correlates with the positive or negative emotions teachers feel toward their supervisors (Zheng et al., 2022).

Commitment to an organization shares similarities with commitment to an occupation (Meyer et al., 1993). In NYC, this parallel can be seen through the use of Open Market Transfers. These transfers allow teachers and other employees committed to their occupation to transfer or move between school communities without affecting their salary or tenure. With this study, I aimed to understand not just a commitment to the field of education but also a commitment to a specific organizational community. Understanding why some teachers stay while other teachers move within the larger NYCPS system requires a deeper understanding of the three types of commitment and the distinct characteristics of each.

In 1984, John Meyer and Natalie Allen revolutionized how organizations view commitment by defining affective versus continuance commitment. When updating their work, they added a third type of commitment: normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984). In those seminal works and the subsequent work that built on these definitions, the understanding of what leaders can do as part of the RLT framework of leadership is understood by listening to what qualities teachers are looking for in their schools.

Much of teachers' work in the United States occurs in a system that relies on their altruism, which requires them to work on a volunteer basis for planning and grading papers that negatively contribute financially to their working conditions. These altruistic contributions may be through teachers' personal funds or by putting time and effort into soliciting external donations. This extra work requires an alignment between their values and the school's. Viewing this through the lens of RLT requires that principals examine the structures they have fostered in their school buildings to encourage such commitment to the organization (Holmes et al., 2021).

Affective Commitment. Multiple studies have cited that the most effective form of commitment to an organization is affective attachment (Haque et al., 2019). Meyer and Allen (1984) defined this type of commitment as an employee's personal goals and ethics aligning with those of the organization and the organization's leader. Employees who exhibit affective commitment stay with the organization because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Meyer et al., 1993). Meyer and Allen's work described affective attachment commitment as the most likely to impact employee performance positively since it reflects employees' desire to stay and their alignment with the organization's values.

Continuance Commitment. In comparison, Meyer and Allen (1984) defined continuity commitment as more economic in nature. Employees stay because the perceived cost of leaving outweighs the perceived cost of staying, so employees need to stay but may not want to. Notably, continuance commitment may have either no impact or a negative impact on employee performance (Cayak, 2021; Gomes et al., 2021; Haque et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 1993).

Normative Commitment. Meyers and Allen (1991) updated their framework to include a third commitment type: normative commitment. This commitment focuses on a person or group as opposed to the organization as a whole. In this case, teachers may choose to work

for a specific administrator or stay because they feel connected to a co-teacher. Normative commitment has a lower level of effectiveness than affective commitment attachment because the commitment to the organization is reduced if the person or group to which the teacher is attached leaves.

I also suggest adding a fourth level of attachment, which I refer to as a “loss of commitment.” This fourth level addresses those employees who are still committed to education, and even the NYCPS, but no longer feel committed to their specific school communities. They exhibit occupational commitment but not organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). This distinction is a valuable variable since it allows for the identification of when a teacher is no longer committed to the school community but is still committed to the profession. In this study, all participating teachers continued their commitment to education through June 2023.

Burnout

Successful teachers are emotionally invested in the success of their students and school communities (Mahwhinney & Rinke, 2020; Wronowski, 2018). Thus, successful teacher identities approach teaching from a place of joy and love (Losano et al., 2018). Nonetheless, as is the case with other employees of the human services industry, there are limits on the emotional capital individuals can invest in their work (Maslach et al., 2001; Van Dierendonck, 2011). When they reach the limits of that capital, they start to experience what Herbert Freudenberger (1974) coined as “burnout.”

The concept of job burnout has become widely accepted in fields that rely heavily on empathy and relationship-building, such as education, healthcare, and first-responder personnel (Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001). In these three fields, success is often reliant on employees investing their emotional capital in their work. However, emotional capital is not an infinite

resource. Factors from inside the job, such as demands, interpersonal connections, and deadlines, can affect the amount of emotional capital available, as well as outside factors, such as family responsibilities, outside social connections, and health-related stress (Abdelmoteleb, 2019; Piotrowski, & Jurek, 2019).

Research has indicated that a depletion of an individual's emotional capital leads to the development of burnout symptoms (Chang, 2009; Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001; Piotrowski & Jurek, 2019; Van Droogenbroek et al., 2021). These symptoms can be categorized into three types:

1. **Exhaustion:** The first symptom is often the easiest to identify: exhaustion. When one's emotional capital depletes, it is common to seek a way to rest and replenish it. For example, teachers may often feel the effects as the year ends and summer is quickly approaching. Thus, they may anticipate the need to take some time off, reconnect with friends and relatives, or just shut down and sleep in on a weekday to recover from the emotional depletion of investing in their students and school communities throughout the school year (Maslach, 2003).
2. **Cynicism:** The second symptom of burnout, cynicism, is often correlated to the level of exhaustion one feels on the job. Cynicism is specifically defined as an adverse attitude toward organizational authority (Bakioğlu & Kiraz, 2019). As exhaustion levels increase and emotional capital becomes increasingly constrained, the evaluation of one's supervisor may become increasingly negative. Thus, people tend to feel less successful at the job and have trouble highlighting positive moments and recognizing goodwill in their supervisors. In many studies, cynicism is expressed as depersonalization (Chang, 2009; Maslach, 2003), where individuals distance

themselves emotionally to protect themselves from perceived negative attention related to their work.

3. **Reduced Productivity:** The third symptom of burnout, reduced productivity, may develop alongside or independently of the other two (Maslach et al., 2001). As exhaustion builds and cynicism develops around one's work, a possible correlation exists to a reduced investment in work. Metaphorically speaking, the gas runs out of the tank, which leads to a slowdown or cessation of the work.

Research on teacher burnout has shown the need for a balance to prevent it and retain teachers. How teachers handle stress impacts how deeply they feel the symptoms of burnout in their lives (Zaretsky & Katz, 2019). Teachers must feel cognitively engaged enough to invest emotionally in their work while having enough support to avoid excessive emotional strain. Groups without sufficient emotional support tend to feel less appreciated and may easily become cynical about their work (Çaglar, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2016). Conversely, teachers who feel more emotionally supported are more likely to perform above their colleagues and show a slower rate of burnout than those who feel less supported.

When the emotional investment becomes too great, the cynicism of the teacher manifests, decreasing productivity. Consequently, the focus on the influence of school-level leaders is imperative. School-level leaders can create communities that address the needs of their faculty, which may include actions such as fostering shared networks, offering relevant professional development, including identity-building activities (Mawhinney et al., 2021), and nurturing communities that value collaboration among the staff (Billingsley et al., 2019; Villavicencio et al., 2021).

Teachers may be viewed from the outside as gregarious because of their student interactions. However, during the workday, teachers tend to be highly isolated (Chang, 2009; Villavicencio et al., 2021). In different work settings, adult interactions around the water cooler serve as welcome breaks to help develop social connections. In contrast, the isolation that teachers face can increase exhaustion and cynicism levels and promote depersonalization at work (Chang, 2009). Furthermore, this feeling of isolation can be exacerbated if teachers are also members of marginalized communities at the school since they may already feel isolated due to microaggressions and other adversity unwitnessed by other community members (Mawhinney et al., 2021).

Maslach's (2001) work led the way in quantifying how teachers feel. Relationships between colleagues, as well as relationship-building between teachers and students, strongly impact how teachers view their success (Jacob et al., 2017). A positive view of success may help to reduce the cynicism that teachers feel in their classrooms. Indeed, building relationships at work is key to retention and reducing feelings of cynicism and burnout in other fields (McKee, 2018). Notably, experienced teachers tend to feel less burnout (Çaglar, 2011), possibly because as they become more seasoned, their expectations become more realistic, which reduces their stress levels. If teachers are less likely to feel symptoms of burnout, they may be more easily retained in the profession. Consequently, less experienced teachers may require more support in developing these mechanisms to prevent burnout and improve retention.

Conclusion

This literature review explored the importance of school leadership, teacher and staff retention, and school climate and culture in shaping the commitment of teachers and staff to their schools. A positive school culture is essential for enhancing teacher satisfaction, retention, and

student achievement. Effective school leadership influences the professional experiences of teachers and the academic outcomes of students. Principals' actions can significantly influence the creation of a positive and supportive environment that fosters collaboration, communication, and a shared vision among staff members.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I conducted this study to understand better how enacted leadership practices affect staff commitment within the context of NYC school-level administration (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Pless & Maak, 2011). Recognizing that administrators in such a system have little impact on fixed and structural variables, I focused on exploring how a school leader with higher-than-average retention used her influence to build and retain staff (Viano et al., 2021). I did this by first interviewing two school principals so they could indicate how they actively created their school's culture through responsible leadership tenets. Subsequently, I interviewed current staff members to ascertain whether those leadership activities surfaced as reasons why the staff decided to remain at the school. By gaining insight into how the actions of the leader were perceived by staff members and how they influenced their feelings of commitment to the organization, I hoped to better refine my practices as a union leader to guide school and district decisions and negotiations around teacher working conditions, thereby improving teacher retention in District 7 and, with it, student outcomes.

This chapter outlines the methodology I employed to investigate the leadership and organizational culture of School B in the context of teacher retention. The research design consisted of qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews with teachers, other staff, and the principal, as well as a focus group composed of selected stakeholders. Additionally, I triangulated the validity of the collected data by analyzing artifacts such as the school handbook, quality review, and official school survey. The chosen approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the school's culture and climate, providing valuable insights from multiple perspectives.

Research Design

I chose a qualitative case study design to conduct an in-depth examination of the organizational culture, that is, the school culture and climate, through the lived experiences of the school site staff. Case studies are particularly suitable for understanding complex phenomena such as organizational culture, allowing researchers to explore the social dynamics and interactions within a specific setting (Yin, 2018).

School Demographics

The study site was a part of my current portfolio of schools. Mott Haven, located in the South Bronx, is a neighborhood marked by significant social, economic, and racial diversity. The population is predominantly Hispanic, with a substantial number of African American residents as well. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), more than 70% of the community identifies as Hispanic or Latino, while approximately 25% identifies as African American. This racial and ethnic diversity is evident in the neighborhood's cultural life, with numerous festivals, restaurants, and community events celebrating Hispanic and African American heritage (New York City Department of City Planning, 2021).

Economically, Mott Haven faces several challenges. The area has a high poverty rate, with a significant portion of the population living below the poverty line, and unemployment rates are higher than the citywide average. The median household income in Mott Haven is lower than that of New York City as a whole, contributing to the economic hardships faced by many families (New York City Department of City Planning, 2021). The area also struggles with issues such as housing affordability, limited access to quality healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure.

The school was selected because of its high teacher retention rate compared to other schools within the district. I determined the teacher retention rate to be higher than that of other

schools within the district by comparing the average teacher salary in the school to salaries in other schools in the district that serve similar populations. School B is one of the 18 District 7 public schools that serve only Grades Pre-K-3 through Grade 5. PreK-3 is preschool for children who will turn 3 by December 31 of the enrollment year. The school employs 25 teachers, 92% of whom have 3 or more years of experience at the school (School Quality Review). Of those 25 teachers, 12 have 20 or more years of service at School B.

