

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER RETENTION AT INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dennis Glen Chapman

A DISSERTATION

in

Educational Leadership

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

Degree of Doctor of Education

2024

Supervisor of Dissertation:

Abigail Gray, Adjunct Assistant Professor

Dean, Graduate School of Education:

Katharine O. Strunk, Dean and Professor

Dissertation Committee:

Abigail Gray, Adjunct Assistant Professor

Janet Pullen, Lecturer and Adjunct Professor

Anne McKee, Adjunct Professor

*The dissertation process has been a journey. I was blessed to have many people by my side throughout the process, and I will acknowledge them in the next section. I want to dedicate this dissertation to my late mother-in-law, Teresa Neal. She loved this research because she loved me. Yes, she embodied it as a lifelong early childhood educator who was a servant leader in every role she held. She always put everyone's needs before hers and embodied the Fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. She had a way to make each person feel special. For me, outside of my wife and my mother, she was my biggest supporter. She always took time to listen as I talked her ear off about this research and what was happening in my school at the time. I will miss her dearly, and I know she is looking down from Heaven with pride on her favorite (and only) son-in-law. Teresa, I hope I made you proud. I love and miss you dearly.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who was the ultimate Servant Leader. Thank you for the many blessings in life. I am beyond blessed.

As head of a school named The Village School (TVS), we like to say, “It Takes a Village.” As I think about my “village,” I am blessed with many people who have supported me along this journey.

To my family -- First, to my amazing wife, Brooke. Thank you for your constant encouragement and belief in me. You know me better than I know myself and are always there for me. Thank you for your understanding and patience while juggling this program and my main duties as husband, father, and Head of School. I love you always and forever.

To my children -- Carly and Cooper. You probably still do not know why your Dad would go back to school at 50 years old. I hope my pursuit of this doctoral degree inspired you to reach for your dreams, no matter how old you might be. If I can do it, you certainly can! I love you both and am proud of the young adults that you are becoming right before my eyes.

To my TVS Family -- to my supportive Board of Trustees and incredible Leadership Team at TVS. You had my back from day one of this journey and I am grateful for your encouragement, care, and support throughout this journey. I want to especially thank and acknowledge my amazing Executive Assistant, Regina Maxfield. You took the time to read, edit, and proofread my work. You took care of all my travel throughout this program. And you were a listening ear when I was ready to throw in the towel or felt overwhelmed. We made it! To my UPenn Community -- I was blessed with a tremendous Chair, Dr. Abby Gray. Thank you for your patience and support during this entire process! I also had a stellar Committee, Dr. Annie

McKee and Dr. Jan Pullen. I am grateful for your feedback and encouraging feedback to improve this dissertation throughout the process.

To the members of my cohort -- Thank you to my Quant Partner, David Miller, who spent hours helping his math-challenged friend. And, to the 20th Floor/Diamond Dogs Crew -- Megan Dean, Meredith Mehra, Pedro Rivera, and Sue Thompson. We did it!

## **ABSTRACT**

### **SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER RETENTION AT INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Dennis Glen Chapman

Abigail Gray

My study asks whether the intent of teachers in independent schools to stay at or leave their school is related to the servant leadership characteristics of their head of school. There are few studies on servant leadership, particularly its influence on teacher retention in independent schools. The servant leadership model has much appeal on face validity; however, the research is thin. Therefore, I studied servant leadership's attributes found in research on transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993) and emotionally intelligent leadership (Goleman et al., 2000). This study examines how these leadership constructs may apply and contribute to the literature on servant leadership. I used a mixed-methods approach to this study. I first shared a survey with all faculty members affiliated with the National Association of Independent Schools. Then, I requested 60-minute interviews with a subset of survey respondents to explore this concept more. Through this mixed-methods approach, I first analyzed quantitative data to understand if there is a relationship between the leadership characteristics associated with servant leadership and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools. I used qualitative analysis to explore, in a deeper way, if the leadership characteristics of the head of school influence teachers' intent to stay at their independent school. I found that the servant leadership attributes of the head of school do influence the desire of teachers to remain at their schools. For those looking to leave their school, compensation is important; however, for those looking to stay at their school, it is

less important than the servant leadership attributes of their head of school. Further, these attributes lead them to experience a sense of purpose in their work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Researcher’s Role and Positionality .....	1
Background and Context.....	2
Research Questions.....	2
Conceptual Framework.....	3
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
Independent School Structure.....	6
Background.....	6
The Head of School .....	7
Research on Teacher Retention .....	9
Public School Teacher Retention.....	9
Independent School Teacher Retention .....	10
The Impact of COVID-19.....	10
Teacher Retention Post-Pandemic .....	10
Excessive Teacher Turnover Post-COVID.....	11
Teacher Retention in Independent Schools Post-COVID.....	12
Similarities and Differences Between Public and Independent School Teacher Retention.....	15
Educator Conditions.....	16
Faculty Culture.....	17
Background.....	17
Faculty Sense of Belonging and Recognition.....	18
Teacher Compensation.....	20
Background.....	20
Faculty Feeling Valued and Seen .....	21
Curricular Autonomy .....	22
Faculty Feeling Trusted and Supported .....	23
Sense of Purpose.....	24
Leadership Styles .....	25
Head of School as an Architect Leader.....	25
Servant Leadership.....	25
Transformational Leadership .....	29
Emotionally Intelligent Leadership.....	30

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	31
Research Context and Demographics .....	31
Research Design.....	31
Methodological Approach/Type of Study .....	31
Survey Data Preparation .....	33
Data Analysis Approach .....	34
Quantitative: Research Question 1.....	35
Sample.....	35
Data Instrument: Survey .....	36
Analytic Process.....	38
Survey Data Analysis.....	39
Qualitative: Research Questions 2 and 3 .....	40
Interview Selection Process .....	40
Participant Sample .....	41
Selection of Interview Participants .....	41
Summary of Participant Demographics .....	44
Data Instrument: Semi-Structured Interviews .....	45
Qualitative Coding .....	46
Interviews.....	46
Data Analysis .....	47
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	49
Introduction.....	49
Sample Characteristics.....	49
Quantitative Findings for Research Question 1 .....	50
Qualitative Findings for Research Question 2 .....	58
Theme 1: Communication.....	59
Strong Communication Skills.....	60
Inspirational Communicator .....	60
Articulates a Clear Vision.....	61
Good Listener.....	62
Open Feedback Loop .....	62
Closed Feedback Loop.....	63
Positive Messaging .....	64
Poor Communication Skills .....	64
Theme 2: Creating a Culture of Appreciation.....	66
Showing Appreciation .....	66
Not Feeling Appreciated.....	67
Theme 3: Compassion: Feeling Valued, Heard, and Seen.....	67
Feeling Valued and Seen .....	68
Feeling Heard.....	69
Feeling Supported .....	69
Not Feeling Valued and Seen .....	70
Not Feeling Heard.....	71
Not Feeling Supported .....	72



Theme 4: Connection .....	73
Theme 5: Cultivating Trust.....	74
Trust Through Having Curricular Autonomy .....	75
Lack of Trust Leads to Unhappiness with the Head of School’s Leadership.....	76
Lack of Trust Leads to an Unhealthy Culture.....	77
Qualitative Findings for Research Question 3 .....	78
Theme 6: Compensation .....	79
Transparent Compensation .....	79
Fair Compensation .....	80
Nontransparent Compensation.....	81
Unfair Compensation .....	81
Theme 7: Coaching the Administrative Team .....	82
Strong Administrative Teams .....	83
Weak Administrative Teams.....	84
Sense of Purpose .....	85
Summary of Key Findings .....	85
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS .....	87
Introduction.....	87
Recommendations for Practice .....	87
Emphasize Effective Communication.....	87
Invest in Leadership Development .....	89
Foster Connection and Trust.....	90
Prioritize Fair Compensation .....	90
Involve Faculty in Decision-Making Activities.....	91
Scholarly Contributions .....	92
Limitations .....	94
Not Feeling Heard.....	95
Nontransparent Compensation.....	95
Not Feeling Supported .....	95
Sense of Purpose .....	96
Implications for Future Study .....	98
Final Summary and Conclusions .....	98
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Survey .....	100
Appendix B: NAIS School Demographics .....	107
Appendix C: Interview Protocol .....	108
Appendix D: Code Book.....	109
Appendix E: Participant Demographics of the Sample .....	113
Appendix F: Informed Consent .....	115
Appendix G: Email to NAIS Faculty.....	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	117

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Interview Participants by Group .....	43
Table 2. Interview Participant Demographics .....	44
Table 3. Future Plans of the Respondents.....	51
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Head of School Responses on Importance of Leadership Characteristics.....	52
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on Importance of Leadership Characteristics for Heads of School Looking to Leave Their School .....	53
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics on Importance of Leadership Characteristics for Heads of School Looking to Stay at Their School .....	54
Table 7. Results of Test for Relationship of Individual Head-of-School Leadership Characteristics to Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay .....	55
Table 8. Results of Test for Influence of Head-of-School Leadership Characteristics on Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay .....	56
Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Factors Influencing Teacher Intent to Leave.....	57
Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Factors Influencing Teacher Intent to Stay .....	57
Table 11. Results of Test for Influence of Predictors on Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay.....	58

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Role of the Head of School in Independent School Teacher Retention.....	5
Figure 2. 2021-22 ISM Research: What Factors Predict the Likelihood a Teacher Says They Will Remain at Your School? .....	15
Figure 3. Explanatory Sequential Design .....	32

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

I was interested in learning how the Head of School's leadership characteristics, specifically those associated with a servant leader, might relate to teachers' intent to stay at independent schools. This topic significantly impacts my work as a Head of School of an independent school. My interest in this topic is multi-layered. I am specifically interested in leadership styles and their influence on teacher retention. At my school, The Village School of Naples, we have experienced challenges retaining our teachers in the last couple of years for myriad reasons. These include (a) the cost of living in Naples, Florida; (b) the amount we charge for tuition, which is less than our competitors and thus hampers our ability to pay teachers at the top of the local market; and (c) leadership turnover at the division head level. Due to these challenges, I was interested in surveying teachers nationwide about the characteristics of their Head of School and whether servant leadership qualities could lead to higher levels of teacher retention.

### **Researcher's Role and Positionality**

I am Head of School for The Village School of Naples. I am in my sixth year as Head, and this is my second headship; my first was 4 years long. I identify as a White, straight male and am 52 years old. I am interested in this topic because schools in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) have experienced significant teacher attrition since COVID-19. I want to understand if there is anything my fellow Heads of School and I can do to curb it. I want to understand what is essential to teachers and share this information with my fellow heads. I exercised reflexivity to remain active and aware of monitoring my role within the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I approached this process as a mid-career doctoral student from the University of

Pennsylvania, which helped in the response rate with faculty. It was essential for them to understand that, even though I am a Head of School in NAIS, in this capacity, I am analyzing their survey data and interview information as a researcher, and all of their answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymized. I did not share that I was a Head of School in the email request.

### **Background and Context**

As I contextualized this study, I explored the following topics: Is there a relationship between Head of School leadership styles and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools? How important are the leadership characteristics of the Head of School to teachers, and how do they affect teachers' experiences? While teacher retention challenges exist in all public, private, independent, and charter schools, I hypothesized that teachers decided to teach in independent schools for specific reasons. A Head of School can address those particular reasons at an independent school. Because of the unique reasons that draw teachers to independent schools and why they intend to stay at their independent schools, I looked to understand if a servant leadership style influences faculty members in their intent to stay at their independent schools.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were established to guide this study:

1. Is there a relationship between the servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools?
2. How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school?

3. To what extent and in what ways do the teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work, and is it related to their Head of School's servant leadership attributes?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In an independent school setting, I hypothesize that the Head of School can help offset teacher attrition and retain more teachers by being an empathetic leader, listening to teachers' needs, helping to support them, and being authentic, which are characteristics of a servant leader, as defined by the originator of the concept, Robert Greenleaf (1970). Greenleaf developed the construct of servant leadership in juxtaposition to a command and control/authoritative style of leadership based on his work experiences throughout his career. I will further elaborate on the servant leadership style as well as illuminate the characteristics of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993) and emotionally intelligent leadership (Goleman et al., 2000). Any school leader can learn to embody the characteristics of servant leadership in their schools. I hypothesize that teachers in independent schools may indicate that they intend to stay longer at their schools due to the leadership characteristics of their Head of School.