Table 1

2023 Student Demographics

	School B		District 7	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female		43		47
Male		57		53
Nonbinary		0		
Black		23	3,581	27
Hispanic/Latinx		75	9,312	69
White		<1	217	2
Other racial category*		<1	405	3
English Language Learner		22	2,245	17
Students w/IEPs		29	3,750	28
Free Lunch Eligible		92	12,601	93
Homeless/Unhoused		Not Available	2,357	17
Total	162	100	13,794	100

* Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or Native American

Table 2*2023 Teacher Characteristics*

Demographics	School B		District 7	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Asian	<5		43	4.5
Black		27	225	23.9
Hispanic/Latinx		42	378	39.74
Native American		0	0	0
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		0	0	0
White	<5	<	284	29.8
Experience as Teachers				
4 Years or more	20	80	722	52
Inexperienced*	5	20	660	48
Total	25	100	1,382	100

*Less than 4 years

Note. Source: <https://data.nysed.gov/studenteducator.php?year=2023&instid=800000046647>

Participants

The study participants comprised a diverse group of individuals representing various roles within the school community. Among them was the administrator, the principal, who has provided leadership and oversight during her 20-plus years at the school. Eleven teachers, one of whom identified as male, and a guidance counselor, also male, participated in the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the principal participated in the interview process as well. Eight of the teachers had worked at the school for more than 10 years, and only one teacher had fewer than 5 years of experience overall. Among the teachers, six are certified in general education, while five are certified in special education. Two paraprofessionals also participated in the focus group,

both of whom identified as male. This diverse mix of participants provided a comprehensive perspective on the school culture and its impact on teacher retention.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics

	Number	Male	Female	Yrs. @ B	Teaching out of Certification	Certification
Principal	1		1	20+		
Counselor	1	1				
Teachers	11	1	10	9 more than 10 years 2 less than 10	0	6 Gen Ed 5 Special Ed
Paraprofessionals	2	2				
Total	15	4	11			

Table 4

Data Collection by Participant Position

	April 2022 Survey	April 2024 Survey	Interview #1 Dec. 2022- May 2023	Interview #2 April-May 2024	Focus Group May 2024
Principal	1		1	1	
Counselor		1		1	
Teachers	9	4	5	7	4
Paraprofessionals		2			2
Total					

Data Collection and Triangulation

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary tool used in this study because they offered in-depth insights into participants' perspectives, experiences, and motivations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I conducted the interviews in two rounds, concluding the first group in December 2022 and May 2023. The initial analysis of school data led to my decision to conduct additional interviews and expand the participant pool, so I conducted the second set of interviews in April and May of 2024.

Through a total of 12 interviews, I gathered detailed, personal narratives that provided insights into how the school culture affected teachers' decisions to remain in the school community. These narratives were invaluable for understanding the individual viewpoints and experiences of the teachers, paraprofessionals, and principal at School B. However, the sole reliance on interviews can introduce biases, as the data are subject to the participants' subjective interpretation and the researcher's potential influence. Additional data collection methods—focus groups and artifacts—were used in this study in an effort to mitigate these biases and validate the interview findings.

Focus Group

The focus group met in May 2024 and included multiple participants, including non-teachers, collectively discussing the school culture and, thereby, providing a different dimension of data collection. This method captured group dynamics, interactions, and shared understandings that individual interviews might miss (Krueger & Casey, 2014). The discussions in the focus group revealed both consensus and divergence in opinions, which helped in the identification of common themes and patterns. Moreover, the interaction among participants

stimulated new ideas and insights that might not have emerged in the one-on-one interviews. By comparing focus group data with interview data, I hoped to identify consistencies and discrepancies, thus enhancing the overall validity of the findings.

Artifact Review

Artifacts—such as the school handbook, school budget, mission statement, quality review, public reviews of the school from both the state and local school district websites, and district data trends—offered another layer of data that supported or challenged the insights gained from interviews and focus groups. The artifacts provided concrete evidence that supported the validity of the participants’ accounts and revealed additional contextual information as well (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Analyzing artifacts alongside interview and focus group data allowed me to cross-check information and build a more comprehensive picture of the school culture under study.

Triangulation

The triangulation of interviews, focus groups, and artifacts served as a robust methodological approach to mitigate potential limitations and biases inherent in each individual method (Patton, 2015). This multimethod approach enabled a balanced and nuanced understanding of the research problem by leveraging the strengths of each component. For instance, interviews offered in-depth perspectives, while focus groups provided breadth through collective insights, and artifacts grounded these insights in tangible evidence. Through the triangulation of the data gathered through these various methods, the credibility and validity of the study’s findings were enhanced. In this case study, interviews, focus groups, and artifacts were employed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research problem, and the corroboration of findings strengthened the study’s overall validity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative process that involved several key steps. First, audio recordings of interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed verbatim, and these transcripts were then analyzed using thematic coding techniques. Initial codes were generated based on themes identified in the literature, such as types of commitment and school culture, and themes related to school culture and climate, such as relationship building, academic experimentation, and shared beliefs or values. As the analysis progressed, additional codes were developed based on recurring patterns, themes, and concepts emerging from the data.

Once the initial coding was complete, the identified codes were refined and organized into broader themes and patterns to elucidate key aspects of the school's organizational culture. These patterns included components of school culture that influence teacher retention, contributions of different aspects of school culture to staff job satisfaction and commitment, and leadership strategies. This process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the school's culture and climate and their impact on teacher retention.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were fully informed about the research objectives and procedures as well as their rights as research subjects. Confidentiality of participants' identities and data was strictly maintained throughout the study.

Researcher Positionality

In the NYCPS, unions represent the majority of the employee contracts. The largest unions within the school system are the Council of School Administrators (CSA), the United

Federation of Teachers (UFT), District Council 37, Service Employees International Union 32BJ, and Local 891 of the Union of Operating Engineers.

The CSA represents both principals and assistant principals, and their contracts are negotiated separately from the school personnel whom they supervise. As a result, there may be times when the rules and regulations that apply to school administrators and to other campus personnel conflict.

The UFT represents nonadministrative pedagogical employees, such as teachers, and the union's bureaucracy often mirrors that of the New York City public schools (NYCPS). Within each school, the UFT elects a chapter leader to represent them in contractual obligations and to perform other union duties in the building. At least once a month, the chapter leader and the principal are required to meet to discuss and attempt to resolve any issues that have arisen.

Each community school district has a district representative who coordinates the union activity for that district and supports the chapter leaders at their schools. In most cases, the current portfolio of the district representative aligns with that of their respective superintendent. These representatives and superintendents meet at least monthly to discuss district-level policy issues affecting the working conditions of the UFT-represented members in the district and to resolve issues that a principal and a chapter leader may have been unable to address at the school level. I am a District 7 representative for the UFT, and part of my responsibility is to understand the culture of each school in my portfolio and to assist the school in resolving conflicts between management and UFT-represented employees.

Reciprocity

For each phase of the dissertation data collection in which they participated, all participants received a \$25 Donor's Choice gift card in appreciation of their time. Additionally,

those who participated in the focus group were provided with drinks and snacks to enjoy during the session.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The findings of this case study highlighted the relationship between school culture and teacher retention. Four major themes emerged from the data collected: resonant communication, relationship building, reciprocal trust, and shared identity. Each theme reflected critical aspects of school culture that contribute to teachers' professional satisfaction and commitment.

- **Resonant communication** fosters transparency, understanding, and alignment of goals, thereby enhancing teachers' sense of belonging and engagement (Goleman et al., 2002).
- **Relationship building** supports a cohesive and collaborative school environment (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). These relationships provide emotional and professional support, which is essential for increasing the commitment of employees to the school community.
- **Reciprocal trust** between teachers and school leadership is another crucial element identified in this study. Trust, established through consistent, respectful, and responsive interactions, is crucial to teachers' organizational commitment (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
- **Shared identity**, reflecting a collective understanding and commitment to the school's mission, values, and goals, reinforces a unified and supportive community. This shared identity enhances teachers' connections to the school and their colleagues, further solidifying their commitment to the institution (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006).

From the qualitative data gathered through interviews, a focus group, and documents, this chapter presents findings that demonstrate how these characteristics contributed to the creation of a school culture that supports and retains teaching staff.

Resonant Communication

One theme that emerged was the importance of resonance in communication and feedback. Resonance in leadership, as explained by Annie McKee, refers to a leader's ability to create a positive and harmonious emotional environment that aligns with the feelings and needs of their team (McKee et al., 2002). The principal consistently spoke about the importance of resonance when she said she communicated with her staff in a manner that "allows people to understand I am true to my word," and she expressed a need to "lead with compassion while at the same time having expectations." This echoed through the interviews with both the principal and the teachers as they discussed the importance of open communication and constructive feedback.

Valuing Open Communication

A recurring theme in the responses was the principal's commitment to maintaining open lines of communication. Teachers consistently stated that her approachable nature and willingness to listen to their concerns played a crucial role in their connection to the school culture. The principal described having an open-door policy, and research has indicated that an authentic open-door policy requires principals to do more than simply state that fact (Smith & Doe, 2023). At School B, the teachers consistently discussed the authenticity of the open-door policy and expressed their comfort in approaching and discussing issues with the principal without fear of repercussions.

A couple of the teachers transferred to School B after working at another school, and they compared their experiences at their earlier campus with the treatment they received at School B, which ultimately led to the creation of the open-door policy. Teacher 8 reflected on the difference between the open-door policy at her prior school and the one at School B. At School B, she felt that the principal “not only wanted her staff to walk through the door but really desired to hear from them.” Teacher 8 then compared the two schools’ working environments, stating that at School B she felt comfortable asking a question, whereas at her prior school, she felt as if there would be repercussions for not knowing the answer if she asked a question of the principal. In another example, Teacher 3, who started her career at School B, described transferring to another campus for a few years. She said one reason she chose to return was the ability to have conversations with the principal because of her true open-door policy. This sentiment was echoed by many others, who appreciated the principal’s willingness to engage in a dialogue with them around the issues they were facing in their classroom.

Constructive Feedback

Communication With the Principal and Teachers. This study found that the principal’s approach to providing feedback was another critical factor contributing to the positive school culture. Prior to her role as an administrator, the principal spent part of her career as a staff developer, which she believed influenced the strategies she employed as a leader. With that mindset, she approached the role of principal by thinking about her faculty as adult learners, not just as subordinates to be directed. She specifically noted that “people learn differently and at different paces.... I will not compare Teacher A to Teacher B. What Teacher A needs, I try to make sure that Teacher A gets.”

Principal B also spoke about the need to take responsibility for providing support when people fell short of expectations. She also recognized that change takes time and described an interaction with a teacher who was struggling, offering feedback and asking for small changes, then checking back in a week to gauge any progress. In her words, it was “Start it, try it; I will be in next week in order to give you support and see how it’s going.” The teachers reflected on this as well, attributing her support for giving them the confidence to try something new.

Teacher 5 recounted her transformation into an instructor who specializes in computer subjects. She began her career as a science teacher but was asked to teach computer coding. At first, she was resistant, so for the first year, the principal promised to assign her only one period a day of coding and added that any observations made regarding that subject would be constructive, not punitive. If the teacher found she did not like teaching coding, she could return to being a science generalist the following academic year. However, by the end of the school year, the teacher had developed the confidence to make the necessary transition, providing students with instruction in computer coding that has driven the school forward since.

Teachers described the feedback process as constructive and supportive, helping them grow professionally without feeling criticized or undervalued. One example that was mentioned in several teachers’ interviews was the use of a color-coded system when conducting observations. Teachers were aware that when the principal entered their classroom and took notes on yellow paper, the notes were not evaluative but, rather, were designed for professional growth. By contrast, if the principal was using a pad of white paper, it would be as part of an official observation. With that knowledge in mind, teachers talked about inviting the principal into their classroom to observe their instructional techniques when they needed feedback for their own growth.

Communication Between Teachers. A school culture that emphasizes positive feedback, however, extends beyond the relationship between teachers and the principal. Teachers described how they interacted with their colleagues during the school day: They arrived early to workshop ideas with their colleagues, invited fellow teachers to provide feedback, and asked to visit one another's classrooms to see their practices. The teachers valued having a network of practitioners in the building with whom to discuss whatever issues they were facing. This culture was influenced by the principal's decision to highlight exemplary teachers who could serve as role models in duplicating positive teaching practices. When asked why she valued this type of interaction, the principal mentioned her need to find support when she first started as a principal. She felt comfortable reaching out to other principals for support and wanted to ensure that the teachers in her school believed they could be resources for each other as well.

Additionally, the principal created a school culture that emphasized teamwork and collaboration. The school was divided into grade teams who regularly met with each other to plan and problem solve. Teachers cited these professional teams and collaborative units as important to increase their communication with each other, as well as develop bonds with their colleagues.

Reciprocal Communication

The principal's emphasis on open communication and feedback was seen as integral to the overall positive school culture. Teachers described the school environment as collaborative and inclusive, recognizing their voices and contributions, and connected that to the principal's ability to provide feedback with caring as well as to receive feedback herself. The reciprocal nature of this feedback was highlighted in the documents from the school that talked about the open-door nature of the principal, and showed up as actuated in the interviews, focus group, and

survey. When asked about their favorite thing about the school administration, one survey respondent wrote, “My administrators listen and are supportive.”