In reviewing the research on servant leadership, transformational leadership, and emotionally intelligent leadership, I found that several concepts were present in one or more of these theories. Empathy was found in both emotionally intelligent leadership and servant leadership. Motivation was found in transformational leadership and emotionally intelligent leadership. Communication was found in emotionally intelligent leadership and servant leadership. These similar leadership paradigms provided research-based attributes to strengthen my conceptual framework. In particular, I utilized the empathy and communication themes to inform my conceptual framework.

My conceptual framework is built on understanding the factors that lead to teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools and whether certain characteristics of servant leaders impact their desire to remain at their schools. In independent schools, parents pay tuition for the best teachers to teach their children, and the issue of teacher retention is exponentially crucial to heads of schools as 80% to 85% of their operating budget comes from tuition dollars (NAIS, 2019). Parents tend to stay at an independent school when they experience less teacher turnover, so teacher retention is one of the most critical metrics all Heads of Schools should review on a consistent basis (Independent School Management [ISM], 2022).

In my conceptual framework, the Head of School at an independent school significantly influences teacher retention. This is based on how independent schools are designed and operated, which differs from their public school counterparts, which I will describe in greater detail in my review of the literature. This distinction is essential because public school teachers have historically reported that the three top reasons they leave the profession are “low salaries, rampant student discipline problems, and little faculty input into school decision-making” (Ingersoll, 1997, p. 1). Independent schools can provide fair compensation based on enrollment and tuition rates, as they have an admission process. They can counsel students out of their schools if they create disciplinary concerns. They can also consistently provide opportunities for faculty input into overall school decision-making processes related to curriculum and other key areas.

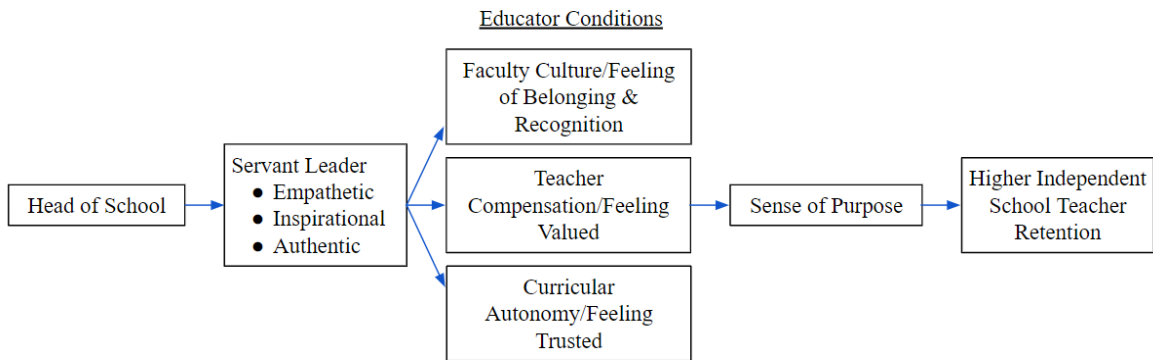
As I have read in the research, teachers stay at their independent schools if they feel a sense of belonging and recognition and are valued and trusted by their administrators (ISM, 2022). I hypothesize that these three factors, which are felt by teachers as a result of the leadership characteristics of a servant leader, lead to a sense of purpose in their work (Crippen,

2004). First, as the leader of the school, the Head of School creates and maintains the faculty culture (see Figure 1). In a positive faculty culture, teachers will feel a sense of belonging and recognition from their Head of School (Sedgwick & Yonge, 2008). Second, teachers will feel valued if they are compensated fairly and transparently by their Head of School (Aydin, 2019). Finally, Heads of Independent Schools can provide curricular autonomy, which gives teachers a sense of trust (Day et al., 2007).

**Figure 1**

*The Role of the Head of School in Independent School Teacher Retention*

Conceptual Framework  
 The Role of the Head of School in Independent School Teacher Retention  
 Dennis Chapman





## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW**

I focused my literature review on four areas. First, I discuss independent schools and the role of the Head of School. Next, I summarize key findings from the research on teacher retention in general and at independent schools. Third, I explore the importance of certain educator conditions, such as faculty culture, teacher compensation, and teacher autonomy, for independent school teachers. I looked to answer the question: Does the literature suggest a relationship between these three factors and teachers' feelings of belonging, value, and trust? If so, do these factors contribute to a sense of purpose at their school and influence their intent to stay at their current school? Next, I reviewed three types of leadership styles. I analyzed servant leadership, and I illuminated the leadership characteristics of transformational leadership and emotionally intelligent leadership. I show how certain characteristics in each of these two research-based leadership styles are found in the servant leadership model. Further, I wanted to understand the qualities and characteristics of a successful school leader. Are there certain leadership styles that lead to higher teacher retention? If so, how might these leadership characteristics impact teachers intent to stay at their schools?

### **Independent School Structure**

#### ***Background***

As I stated, independent schools are fundamentally designed differently than public schools. Independent schools have origins dating back to the 1800s (Kane, 1991). According to the NAIS (2022a), they were based on having independence in governance, finance, curriculum, faculty, and student selection. Independent schools are primarily funded by tuition at nearly 80%, while the rest is derived from philanthropy and auxiliary income (NAIS, 2022a). Independent schools have independence in how they are funded and how they compensate their employees.

At an independent school, the Board of Trustees, which is a self-perpetuating board, oversees the school's mission, maintains fiduciary oversight, and oversees their sole employee, the Head of School (NAIS, 2022a).

### ***The Head of School***

The Head of School has a significant role in independent schools (NAIS, 2020). The Head of School runs the school's operations and recruits and retains faculty, staff, and administrators. The Head of an Independent School leads the culture, oversees teacher compensation, and typically provides curricular autonomy for their faculty, among many other responsibilities. Independent school heads are positioned to provide a positive work climate and allow for more teaching control than their public school counterparts, which are governed by standardized testing.

Heads of Schools need teachers to know that what they do matters, as belief in the mission is the number one reason independent school teachers choose private over public schools (ISM, 2022). The Head of School is the keeper of the culture (NAIS, 2022a). The Head sets the tone for the administration, faculty, and staff. This responsibility is essential, as some of the main reasons teachers choose independent schools over public schools are having autonomy over the delivery of the curriculum, having the opportunity to work with and build relationships with fellow teachers, and being part of a healthy culture (Kane, 1991). One recent MIT Sloan School of Management study found that money is no longer the sole factor that keeps people in their jobs (Sull et al., 2022). People also seek connection, recognition, and culture. Researchers found that a toxic culture was the number one factor in employees leaving their jobs during the Great Resignation that followed the COVID-19 pandemic (De Smet et al., 2021). How can the Head of School ensure a positive culture and eliminate toxicity?

The Head of School oversees budget allocation, including tuition pricing, salary, benefits, and the budget for instructional materials and professional development (NAIS, 2020). The Head of School and their designee, typically the Chief Financial Officer, create the operating budget and bring it to the Board of Trustees for approval. Within the budget, tuition is set and approved for the following fiscal year, and increases in the salaries for the administration, faculty, and staff are within the approved budget. In addition to the Chief Financial Officer, the Head of School typically has several direct reports that they supervise. They include the division heads (principals), admissions, development, athletics, and the arts. Because the Head of School is the person who proposes the budget to the Board of Trustees and is ultimately responsible for how the budget is spent, this structure allows the Head of School to allocate salaries and benefits to the staff (NAIS, 2020). Finally, the Head of School also gives teachers autonomy over how they teach the curriculum, which is one of many shared decision-making opportunities typically afforded to faculty at independent schools. The literature shows that independent school teachers value curricular autonomy (ISM, 2022). These are some of the unique characteristics of independent schools.

Recently, the NAIS conducted a study using the Jobs-to-be-Done methodology, which is based on the theory that consumers hire or fire a product or service to fulfill a particular job to be done (NAIS, 2022b). Through this framework, the researchers explored why teachers left their previous jobs to start new ones. Essentially, the teachers are the consumer and they are firing their job. Using this methodology, the researchers spoke with current and former teachers who had recently switched jobs, new teachers transitioning from other fields, and those just graduating from college. This study found that independent school teachers leave schools that fail to deliver on one or more of three jobs to be done. The first was someone who did not find

their current non-teaching job fulfilling and left to become an independent school teacher. The second was the public school teacher who left their previous teaching position because they did not feel the administration supported them. The third felt stressed about their former public school teaching job and felt they needed to escape their former school. They valued work-life balance. They found that active listening in interviews was one good way to understand the three types of teachers coming to their independent school and how they could help them feel satisfied with their job at their school.

## **Research on Teacher Retention**

### ***Public School Teacher Retention***

As I considered this topic for my dissertation, I first needed to answer whether teacher retention is an issue beyond my school. I found significant empirical research on teacher retention conducted in the public school kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) sector (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2004). These studies have been conducted for the last two decades. I did not find the same amount in private or independent school sectors. Teacher mobility in the public school sector is a long-standing issue that has been studied for several decades (Ingersoll, 2003). Nearly 20 years ago, a study was conducted where 40% to 50% of the teachers who were new to the profession said they would be leaving teaching entirely after 5 years (Ingersoll, 2003). Gray and Taie (2015) produced a 5-year longitudinal study focused on public school teachers starting their careers from 2007-2008 through 2011-2012. The findings showed a steady increase in beginning teachers leaving the profession each year over these 5 years. As Ingersoll learned two decades ago, teachers are not just leaving their schools; they are leaving the profession all together. So, what are the factors that are causing public school teachers to leave the job all together? Lack of administrative support, non-competitive salary and

benefits, and a toxic work environment are some of the top reasons consistently listed by public school teachers (Nguyen et al., 2022).

### ***Independent School Teacher Retention***

In the independent school sector, Kane (1991) looked at the issue of teacher retention and, even more than 30 years ago, thought that teacher retention was starting to become an issue. It is crucial for Heads of Schools to monitor trends in teacher retention. The NAIS stated that independent schools must stay current with their research on workplace trends and review best practices for retaining their employees (Sands, 2011).

### ***The Impact of COVID-19***

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, public school teachers were leaving at a rate of 13.8% per year. They were either leaving their current school or getting out of teaching as a profession (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Fewer teachers were entering the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2021), and many were leaving the profession at a record pace before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Engelhart, 2012). There was a 37% decline in teachers entering education programs in colleges and universities between 2005 and 2018 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Before the pandemic in 2019, a Phi Delta Kappan Poll revealed that most teachers were already considering quitting their jobs, with 60% feeling underpaid (Langer Research Associates, 2019). Just over a decade ago, Ingersoll and Merrill (2010) found that the lack of growth of new teachers entering the profession was outpacing student enrollment growth. The number of teachers nearing retirement age also grew while turnover increased (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).

**Teacher Retention Post-Pandemic.** Teacher retention was a pre-pandemic problem that worsened post-pandemic (Roberts, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated teachers' departure from the classroom (Zamarro et al., 2022) and has been part of the nationwide

movement known as the Great Resignation (Sheather & Slattery, 2021). Many people are asking themselves existential questions regarding their purpose in life and have changed professions altogether (Babarskienė et al., 2022). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) reported quit rates in all occupations reaching a record high in November 2021, with 4.5 million people leaving their jobs. This migration away from teaching has had many challenging impacts on our schools. Longer tenured faculty tend to be more effective teachers (Ingvarson et al., 2005), which correlates to better student outcomes (Goe, 2007).

**Excessive Teacher Turnover Post-COVID.** As we look at the root causes of excessive teacher turnover, this problem has worsened for all teachers (public and independent) since the COVID-19 pandemic and is reaching critical levels. During the pandemic, we asked teachers to teach from home to students online at their homes. Then, we asked them to teach in person to students in the classroom while simultaneously teaching distance-learning students who were still at home. While these teaching and learning methods were necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic health and safety protocols, many teachers were pushed beyond their limits, questioned their schools' administration, and experienced feelings of burnout (Jotkoff, 2022). The RAND Corporation conducted a study in December 2020 and found that most K-12 teachers who quit during the pandemic listed the stress of teaching as their primary reason for leaving their job (Diliberti et al., 2021). Teachers overall are quitting at a record rate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, quit rates in K-12 education have risen faster than in any other industry since January 2021 (Mollica & Cambon, 2021).