The principal also emphasized the importance of listening and receiving feedback in her approach as a leader. She said, “Listen not only to those above you but also to those you lead.” Part of that approach was to ask teachers what they needed to be successful and ensure that they felt comfortable responding. One example of this was mentioned by Teacher 3, who said she felt unsuccessful in teaching reading in her classroom and asked to be trained in the Orton-Gillingham method of phonics instruction, but the cost was prohibitive. She brought her concerns and request to the principal of School B, who asked how the course would improve student performance. At first, the principal did not want to spend the money on the training. However, after hearing why the teacher wanted to learn the method, she worked to find the money to send her to the training.

The principal said she still finds those conversations difficult, but she attempts to make them easier by keeping in touch with her human side. In light of this, she underscored the importance of taking time to understand and consider the humanity of those under one’s leadership, acknowledging that change is not an instantaneous process and individuals have personal lives outside of work. She specifically emphasized this when she stated she “tries to lead with compassion but having expectations.” Moreover, that philosophy is what helps her sleep well at night. By emphasizing the importance of providing reasonable time for the changes to happen, the principal took into account the learning needs of her staff to effect real and lasting changes within the school culture.

The value placed on open communication, constructive feedback, and empathy by the principal significantly influenced teachers’ decisions to remain at the school long term. “I’ve

been here for over a decade, and a big reason is the leadership,” said Teacher 1, who described the way that looked in detail:

Some teachers get nervous when administrators come in the room. [Here] I do not feel that way. I think it’s because I don’t feel like the administrators are out to get you. They always give feedback that is constructive. I feel like they’re always open for a conversation if you are having trouble, if you’re having an issue, or if you don’t understand something. (Teacher 1)

Multiple examples of the principal’s empathy emerged from the interviews with teachers. One example of this was provided by Teacher 6, who recalled a time when he was sick and away from the classroom for a lengthy period. He thought he would be disciplined; instead, when he returned, the first question Principal B asked was, “Are you feeling better?” In another case, Teacher 1 described having a difficult time with her own child and exceeding her allotted personal leave. She credited Principal B with helping her find ways to care for her child and still fulfill her commitment to the school community.

As teachers in the focus group reflected on their experience, the fact that the principal was retiring surfaced as a concern because of the value they placed on the reciprocal communication channels they had described as integral to the culture. The loss of this valuable two-way channel also surfaced when the teachers pondered the future of their school community, as they were aware of the principal’s coming retirement. Because of this imminent change, some teachers said they chose to delay their own retirement, and others expressed concern about how communication and school culture would change under a new leader. Teacher 2 was one such teacher: Currently, she has a lengthy commute from another state, but she does so because she is committed to her students and to the principal. She said she is concerned that when Principal B retires, the school culture will change and affect her desire to continue working at the school. This uncertainty was clear and evident in the focus group, as teachers and paraprofessionals alike

voiced concerns stemming from experiences at prior schools that the positive school culture they currently enjoy may not continue with a leadership change.

Relationship Building

Another situation in which resonance in the principal's leadership style creates a harmonious and positive culture became evident when she described the importance of relationship building at School B. She said,

I do think that there is a time and place for everything. I do think that as staff, we need to get together and get to know each other outside of the workplace—if that's what you choose to do, because everybody may not be comfortable with that. I think it's important to do some of those activities together because you get to understand people and see them outside of who you see when they walk through the door. It helps, I think, to build a better relationship when you understand people. Understanding people helps, I think, to build a better relationship. I also think that speaking to people is important. (Principal B)

Using this quote as a foundation, I endeavored to discern whether the other relationships within the school mirrored this philosophy. Studies have indicated that positive relationships among peers enhance teachers' commitment to their school communities (Johnson et al., 2012).

Interpersonal Relationships Among the Coworkers

In the interviews, many teachers mentioned their relationships with colleagues as the reason they return to the school year after year. Teachers were asked to comment on both their relationships during the workday as well as their interactions outside of work hours. The importance of these relationships soon emerged, as both the principal and the teachers described structured and unstructured ways in which they interact with each other.

Interpersonal Relationships With Coworkers: Professional Interactions

The participants described visiting other teachers' classrooms before school and knowing whom to ask for support. Additionally, the principal spoke about highlighting success by recommending that teachers visit exemplary classrooms and see positive practices in action. This

was reiterated by teachers who spoke highly of times when the principal suggested such a visit, in which they could observe success in confronting an issue with which they were struggling. The principal joined the teachers on these visits to other teachers' classrooms to highlight positive teaching practices they might seek to replicate in their own classrooms.

Additionally, the principal worked to foster a team dynamic among the students. The school has two classes in every grade, one of which offered an integrated coteaching model for both students with special needs and general education students. Additionally, the school departmentalized the fourth- and fifth-grade classes, assigning one general education teacher to teach English language arts and social studies and another to teach math and science for both classes. The special education teacher on that team travels between the two classes as part of an integrated coteaching model. This intentional structure enforces team relationships and planning in a way that the teachers perceive to be beneficial to their professional relationships. In the lower grades, teachers discussed working in their grade teams to plan and design comprehensive instruction for all students.

Interpersonal Relationships With Coworkers: Other Than Professional Interactions

A significant finding from the case study revealed that interpersonal relationships cultivated outside of school played a crucial role in the teachers' commitment to their school. The teachers frequently cited these relationships as among the primary factors in their long-term dedication to the school. Multiple comments throughout the interviews and the focus group indicated that the teachers return year after year because of a desire to work with the same people and their love for their coworkers.

However, the data revealed that interpersonal relationships among the teachers shifted over time as their family lives and personal situations evolved. The interviews highlighted that

the staff continued to celebrate personal milestones such as baby showers or a teacher's retirement through get-togethers at school. However, these coworkers also spoke about sharing their personal lives outside of school hours, offering many examples of these interactions, many of which centered around the lives of their children. One teacher described seeking advice for their oldest child regarding the college application process from a colleague who had already navigated the process with their children. Another teacher mentioned that her son and another teacher's son were both fans of the Green Bay Packers. As one teacher's child outgrew their football jerseys, they would pass them on to the other teacher's son.

These examples were among the reasons the teachers cited for their ongoing commitment to their school community. The teachers' examples and anecdotes highlighted the dynamic school culture in which faculty members' personal lives directly shaped the development of a community of practice that values caring for colleagues. The principal's model of interaction with the school community also played a significant role. Principal B spoke many times in her interview about the power of getting to know your staff on a personal level while leading with compassion: "I really try to get to know the individual teachers as much as I can by helping them understand me. Knowing you does not make me hold you to [lower] expectations but to higher expectations."

Annie McKee (2018) noted that the work of those they lead often mirrors a leader's resonant, friendly relationships. This seemed to be true of Principal B's leadership style regarding building relationships.

Principal as Caring Thought Partner and Reciprocal Trust

This study identified reciprocal trust as a major theme emerging from the interactions between the principal and her staff. This trust was particularly evident in the principal's

consistent acknowledgment of the teachers' professionalism. The study defines this as reciprocal trust. This trust in her teachers to be professional was manifested in the principal's descriptions of staff development and conversations with staff. The principal provided multiple examples of this by emphasizing the need to ask people why they made the decisions they made and leaning into disagreements: "You learn a lot when you disagree; disagreement is just sharing ideas, then coming up with a happy medium." She emphasized the importance of being able to listen to people, knowing they will tell a leader what they need and believing they all share the same goals and mission in their work. She explained that teachers prioritize the needs of the students in their professional work, just as she does.

Another example of this reciprocal trust was the teachers' perception that the principal trusted their professional judgment and did not micromanage their decisions. In her interview, the principal acknowledged that she could not manage the school community entirely by herself: "Sometimes you have to step back" because the people who work under a leader know what to do, she said. The teachers echoed this as one of the reasons they remained at School B. During the focus group discussion, the teachers spent some time on this topic, sharing their experiences of being able to make decisions around their students' needs. Teachers who had worked at other schools mentioned that other principals might have wanted to discipline them for being off the class timeline for a matter of minutes or for repeating topics from a prior lesson. Teachers said they valued autonomy in their classrooms and the trust of their leaders to make professional decisions. This autonomy was closely linked to their sense of professional respect and job satisfaction.

Additionally, the teachers provided examples of doing things the principal asked of them, even when they were not confident of the results. One example of this was when the principal

asked a teacher to try a different technique in her small group instruction. At first, the teacher was unsure whether it would be effective, but her trust in the principal's leadership prompted her at least to attempt this new practice and reflect on it. Eventually, she incorporated it more regularly into her teaching.

The combination of professional acknowledgment and autonomy created a robust foundation for a culture of reciprocal trust. This trust was not one-sided; it was a mutual exchange in which both the principal and the teachers felt secure and supported in their roles. The teachers' trust in the principal's leadership and the principal's trust in the teachers' professionalism contributed to a cohesive school culture. When asked in the focus group what draws them back to the school every year, one teacher summarized, "At this school, I feel respected and know [Principal B] will do what is right for both us and the kids." This highlighted the importance of reciprocal trust in the decisions that teachers make to commit to a school community.

Shared Identity

The concept of shared identity emerged as another reason cited by the teachers for committing to School B year after year. Research has indicated that when faculty members perceive a shared identity within their school, it enhances their sense of belonging and connection, thereby strengthening their commitment in turn (Barth, 2002; Saphier, 2019; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). The shared identity, in part, came from the mission of a child-centered school community and the school branding around international cultures. These thoughtful foci were developed over time, nurtured by the principal's 20 years of leadership and experience. As a result, they influenced the effective commitment of the staff toward the organization.

Child-centered Education

In her interview, Principal B was clear to state her goal that the school be responsive to the needs of the students and the community. She referred to it in several aspects, most clearly when she said, “We make decisions based on the best interests of children, but we are still at the same time trying to be compassionate about what other adults are going through.” Her same desire for doing what is right for children also surfaced in the interviews with teachers, the survey data, and the focus group. Teachers responded that the students were among the main driving forces that had them coming back to the school. One paraprofessional even mentioned how he had experienced this as a student at School B and how it influenced him to return and join the staff.

One example mentioned by both the principal and the teachers was the drive to improve student attendance. The attendance rate declined after the return to full-time in-person learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the principal and teachers recognized the importance of attendance for students’ outcomes and created opportunities to incentivize that attendance. These incentives included shout-outs on the loudspeaker for students whose attendance had improved and field trips and popcorn for classes with 100% attendance for the day or week. For example, if the principal anticipated low attendance on a particular day, such as one before a long holiday weekend, she would remind students via the loudspeaker that there might be a surprise reward, such as popcorn, for those who were present. Then the next day, she would make popcorn for every child and faculty member in the building. Additionally, special trips to a Medieval Times show or to the movies were rewards for students with high and improved attendance.

Another example in which the shared child-centered mission emerged was regarding the teachers' desire to increase parents' involvement. This was consistent across the interviews and survey comments and in the focus group. Teachers said they understood that parents were busy with their own work, but they continued to press for greater parental involvement because of its positive impact on student outcomes.

School-branding Identity

Data from the focus group discussions revealed that the school's multicultural branding and the presence of a well-recognized mascot significantly contributed to a strong, cohesive school culture. Teachers consistently highlighted how these branding elements enhanced their sense of belonging and fostered affective commitment and a unified identity among staff and students.

The multicultural brand emerged as a significant subtheme under shared school identity in the study, reflecting the school's emphasis on celebrating and integrating diverse cultural backgrounds. The branding was evident in a review of public-facing documents, such as the school mission statement and school promotional documents; an examination of internal documents such as the school handbook; and in conversations in the focus group. Teachers in the focus group highlighted that the school's commitment to fostering an international culture was prominent in the presentation of its annual Multicultural Week. This weeklong event, filled with activities that celebrate the diverse cultures represented in the student body and staff, was frequently cited by teachers as a pivotal factor in their decision to remain at the school. One teacher shared, "One thing we do really well is embrace all cultures." The participants in the focus group particularly highlighted the week's culminating activity, in which students were able

to share their learning by visiting each other's classrooms to experience reports, food, and artistic expressions from their own cultures and those they studied.