A recent Merrimack College Teacher Survey, in which a nationally representative poll of 1,324 public school teachers responded, was conducted by the EdWeek Research Center and commissioned by the Winston School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack (Kurtz,

2022). This survey was conducted between January 9, 2022, and February 23, 2022. Only about half of teachers said they were satisfied with their jobs, and only 12% said they were very satisfied (Kurtz, 2022). Conversely, in this same survey, 39% reported that, in 2012, they were very satisfied, and, in 2008, 62% were very satisfied (Kurtz, 2022). Another reason these numbers have declined is due to staffing shortages. In a survey conducted by the National Education Association, nearly 75% of teachers reported covering for one another due to staff shortages (Jotkoff, 2022). Due to these staffing shortages, 80% of teachers reported heavier workloads (Jotkoff, 2022).

In a recent study conducted by McKinsey and Company, 32% of employees in the public education sector stated they are somewhat likely to leave their jobs in 3 to 6 months (De Smet et al., 2021). In a January 2022 survey of the three million educators who are members of the National Education Association, the nation's largest union, 55% of the teachers reported they would be looking for new occupations sooner than expected (Walker, 2022). This figure is up from 37% when this group of educators was surveyed in August 2021. Nguyen et al. (2022) conducted a recent study of public school teachers. According to this survey, the top two reasons public school teachers leave their schools are a perceived lack of administrative support and compensation. Teachers feel overworked, under-supported, and underpaid for their work. These factors lead to teacher stress and burnout, causing teachers to consider other career options. In a RAND Corporation study of 1,000 public school teachers who left their public school job for a private school teaching position, 86% reported it was due to a better work climate and more teaching control than they had experienced in public school (Diliberti et al., 2021).

**Teacher Retention in Independent Schools Post-COVID.** It is important to examine the independent school sphere to see if teacher retention has worsened since the COVID-19

pandemic independent schools. Private school teachers tend to skew older than their public counterparts (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). One hypothesis is that public school teachers will retire from public school and collect their pension and then work in an independent school as they finish out their teaching career. Specifically, 37% of private school teachers are 50 years of age or older, whereas 29% of public school teachers are 50 years of age or older (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). This statistic is troubling, as fewer younger people are going into the teaching profession.

In a recent poll of independent school administrators, only 13% were very concerned about the teacher shortage, and 0% were extremely concerned (ISM, 2022). However, the Independent School Administration should note the research on what teachers think. According to a 2021 survey from the American Teacher Panel of 1,006 public school members from January to February 2021, 25% of teachers said they would leave their jobs after the 2020-2021 school year (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Another survey of this same group reported that 54% of teachers were somewhat likely or likely to leave teaching in the next 2 years, which is more than double the data released in 2019 (Loewus, 2021). The NAIS Career Center recently examined monthly job postings before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. They compared 2019 to 2021 and saw that the numbers were consistently higher in 2021 (NAIS, 2022c). Further, the number of new jobs posted for the first 3 months of 2022 was 59% higher than in the first 3 months of 2019 through 2021 (NAIS, 2022c). Teachers are leaving at a high rate, and the pool for faculty recruitment is low (Walker, 2022).

Recent NAIS data support this idea (NAIS, 2022c). In a NAIS survey conducted of independent school teachers, 704 teachers from 304 schools responded, representing a 30% completion rate and a good representation of the NAIS membership. The survey was open from May to August 2021. These are teachers who are still in their roles, and the top three reasons



reported for wanting to leave their roles as teachers are as follows: not feeling fulfilled, losing trust, and feeling overwhelmed (Bernate, 2022). In a study by the National Education Association, 67% reported teacher burnout as a very serious issue, and 90% reported it as a very serious or somewhat serious issue (Jotkoff, 2022). Overall, teachers are feeling burned out at a high rate. According to a recent Gallup Poll in 2022, K-12 teachers are reported to be the most burned out of any other profession at a rate of 44% (Speicher & Francis, 2022). In a recent NAIS survey of 1,820 teachers, conducted from November 17, 2023, to December 5, 2023, with a 21% response rate, about 70% of teachers planned to renew their contract for the 2024-2025 school year, whereas 26% were unsure and 4% would not (Foley & Torres, 2024). The top reasons teachers were not renewing their contract included feeling stressed or burned out (55%), salary too low (50%), and lack of support from administration (42%). Over half of the teachers who responded reported that their job was often or always stressful, and over 90% of the teachers reported working more than 40 hours a week. In addition to these stressors, teachers reported lower maturity levels, reduced attention spans, and more mental health issues among their students compared to before the pandemic (Foley & Torres, 2024).

Independent school faculty are drawn to this sector for different reasons (ISM, 2022) and, therefore, stay at their schools due to numerous factors. In a 2022 study of 2,753 private school teachers (see Figure 2), conducted by Independent School Management (ISM), teachers were asked: What factors predict the likelihood a teacher says they will remain at your school? Teachers chose a private school over another public school based on the school's mission at more than double the rate of greater autonomy in the classroom, which is the second reason reported (ISM, 2022). In that same study, pay and morale were typically cited as the top reasons why teachers leave, but losing confidence in school leadership was the third most cited reason.

**Figure 2**

*2021-22 ISM Research: What Factors Predict the Likelihood a Teacher Says They Will Remain at Your School?*

**2021-22 ISM Research: What Factors Predict the Likelihood a Teacher Says They will Remain at your School?**

MR=.29, p<0.001

2753 Private School Teachers



Conversely, the factors that independent school teachers said influenced the likelihood of them staying at their school included respect from parents, being richly rewarded, being compensated fairly, and feeling valued by administrators (ISM, 2022). Ballou and Podgursky (1998) found that private schools were more successful in retaining the best of their new teachers due to greater flexibility in teacher pay, more supervision and mentoring of new teachers, and freedom to dismiss teachers for poor performance.

**Similarities and Differences Between Public and Independent School Teacher**

**Retention.** As stated previously, there are similarities and differences between the reasons public school teachers and independent school teachers stay in their positions. The similarities between why public school teachers and independent school teachers stay in their positions are the following: Public school teachers and independent school teachers stay in their positions when they feel valued by their administration, recognized for their hard work, and trusted by their administrators. Conversely, public school teachers and independent school teachers leave their

positions when they feel a lack of administrative support, have a non-competitive or non-transparent salary and benefits, and experience a toxic work environment (Gius, 2015).

Gius (2015) conducted a study to measure the job satisfaction between public and private school teachers. The study was conducted by measuring a large sample of public and private school teachers through the 2007 Schools and Staffing Survey, which is compiled by the US Department of Education. Gius found that private school teachers were more satisfied with their jobs than public school teachers despite making on average \$10,000 less than their public school teaching counterparts. This study supports the hypothesis that higher pay does not equal higher levels of job satisfaction.

### **Educator Conditions**

My conceptual framework includes three overall types of educator conditions that the literature associates with a positive work environment. These are a positive faculty culture, transparent teacher compensation, and curricular autonomy in their classroom. These conditions are related to fulfilling the following needs teachers have expressed in the literature as important to them: a sense of belonging and recognition, feeling valued and seen, and feeling trusted by their administrators. Servant leadership characteristics, as displayed by the Head of School, which include empathy, inspirational leadership, and authenticity, can address these desires on behalf of the teachers. When teachers know that their Head of School communicates effectively, has compassion for them, inspires them, and is an authentic leader, they feel a sense of belonging, are appropriately recognized for their work, feel valued and seen, and feel trusted by their leadership.

An important distinction is to highlight the importance of the division heads at the independent school. The leadership style of the division head has a direct impact on how teachers

feel on a daily basis. It is important for Heads of Schools to hire, counsel, and ensure that the types of leaders at the division head level share the same values as the Head of School. While not part of my study, I believe that the division heads play a major role in the educator conditions as they impact faculty. For instance, a Head of School who is a servant leader might have division heads who do not practice servant leadership attributes or, worse, lead in a command and control fashion. This juxtaposition in leadership styles may have implications for the impact of the Head of School's leadership and their ability to effectively curb teacher attrition. I will revisit this idea in the Limitations section.

### ***Faculty Culture***

**Background.** Faculty culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, traditions, and practices that shape a school's atmosphere and environment (Deal & Peterson, 1990). It encompasses how students, staff, and community members interact with one another and the school as a whole. Through the research, I found that a positive school culture is one in which all members feel safe, respected, and valued, and everyone is committed to the student's success (Engels et al., 2008; Russell, 2001). One key aspect of school culture is the sense of community fostered among students, staff, and families (Lambersky, 2016; Vieno et al., 2005). This can be achieved through regular communication and opportunities for collaboration and engagement (Liu et al., 2021). Another important aspect of school culture is the emphasis on academic excellence (Cohen et al., 2009). This can be promoted through high standards and expectations for student learning, as well as through effective teaching practices and support for student success (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Schools should also provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and passions and develop a sense of purpose and direction (MacNeil et al., 2009).

School culture is also shaped by the values and beliefs reinforced and modeled by adults in the school community (Halawah, 2005; Konold et al., 2018). This includes the principles of mutual respect, responsibility, and fairness that all school community members should uphold (Nelsen et al., 2013). Schools should also strive to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of their background or abilities (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). School culture is an essential element of a successful education. Schools can create an environment conducive to student success and well-being by focusing on these key elements. Everyone in the school community is responsible for working together to create and maintain a positive school culture (Freiberg, 1999). This includes fostering a sense of community, promoting academic excellence, and modeling positive values and behaviors (Berkowitz et al., 2017). By focusing on these key elements, studies show that a positive school culture leads to higher enrollment in independent schools (ISM, 2022).

Many studies have highlighted the importance of the school leader's leadership on school culture and climate. In one study conducted as part of the Vision Project (Spicer, 2016), the researcher looked at two different school districts to determine principal and teacher perceptions regarding what a leader does to develop and maintain a positive school climate. In this study, the leader was the person who developed and maintained the school climate as determined by the teachers. Morris et al. (2020) conducted a participatory action research mixed methods study in Australia to see if the intervention of certain strategies supported a positive school culture among their faculty. The researchers used baseline data from the School Organizational Health Questionnaire ( $n = 28$ ) and qualitative data from focus groups ( $n = 15$ ), which were collected and presented to the leadership team. There were four areas of focus for the study: supportive leadership, professional growth, participative decision-making, and appraisal and recognition.

After a range of interventions, the researchers found that a change in leadership style was a key factor of school cultural change across all factors.

Anderman (1991) conducted a study that examined the relationships among teachers' perceptions of school leadership, school culture, and teacher satisfaction and commitment. Data were collected through a Likert-scale survey of 101 teachers from Illinois, 241 teachers from Arizona, and 416 teachers from Florida. The first study used multiple regression analyses and found that a school culture that stresses recognition, accomplishment, and affiliation is related to satisfaction and commitment. The second study using multiple regression analysis and showed that different behaviors by the principal fostered different cultures within the school. The third study used path analysis and examined the relative impact of different leadership behaviors on teacher satisfaction and commitment. The findings supported the hypothesis that different types of working environments yielded high levels of teacher satisfaction and commitment.

**Faculty Sense of Belonging and Recognition.** Teachers state a sense of belonging within their school community is an important factor in remaining at their independent school (ISM, 2022). As the educational leader of the institution, the Head of School needs to recognize the faculty who exemplify high academic standards while holding all faculty accountable to maintain these standards. The Head can do this in myriad ways. Leaders must provide teachers with real-time feedback to maintain a continuous improvement culture. The Head needs to provide an environment where faculty feel psychologically safe (Coyle, 2018). Teachers need to know that they can make mistakes and that the administration will be there to support them with parents. Finally, active listening is a core leadership skill (Baker et al., 2019). Teachers want to feel heard by their leaders.

The Head of School also has the opportunity to build collegiality and a sense of belonging within the school. They can provide faculty professional development opportunities and promote them from within to administrative positions. Independent Schools also have admission processes that allow them to select students who best fit their mission. Also, as stated previously, if students become a disciplinary problem, independent schools and the Head of School will counsel them out of their school. Teachers are appreciative when administrators step in and remove students who are consistently disruptive and distracting from the learning process in their classrooms.

### ***Teacher Compensation***

**Background.** All teachers need to be paid a fair wage. As I have learned through the research, increasing compensation is one component of teacher retention; however, only increasing compensation may be a limited strategy for retaining faculty (ISM, 2022). Teachers can leave education all together to make more money (De Smet et al., 2021; Kan, 2014). Furthermore, research has shown that teachers want a transparent salary structure (ISM, 2022). Teacher compensation, which includes salary benefits and other forms of remuneration, is a critical issue in education (Perie, 1997). Adequate compensation for teachers is essential for attracting and retaining high-quality educators and ensuring that they can meet the needs of their students (Guarino et al., 2006). In the 2021 NAIS Teacher Satisfaction Survey, when teachers were asked about compensation, the importance of transparency and parity with local independent schools was magnified. Nearly 80% of those who responded to the survey said this was extremely important to them, and just 21% reported high satisfaction with their salary based on this measure (NAIS, 2022c).

First and foremost, while teacher compensation plays a critical role in attracting and retaining high-quality educators, it is not the sole factor. However, teachers who feel fairly compensated for their work are more likely to stay in the profession and be satisfied with their jobs (Liu & Ramsey, 2008). This is especially important given the current teacher shortage crisis. As mentioned, adequate compensation can help attract and retain highly qualified educators, while improving student outcomes (Stronge et al., 2011). In addition, teacher compensation is crucial for ensuring that teachers can meet the needs of their students (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Moreover, with fair and transparent compensation, teachers can also afford to take on additional responsibilities and professional development opportunities to help them become more effective educators (Ganser, 2000).

Teachers who feel that they are underpaid or undervalued are more likely to experience job-related stress and burnout (Dworkin, 2009), which can lead to poor health outcomes (Farber, 1984) and a higher risk of turnover (Hughes, 2001). Adequate compensation can alleviate some of these adverse effects and allow teachers to focus on their work. Furthermore, fair teacher compensation can also help reduce the high stress and burnout levels many teachers experience. In conclusion, teacher compensation is a critical issue with far-reaching implications for the education system (David & Kirby, 1997). Fair, transparent, and adequate compensation is essential for attracting and retaining high-quality educators and ensuring that they can meet the needs of their students. It is essential for school administrators to recognize the importance of fair teacher compensation and take steps to address the issue.

**Faculty Feeling Valued and Seen.** Independent schools are unique in how they operate from their public school counterparts (NAIS, 2020). Heads of Schools who are empathetic can listen and act when teachers describe a lack of confidence in their division head's leadership. At



an independent school, the Head of School oversees the administration. Therefore, an independent school Head can move administrators, faculty, and staff in and out of their positions more quickly than their public school counterparts. Conversely, independent school administrators, faculty, and staff can also decide to depart at any time, especially in a right-to-work state such as Florida, where my school is located (Murphy, 1954).

In an independent school, the division head (or principal) reports to the Head of School (NAIS, 2020). The Head of School can coach the division head in areas with which teachers identify. The Head of School can ultimately terminate the division head's employment if the issues persist. Teachers can then feel validated when sharing their concerns about their division head with the Head of School, and, in turn, feel that their thoughts and opinions are valued by their Head of School. We need to ensure faculty are fairly compensated and ensure the school continues to be mission-aligned and the culture is one that teachers want to remain in (ISM, 2022). Those factors are key to increasing teacher retention in independent schools (ISM, 2022).

### ***Curricular Autonomy***

The research shows that teachers need to feel trusted by their administrators (NAIS, 2022c). One of the characteristics of a servant leader is being a good listener (Spears, 1995). When teachers feel heard and valued, they begin to develop trust with their Head of School. When a Head of School provides a teacher with curricular autonomy in their classroom, they are showing the teacher that they trust them. Administrators can show that they trust their faculty by providing autonomy in their curriculum delivery and allowing for teacher voice and choice (Kirk & McDonald, 2001). Allensworth et al. (2009) found that teachers stayed at their school when they felt they had a voice in school decision-making due to a track record of ideas that were implemented, and, even when the ideas were not implemented, the teachers felt their voices were

being heard and opinions considered in the process. In this same study of Chicago Public School teachers, they felt the environments where their colleagues had the autonomy to be innovative and were encouraged to try new things by their principals, and there was a sense of whole school responsibility to improve the school (Allensworth et al., 2009).

Teacher autonomy refers to teachers' degree of independence and decision-making power in their classrooms and the curriculum (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). It can include the opportunity to choose teaching methods, materials, assessments, and control over the classroom environment and discipline (Little, 1995). Some educational systems and schools emphasize teacher autonomy (Kengathran, 2020), while others have more centralized control leading to lower levels of teacher satisfaction and retention (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020).

**Faculty Feeling Trusted and Supported.** Teachers play a critical role in shaping the future of our society by educating and nurturing the next generation; however, for teachers to be effective in their role, they need to feel trusted and supported by their Head of School (Rhodes et al., 2004). One of the characteristics of a Servant Leader is Commitment to the growth of their people (Spears, 1995). When a Head of School is committed to the growth of their faculty, teachers feel trusted and supported by their Head. When teachers feel trusted by their Head of School, they are more likely to take ownership of their classroom and curriculum, leading to improved student outcomes (Brown, 2016). Trust also allows teachers to make decisions about their teaching methods and materials, which can lead to more effective and engaging instruction. It also creates a positive work environment where teachers feel valued and respected, increasing job satisfaction (Wong & Davey, 2007).

Furthermore, when teachers feel supported by their Head of School, they are more likely to seek help and feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things. Support can come from

professional development opportunities, mentoring, and resource access. Heads of School can also support teachers by providing a safe and positive work environment where teachers feel comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns (Edmundson et al., 2016). Moreover, trust and support from the Head of School also reduces stress, anxiety, and burnout. When teachers feel trusted and supported, they are more likely to feel confident in their abilities, reducing stress and anxiety. They also feel more connected to their work, increasing job satisfaction (Aydin, 2019). Additionally, when teachers feel trusted and supported by their Head of School, they are more likely to be effective in their role and positively impact student outcomes (Gary-Pointer, 2022; Harrison, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2017). Heads of School can foster support and trust by creating a positive work environment, providing professional development opportunities, and being responsive to teachers' needs.

**Sense of Purpose.** Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) presented a study that categorized how people saw themselves as related to work. They either viewed their work as a Job, which focused on the financial rewards of work, a Career, which focused on advancement, or a Calling, with a focus on fulfillment. I posit that teachers typically consider their work a Calling. Those who are in teaching as a Job will never find their fulfillment or a sense of purpose by how much money they make. Most teachers feel more comfortable with students than parents, so that path will lead them into an area that would be quite different from what they typically do. I believe teachers, particularly independent school teachers, view what they do as a Calling (Hansen, 1995). Hirschi (2012) and Serow (1994) investigated whether there was a relationship between Calling and work engagement and found that Calling was a significant predictor of work engagement among working adults. Serow conducted a study analyzing survey and interview data from a sample of 527 teacher-certification candidates, nearly half of whom perceive teaching as their calling.

## **Leadership Styles**

### ***Head of School as an Architect Leader***

An interesting study on school leadership and the type of leader who consistently displays the greatest success was conducted by Hill et al. (2016). The study was based on the changes made by 411 leaders of United Kingdom academies. The researchers interviewed all 411 leaders, along with those who worked for them, and analyzed their backgrounds, education, and experience. They recorded their actions and impact using 64 investment variables and 24 performance-based measurements over a 7-year period. They found five types of leaders but only one style of leadership that was truly effective. These leaders drove lasting change in their schools. They gave the five leadership types the follow titles: Accountant, Architect, Philosopher, Soldier, and Surgeon. The Architect leader was the most successful in turning a failing school around. They are described as insightful, humble, and visionary leaders, which are similar characteristics to those of a servant leader. These types of leaders have a long-standing impact on the social and economic aspects of their schools, as they are taking a long view instead of making top-down, authoritative changes without soliciting teacher voice and choices. These leaders create more faculty buy-in, which leads to teachers feeling a sense of belonging, value, and trust in their administration.

### ***Servant Leadership***

My conceptual framework is rooted in how a servant leader can curb teacher attrition (Kock et al., 2019). This model has been with us since 1970 and is face-valid. Other leadership models have similar attributes as servant leadership that validate these attributes. These research-based models include transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993) and emotionally intelligent leadership (Goleman et al., 2000). The characteristics of a servant leader can be found

in various leadership frameworks. For the purpose of this study, I used the term *servant leadership* (Bass, 2000). Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the leader focuses on serving others rather than exercising authority over them. In 1970, Greenleaf first proposed the concept of servant leadership in his essay entitled “The Servant as a Leader” and stated the following:

The Servant-Leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (p. 7)

There has been much discussion on servant leadership. A servant leader displays several unique skills, such as active listening, being persuasive, and being an articulate and effective communicator of ideas (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977; Spears & Lawrence, 2002). Greenleaf says a servant leader is “*primus inter pares*” (first among equals). They do not use power to accomplish things; they use persuasion, not positional authority. According to Greenleaf (1970), the defining characteristics of a servant leader include a desire to serve others, a focus on building relationships, a willingness to listen and empathize, and a belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. Servant leaders also tend to possess several personal qualities, such as humility, authenticity, interpersonal awareness, and stewardship (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Spears (1995) took this concept a step further when he developed the 10 characteristics of the servant leader:

1. Listening while emphasizing the importance of seeking the will of the people they serve.
2. Empathy, which is the ability to understand other people and accept them where they are.

3. Healing, which is to help make people feel whole.
4. Awareness, which is being awake to the needs of others.
5. Persuasion, which is influencing rather than using positional power.
6. Conceptualization, which is looking beyond the present and into the future.
7. Foresight, which is foreseeing outcomes of situations and working with their intuition.
8. Stewardship, which is holding their people in trust and serving their needs.
9. Commitment to the growth of their people.
10. Building community, as local community is essential to each person's life.

I used Spears' 10 characteristics to define servant leadership for the purpose of my study. Later, I used these 10 characteristics in my survey of the faculty in NAIS (see Appendix A). One of the key benefits of servant leadership is that it can create a positive work environment for employees (Wong & Davey, 2007). Working in a positive work environment can benefit employees and includes the following:

1. Increased job satisfaction: Employees who feel valued and respected are more satisfied and motivated to do their best work.
2. Improved mental and physical well-being: A positive work environment can reduce stress and anxiety, improving mental and physical health.
3. Greater creativity and innovation: Employees are more likely to take risks and develop new and creative ideas when they feel comfortable and supported.
4. Increased productivity and performance: A positive work environment can lead to increased employee engagement and motivation, resulting in improved productivity and performance.

5. Better relationships with colleagues: A positive work environment can foster better communication and collaboration, leading to stronger working relationships.
6. Increased retention: Employees who feel satisfied with their jobs and work environment are less likely to leave the organization.

Overall, a positive work environment can significantly impact the well-being, productivity, and performance of employees (Wong & Davey, 2007). Research has shown that servant leaders are more likely to foster trust and commitment among their team members, increasing job satisfaction and motivation (Joseph & Winston, 2005). In addition, servant leadership has been linked to improved communication, collaboration, and problem-solving within organizations (Trastek et al., 2014). Another benefit of servant leadership is that it can improve organizational performance (de Waal & Sivro, 2012). Studies have shown that organizations with servant leaders tend to have higher levels of innovation and creativity, better customer service and overall organizational health (Russell, 2001; Van Dierendock, 2011).

Overall, the literature on servant leadership suggests that it can be a highly effective leadership style with numerous benefits for individuals and organizations (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010). The servant leader keeps more teachers at their school and keeps more families happy (Engelhart, 2012). The research shows that key characteristics of servant leaders positively influence an organization's culture. Servant leadership promotes valuing and developing people, practicing authenticity, providing leadership for the good of those they lead, and sharing power and status for the common good of each individual, the organization, and those served by the organization (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders, at their core, are empathetic individuals (Greenleaf, 2011). Their ultimate goal is to serve others because they care and empathize with

others in their organization (Greenleaf, 1970). Studies show empathy is the essential leadership skill for employees to experience from their supervisor (Brower, 2021). Many of the characteristics of a servant leader could be described as emotionally intelligent-based skills.