The branding around international culture not only strengthened the internal cohesion among the faculty but also served as a unique identifier for the school, distinguishing it from other institutions. Teachers expressed pride in being part of a school that actively promotes and values cultural diversity, seeing it as a cornerstone of their shared identity. This strong cultural branding and the associated Multicultural Week were cited in teachers' decisions to recommit to School B year after year. The paraprofessional who was an alumnus of the school stated that the Multicultural Week activity was a memory he recalled with fondness and was among the reasons he applied to work at the school.

Another popular branding technique employed by the principal is the use of a mascot. The faculty and students are proud of the animal mascot that adorns their school logo, T-shirts, and other branded items. They see it as symbolic of the welcoming atmosphere they are building with the students and their families, mentioning the pride they feel when they wear clothing bearing the school mascot's image. The mascot is something they can rally around because it serves as a unifying symbol that brings the school together.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter explores the findings from a case study investigating the culture of School B, an urban Title 1 elementary school with notably high teacher retention. Title 1 schools, which serve large populations of students from low-income families, often face significant challenges, including resource constraints, high student needs, and issues related to equity and access (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Despite these obstacles, the focal school in this study has managed to maintain a high level of teacher retention, a remarkable achievement given the national trend of high turnover rates in similar settings (Ingersoll, 2001).

The study identified that the leadership of the principal played a pivotal role in shaping the school culture at School B. The data collected highlighted that the principal's practices and style directly influenced the school culture. In turn, that culture influenced teacher retention, job satisfaction, and commitment. The principal's leadership fostered a school culture of collegial relationships and organizational support systems, which bolstered the ever-important culture of the school to coalesce around the school's mission and branding. This finding underscored the importance of effective leadership in building a positive school culture conducive to teacher retention and overall school success.

With the strong connection between teacher retention and student outcomes, schools and the districts that support them must continue to strive to retain teachers and other faculty over time. From this case study, the role of school culture emerged as a critical determinant of overall effectiveness. Through this study, I have taken a deep look into one school and identified some critical ways that the school principal influences school culture and, with it, higher-than-average teacher retention.

Research Aims and Questions

This case study aimed to better understand how the principal's choices in how to develop the school culture impacted the retention and commitment of teachers in that school. This is with the understanding that prior research has shown that high teacher retention correlates with better student performance (Atteberry et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Rondfelt et al., 2013; Wallington et al., 2010).

The study was designed to explore and develop better understandings of the underpinnings of three research questions:

1. What are the key components of school culture that influence teacher retention?
2. How do different aspects of school culture contribute to teacher job satisfaction and commitment?
3. What strategies can educational institutions implement to foster a positive school culture that promotes teacher retention?

The study included a diverse group of participants, including the long-serving female principal, teachers with varying experience levels and certifications, and support staff, thus providing a comprehensive perspective on school culture and its impact on teacher retention.

Using concepts derived from Responsible Leadership Theory (RLT) and Commitment Theory, this study suggested that the intentional relationships, structure, and practices that principals develop in their schools have a direct impact on the type of commitment teachers give to the school organization. By understanding this connection, school leaders can make leadership choices that strengthen the types of commitment that retain and develop strong teachers and improve student learning outcomes.

Key Findings

Overall, the findings from Chapter 4 highlighted the importance of fostering a positive school culture characterized by resonant communication, relationship building, reciprocal trust, and shared identity in promoting teacher retention. The data analysis led to answers to the research questions.

Key Components of School Culture

In examining the components of school culture that influence teacher retention, several key elements emerged from the findings presented in Chapter 4 of this study: reciprocal communication, professional respect, and shared identity

Reciprocal Communication

The cornerstone of School B's culture is the establishment of reciprocal communication. The open, two-way dialogue between school faculty between both the principal and teachers, but also between teachers, fostered an environment where feedback is not only welcome but acted upon. It became evident that communication ensured teachers felt heard and valued, contributing significantly to their job satisfaction and willingness to remain in their positions.

Professional Respect

Another critical component that surfaced was the professional respect afforded to teachers. This respect is manifested through a lack of micromanagement, where the principal demonstrated trust in teachers' professional judgment and granted them the autonomy to make instructional decisions. Additionally, School B has a culture where teachers see each other as valuable resources and collaborators, further strengthening this respect. The teachers described that feeling of trust and empowerment as contributing to a sense of professional fulfillment and commitment to their school and their principal.

Shared Identity

Finally, a strong shared identity within the school played a pivotal role in teacher retention. In the case of School B, it involved cultivating a clear and cohesive school branding and identity that all staff members can rally around. Examples of this included the consistent school-wide themes centering on multiculturalism, the school mascot, and values that are visibly upheld in daily operations and communications not only from the principal but also between other faculty members. Especially in the focus group, the teachers described identifying with the school's mission and feeling part of a unified team. They attributed these feelings to their continued commitment.

In summary, these components—reciprocal communication, professional respect, and shared identity—created a supportive and empowering school culture. Such an environment not only enhances teacher satisfaction and engagement but also significantly contributes to their decision to remain at their school. This holistic approach to cultivating a positive school culture underscored the importance of emotional intelligence and strategic leadership in fostering teacher retention.

Aspects of the School Culture That Contributed to Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Commitment

In understanding how different aspects of school culture contributed to job satisfaction and commitment, it is crucial to recognize the principal's role in shaping the culture of School B. Chapter 4 highlighted several key elements strongly supported and modeled by the principal, which collectively drives the commitment of the school's teaching staff.

In the exploration of leadership dynamics within educational settings, School B offers a compelling case study that underscores the pivotal role of emotional intelligence (EQ) in

effective school administration. Through the detailed narratives and strategic insights shared by study participants, it became evident that the principal's EQ extends beyond mere considerations for student welfare. More critically, it manifests in the cultivation of a positive and collaborative school culture, achieved through nuanced interactions and the intentional modeling of desired cultural norms with the teaching staff. These stories and strategies vividly illustrated the core concepts highlighted in the literature review, showcasing how a principal's emotional acumen is integral not only to fostering student success but also to empowering teachers and nurturing an environment conducive to collective growth and excellence. This dual focus on student and teacher relationships as driven by a principal's EQ provided a holistic view of leadership that is essential for creating thriving educational communities. By prioritizing these key components, school leaders may be able to create environments that support the professional growth and well-being of teachers, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

Relationship With Principal

In this school community, Principal B set the tone for the entire school community to develop a school culture and climate widely recognized as positive by the teachers. Principal B seems to have modeled the strong leadership, relationship building, and supportiveness that created the foundation for a school culture designed to retain teachers and attract quality educators. This relationship proved pivotal as it was directly cited in the teachers' perceptions of their work environment. This matched the prior body of research showing that when teachers feel their principal is approachable, supportive, and invested in their success, their job satisfaction increases (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Grissom et al., 2021).

Caring Thought Partner (EQ)

Emotional intelligence (EQ) in a principal has been shown to be particularly important in the development of school culture and climate (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Principal B, both through her own descriptions of her leadership and the descriptions offered by the staff, demonstrated her EQ as a caring thought partner to address teachers' professional and personal needs. She did this through actively demonstrating empathy, active listening, and emotional support. This approach seems to have fostered a sense of trust and security, which is essential for job satisfaction. Research by Grisson et al. (2021) showed that emotional support, similar to what emerged in this study, is key to fostering the positive school culture critical for teacher satisfaction and retention.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction and retention at School B was attributed to positive principal relationships and the principal's EQ. The teachers expressed feeling supported, respected, and part of a cohesive team. A teacher's sense of satisfaction is a key driver in their decision to stay at the school (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Teachers at School B expressed that they chose to remain at a school in part due to the supportive and respectful culture established by the principal. This matched the context of the research from Boyd et al. (2011), who found the sense of belonging and professional fulfillment teachers experience in such an environment is a primary reason for their continued, even increased commitment. The teachers repeatedly attributed that culture to actions stemming from Principal B's ability to foster a positive and emotionally intelligent environment where teachers felt valued and understood. This led to their job satisfaction and long-term dedication to the school.

Overall, the school culture, particularly those aspects strongly supported and modeled by the principal, emerged as key contributors to teacher job satisfaction. Principal B fostered strong relationships, demonstrated EI, and created a supportive environment, significantly enhancing teachers' job satisfaction (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Grissom et al., 2021). Teachers reported feeling supported, respected, and part of a cohesive team, which boosted their motivation and enthusiasm for their work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). This sense of belonging and professional fulfillment emerged as a primary reason for their continued commitment to the school (Boyd et al., 2011). The effectiveness of these cultural aspects was evidenced by the high percentage of teachers who remained or returned to the school. This was particularly highlighted by the high number of teachers who qualified for Rule 10 of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Rule 10 is a provision of the agreement that prevents teachers with 10 or more years of service in a particular school site from being moved out of the school for other than disciplinary or voluntary reasons. This high number of teachers who qualified for the Rule 10 provision indicated the long-term tenure and commitment of these teachers. Study participants attributed the higher rate of teacher retention at School B to the principal's ability to cultivate a positive and emotionally intelligent school culture.

Strategies That School B Implemented to Foster a Positive School Culture Related to Its High Teacher Retention

School B implemented several effective strategies aimed at fostering a positive school culture that significantly promoted teacher retention. These strategies, when analyzed, may serve as a possible start for other school leaders to change their school culture and improve teacher retention.

The Principal of School B actively developed a trusting and responsive school culture by modeling through her interactions with staff the types of interactions she expected them to have with the other stakeholders in the community. One way she did this is through her true open-door policy. Teachers described this policy in contrast to other schools in which they worked. They explained that while other principals stated they had an open-door policy like Principal B, unlike Principal B, they were not expected to actually walk through that door. On the other hand, Principal B described herself as a thinking partner who not only opened the door but expected teachers to walk through it and work through issues of practice with her in a safe and trusting manner. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) found this type of “true open door/walk through the door” policy, where the principal maintained an accessible presence and welcomed teachers to engage freely in discussions and seek support, was critical to a positive school culture. This leadership approach contributed to a culture over time that has made teachers feel valued and supported, thus contributing to their commitment not just to the school but also to the principal as well.

In addition, Principal B facilitated teams through structured professional development initiatives. Teachers were organized into collaborative teams or professional learning communities (PLCs) where they could share ideas, collaborate on instructional strategies, and support each other’s professional growth (Grissom et al., 2021). These opportunities not only enhanced teaching practices but also fostered a sense of camaraderie and collective responsibility among staff members. This camaraderie spilled into interactions among the staff outside of the structured meetings planned by the principal, including impromptu meetings teachers cited as happening outside of their workday with colleagues with whom they developed trusting and respectful professional relationships during the structured timeframes.

Furthermore, Principal B developed a clear school identity and brand. The principal actively promoted and upheld the school's mission, values, and goals, ensuring that they were consistently communicated and reinforced throughout the school community (Boyd et al., 2011). This clarity helped align the efforts and motivations of teachers, fostering a cohesive and purposeful school culture.

Principal B's demonstration of respect and empathy in interpersonal interactions helped to set a tone of collaboration and mutual respect among staff members, something that Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) showed to be critical. These aspects of Principal B's leadership style is not only attributed to strengthening the relationships within the school community but also to inspiring trust and loyalty among teachers, thereby contributing to higher levels of job satisfaction and retention.

Limitations and Implications for Practice

Understanding the factors that contribute to high teacher retention rates is crucial for fostering stable and effective educational environments. This section explores the limitations of this case study conducted at School B, a school recognized for its high teacher retention rates amidst neighboring schools with varying retention challenges. By examining the specific cultural dynamics of School B, this study provides insights that can inform future educational practices and research endeavors. The findings offer valuable implications for enhancing school culture and supporting teacher retention strategies. However, it is essential to acknowledge the constraints and considerations that may influence the interpretation and application of these findings in broader educational contexts and for future research initiatives.

Limitations

Conducting a case study focusing on the impact of school culture on teacher retention offers in-depth insights into the dynamics of a specific educational environment (Yin, 2018). The insights generated from this study provide valuable contributions to understanding school culture and its impact on teacher retention. However, several limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to broader contexts and future research.

Generalizability. As with any case study, the primary limitation of this study was its generalizability. Findings from a single school cannot be readily extrapolated to other educational settings due to the unique context, demographics, and challenges each school faces (Stake, 1995). While the findings provide valuable insights into how one school leader cultivated a positive culture, caution must be exercised in applying these findings broadly.

Potential Biases Introduced by Researcher's Role. While my role as a union labor organizer and the union's district representative for this provided an important entry into the school and facilitated access to crucial information, it also came with a particular set of lenses that may have introduced bias into the study. Specifically, this dual role may have introduced confirmation bias from myself as the researcher during the coding and analysis phase, or participant bias during the data collection phase (Creswell, 2013; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Ravitch and Carl (2021) discussed the concept of positionality, which refers to the researcher's identity and stance in relation to the research context and participants. My role as the district union representative placed me in a position of authority and influence over the participants, which could shape their responses. This positionality might have caused participants to provide responses they thought I wanted to hear or to avoid sharing negative views about the

union. Additionally, some participants with a less-than-favorable view of the school may have chosen not to participate in the study.

Confirmation Bias From the Researcher. Confirmation bias is a well-documented phenomenon where individuals tend to favor information that confirmed their preconceptions or hypotheses, leading to a skewed interpretation of data. As noted by Ravitch and Carl (2021), researchers bring their own perspectives and assumptions to the research process, which can shape how they interpret data. In my case, my strong affiliation with the union could have led to an unintentional emphasis on positive outcomes associated with union activities while neglecting negative or neutral data. Creswell (2013) also emphasized the importance of researchers being aware of their biases and how these can affect their interpretation and analysis.

Participant Bias Due to Positionality. Moreover, my interactions with study participants could have been influenced by my advocacy position in my day job, which may have potentially led to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias occurs when respondents provide answers they believe are more socially acceptable or favorable rather than their true thoughts or feelings (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). In the context of this study, participants might have tailored their responses to align with what they perceived to be union-favorable outcomes, thus distorting the data collected. Additionally, some participants with a less-than-favorable view of the school may have chosen not to participate in the study.

COVID-19 Pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the education sector globally, including teacher retention. Although most of the faculty in the selected school were in place before the pandemic, the shift to remote learning, health concerns, and policy changes such as vaccination mandates affected teacher morale and retention (Smith & Judd,

2020). This broader context may have influenced the findings and cannot be fully captured within the study's timeframe.

Lack of Diversity in Roles. Another limitation was the lack of diversity in the positions and roles of individuals included in the study. The research primarily focused on teachers and the principal, omitting perspectives from other administrators, support staff, students, and families (Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006). These stakeholders play distinct roles in shaping school culture and could have provided additional insights into factors affecting teacher retention.

Time Constraints. Time constraints posed challenges to conducting a comprehensive case study. School environments are dynamic, and factors influencing teacher retention can evolve over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the impending retirement of the principal during the study period influenced the data collection timeline and responses. Initial low response rates necessitated a second round of interviews, impacting the depth of data collected. The limited timeframe also constrained the ability to interview additional stakeholders, including families and external partners, who could have provided broader perspectives on school dynamics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In conclusion, while this study offers valuable insights into how one school cultivated a positive culture to promote teacher retention, these findings should be interpreted within the context of its limitations. Future research should aim to include diverse perspectives and longitudinal data collection across multiple schools to enhance generalizability and inform comprehensive strategies for improving teacher retention in varied educational settings.

Implications for Practice

This research can be used to inform future practice by helping to identify structures and practices that contribute to a deeper understanding of key issues, enabling educators and union

leaders to effectively advocate for specific concerns during district-level negotiations and consultations with administrators at all levels of a complex system (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The methodology used in this research can be used to support further labor organizing campaigns to build worker power (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; McAleve & Lawlor, 2023). The AFT and their local counterparts, like the UFT, regularly engage in data collection and cycles of inquiry with both school leaders and their union members. By leveraging the available union resources, the researcher can expand these efforts to collect and analyze data that will help to focus efforts to improve the schools. The recommendation is to schedule regular data collection opportunities to identify places where organizational strengths can be improved and culture can be designed to meet the goals of an organization. These data can be collected through regular distribution of surveys and periodic focus groups to explore and understand the perceptions of organizational culture at different levels.

An important implication for future practice of a union leader stemming from the findings is the critical need to develop and advocate for comprehensive principal development programs focused on EQ and school culture building. Research has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of principals in shaping school culture and fostering environments conducive to teacher satisfaction and retention (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Principals with high EQ demonstrate the ability to understand and manage their own emotions as well as effectively navigate interpersonal relationships within the school community (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). By advocating for professional development initiatives that enhance principals' EQ competencies and their capacity to build positive school cultures, educational stakeholders can potentially mitigate turnover rates and create more supportive working environments for teachers (Grissom et al., 2021). Additionally, by examining the intricate dynamics of school

culture and its influence on teacher retention at this school site, labor organizers can gain valuable insights into the systemic challenges faced by their members. This case study revealed instances of supportive leadership and effective communication channels within schools, contributing to high teacher retention rates (Ingersoll, 2003). Armed with this knowledge, labor organizers can leverage the findings to advocate for policy reforms aimed at enhancing school culture, improving working conditions, expanding professional development opportunities, and fostering collaborative decision-making processes within schools through collective bargaining (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). By examining the intricate dynamics of school culture and its influence on teacher retention at this school site, labor organizers like myself can gain valuable insights into the systemic challenges faced by our members in their schools.

This case study provided a real-world example of how certain policy and contract changes may improve teacher retention rates. Labor organizers can use these data to argue for the implementation of leadership training programs and initiatives aimed at fostering positive school climates (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). Studies of successful school cultures, such as the one highlighted in this study, can be used in union negotiations by providing evidence to bolster the union's proposed reforms and initiatives at the bargaining table such as reductions in micromanagement and paperwork, and school conditions that promote positive school culture (Shen et al., 2012).

Future Research

While the findings of this case study offer valuable insights into the specific dynamics of one educational environment, there are many areas to expand the research to make it applicable

to more school settings. Below, I provide four recommendations for future studies to support school and district leaders with the goal of improving teacher retention:

1. Exploring other positions in the school and how they impact school culture;
2. Looking at the school in connection to external stakeholders;
3. Creating a longitudinal study; and
4. Expanding the exploration of school culture and retention to include additional school sites or districts.

Future Research Recommendations: Inclusion of Other Positions in School Culture Studies

This gap in the literature around other titles and their impact on school culture necessitates a broader exploration to understand fully and address the retention challenges faced by the entire spectrum of school staff. Future research should aim to explore how individuals in various roles, such as paraprofessionals, contribute to and perceive school culture. While existing studies have often focused on the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators, there remains a significant gap in understanding the role played by paraprofessionals and other support staff in shaping the school environment. As Browne-Ferrigno and Allen (2006) highlighted, paraprofessionals, despite not being directly responsible for classroom instruction, play a crucial role in fostering a supportive and conducive learning environment and community connections. By including their perspectives in research inquiries, a more holistic understanding of school culture can be attained.

Paraprofessionals often work closely with teachers and students. Their work provides essential support services and makes important contributions to the overall school culture (Pickett, 2019). Their experiences and perceptions can shed light on aspects of school culture that may not be evident from the perspective of teachers or administrators alone. In School B,

the two paraprofessionals who participated in the focus group expressed that while they felt respected by the school's administration, they often did not feel they received the respect they deserved from other colleagues within the school building. Paraprofessionals may have unique insights into the quality of relationships and communication within the school, the level of collaboration among staff members, and the effectiveness of support systems in place. Moreover, including the voices of paraprofessionals in research endeavors can help identify potential areas for improvement and innovation in school practices and policies to better meet the needs of all stakeholders (Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006). By focusing research to better understand the experiences of paraprofessionals and other school-related professionals besides teachers and administrators, researchers can better understand the school culture more holistically and suggest strategies for enhancing collaboration and support across all roles within educational institutions.

Explore School Culture in Relation to External Stakeholders. School B, like all schools, operates within broader community contexts that significantly shaped its culture and therefore influence outcomes like teacher retention. As microcosms of their surrounding neighborhoods, schools reflect the socioeconomic dynamics, values, and challenges present in their communities (Bryk et al., 2010). While internal factors such as leadership and teacher-student relationships are pivotal, understanding the impact of external stakeholders like partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) on school culture and teacher retention is just as important.

In New York City, external stakeholders like CBOs play crucial roles in shaping school culture by providing wraparound services and community engagement opportunities. These organizations contribute resources, expertise, and support that extend beyond the school walls, impacting both students and educators (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Some examples include

connecting families to resources outside of school hours such as afterschool programs or family support programs such as help finding support around housing or food insecurities. Despite the interconnected nature of schools and communities, existing research often neglects the influence of external stakeholders on school culture and teacher retention, focusing predominantly on internal school dynamics (Johnson et al., 2012).

For instance, in this study at School B, a paraprofessional participating in focus groups described how a CBO partnered with the school influenced his career path. This individual became a paraprofessional because of his initial work in the afterschool program managed by the CBO that he continues to work with after his regular school hours. Such personal narratives underscored the potential of external partnerships in attracting and retaining education professionals who are deeply rooted in their communities.

Research has indicated that leveraging community partnerships through initiatives like “grow your own” programs can enhance teacher retention by nurturing local talent and fostering a sense of commitment to community schools (Stucher et al., 2016). These programs not only recruit educators from within the community but also support their professional growth and retention rates compared to traditionally trained teachers. This approach aligns with the broader goal of strengthening community-school collaborations to improve educational outcomes and create supportive environments for teachers (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Future research should explore the dynamics between school culture and external stakeholders more expansively. This should expressly include a focus on CBOs. Understanding how these stakeholders perceive and interact with school environments can uncover additional factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction and retention (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). By examining these relationships, researchers can identify strategies for leveraging and enhancing

community-school partnerships that will continue to improve the greater school culture and climate.

Conduct Longitudinal Study on School Culture and Teacher Retention. This study was limited by a short period of time. To advance the understanding of how school culture impacts teacher retention over time, I recommend conducting a comprehensive longitudinal study over the course of several years. Such a study would not only track changes in school culture but also explore their implications for teacher satisfaction and retention rates. Current measures like annual school climate surveys provide valuable snapshots of school culture at a given moment, but integrating additional longitudinal instruments can enhance the depth and breadth of analysis.

A longitudinal research design would enable researchers to capture the dynamic nature of school culture and its evolution as influenced by various factors, including changes in leadership. For instance, the pending retirement of a long-term principal at School B serves as a pertinent example of why longitudinal insights are crucial. Through this study, teachers at the school expressed apprehension about the upcoming transition, highlighting concerns about potential shifts in school culture under new leadership. Some teachers, who had previously committed additional years or traveled long distances to remain at the school, voiced uncertainty about their future amid the impending change. Specifically, one teacher talked about teaching one additional year in order to retire the same year as Principal B.

A longitudinal study would allow for the examination of how such changes in leadership impact school culture and subsequently influence teacher commitment and retention rates. By tracking school climate data longitudinally, researchers can identify patterns and trends that may affect teacher job satisfaction and commitment over time and develop supports for new

principals who may be taking over schools with entrenched cultures developed by their predecessors.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies can offer valuable guidance to policymakers and school administrators aiming to implement evidence-based practices for improving teacher retention. By analyzing longitudinal data, researchers can determine whether specific interventions or changes in school culture correlate with improvements or declines in teacher retention rates. This nuanced understanding can inform strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and professional development initiatives tailored to enhance school climate and support teacher well-being (Golafshani, 2003).

Explore School Culture Dynamics Across Schools and Districts. Expanding research on school culture dynamics across schools and districts represents a crucial step towards understanding and improving teacher retention outcomes. By leveraging insights from diverse educational settings and applying theories of organizational development and leadership, this research initiative has the potential to drive meaningful change in educational practice and policy. Expanding the current study to encompass multiple schools and districts offers an opportunity to delve more deeply into the dynamics of school culture and its impact on teacher retention across varied educational contexts. This recommendation advocates for a comprehensive research approach that compares schools with similar student and staff demographics as well as those with contrasting retention rates. By examining these variations, researchers can identify factors contributing to effective school cultures that support long-term teacher retention.