In summary, for the purpose of this study, I am defining servant leadership as an approach to leadership that is based in active listening, empathy, healing (making people feel whole), awareness of others' needs, persuasion, conceptualization for the future, foresight (working with intuition), stewardship (holding people in trust and serving their needs), commitment to the growth of their people, building community, and being an effective communicator of ideas (Spears, 1995). This definition of servant leadership shares important overlap with the more studied conceptualizations of leadership, transformational leadership, and emotionally intelligent leadership, which I will expound on in the following paragraphs. In particular, I focused on empathy and communication as two important leadership characteristics that are also found in servant leadership. I aimed to prove that, if teachers feel all of these factors at their school, they will also have a sense of purpose, which leads to higher numbers of teachers who intend to stay at their independent school.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

The research-based transformational leadership model is based on the opposing characteristics of the transactional leadership model (Bass, 1999). Whereas transactional leaders focus on continued compliance from their followers, transformational leaders are inspirational, intellectually stimulate their followers, and are individually considerate of them (Bass, 1999). The transformational leadership model has proven to be effective in many industries beyond education, including business, military, hospital, and industrial organizations. Quality leadership drives a healthy environment. Allen et al. (2015) conducted a correlational study to examine if



there was a relationship between transformational leadership, school climate, and student reading and mathematics achievement. The researchers found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and school climate. School leaders can provide predictability and support while crafting a healthy faculty culture. They can help teachers with work-life balance, provide more flexibility, ensure they are seen, heard, and valued, and give them autonomy (Al-Safran et al., 2014; Brown, 2018; Day et al., 2007; De Smet et al., 2021).

### ***Emotionally Intelligent Leadership***

Emotional intelligence is critical to successful leadership and can be taught to Heads of Schools (Humphrey et al., 2007). The leader's emotional intelligence can foster a climate where information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking, and learning can flourish (Mayer et al., 2008). Leaders have the greatest power to animate emotional contagion, which can impact performance across a community (Goleman et al., 2000). How leaders carry themselves has a direct impact on those they lead. In a school setting, these are the faculty members, and, based on the research, they want to feel a sense of belonging and recognition, be valued and seen and trusted, and be supported by their administration. The chief components of emotionally intelligent leadership are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Goleman, 2017, 2019). These attributes are similar to the servant leadership characteristics as defined by Greenleaf in 1970. The emotionally intelligent leader can rein in emotional impulses, read another person's innermost feelings, and handle relationships and conflict smoothly (Goleman, 1998).

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Research Context and Demographics

The following research questions were established to guide this study:

1. Is there a relationship between the servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools?
2. How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school?
3. To what extent and in what ways do the teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work, and is it related to their Head of School's servant leadership attributes?

For this study, I analyzed the relationship between the Head of School's leadership characteristics and teachers' intent to stay at their schools. I focused my study on independent schools accredited by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS; see Appendix B). NAIS currently has over 1,615 member schools. Generally speaking, most independent schools are not publicly funded; therefore, the amount of public information is limited.

### Research Design

#### *Methodological Approach/Type of Study*

I used a mixed-methods approach to this study. First, I analyzed the quantitative data through the survey in order to identify trends. Next, I conducted interviews in my qualitative research (see Appendix C). I looked for patterns based on their responses to the servant leadership characteristics in the survey and delved more deeply into their intent to stay at their school as well as if they felt a sense of purpose in their work at their school due to the type of leadership they work under. My rationale for using a mixed-methods approach was triangulation

because I could not fully answer my research questions using only a quantitative or qualitative study. Further, triangulation increased the validity of the results by corroborating and converging the results from different methods (Greene et al., 1989).

I needed quantitative and qualitative aspects to my study so I could dig deeper to learn more about educator conditions. The quantitative survey was used to answer the first research question: Is there a relationship between the servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers’ intent to stay at their independent schools? Also, to answer my first research question, I wanted to learn if the faculty members felt a sense of belonging and recognition and if they felt valued, seen, trusted, and supported by their administration. Interviews were used to answer the second research question (How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school?) and the third research question, in which I probed into each teacher’s sense of purpose regarding their role and its possible connection to the Head of School (To what extent and in what ways do the teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work, and is it related to their Head of School’s servant leadership attributes?). The process I used involved the explanatory sequential design, as shown in Figure 3 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

**Figure 3**

*Explanatory Sequential Design*

<b>QUANT</b>	<b>QUANT</b>	<b>QUANT</b>	Identify	<b>Qual</b>	<b>Qual</b>	<b>Qual</b>	Interpretation
Data	Data	Findings	Trends	Data	Data	Findings	<b>QUANT/Qual</b>
Collection	Analysis			Collection	Analysis		

A survey method was key for this study to inform the quantitative aspect of my research. The survey provided information to assess my first research question and allowed me to identify

interview participants to provide additional information for my second and third research questions. The survey needed to be conducted first so I could collect the data and then analyze it quantitatively. Also, the survey allowed participants to opt in for me to contact them for an interview. The survey data showed trends, and I used descriptive statistics to look for these potential patterns, as this process helped me summarize the data. Then, using qualitative methods I was able to analyze how the quantitative findings and qualitative findings talked with one another in answering my first two research questions. The survey design helps to answer the first research question of how the leadership characteristics of Heads of Schools might be related to teachers' intent to stay at their schools and the second research question which was how do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school.

### ***Survey Data Preparation***

As a first step in my survey data preparation, I prepped the file containing the survey data in Microsoft Excel and cleaned the data. In cleaning the data, I changed the word terms to numbers. For example, for the question in the survey when I asked for participants to list their race, I changed the word White to the number 1, and then for the word Black, I changed the number to 2, and so forth. I then used the same method for each category. Then, I determined which variables were either categorical or numerical. I identified the following variables as categorical: "years of service," "race," "gender," "age range," "region," "educational level," "teaching division," "day or boarding school," "coed or single gender," "elementary or elementary and secondary," and "size of school." I measured them by the number and percentage of responses. I identified the Likert-scale answers as continuous variables because the underlying constructs that I was exploring were continuous. There may be gradations of sentiment between

the response options. Next, I applied descriptive statistics for each variable (mean, median, mode, standard deviation). Then, I deleted anyone who did not answer the stay/leave question, which involved 18 responses. Finally, I moved those remaining into a binary stay-or-go option, which narrowed the responses to 1,964. Further, while offering the option of “other” for some of the survey items that allowed for a write-in response, it created a challenge to consider how to handle these particular responses. I classified those who answered “other” when asked if they would stay until retirement or leave their school based on whether their response reflected a general desire to stay at their school. Next, I deleted two respondents whose comments to “other” made it impossible to determine their future plans. I then coded each respondent for best fit.

### ***Data Analysis Approach***

Using a mixed-methods approach, I was able to triangulate my findings to help mitigate issues of validity. I am mindful that triangulation does not automatically increase validity, as the triangulated methods may have the same biases and sources of invalidity (Fielding & Fielding, 1986), so I am looking to triangulate the data to minimize validity threats. To triangulate my data, I was proactive in my research steps. I followed a sequential methods approach, as previously exhibited in Figure 3 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; DeCuir-Gunby & Shutz, 2018). I started with quantitative data collection. Then, I analyzed quantitative data and analyzed the findings. Through the data analysis process, I looked to identify trends. Then, I analyzed the qualitative data and looked for findings. Next, I conducted semi-structured interviews through qualitative data collection. Finally, I interpreted what I learned through a mixed methods research process in answering my first two research questions.

## **Quantitative: Research Question 1**

Is there a relationship between servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers' intent to stay at their independent school? To answer this question, I utilized the quantitative data that I collected from the faculty survey sent to all faculty in NAIS schools in August 2023. I ran descriptive statistics to understand the characteristics of my sample and performed a correlational analysis to determine if there is a relationship between the various servant leadership characteristics and the length of time teachers intend to stay at their schools. I looked for correlations between servant leadership characteristics and the length of time teachers intended to stay at their schools.

### ***Sample***

First, NAIS agreed to survey faculty throughout the NAIS network. NAIS and I signed a letter of understanding before distributing the survey. NAIS sent this survey in August 2023 to the ~15,000 faculty members of the National Association of Independent Schools. They were sent three reminders to fill it out. NAIS surveyed only those within the specified group (Berndt, 2020). The survey was used to collect data to answer Research Question 1. More specifically, the survey asked teachers about their intentions to stay at their schools, the reasons why they intend to stay if they plan to do so, and the servant leadership characteristics of their Head of School. In a survey conducted by NAIS in 2022-2023, they had a response of ~800 responses out of ~15,000 teachers. I optimistically targeted a sample size of 3,000 to 4,000 respondents.

The NAIS distributed the survey to the faculty. They sent an email to all faculty in the email database. The NAIS also reached out to the Heads of Schools with a similar message and to ensure that their faculty received the survey indicating that NAIS was reaching out to them on behalf of a NAIS colleague and researcher from the University of Pennsylvania. This process

involved snowball sampling (Light et al., 1990). As Light et al. (1990) stated, the purposeful selection of the participants and settings is essential to the process and validity of the study. I posted in the Florida Council of Independent Schools' Heads listserv and the NAIS Heads listserv encouraging Heads of School to encourage their faculty to fill out the survey.

### ***Data Instrument: Survey***

An online 10-question survey, which took 3 to 5 minutes to complete, was sent to NAIS faculty. The survey asked the respondents to provide demographic information regarding (a) how long they had been teaching at their current school, (b) their race, (c) their gender, (d) the region of the country in which they lived, (e) their age by decade, (f) the highest degree that they held, and (g) the division in which they taught. The survey also asked them a question requiring them to select one of the following options related to their future teaching career plans:

1. Leave my current school as soon as possible.
2. Leave my current school when I get a better opportunity.
3. Leave my current school eventually.
4. Stay at my current school indefinitely.
5. Stay at my current school until I retire.
6. Leave education, but work in a different industry next year.

I assigned numeric values to each answer to look for patterns among the respondents regarding their intentions.

Next, I asked questions that allowed them to rate from 1 (*extremely important*) to 5 (*not important*) on a Likert scale how important various servant leadership characteristics of their Head of School are to them and how they influence their intent to stay at their independent school. I then tallied the points to treat them as my independent variable with high, medium, or

low levels. From there, I measured the responses from *not important* to *extremely important* and assigned a numeric score. Then, I looked at the distribution of the scores. I identified the point ranges based on the responses. Then, I correlated them with the intent to stay, which also had a numeric value. The values I asked pertained to how present the following characteristics were in their Head of School. I did not list the names of the values, so I did not sway the participants or confuse them on the definition of each characteristic while providing clarity for the terms. These values were as follows:

1. Listens when I talk to them.
2. Displays empathy: shows genuine respect, care, and concern for my well-being.
3. Healing: addresses conflict and other issues in a constructive manner.
4. Awareness: understands my needs and concerns.
5. Persuasion: encourages and motivates me to perform at my best and creates a supportive environment.
6. Conceptualization: develops a clear vision and inspires others to work towards achieving common goals.
7. Foresight: anticipates future challenges and opportunities and develops strategies to address them.
8. Stewardship: manages resources and assets to ensure long-term success.
9. Commitment: to the growth of their people.
10. Building community: creates a sense of belonging, collaboration, and support

Finally, I asked them to rank the following items in order of importance related to their desire to remain at their current school. I used a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important: (a) compensation, (b) supportive Head of School, (c)



relationships with their colleagues, (d) mission alignment with their school, and (e) trusted by their Head of School. These data informed how important these areas are to them, and I treated the data as descriptive statistical information to help inform my study.

### ***Analytic Process***

First, I computed an average score for all Likert-scale items for each survey participant. The purpose was to explore the hypothesis that people with overall higher reported scores would be more likely to report an intention to stay at their school. These were the questions that I asked the survey participants:

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being extremely important, how important are the following leadership characteristics in your Head of School to you?
  - a. Really listens when I talk.
  - b. Shows genuine respect, care, and understanding.
  - c. Addresses conflicts and other issues in a constructive manner.
  - d. Understands the needs and concerns of our community.
  - e. Encourages and motivates me to perform my best through positive relationship-building.
  - f. Develops a clear vision of the future.
  - g. Inspires our community to work toward achieving common goals.
  - h. Anticipates future challenges and opportunities.
  - i. Develops strategies to address those challenges and opportunities.
  - j. Understands the needs of my community and serves those needs.
  - k. Creates an environment that encourages learning and growth.

1. Fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, and support.
2. Please indicate how important are the following items related to your desire to remain at your current school?
  - a. Compensation
  - b. A supportive Head of School
  - c. Relationships with colleagues
  - d. Mission alignment with my school
  - e. Trusted by my Head of School

Next, I averaged the responses from 1 to 5, with 1 being least important and 5 being extremely important. The average score for the 1,964 participants was 4.41. Then, I ran central tendency (mean and standard deviation) based on the leadership characteristics of the Head of School for those looking to leave their school and those looking to stay at their school. Next, I ran a two-sample  $t$  test with equal variances and treated them as Likert-type data (Clason & Dormady, 1994). I ran mean, standard deviation, and frequency. I ran this test to understand if there was a relationship in the five predictors of teacher retention as found in the literature and if they impacted teachers' desire to remain at their school.