Saphier (2018) emphasized that school culture is not static but can be actively cultivated and developed over time through intentional leadership and professional development efforts.

Similarly, McKee (2011) highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence and leadership in creating positive organizational cultures that enhance employee satisfaction and commitment. Building on these insights, future research should focus on how school leaders can be equipped with the knowledge and skills to foster supportive and resilient organizational cultures that promote teacher retention.

A comparative analysis across multiple schools and districts would enable researchers to explore how variations in leadership practices, professional development opportunities, and community engagement strategies influence school culture and teacher retention outcomes. Schools with high retention rates could serve as models of effective practices, while those with lower retention rates present opportunities for targeted interventions and improvement initiatives.

By utilizing longitudinal data collection methods, researchers can track changes in school culture over time and assess their impact on teacher turnover rates. This approach aligns with the assertion that sustainable organizational cultures are built through continuous learning and adaptation (McKee, 2011). Moreover, it allows for the evaluation of initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership competencies related to EQ, communication, and relationship-building—factors identified as crucial for shaping positive school cultures (Barth, 2002; D’Auria, n.d.; Saphier, 2018).

Practical implications of this research include informing policy decisions and providing evidence-based recommendations for professional development programs tailored to school leaders. These programs can focus on developing leadership capacities that foster inclusive, supportive, and empowering school cultures. Ultimately, by strengthening organizational cultures that support teacher retention, school systems can enhance overall educational quality and stability.

Recommendations for NYC Public Schools and Employee Unions: Policy Recommendations

This section outlines strategic proposals aimed at both NYCPS and the employee unions representing the teachers and other school-related professionals within the NYCPS. These recommendations are designed to address current challenges and improve organizational practices to support teacher satisfaction and retention. While formulating these recommendations, it is important to acknowledge that available data are limited regarding the internal movement of faculty within NYCPS. Current data and policies primarily focus on the needs for external recruitment rather than the longitudinal retention of staff within the system. This gap in data highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that not only attracts new talent but also sustains and nurtures existing faculty members over time. Addressing these areas holistically will be crucial in fostering a stable and supportive environment for educators, thereby enhancing overall teacher satisfaction and retention.

Additionally, it is essential to recognize that while employees in NYCPS are represented by several employee unions, this study focused on teachers. Therefore, the majority of the recommendations for employee labor organizations focus on the work that the UFT can do. However, these recommendations can be expanded for use by other employee organizations and unions within and outside the NYCPS. This inclusive approach ensures that the strategies proposed can benefit a broader range of school-related professionals, fostering a more cohesive and supportive working environment across public school systems and structures.

Recommendations for the NYCPS

It is important for an employer to develop a comprehensive strategy that includes not only the recruitment of faculty, but also the retention at all levels of the system. This section

outlines three key recommendations for NYCPS on the findings of this research: implementing exit surveys for internal transfers; developing policies to support school leader EQ; and conducting regular comprehensive reviews of school and district leaders, such as 365 reviews that include data collected through interviews of all school community stakeholders.

First, comprehensive exit surveys can provide valuable qualitative data on faculty turnover, helping to identify underlying issues such as job satisfaction, workload, leadership effectiveness, and professional development opportunities (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These insights can inform targeted interventions to improve retention and support teacher well-being. Second, developing policies to enhance school leader EQ is essential for fostering positive school cultures and improving both teacher retention and student outcomes (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; McKee, 2011). Lastly, regular 365 reviews conducted by a third-party agency can offer a holistic view of school performance, incorporating feedback from staff to provide targeted professional learning opportunities for school leaders (Creswell & Clark, 2017). By partnering with unions, the NYCPS can implement these recommendations to create a supportive and effective environment for educators within NYCPS.

Implement Exit Surveys for Internal Transfers in NYCPS. Currently, there is no policy to gather and evaluate data that fully describe and document faculty movement within New York City public schools. By implementing comprehensive exit surveys with open-ended questions, NYCPS can gather valuable qualitative data to understand better faculty turnover dynamics and improve retention strategies. These surveys should be designed to include open-ended questions that allow departing teachers to provide qualitative insights into their reasons for leaving. Integrating these surveys into the Open Market process would provide a structured mechanism to capture and analyze data on faculty turnover systematically (Creswell & Clark,

2017). These surveys should be seen as integral components of a broader effort to enhance organizational effectiveness, support teacher well-being, and, ultimately, foster a more stable and satisfied teaching workforce in New York City public schools.

Exit surveys are widely recognized in organizational research as valuable tools for gathering feedback and identifying underlying issues that contribute to turnover (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). By including open-ended questions, NYCPS can gain deeper insights into the specific factors influencing faculty decisions to leave, such as job satisfaction, workload, leadership effectiveness, and professional development opportunities (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These qualitative data complement quantitative metrics by providing narratives and context that illuminate the human aspects of turnover, which are often overlooked in purely statistical analyses (Creswell, 2014). Understanding the reasons behind faculty departures is crucial for developing effective retention strategies tailored to address specific organizational challenges. Research has suggested that organizations benefit significantly from exit surveys by using the feedback to implement improvements in work conditions, leadership practices, and career development opportunities (Allen, 2006; Tett & Meyer, 1993). For instance, insights gained from exit surveys can inform policies aimed at enhancing principal and teacher support systems, fostering a more positive work environment, and aligning organizational goals with employee expectations (Hertz, 2008). Moreover, the integration of exit surveys into the Open Market process aligns with best practices in human resource management, where feedback mechanisms are essential for continuous improvement and strategic decision-making (Creswell, 2014). This structured approach would allow the data to be targeted to look at individual schools and districts to direct resources to where they are most needed around school culture development.

Implement Comprehensive Exit Surveys. To implement exit surveys effectively, NYCPS should develop a standardized digital format that is mandatory for any teacher engaging in the Open Market transfer system. The surveys should be accessible, user-friendly, and designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. Open-ended questions are particularly valuable for eliciting detailed responses that can provide a deeper understanding of the individual and systemic issues leading to faculty movement (Creswell, 2014). Key components of the exit survey include the following:

1. **Reasons for Leaving:** Questions should address why teachers are choosing to leave their current positions through the Open Market transfers and take other positions within the system. This can include factors such as job satisfaction, administrative support, workload, commute, school structures, parking, and school culture.
2. **Work Environment:** Teachers should be asked about their perceptions of the work environment at their previous school, including relationships with school leaders, colleagues, support from administration, resources, support services for students, classroom resources, and overall school climate (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).
3. **Professional Development:** The survey should include questions about the availability and effectiveness of professional development opportunities and what professional opportunities staff would like. Understanding how these opportunities impact teacher satisfaction and retention is crucial for developing supportive policies (Guskey, 2002).
4. **Leadership Effectiveness:** Questions should gauge the effectiveness of school leadership, including communication, support, program implementation, attention to

equity issues, and the ability to foster a positive school culture (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

5. **Job Satisfaction:** General questions about job satisfaction can help identify broader trends and areas of concern that need to be addressed to improve teacher retention (Herzberg, 1966).

Analyze and Utilize Survey Data. The data collected from these exit surveys should be systematically analyzed to identify patterns and trends. This analysis can help NYCPS target interventions and allocate resources more effectively. For example, if a significant number of teachers cite inadequate administrative support as a reason for leaving, the district can implement targeted leadership training programs to address this issue (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Target Support and Resources. One of the primary benefits of implementing exit surveys is the ability to target support and resources to specific schools and districts. By understanding the unique challenges faced by different schools, NYCPS can develop tailored interventions that address the root causes of teacher turnover. This targeted approach can lead to more effective use of resources and improved outcomes for both teachers and students (Ingersoll, 2001).

Improve School Culture and Climate. Exit surveys can also provide valuable insights into the culture and climate of individual schools. Understanding how teachers perceive their work environment can help NYCPS support school leaders in developing strategies to create a more positive and supportive school culture. This, in turn, can lead to higher levels of teacher satisfaction and retention (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Enhance Organizational Effectiveness. Overall, the implementation of exit surveys can enhance the organizational effectiveness of NYCPS by providing a structured mechanism for

continuous feedback and improvement. By systematically capturing and analyzing data on faculty turnover, the district can develop more informed and effective policies that support teacher well-being and retention (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Recommendations for NYCPS: Policies to Support School Leader Emotional Intelligence Development

The interview with Principal B highlighted a critical gap in the support provided by NYCPS around professional development and school culture development. She emphasized the need to seek external support to address these areas on her own, reflecting a broader systemic issue. To enhance teacher satisfaction and retention, I recommend that NYCPS establish clear policies and procedures aimed at supporting school leaders in fostering positive school cultures. Central to this initiative is the provision of comprehensive leadership training focused on enhancing EQ, conflict resolution skills, and community engagement strategies (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; McKee, 2011).

Integrating EQ with resonant leadership can be particularly impactful in this context. Resonant leaders, who are deeply attuned to their own emotions and those of others, are more effective at building strong, supportive relationships within their schools. “Resonant leadership is about the leader’s ability to inspire through emotional intelligence, creating an environment where staff feel valued and motivated” (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 3). By developing their EQ, school leaders can better understand and manage their emotions, which is crucial for addressing conflicts, building trust, and fostering a positive school climate.

Moreover, research by Goleman et al. (2002) indicated that leaders with high EQ are better equipped to create resonant relationships that drive positive change within their organizations. These leaders are not only able to navigate the complexities of school

environments but also to inspire and motivate their teams, leading to higher levels of teacher satisfaction and retention. “The ability to connect with others on an emotional level is a hallmark of resonant leadership and is essential for creating a cohesive, high-performing school culture” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 30).

Importance of EQ in Educational Leadership. EQ plays a crucial role in effective educational leadership, enabling principals to understand and manage their own emotions, empathize with others, and build strong relationships within the school community (McKee, 2011). Research has indicated that EQ can be developed through targeted training programs, leading to improved leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Goleman, 1995). Effective leadership, particularly in education, requires a high degree of EQ. Leaders with high EQ are better equipped to handle the stress and complexity of school environments, and they are more effective at building trust and collaboration among staff (Brackett et al., 2011; Fullan, 2001).

Role of Responsible and Resonant Leadership. To achieve the goal of retaining faculty, NYCPS should adopt responsible and resonant leadership techniques. Responsible leadership emphasizes accountability, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to the well-being of all stakeholders (Pless et al., 2012). Resonant leadership, as described by Boyatzis and McKee (2005), focuses on the ability of leaders to create positive relationships and environments that resonate emotionally with their team members. This kind of leadership is essential for creating a school culture where teachers feel valued, supported, and motivated to perform at their best.

Partnership with the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA).

Implementing these policies should be done in partnership with the Council of Supervisors and

Administrators (CSA), the employee union representing principals, assistant principals, and other administrators within the NYCPS system. The CSA (2020) has a vested interest in the professional development and well-being of school leaders and can provide valuable insights and support for the development and implementation of these policies.

Leadership Training Programs. Leadership training programs should include components that address the development of EQ, responsible and resonant leadership techniques, and practical strategies for conflict resolution and community engagement (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; McKee, 2011). These programs should be mandatory for all current and aspiring school leaders within NYCPS. Research has shown that such training can lead to significant improvements in leadership effectiveness and school performance (Brackett et al., 2011; Goleman, 1995).

Manage the Fractal Nature of School Organizations. Schools function as fractal organizations, where the patterns and behaviors observed at the micro-level (e.g., individual interactions) are reflected at the macro-level (e.g., the overall organizational culture) (Spillane et al., 2001). Understanding and managing this fractal nature is crucial for creating a cohesive and positive school environment. By investing in leadership development that emphasizes the fractal nature of schools, NYCPS can empower principals to cultivate cultures that resonate across all levels of the organization (Barth, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Saphier, 2019).

One example of the fractal nature in schools is the way Principal B communicated with her teachers and set the tone for how teachers communicated with students. If a principal consistently models respectful, empathetic communication, this behavior is likely to be mirrored by teachers in their interactions with students, thereby fostering a culture of respect throughout the school.

Another example is decision-making processes. Shared decision-making about learning involves teachers and administrators collaboratively making decisions that directly impact the educational experiences of students. This approach enhances student achievement by leveraging the expertise of teachers who are closely attuned to their students' needs. When teachers are included in the decision-making process, they are more committed to implementing strategies effectively, which leads to improved student outcomes. Research by Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011) showed that this collaborative involvement boosts teacher motivation and accountability—key factors in promoting student success.

Involving teachers in decision-making also contributes to their professional growth and job satisfaction. When teachers have a voice in shaping the learning environment, they feel more valued and supported, which reduces turnover and creates a more stable educational setting (Ingersoll, 2001). This stability, in turn, benefits students by providing a consistent and supportive learning environment. Additionally, shared decision-making aligns with distributed leadership, which fosters a responsive and adaptable school culture, further enhancing the potential for student achievement (Spillane, 2006).

A third example is the alignment of professional development with school values. When professional development programs are designed to reinforce the school's core values—such as equity, collaboration, and continuous improvement—these values are more likely to permeate every aspect of the school's functioning. This ensures that what is taught in professional development is not just theoretical but becomes an integral part of the school's daily practices.

By managing the fractal nature of school organizations, principals can ensure that positive patterns at one level of the school are echoed throughout the entire organization. This

approach not only enhances the immediate environment but also contributes to the overall health and sustainability of the school system.

Benefits of Emotional Intelligence and Resonant Leadership. Developing EQ and resonant leadership skills among school leaders can have numerous benefits, including improved teacher retention, higher student achievement, and a more positive school climate (Cherniss et al., 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel supported and valued by their leaders, and students benefit from a stable and positive learning environment (Ingersoll, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

Policy Implementation and Evaluation. The implementation of these policies should be accompanied by a robust evaluation framework to assess their effectiveness and impact on school leadership and culture (Guskey, 2002). Regular feedback from school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders should be used to improve and refine the training programs and support structures continuously (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Recommendations for the NYCPS: Implementing 365 Reviews of School and District Leaders

To further enhance school culture and leadership effectiveness within the New York City public schools (NYCPS), I specifically recommend 365 reviews to complement existing school surveys. A 365 review is a comprehensive evaluation process in which feedback is collected from a full circle of an individual's colleagues, including supervisors, peers, subordinates, and sometimes even external stakeholders. This approach provides a holistic view of the individual's performance by capturing diverse perspectives on their strengths, areas for improvement, and overall effectiveness. The 365 review is particularly valuable in educational settings, where school leaders can gain insights into their impact on school culture, teacher morale, and student outcomes. According to Bracken et al. (2016), the 365 review process is instrumental in

promoting self-awareness and professional growth. It also supports leadership development by highlighting areas where school leaders can improve their practices to better support their staff and students (Lepsinger & Lucia, 2009). Additionally, London and Smither (1995) noted that this type of feedback encourages a culture of continuous improvement, while Allen et al. (2020) emphasized that it can lead to more informed decision-making and enhanced organizational effectiveness. The regular 365 reviews should be conducted by a third-party research agency. These reviews focus on assessing how school leaders are perceived by their staff members and provide targeted professional learning opportunities to improve school culture (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Importance of 365 Reviews. Regular 365 reviews provide a comprehensive and systematic approach to evaluating school and district leadership effectiveness. The reviews gather feedback from all stakeholders in the community regarding their perceptions of those leaders (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). By utilizing external research agencies to conduct these reviews, NYCPS can ensure objectivity and reliability in the data collection process, enabling the credibility of the feedback received.

Feedback from 365 reviews serves as a valuable diagnostic tool to identify schools where perceptions of leadership are below average and school culture may be negatively impacted (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Schools with lower ratings can then be targeted for specific professional learning initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership skills, EQ, and fostering positive school cultures (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; McKee, 2011).

Comprehensive Data Collection. A key component of the 365 reviews is the collection of comprehensive data, including teacher churn data and student outcome data. Teacher churn, or turnover, is a critical indicator of school culture and leadership effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2001).

High teacher turnover rates often signal underlying issues in the school environment, such as poor leadership, lack of support, or negative school culture (Simon & Johnson, 2015). By regularly reviewing teacher churn data, school leaders can gain insights into the factors contributing to turnover and implement strategies to address these issues (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Additionally, student outcome data provide essential information on the academic performance and well-being of students, which are directly influenced by the quality of school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2020). Analyzing both teacher churn and student outcome data together offers a more holistic view of the school's performance and areas needing improvement (Grissom et al., 2013).

Inclusion of Union Leaders in the Review Process. The review process should also include data collected from school and district-level union leaders who have been interviewed or surveyed. Union leaders, representing teachers and other staff, offer valuable perspectives on the levels of collaboration and communication within the school culture (Freeman & Rogers, 1999). Their input can highlight areas where school leaders are effectively engaging with staff and areas needing improvement (Weingarten, 2014). This collaborative approach ensures that the review process is comprehensive and considers the views of all key stakeholders, including all titles of the faculty, staff, parents, and students (Johnson, 2019).

Professional Learning Opportunities. Based on the feedback from 365 reviews, NYCPS should provide targeted professional learning opportunities for school leaders. These opportunities should focus on developing key leadership skills, such as EQ, conflict resolution, and effective communication (Fullan, 2001; Goleman, 1995). Professional development programs should be tailored to address the specific needs identified through the review process

and include ongoing support and coaching to ensure sustained improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Impact on School Culture and Leadership Effectiveness. Implementing regular 365 reviews and providing targeted professional learning opportunities can significantly enhance school culture and leadership effectiveness. Research has indicated that effective leadership is crucial for creating positive school cultures, improving teacher retention, and boosting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). By systematically evaluating and supporting school leaders, NYCPS can foster environments where teachers and students thrive (Kraft et al., 2016).

Recommendations for Employee Unions

While these recommendations for NYCPS focus on institutional strategies to enhance retention and support within the school system, it is equally important to address the role of employee unions in this effort. Employee unions, such as the UFT, play a critical role in advocating for and supporting the needs of educators. The following subsection provides specific recommendations for employee unions to collaborate with NYCPS in implementing these initiatives. By working together, both the employer and the unions can create a cohesive strategy that promotes a positive work environment, supports professional development, and, ultimately, improves the educational experience for students and teachers alike.

Role of UFT

Teacher retention and well-being are critical issues that affect the overall quality of education within any school system. In New York City public schools, these challenges are particularly acute. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including employee unions. The UFT, as a key advocate for teachers' rights and well-being,

plays a pivotal role in this process. Following recommendations for the employer, it is crucial to focus on strategies that the UFT can implement to mitigate teacher turnover and enhance the work environment for educators.

Because of their size, employee unions have a large influence on policy decisions at all levels of the NYCPS. In light of the findings from this case study, and the political and policy influence unions have in the NYCPS, I propose two recommendations for the employee unions like the UFT that could significantly enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction. First, implementing regular surveys to assess employee burnout levels is essential to monitor and address the mental and emotional strain experienced by educators (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Conducting these surveys two to three times a year can provide invaluable data that help in targeting interventions and advocating for policy changes and contract provisions aimed at reducing teacher churn. Regularly assessing the experiences of teachers and school-related service providers (SRPs) will help identify specific factors contributing to their professional stress and satisfaction, allowing for the development of targeted advocacy strategies, empowering employees, and creating healthier work environments (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Second, establishing focus groups dedicated to exploring school culture and climate is another crucial step. These focus groups should be inclusive, representing a broad spectrum of union chapters and encompassing diverse perspectives from different schools and districts. By providing a platform for educators to share their experiences, discuss concerns, and propose solutions, focus groups can offer invaluable insights that inform targeted interventions and policy advocacy. This participatory approach not only empowers employees by enhancing their sense of agency, but it also fosters a positive school culture, ultimately leading to improved teacher

satisfaction and retention (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Krueger & Casey, 2014).

The following sections delve into these recommendations in greater detail, outlining how the UFT can leverage surveys and focus groups to address teacher retention and well-being effectively in NYCPS. By implementing these strategies, the union can advocate for necessary changes to policies and contract provisions that create a supportive and sustainable work environment for all educators.

Regular Surveys to Assess Burnout and Job Satisfaction

Teacher retention and well-being are critical issues that affect the overall quality of education within any school system. In New York City public schools (NYCPS), these challenges are particularly acute. The UFT, as a key stakeholder in advocating for teachers' rights and well-being, can play a pivotal role in addressing these issues. One useful strategy the UFT can adopt is implementing regular surveys among its members to assess burnout and job satisfaction. Conducting these surveys a couple times annually can produce invaluable data that will target interventions and advocate for policy changes and contract provisions that can reduce teacher churn.

The Importance of Regular Surveys. Regular surveys are essential for capturing the ongoing experiences of educators and identifying the specific factors that contribute to their professional stress and satisfaction. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), burnout is a significant factor affecting teacher retention. By systematically gathering data on burnout and job satisfaction, unions can gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues teachers face.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) highlighted that job satisfaction and burnout are influenced by various factors, including workload, administrative support, and access to resources. By

including questions that address these aspects in the surveys, unions can gather nuanced insights into the elements that either mitigate or exacerbate burnout. For instance, survey questions could explore workload distribution, level of administrative support, access to professional development opportunities, and adequacy of resources available for teachers to perform their duties effectively.

Benefits of Longitudinal Data. Implementing these surveys regularly allows for the collection of longitudinal data, which is invaluable for tracking changes and trends in teacher well-being over time (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Longitudinal data provide a dynamic view of the teachers' experiences, revealing how various factors and policies impact their well-being over different periods. This approach enables the identification of long-term trends and the evaluation of how effective recently implemented policies are.

For example, if a new policy aimed at reducing administrative tasks for teachers is introduced, the surveys can track its impact on teacher burnout and job satisfaction over several months or years. These data can highlight whether the policy is successful or needs further adjustments. Moreover, longitudinal data can pinpoint emerging issues that require immediate attention before they escalate into more significant problems.

Targeted Advocacy Strategies

Systematically analyzing the data collected from these surveys enables unions to develop targeted advocacy strategies to address the root causes of burnout and dissatisfaction. For instance, if surveys reveal a high level of stress due to increased administrative tasks, the UFT can push for policy changes that redistribute these tasks or provide additional support to teachers. Similarly, if a significant number of teachers report feeling unsupported in their professional development, the union can advocate for more robust professional learning opportunities.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) emphasized the importance of supportive professional development in enhancing teacher satisfaction and retention. By using survey data to advocate for better professional development programs, the UFT can help create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported, thereby reducing turnover rates.

Empower Teachers and Enhance School Culture. Beyond immediate policy advocacy, regular surveys empower teachers by giving them a voice in the policymaking process. If members see their union apply the data gathered, then this participatory approach may ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed, enhancing their sense of agency and investment in their professional environment. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) argued that teacher participation in decision-making processes is crucial for fostering a positive school culture.

When teachers feel that their opinions matter and they can influence policies affecting their work, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles. This sense of empowerment can lead to a more positive and collaborative school culture, which is essential for both teacher retention and student success.

Identify High-Need Areas. Possibly most importantly, these surveys can identify specific schools or districts where teachers are experiencing dissatisfaction with their work. This information enables the employee union to focus its advocacy, support, and resources where they are most needed. By targeting interventions and support mechanisms effectively, unions can work to create healthier work environments that promote teacher retention and job satisfaction.

For example, if survey data indicated that teachers in a particular district were experiencing high burnout due to inadequate administrative support, the union can prioritize efforts to address this issue in that district. The union may work with district leaders to implement specific support measures such as professional development cycles specific to titles

like paraprofessionals or tailored to the needs and interests of a smaller group. This targeted approach ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and interventions have the greatest possible impact.

Case Studies and Real-World Examples. Several case studies illustrate the effectiveness of regular surveys in addressing teacher retention and well-being. For instance, a study conducted in California by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that regular surveys played a crucial role in identifying key stressors for teachers, such as excessive workload, lack of administrative support, and insufficient professional development opportunities. By addressing these issues through targeted interventions, the study reported a significant reduction in burnout rates and a subsequent increase in teacher retention. This research highlighted how data-driven approaches can pinpoint specific challenges faced by educators, enabling unions and school districts to implement focused strategies that directly address the root causes of teacher dissatisfaction.