### ***Survey Data Analysis***

I analyzed the data of the survey results from the participants and treated the data as continuous data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For this portion of the survey data analysis, I used Microsoft Excel to create descriptive statistics and analyze the data. I will first report information about the number of participants in my sample that did and did not return the survey. I used a table with numbers and percentages to present this information. Next, I used descriptive statistics to look at the characteristics of my sample. This approach was selected to identify any

characteristics of the sample that might be important to understanding my results. I provided descriptive statistics for all the various backgrounds and demographic variables, which included how long they had taught at their current school, their gender, their race, in which region of the country they lived, their age by decade, their educational degrees, and the division in the school where they taught. I reported on the level of measurement of the variable.

### **Qualitative Data: Research Questions 2 and 3**

Research Question 1 asked the following: How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school?

Research Question 3 asked the following: To what extent and in what ways do teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work, and is it related to their Head of School's servant leadership attributes?

### ***Interview Selection Process***

I interviewed 20 teachers from the teacher survey who agreed to be interviewed. I sorted the survey data and identified and interviewed 10 teachers who had the strongest *positive* responses to the following question: How important is a supportive Head of School related to your desire to remain at your current school? Then, I identified and interviewed 10 teachers who had the strongest *negative* responses to the same question: How important is a supportive Head of School related to your desire to remain at your current school? I chose these two particular groups to interview based on the literature review of how teachers described the importance of a supportive Head of School in their desire to remain at their school (ISM, 2022).

To answer the question asking for positive and negative responses, I drew upon the qualitative information that was gathered and analyzed from my 60-minute, semi-structured interviews. I used the qualitative aspect of my study to explore if the leadership characteristics of

the Head of School influence teachers' intent to stay at their independent school. Qualitative inquiry was necessary to establish this because, even though my quantitative analysis could assess whether there is a relationship and how strong it is, it could not establish cause. Next, I asked them about the climate and culture of their school and if it impacted their willingness to remain at their school. I also explored if they felt valued, trusted, and had a sense of belonging in their school. Finally, I explored if they felt purpose in their work and at their independent school.

### ***Participant Sample***

My sample for the qualitative aspect of my study was nested within the survey respondents. I interviewed faculty members who agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were approximately 60 minutes each. I targeted a sample size of 20 teachers. My sample was a nested approach to gathering the data. This approach is where a sample from one research strand is a subset of the sample for the other research strand (Gray & Nunn, 2023).

**Selection of Interview Participants.** For the qualitative aspect of my study, and to answer Research Questions 2 and 3, I used the following criteria to select the interview participants. First, I segregated respondents who expressed a willingness to be interviewed. Then, I sorted possible interviewees by their answers to the following question: Which of the following statements most accurately describes your future plans as a teacher?

1. Leave my current school when I get a better opportunity.
2. Leave my current school as soon as possible.
3. Leave education, but work in a different industry next year.
4. Stay at my current school until I retire.
5. Other (please specify): (a) Highlighted in orange were responses under "Other" that spoke of dissatisfaction with their Administrator or Head and (b) highlighted in red

were responses under “Other” that speak of a desire to be promoted into administration or management positions.

Of note, five participants in the study listed “other” in response to the item asking about their future plans. I classified them as “leave” or “stay” based on the following responses:

1. Participant TS (stay): “I would like to stay until I retire, but I don’t know if that will happen.”
2. Participant TN (leave): “Leave once my children graduate.”
3. For Participant AG, I classified as “leave” based on the following response:  

I am looking for a position in admin in another school, as it seems my school leader whom I talked to doesn’t seem that interested in supporting me to pursue this at my school. I may also look to going back to public school which is where I began my teaching career for 11 years.
4. For Participant EDP, I classified as “stay” based on the following comment: “I hope to take advantage of our school’s early retirement incentive in 6 or 7 years, but I will need to work after that somewhere else, at least part time, to make ends meet financially.”
5. For Participant JM, I listed them as a “stay” based on the following response: “I am not sure yet. I am living out my teacher dreams however, I have never done anything different and would like to take risks and go on adventures at some point in my life.”

Further, I was able to confirm their leave or stay status during the interviews. When I moved everyone into a binary stay or leave answer, these five participants were classified as leaving or staying at their school based on their open-ended response. Therefore, 13 participants were classified as planning to stay at their school, and seven indicated they plan to leave their school.

Then, the next question I asked was as follows: How important are the following items related to your desire to remain at your current school? I selected 10 participants with the highest scores on this question and 10 with the lowest scores. I categorized the 10 participants in the study with the highest scores to that question as most aligned, while I categorized the 10 participants with the lowest scores as least aligned. I selected a mixture of individuals based on gender, race, and region. Overall, I contacted 67 individuals to secure these 20 participants for semi-structured interviews. The 20 interview participants and their race, gender, region of the country, age range, and initials are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Interview Participants by Group*

Group	Gender	Region	Age range	Initials
<b>Most aligned</b>				
Asian	Male	West	50s	MA
White	Female	Mid-Atlantic	40s	JG
White	Female	Southeast	40s	LR
White	Female	Midwest	50s	SZ
Did not disclose	Did not say	Midwest	40s	CKS
African American/Black	Female	West	50s	GH
Latinx	Female	New England	40s	FB
White	Female	Midwest	50s	EDP
African American/Black	Female	New England	50s	AG
White	Female	Midwest	20s	JM
<b>Least aligned</b>				
White	Female	Southeast	30s	AK
White	Female	Mid-Atlantic	50s	LK
White	Female	Mid-Atlantic	50s	TN
White	Male	Midwest	40s	JP
White	Female	New England	20s	SJS
White	Male	West	40s	JW
Asian	Female	New England	50s	SP
Multiracial	Female	West	50s	TS
White	Male	Southeast	40s	NS
Prefer not to disclose	Female	Mid-Atlantic	50s	DM

**Summary of Participant Demographics.** In my interview participant group, 60% of the participants identified themselves as White, and 75% identified themselves as female. Twenty-five percent were from the Midwest, and 20% were each from the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and the West. Regarding age range, 50% were in their 50s, and 35% were in their 40s. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the interview participant demographics in number and percentage for race, gender, region, and age range.

**Table 2**

*Interview Participant Demographics*

Item	No.	%
<b>Race</b>		
White	12	60
Black	2	10
Asian	2	10
Latinx	1	5
Multiracial	1	5
Not disclosed	2	10
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	4	20
Female	15	75
Not disclosed	1	5
<b>Region</b>		
Mid-Atlantic	4	20
Midwest	5	25
New England	4	20
Southeast	3	15
West	4	20
<b>Age range</b>		
20s	2	10
30s	1	5
40s	7	35
50s	10	50

### ***Data Instrument: Semi-Structured Interviews***

The purpose of my interviews was first to explore the relationships and dynamics that I was not able to test for in my survey. For example, the concept regarding a sense of purpose was challenging to measure quantitatively based on the various educator conditions. It was challenging to solely measure quantitatively if there is a relationship between educator conditions and the leadership characteristics of their Head of School. Further, I wanted to see if my conceptual framework was accurate during the interviews and analysis of these conversations with faculty. I asked questions about educator conditions, how important these conditions are to them, and how their leader exemplifies these characteristics. Finally, I asked questions about their sense of purpose in their profession. This was an emic approach to analyzing the interview data within the qualitative research aspect of my study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed digitally using the Otter AI artificial intelligence software. I reviewed all interviews for accuracy. The rationale for utilizing interviews was to receive information from teachers regarding my research questions. The key was asking questions that elicit thoughtful responses. These were semi-structured, and I worked from a set of questions that allowed for an open-ended interview style with some analysis and interpretation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The following questions for the open-ended, semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me about your school.
2. How long do you plan to stay?
3. What factors contribute to your desire to [stay long-term; leave; leave eventually, etc.]?
4. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your work and at your school?



5. Educator Conditions:

- a. Do you have the autonomy and power to make curricular decisions in your classroom?
- b. Do you feel a sense of belonging at your school?
- c. Are you appropriately recognized for your work?
- d. Do you feel fairly compensated based on your peer schools?
- e. Is your compensation system transparent?

6. Teacher Conditions:

- a. Do you feel valued by your school leader?
- b. Do you feel supported by your school leadership?
- c. Do you feel that your school leader trusts you?

***Qualitative Coding***

I first approached the data with a deductive coding method as I developed the initial set of codes based on the conceptual framework. Then, I took a first pass at coding using an inductive approach with a constant-comparative analysis (Boeije, 2002). I added codes as they emerged through the interviews. Then, I finalized the Code Book (see Appendix D) with all the codes.

***Interviews***

I conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the 20 participants. All interviews were conducted via Zoom. Then, I asked open-ended questions and follow-up questions from the developed interview protocol. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. One interview needed two sessions and lasted approximately 120 minutes.

Transcription software from Otter AI was used to transcribe each Zoom interview. Then I loaded all 20 interviews into atlasai.com to code the interviews.

### ***Data Analysis***

The first step in the data analysis process was to read the interview transcripts (Emerson et al., 1995). During my review, I began coding and looking for interview themes in conducting a thematic analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that creating themes and codes from the interviews will allow for “quantification of qualitative data that will enable a researcher to compare quantitative results with the qualitative data” (p. 218). I first categorized and chronologically organized the interviews by themes or codes to analyze the data. I looked for inductive codes to search for the key concepts from my conceptual framework. These involved the educator conditions and if the leadership characteristics of their Head of School influenced their intent to stay at their school. I continued to be aware of themes that may emerge in my data analysis.

As I coded the data in the qualitative aspect of my study, I critically and systematically reflected on what I learned through the analysis of my interviews and what I still needed to understand related to my research questions and my conceptual framework (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I then analyzed the data again, looking for emergent, or emic, themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I looked to remove bias or to anticipate data that may not have proven my hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Further, I took both an inductive and deductive approach to the qualitative aspect of my study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). From an inductive perspective, I did not know what I would find during these interviews. From a deductive perspective, I had particular topics that I wanted to explore with the interviewees, such as a sense of purpose. Furthermore, I looked to understand the accuracy of my conceptual framework. In

addition, I identified other themes that arose through my interview process. I then reapplied the themes as code as well.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Introduction

The following research questions were established to guide this study:

1. Is there a relationship between the servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools?
2. How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their school?
3. To what extent and in what ways do the teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work and is it related to their Head of School's servant leadership attributes?

This chapter presents the findings, and I have organized them according to the research questions and obtained these findings via the methods detailed in Chapter 3. I will share the quantitative and qualitative findings in this chapter and synthesize them in Chapter 5. First, I will discuss Research Question 1 based on quantitative findings. Next, I will discuss Research Questions 2 and 3 based on qualitative findings.

### Sample Characteristics

It is important to review the response rate of the NAIS survey. The survey was sent out to all faculty members who registered their email addresses in the NAIS database. In terms of survey respondents, here are the final numbers: (a) sent to: 15,284 emails; (b) bounced back: 1,895; (c) opted out: 1,807; (d) responses: 2,051; (e) response rate: 17.71%. Most of the schools were in the West Region (21%), and the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast were tied with the second most independent schools, with 20% of the schools. The East (9%) and the Southwest (7%) regions had the smallest number of independent schools. Most of the schools in NAIS were Day

Schools (88%), and Boarding and Day Schools comprised 10% of the schools. The Coed Schools in NAIS made up 86% of the schools; Girls Schools made up 9%, and Boys Schools represented 4%. The schools were mostly elementary and secondary (58%), with 29% serving only elementary students and 10% that were solely secondary schools. Regarding school size, 36% of schools had 701 or more students; the next largest enrolled 301 to 500 students (24%) and 501 to 700 students (17%).

I utilized the quantitative data I collected from the faculty survey sent in August 2023. I ran descriptive statistics to understand the characteristics of my sample. A breakdown of sample characteristics is provided in Appendix E. Half of the survey respondents reported 0 to 9 years of service at their school. Nearly 70% of the respondents identified as White/Caucasian. Regarding gender, 71% identified as female. The respondents had a wide representation from a regional perspective. The Southeast had the most respondents, with 406 responses. The age range of the participants showed 62% were in their 40s and 50s. The respondents were also well educated, with 71% earning a graduate degree or higher. Forty percent of the teachers taught in the upper school division. Seventy-three percent taught in a day school, 57% taught in a coed school, and 35% taught in a K-12 school. Twenty-one percent taught in a school size of 301 to 500 students.