Similarly, in Finland, Sahlberg (2015) documented how regular surveys have been instrumental in monitoring teacher well-being across the country. The Finnish education system, renowned for its high levels of teacher satisfaction and low turnover rates, utilizes survey data to continuously adapt and improve working conditions for educators. This has led to policy changes that not only enhance job satisfaction but also contribute to the overall attractiveness of the teaching profession in Finland. Sahlberg's study underscored the importance of an ongoing dialogue between teachers and policymakers, facilitated by regular feedback mechanisms, in maintaining a healthy and motivated teaching workforce.

These examples demonstrated that regular surveys are not merely a theoretical recommendation but a practical strategy with proven benefits when used to inform decision-

making. By adopting a similar approach, the UFT can expand its mission of labor organizing to further improve teacher well-being and retention in New York City public schools (NYCPS). By systematically collecting and analyzing survey data, the UFT can identify specific districts or schools where teachers are most at risk of burnout and advocate for tailored interventions, such as increased administrative support or professional development tailored to teachers' needs. Additionally, the union can use these data to push for broader policy changes at the district and city levels, ensuring that the voices of teachers are heard and acted upon in a meaningful way. This proactive approach not only aligns with the union's goals of improving working conditions but also contributes to building a more resilient and sustainable educational system in New York City.

Establish Focus Groups Within Their Bargaining Units Dedicated to Exploring School Climate and Culture

To address the complexities of school culture and its impact on teacher retention effectively, NYCPS employee unions should establish focus groups dedicated to exploring these issues. To ensure that the data collected are useful, it is recommended that a variety of focus groups be used that crosscut across boundaries and represent a broad spectrum of union chapters that encompasses diverse perspectives from different bargaining units, schools, and districts. By doing so, unions like the UFT can ensure a full understanding of the organizational challenges and opportunities faced by educators across the system. The establishment of these focus groups can play a pivotal role in targeting interventions and advocating for changes to policies and contract provisions that reduce teacher churn within the system.

Benefits of Focus Groups in Exploring School Climate and Culture. Focus groups provide a unique and in-depth method of understanding school climate and culture,

complementing other data collection methods such as surveys and interviews. Krueger and Casey (2014) highlighted that focus groups offer rich, qualitative insights that might not emerge from quantitative data alone. This interactive approach allows participants to share their experiences, discuss concerns, and propose solutions in a supportive and collaborative environment.

Diverse Perspectives and Comprehensive Understanding. By including representatives from various union chapters and ensuring that discussions reflect the diversity of the educational workforce, focus groups can capture a wide range of perspectives. This inclusivity is crucial for understanding the unique contexts of different schools and districts, which can vary significantly in terms of resources, student demographics, and administrative support. Additionally, holding focus groups in all five boroughs ensures that geographical challenges and the diverse needs of teachers across the city are considered.

Inform Union Advocacy Efforts. The insights gained from these focus groups can significantly inform union advocacy efforts in several ways. First, they help identify common issues and trends related to school culture and climate that affect teacher satisfaction and retention. Understanding these issues in detail allows unions to advocate for targeted policies and interventions that address the root causes of teacher dissatisfaction. For instance, Berkovich and Eyal (2017) emphasized that a positive school climate is crucial for teacher retention and job satisfaction.

Identify and Share Best Practices. Focus groups can also highlight best practices and successful strategies already in place in some schools, which can be replicated or adapted in others. Bryk et al. (2010) suggested that peer-to-peer learning is invaluable for disseminating practical solutions and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. For example, if certain

schools have developed effective mentorship programs for new teachers or innovative approaches to fostering community engagement, these examples can be shared and promoted across the district.

Strengthen Union Members' Trust in Union Advocacy and Activism. Empowering union members through active involvement in decision-making processes is essential for strengthening their trust in union advocacy and activism. When union members, particularly teachers, are included in discussions that shape their work environment, they are more likely to trust the union's ability to represent their interests effectively. This participatory approach fosters a deeper connection between members and the union, as teachers feel that their voices are not only heard but also valued in the policymaking process. According to McKee (2011), this sense of agency is crucial for fostering a positive school culture, as it encourages teachers to take ownership of the decisions that impact their professional lives.

Moreover, involving teachers in decision-making builds a stronger sense of community and collective responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions, reinforcing their trust in the union's advocacy efforts. Saphier (2017) emphasized that when teachers collaborate with union leaders in shaping school policies, it not only enhances morale but also solidifies a shared commitment to improving the educational environment. This collaborative approach is further supported by research from Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011), who found that inclusive leadership practices that involve teachers in decision-making are linked to higher levels of trust and engagement within schools. Additionally, Bryk and Schneider (2002) highlighted that trust is a critical component of effective school reform, and when union members trust their leaders, they are more likely to support and engage in union-led initiatives.

By actively involving union members in discussions and decisions that affect their work environment, unions can strengthen their members' trust in their advocacy and activism. This, in turn, enhances the union's ability to mobilize its members around key issues, leading to more effective collective action and better outcomes for both teachers and students.

Case Studies and Real-World Applications. Several case studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of focus groups in addressing workplace culture and climate. For instance, a study conducted in Massachusetts by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that regular focus groups with teachers were instrumental in identifying key stressors such as workload, lack of administrative support, and inadequate professional development. The feedback gathered from these focus groups enabled school administrators to implement targeted interventions, including workload adjustments and improved professional development opportunities, which significantly enhanced the overall school climate. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) highlighted that “teachers felt more valued and supported when their concerns were heard and acted upon, leading to improved job satisfaction and a more positive school environment” (p. 594).

Similarly, in Finland, focus groups have been effectively utilized to monitor teacher well-being and inform policy changes that have significantly enhanced job satisfaction and retention. Sahlberg (2015) described how these focus groups provided teachers with a platform to express their concerns and share their experiences, which directly influenced national education policies. These policies included measures to reduce teacher workload, improve professional development, and ensure better work-life balance. Sahlberg noted that “the continuous feedback loop created by these focus groups has been a key factor in maintaining Finland's high levels of teacher satisfaction and low turnover rates” (p. 87). This approach

underscores the importance of regular, structured dialogue between teachers and policymakers in fostering a supportive and sustainable educational environment.

These studies illustrated that focus groups are not just a tool for gathering information but are essential for creating responsive and effective interventions that improve workplace culture and climate. By regularly engaging with teachers through focus groups, educational institutions can better understand the challenges faced by educators and develop strategies that lead to lasting improvements in teacher well-being and retention.

These examples highlighted that focus groups are not merely a theoretical recommendation but a practical strategy with proven benefits. By adopting a similar approach, the UFT can make substantial strides in improving teacher well-being and retention in NYCPS.

Advocacy for Policy Changes. Based on the findings from these focus groups, NYC labor unions can advocate for policies that support positive school cultures. For example, unions could push for professional development programs focused on building positive school climates. McKee (2011) emphasized the importance of such programs in creating a supportive and engaging work environment. Additionally, unions can advocate for policies that address specific issues identified in focus groups, such as workload distribution, administrative support, and access to resources.

Example of Successful Policy Advocacy. One successful example of policy advocacy informed by focus group findings comes from the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). In response to insights gathered from teacher focus groups, the CTU successfully advocated for policies that reduced class sizes, increased funding for school counselors, and improved professional development opportunities (Bryk et al., 2010). These changes had a significant positive impact on teacher satisfaction and retention, demonstrating the potential effectiveness of this approach.

Implement Focus Groups in NYCPS Employee Unions Such as the UFT. To implement focus groups effectively, NYCPS employee unions like the UFT should follow a structured approach:

1. **Inclusivity and Representation:** Ensure that focus groups are inclusive, representing a broad spectrum of union chapters and encompassing diverse perspectives from different schools and districts.
2. **Regular Scheduling:** Hold focus groups regularly, at least two to three times a year, to capture ongoing changes and trends in school culture and climate.
3. **Geographical Consideration:** Conduct focus groups in all five boroughs to account for geographical challenges and ensure that the diverse needs of teachers across the city are considered.
4. **Structured Discussion:** Use a structured discussion guide to ensure that all relevant topics are covered, including workload distribution, administrative support, access to resources, and professional development opportunities.
5. **Data Analysis and Reporting:** Analyze the data collected from focus groups systematically and report findings to union leadership to inform advocacy efforts.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Protocol Title: William Woodruff Dissertation

Principal William Woodruff

Investigator: 2500 Halsey Street

Bronx, NY 20462

718-379-6200

You are being invited to participate in a research study that is a part of my doctoral dissertation. Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate or not participate, there will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any questions about your rights as a human research participant at any time before, during or after participation, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (215) 898-2614 for assistance.

This research project has been designed to help develop a better understanding of how to retain teachers. Right now, the US is experiencing a shortage of teachers. Your participation is key in understanding what schools can do to better recruit and retain teachers.

If you agree to join the research study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete and consists both of multiple-choice questions and some short answer questions. Additionally, a small group of members from your school community will be invited to participate in an interview about your school culture. Those

interviews will be scheduled via zoom and take approximately 45 minutes to an hour to complete. Individual interviews will be recorded and transcribed. In order to not disrupt instructional time, all surveys and interviews will be completed outside of your regular work hours.

While direct identifiers WILL NOT be included in the final dissertation, because of the small data pool used I cannot guarantee full confidentiality. Indirect identifiers such as the school community you are a part of may be used even though your name will not. There is not expected to be any risk of injury from this study.

Any participant who is selected for, and completes, the interview will be compensated with a \$25.00 Donor's Choose Gift Card. The gift card can be applied to a project in their classroom or at their school.

At the conclusion of the study all participants will be provided access to read the finished dissertation. All individual participant direct identifiers will be held confidential in a data encrypted secure file. After 5 years, all participant identifiers will be destroyed.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY SECTIONS

Section 2

The second section of the survey was the Maslach MBI for Educator's tool. It is not published here to comply with copyright rules and regulations.

Section 3:

Name:

Contact Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

Number of years worked in the DOE: Less than 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, more than 5

In the last 5 years have you received an overall rating of U or I? If so what years?

Are you tenured?

What school do you work in?

What is your title? How many years have you been at your current school?

Section 4:

- 1. Why did you decide to work in your current school?**
- 2. What is your favorite part of your current school?**
- 3. What is your least favorite part of your current school?**
- 4. How long do you plan on remaining in your current position? What factors led you to this decision?**
- 5. Are you willing to participate in an interview with the researcher?**

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview should take approximately 45 minutes. At the end of the study, the dissertation will be made available for all interview participants to read via email. It is not expected that any part of this interview protocol should cause you any discomfort. However, I can provide you with the number for the DOE or the UFT support systems as applicable if needed.

1. What do you think it takes to be a highly effective teacher?
2. When hiring teachers to work at your school building what qualities do (you or your administrator as applicable) look for?
3. What is the interview process for being hired at your school building?
4. Describe what you feel your relationship should be like with your supervisor?
5. What are the most important things that you feel will help support teachers?
6. How do you interact with members of your school community during work hours?
7. How do you interact with members of your school community outside of work hours?
8. What is the single most important quality a school leader should have? Why?

For Administrators Only:

9. What would you do if you encountered teachers who are resistant to change?
10. A teacher gives an unsatisfactory lesson. What steps do you put in place to improve their teaching practice in future lessons?
11. How do you develop a supervisory relationship with a teacher who has 25 years of experience and sees you as having less experience?
12. How do you use teacher input when deciding on professional learning opportunities?

For Teachers Only:

9. What are the parts of your school that encourage you to return or convinced you to leave?
10. What are 5 things you think could be changed that would improve the working conditions of this school site?
11. Describe what you feel your relationship should be like with your principal.
12. What supports do you feel are available and useful to you for improving your teaching practice?
13. What would you do if you received feedback from a supervisor that you did not agree with?
14. What professional learning opportunities has the school provided for you? Do you feel these professional learning opportunities have been helpful?

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