### **Quantitative Findings for Research Question 1**

The first research question asked the following: Is there a relationship between the servant leadership attributes such as active listening, empathy, and creating a sense of belonging and teachers' intent to stay at their independent schools? Survey Questions 8 and 9 and Survey Item 10 were used to answer this research question. Survey Question 8 addressed their future plans as teachers, as my study was on how the leadership characteristics of the Head of School may influence teacher retention. The responses are presented in Table 3. In thinking about the

challenges related to teacher retention, it is worth pointing out that 57% responded that they plan on staying at their current school until they retire. The next largest response was 24%, with those who will leave their current school when they get a better opportunity.

**Table 3**

*Future Plans of the Respondents*

Item	No.	%
Leave education, work in a different industry next year	50	2.00
Leave my current school as soon as possible	20	0.98
Leave my current school when I get a better opportunity	482	24.00
Other (please specify)	320	16.00
Stay at my current school until I retire	1,161	57.00
No answer	18	0.88

*Note.*  $N = 2,051$ .

In addition to understanding teachers' future plans, I needed to assess their views on their Head of School's servant leadership characteristics, so I calculated total responses to Survey Question 9: On a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*), how important are the following leadership characteristics in your Head of School to you?

1. Really listens when I talk.
2. Shows genuine respect, care, and understanding.
3. Addresses conflicts and other issues in a constructive manner.
4. Understands the needs and concerns of our community.
5. Encourages and motivates me to perform my best via positive relationship building.
6. Develops a clear vision of the future.
7. Inspires our community to work toward achieving common goals.

8. Anticipates future challenges and opportunities.
9. Develops strategies to address those challenges and opportunities.
10. Understands the needs of my community and serves those needs.
11. Creates an environment that encourages learning and growth.
12. Fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, and support.

Table 4 shows that the highest mean scores were for the Head of School showing respect ( $M = 4.67$ ), addressing conflicts ( $M = 4.63$ ), and understanding the needs of the community ( $M = 4.63$ ). The lowest mean scores were given to the following items: encourages and motivates ( $M = 4.08$ ), inspires community ( $M = 4.13$ ), and anticipates challenges ( $M = 4.21$ ). Later, in Chapter 5, I will discuss the limitations of this study, as there was not a lot of variation in the responses to Survey Question 8. This lack of variation could be attributed to either the survey's failure to capture or lack of variation.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for Head of School Responses on Importance of Leadership Characteristics*

Characteristic	Mean	Standard deviation
Shows respect	4.67	.606
Understands needs	4.63	.625
Addresses conflicts	4.63	.617
Fosters sense of belonging	4.58	.702
Creates environment growth	4.54	.696
Really listens	4.52	.694
Serves the needs	4.38	.754
Clear vision	4.34	.825
Develops strategies	4.27	.791
Anticipates challenges	4.21	.807
Inspires community	4.13	.856
Encourages and motivates	4.08	.949

*Note.* Number of observations: 1,964.

Next, I wanted to examine the distribution of responses for participants who indicated they were interested in leaving their schools versus those who indicated an intent to stay. First, I ran descriptive statistics on how the participants looking to leave their school responded to the questions about the importance of the same leadership characteristics of their Head of School for the teachers (see Table 5). The most important leadership characteristics of the Head of School for those looking to leave their school were as follows: shows respect ( $M = 4.64$ ), understands the needs of the teachers ( $M = 4.60$ ), and addresses conflicts ( $M = 4.56$ ). The least important leadership characteristics of the Head of School for those looking to leave their school were as follows: encourages and motivates ( $M = 4.00$ ), inspires community ( $M = 4.04$ ), and anticipates challenges ( $M = 4.10$ ).

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics on Importance of Leadership Characteristics for Heads of School Looking to Leave Their School*

Characteristic	Mean	Standard deviation
Shows respect	4.64	.628
Understands needs	4.60	.647
Addresses conflicts	4.56	.658
Fosters sense of belonging	4.54	.738
Creates environment of growth	4.49	.760
Really listens	4.46	.701
Serves the needs	4.32	.769
Clear vision	4.28	.876
Develops strategies	4.21	.825
Anticipates challenges	4.10	.849
Inspires community	4.04	.902
Encourages and motivates	4.00	.968

*Note.* Number of observations: 678.

As shown in Table 6, responses indicated the most important leadership characteristics of the Head of School for those looking to stay at their school were as follows: shows respect ( $M =$



4.69), addresses conflicts, ( $M = 4.66$ ), and understands needs ( $M = 4.66$ ). The least important leadership characteristics of the Head of School for those looking to remain at their school were as follows: encourages and motivates ( $M = 4.12$ ) and inspires community ( $M = 4.18$ ).

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics on Importance of Leadership Characteristics for Heads of School Looking to Stay at Their School*

Characteristic	Mean	Standard deviation
Shows respect	4.69	.594
Addresses conflicts	4.66	.591
Understands need	4.66	.591
Fosters sense of belonging	4.60	.681
Creates environment growth	4.56	.658
Really listens	4.55	.688
Serves the needs	4.41	.744
Clear vision	4.36	.796
Develops strategies	4.31	.771
Anticipates challenges	4.26	.779
Inspires community	4.18	.827
Encourages and motivates	4.12	.936

*Note.* Number of observations: 1,286.

To determine if there was a relationship between the various servant leadership characteristics and the length of time teachers intended to stay at their schools, I performed a two-sample  $t$  test. According to Table 7, the statistically significant findings in this portion of the survey were the importance of the servant leadership characteristics of their Head of School, which were the following: encourages and motivates ( $p = .00$ ), inspires the community ( $p = .00$ ), anticipates challenges ( $p = .00$ ), really listens ( $p = .01$ ), shows respect ( $p = .01$ ), develops strategies ( $p = .01$ ), serves the needs of the community ( $p = .02$ ), creates an environment that encourages learning and growth ( $p = .03$ ), understands needs ( $p = .04$ ), and demonstrates a clear vision ( $p = .04$ ). The null hypothesis can be rejected because the  $p$  value is less than .05. This is a

predictive relationship but cannot be described as causal. The findings that were not statistically significant at .05 were the Head of School addressing conflicts ( $p = .07$ ) and creating a sense of belonging ( $p = .07$ ).

**Table 7**

*Results of Test for Relationship of Individual Head-of-School Leadership Characteristics to Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay*

Characteristic	Intent	No. observations	Mean	SD	$p$
Encourages/motivates	Leave	678	4.04	.968	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.12	.936	
Inspires community	Leave	678	4.04	.902	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.18	.827	
Anticipates challenges	Leave	678	4.10	.849	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.26	.779	
Really listens	Leave	678	4.47	.701	.01
	Stay	1,286	4.55	.688	
Shows respect	Leave	678	4.64	.628	.01
	Stay	1,286	4.69	.594	
Develops strategies	Leave	678	4.21	.825	.01
	Stay	1,286	4.31	.770	
Serves needs	Leave	678	4.32	.769	.02
	Stay	1,286	4.41	.744	
Creates environment	Leave	678	4.49	.760	.03
	Stay	1,286	4.56	.658	
Understands needs	Leave	678	4.60	.647	.04
	Stay	1,286	4.66	.613	
Addresses conflicts	Leave	678	4.56	.658	.07
	Stay	1,286	4.66	.590	
Sense of belonging	Leave	678	4.54	.738	.07
	Stay	1,286	4.60	.681	
Clear vision	Leave	678	4.23	.876	.04
	Stay	1,286	4.36	.796	

Because I looked to understand if there was a relationship between those looking to leave their school and those looking to stay at their school and the leadership characteristics of their Head of School, I conducted the following *t* test to determine the influence of servant leadership characteristics of the Head of School on teachers' intent to stay at their school. The findings are shown in Table 8. Teachers looking to leave their school scored a mean of 4.35 on these questions, whereas the teachers looking to stay at their school scored a mean of 4.45. This is a statistically significant finding at .05, and statistical significance suggests that there may be a relationship between those looking to leave their school and those looking to stay at their school. Therefore, the null hypothesis indicating there is no relationship can be rejected.

**Table 8**

*Results of Test for Influence of Head-of-School Leadership Characteristics on Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay*

Category	No. observations	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Stay	1,286	4.45	.507	
Leave	678	4.35	.530	.00

To explore the importance of predictors of teacher retention, Survey Item 10 asked the participants to respond to the following: Please rank the following factors in order of importance related to your desire to remain at your current school, with 5 being most important and 1 being least important: (a) compensation, (b) a supportive Head of School, (c) relationships with colleagues, (d) mission alignment with my school, and (e) trusted by my Head of School. These five factors were identified in the literature as important predictors of teacher retention. To understand the data, I ran descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and treated the

information as Likert-type data. Table 9 shows results for teachers looking to leave their school, and Table 10 shows results for teachers looking to stay at their school. For those looking to leave their school, the most important item was compensation ( $M = 4.15$ ), and the least important item for looking to leave their school was mission alignment ( $M = 3.86$ ). For those looking to remain at their school, the most important item was to feel trusted by their Head of School ( $M = 4.19$ ), and the least important item was compensation ( $M = 3.96$ ).

**Table 9**

*Descriptive Statistics for Factors Influencing Teacher Intent to Leave*

Item	Mean	SD
Compensation	4.15	.830
Trusted by head of school	4.04	.821
Relationships	4.01	.802
Supportive head of school	3.96	.763
Mission alignment	3.86	.909

*Note.* Number of observations: 678.

**Table 10**

*Descriptive Statistics for Factors Influencing Teacher Intent to Stay*

Item	Mean	SD
Trusted by head of school	4.19	.794
Relationships	4.17	.742
Supportive head of school	4.11	.766
Mission alignment	3.98	.848
Compensation	3.96	.792

*Note.* Number of observations: 1,286.

To assess the relationship between key predictors of teacher retention from the literature and teachers' stated intentions to stay or leave within my sample, I conducted a two-sample *t* test to determine if there was any statistical significance at .05. Interestingly, the largest differential of these five categories was compensation (see Table 11). Those participants who were looking to leave their school scored a mean of 4.15, whereas those who were looking to stay at their school scored a 3.96, a statistically significant finding at a .19-point differential. Not only did this category have the largest gap, but the 3.96 mean score by those looking to stay was the lowest score of the five categories, whereas the 4.15 mean score by those looking to leave was the highest score of the five categories. Those looking to stay were least concerned about compensation, but those looking to leave were the most concerned about this particular topic.

**Table 11**

*Results of Test for Influence of Predictors on Teacher Intent to Leave or Stay*

Item	Intent	No. observations	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Compensation	Leave	678	4.15	.830	.00
	Stay	1,286	3.96	.791	
Trusted by head of school	Leave	678	4.04	.821	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.19	.794	
Relationships	Leave	678	4.01	.802	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.17	.741	
Supportive head of school	Leave	678	3.96	.763	.00
	Stay	1,286	4.11	.766	
Mission alignment	Leave	678	3.86	.909	.00
	Stay	1,286	3.98	.848	

### **Qualitative Findings for Research Question 2**

The second research question asked the following: How do independent school teachers talk about how the characteristics of a servant leader influence their willingness to stay at their

school? As I looked to answer this research question, I used qualitative data analysis to understand how the participants were talking about the leadership characteristics of their Head of School. Five themes emerged through the interviews with the participants. First, respondents described the importance of communication from the Head of School. Second, they described feelings of appreciation from their Head of School. Third, they talked about compassion from their Head of School, specifically if they felt valued, heard, and seen. Fourth, they talked about feelings of trust or lack of trust with the Head of School. Fifth, they spoke of the connection or lack of connection between themselves and their Head of School.

### ***Theme 1: Communication***

The most common leadership characteristic shared by the interview participants was the importance of good communication from their Head of School to the faculty and the broader community. Twenty of 20 participants spoke about communication from their Head of School. Ten of 20 talked about how they felt their Head of School was a good communicator. Of those 10, eight respondents indicated they will stay at their school, and two were looking to leave their school. Ten of 20 indicated their Head of School was a weak or poor communicator. Of the 10 respondents who talked about their Head of School being a weak or poor communicator, three also talked about times when their Head of School was a good communicator. Of the 10 participants, five are looking to stay at their school and five are looking to leave their school.

For participants who were looking to stay at their school and were also classified as most aligned with the highest scores on whether they felt they had a supportive Head of School in the survey, they talked about their Head of School being a good communicator and used the following terms in their descriptions: clear, concise, timely, and transparent communication from their Head of School. They also mentioned the importance of articulating a clear vision and

being a good listener. Conversely, those who were looking to leave their school and were the least aligned with the lowest scores to the same question described their Head of School's communication style as unclear, cold, and too formal.

**Strong Communication Skills.** Ten participants described their Head of School as a good communicator. One of the descriptions used by the participants was clear communication. Participants SZ and LK shared examples when describing their Head of School, which “makes it very clear what his role is for our school, too” (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Participant LK shared the following:

The way that she operated and her clear communication, her timelines that were very easily understood...rolling up her sleeves, so to speak, and making sure that she could help navigate any of the challenges that may have come the way. (LK, personal communication, October 13, 2023)

Participant SP discussed the timeliness of their Head of School's communication by saying, “(they) communicate important messages, in a brief way at a timely moment” (SP, personal communication, October 18, 2023). JP shared the importance of “open communication every step of the way” (JP, personal communication, October 11, 2023). If their Head of School was determined to be a strong communicator by the participants, they also tended to be ranked high in other servant leadership categories, such as the following: “inspires the community,” “cares for the needs of others,” and being “mission-driven.”

**Inspirational Communicator.** The following three participants spoke about how their Head of School was an inspirational communicator. Participant LK felt inspired by their Head of School's communication style and shared, “I listened to her talk about the school, and it sounded like the school you wanted to be a part of, or I wanted to be a part of” (LK, personal

communication, October 13, 2023). Participant JP shared the following about their inspiring Head of School:

She's very passionate and inspiring. I mean, she just truly demonstrates that she cares about what is best for the kids and the learning of the students. And she is extremely connected to the mission of the school and does a very good job of clearly communicating how decision-making ties back to that mission. (JP, personal communication, October 11, 2023)

Participant JW shared the following about their Head of School:

And the sense of he led with his values forward, and everyone knew the core values and everyone understood....This is a place of values, this is a place of being mission-driven, and vision....It's not a place that caters towards parents, or teachers, or x, y, you know....We are all headed to this direction. (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023)

**Articulates a Clear Vision.** When speaking about communication from their Head of School, the participants also talked about how their Head of School articulated a clear vision. Seven participants shared examples of how this important servant leadership characteristic is to them. Of these seven participants, six were looking to stay at their school. The participants felt inspired by the Heads who could also tie their vision back into their school's strategic plan. Participant SZ talked about the clarity their Head of School used in their communication by stating the following:

He's very clear about it. And he uses the strategic plan as his guide, just like the board is his kind of boss....He says, this is my job. This is my role. This is what I'm doing to carry it out. (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023)

Participant SP talked about how important it was for the Head of School to articulate their vision and how it gives their faculty confidence in their Head of School:

There's vision involved, there's a vision that he has that he's going to stick to. And then the confidence that finds a way that if you have a goal, and you want to achieve it with your student, if you're a faculty member, if your staff member, or try to, we'll try to make you help you achieve it, give you the time, the space, the resources, the drive the



motivation to accomplish something, if it's really what you want to accomplish. (SP, personal communication, October 18, 2023)

**Good Listener.** Another leadership characteristic in the literature about servant leadership is being a good listener. Nine participants talked about how their Head of School was a good listener. Of these nine participants, seven are looking to stay at their school, and two are looking to leave their school. The participants described their Head of School as a good listener by saying their door is always open for concerns, listening to the faculty while helping to facilitate decisions, and being open to new ideas from the faculty. Participants JG and FB felt that their Heads of School have an open-door policy. Participant JG said, "I felt like her door was always open for concerns. She'd listen, she would always say, I'm happy to listen" (JG, personal communication, October 14, 2023). Participant FB stated, "And for us, teachers, I think she has always kept an open door for everybody to come in and just talk and listen" (FB, personal communication, November 11, 2023).

Participant JW talked about how their Head of School did a nice job balancing listening to faculty and facilitating decisions by stating, "He knew when to listen to people and let them decide, but he would also facilitate the decision" (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023). Participant EP talked about how their Head of School listened to new ideas that they brought: "He was a pretty good listener when I went to him. I only went to him a couple of different times about a new idea. But he listened well and appreciatively in those circumstances" (EP, personal communication, November 20, 2023).

**Open Feedback Loop.** Three participants talked about the importance of having an open feedback loop. The three participants who mentioned it as a construct are all looking to leave their school because the suggestions given were not acted on, they were dubious of it, or it was

inadequate. They shared examples of how their school used a climate survey, which included questions about their leadership. Participant JG shared the following about their climate survey:

She has started a few new things with a big survey climate a couple of years ago. And I think there were some changes made after that...trying to provide more opportunities for her to get to know faculty and new people to get to know each other...which I think gives people a chance to just chat and get to know her and, but I think those things are important. (JG, personal communication, October 14, 2023)

Participant JW thought a climate survey would provide an opportunity for an open feedback look when they shared, “That’s exactly what I think would benefit any Head of School. I really think, like, feedback loops would be really beneficial to any Head” (JW, personal communication, October 30, 2023).

**Closed Feedback Loop.** Conversely, eight participants shared examples where they felt there was no opportunity to share feedback about the Head of School. Of these eight participants, six are looking to leave their school. Some even felt fearful to do so. Participant JW talked about how the behavior of their Head of School was so upsetting that the faculty felt that they needed to go to the Board:

There was an anonymous faculty letter vote of no confidence that was sent to the Board. That was essentially almost dismissed by the board. I would just say, not dismiss, heard, okay, we’re working on it. Nothing was done to work on it. (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023)

Participant CKS stated the following:

Yes, but the one thing that looms over me from like going to one of them, as opposed to the music director, is that it was always said to me, even in my first year, by other faculty in the division that you should never go past the director because that’s insubordination and you’re going to get fired. (CKS, personal communication, October 27, 2023)

For Participant CKS, their Head of School goes by the title of Director. The importance of receiving feedback from the faculty is vital for the Head of School to achieve their vision for the

school. The participants talked about how their Head of School could or could not articulate the vision.

**Positive Messaging.** One of the characteristics of servant leadership is positive messaging. Five participants looking to stay at their school discussed the positive messaging of their Head of School. Four of the five participants are looking to stay at their school and were satisfied with the leadership characteristics of their Head of School who exemplified positive communication skills. Participant SZ talked about how a positive leader attracted additional positive people when they said, “So I think that like that positive energy attracts more positive energy....That just is like contagious, you know, so absolutely. It starts at the top” (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Positive leaders are encouraging to their faculty as Participant NS shared, “I really think you’re doing great, we might have to make some changes when we go forward; things are looking up, and we’re, you know, we’re gonna get through this” (NS, personal communication, November 6, 2023). Positive leaders were also noted to be inspiring to the faculty as JW shared, “I was really inspired by our Head of School” (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023).

**Poor Communication Skills.** Ten participants described their Head of School as a poor communicator. Of the 10 participants, five indicated that they would remain at their school and five were looking to leave their school. This is a conflicting finding and might be attributed to the daily interactions that they have with their division head and not their Head of School. They discussed the tone of communications being unclear, cold, or too formal. They referred to miscommunications between the Head of School and the faculty. They shared that the Head of School lacks the ability to tell stories about the school and is not able to articulate the vision for

its future. It was also pointed out that the Head of School was not asking hard questions to determine their strategy to move their school forward.

Participant TS talked about miscommunications between the Head of School and the faculty when by stating, “There are miscommunications and disconnect between administration and faculty....She’s not much of a communicator, you know?” (TS, personal communication, October 12, 2023). Participant JG talked about how their Head of School projected a lack of warmth in their communication style when they shared, “Information gets across, but it’s not necessarily a warmth, doesn’t always come through that way” (JG, personal communication, October 14, 2023). Participant SJS talked about unclear communication and not knowing if their Head of School agreed or did not agree with them and leading to frustration when they said the following:

He’s not a clear communicator. He’s not great even if you’re meeting with him...you come out of the meeting, you’re a little bit like, Wait, what are the actual action items? Did I get a yes or no? And so, in the moment, he doesn’t really give an answer. But that frustrates people. (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

Participant SJS went on to talk about how their Head of School could not articulate their identity in the community when they said, “But our leader isn’t able to articulate what our identity is” (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Participant JW added, “He could not ever clearly articulate or explain his reasons why we did what we did” (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023) and went on to say “A really polarizing, combative, just not....I don’t know if meddling is the right word, but uncommunicative and combative. I think I said that already there were really some hallmarks...” (JW personal communication, October 31, 2023).

## ***Theme 2: Creating a Culture of Appreciation***

**Showing Appreciation.** Another leadership characteristic of a servant leader is showing appreciation for those who work for them. Seven participants looking to stay at their school talked about how their Head of School showed appreciation to them for the work that they do for their school. The shared forms of appreciation were verbal and written, gifts (tokens of appreciation), and cash bonuses. Participant MA talked about how their Head of School went out of his way to share positive comments when they shared, “Our Head of School said publicly, (What) ‘Mike’ is doing for these students is just incredible....He’ll just make these little comments here and there....Wow, that was really nice of him to say that” (MA, September 25, 2023). Participant JG talked about how their Head of School provides gifts at the beginning of each school year by sharing the following:

Just the nice little things like your first day of meetings back to school, there was always a little gift, an umbrella from the school store, or a keychain or some little branded thing. At the holidays, she’d order big flats of poinsettias, and everyone stopped by the office. Please pick a poinsettia to take home from our break. Valentine’s Day, she always got big, lots of primroses and everybody got a little plant, a little flower. Just little things like that are just nice touches and the employee parties and celebrations, you know holiday, their end of year gathering they’re always at the Head of School’s house. (JG, personal communication, October 14, 2023)

Participant SZ built on that idea as follows:

Just so appreciated and notes, you know, thank you for doing this in your mailbox. Or, even today, we had a teacher appreciation lunch from the parents....I kind of feel guilty sometimes because I feel like my job is so good....I wish all kids could have this experience at our school....I wish every single kid could have this kind of education. (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023)

Participant CKS talked about how meaningful handwritten notes from their Head of School were to her by saying, “‘Bobby’s’ written thank you letters to teachers, for work that they’ve done....I think he strives to take a personal approach...” (CKS, personal communication,

October 27, 2023). Participant NS talked about compensation in relation to feeling appreciated: “He has given me a few shout outs in meetings and he went to the Board of Trustees and got me an extra \$7,000 for the (athletic) season” (NS, personal communication, November 6, 2023).

**Not Feeling Appreciated.** Eight participants talked specifically about not feeling appreciated by their Head of School. Of these eight participants, six are looking to leave their schools. They described feelings of not feeling respected by their Head of School, working hard on a project, not receiving a word of appreciation from them, and feeling ignored by their Head of School. Participant MA talked about a lack of respect from their Head of School when they said, “At the heart of it really is that lack of appreciation and respect for the faculty, or at least the perception of that” (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Participant TS described how she felt unappreciated:

I put a whole art show together. And it’s kindergarten through eighth grade. And it’s 300 students, with probably three pieces from each student. So if you do the math, that’s quite a lot. Right. And so I spent weekends doing that and putting it together, and it’s a nice showing, and I didn’t get an email, there was no thank you for doing this...nothing. And, and I was hurt, you know, I was hurt. (TS, personal communication, October 12, 2023)

When asked if they felt appreciated by their Head of School, Participant AK said, “No. I teach his son, and he has not talked to me at all...He has closed himself off to not talk to me” (AK, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

### ***Theme 3: Compassion: Feeling Valued, Heard, and Seen***

The interview participants also spoke about the compassion they felt or did not feel from their Head of School. Specifically, they talked about whether they felt valued, heard, and seen by their Heads of Schools. In speaking about feeling valued, the participants mentioned that the Head of School remembered things about them, actively listened to their concerns and acted on them, and supported them as a new teacher. As a result, trust and loyalty were formed by the

faculty members with their Heads of Schools, and they would do anything for them and had no desire to leave their schools, which we will delve deeper into in Chapter 5. The participants also commented on the importance of an open feedback loop to a closed feedback loop as this made them feel heard by their Head of School.

**Feeling Valued and Seen.** Ten participants talked about how their Head of School made them feel valued and seen. Of these 10 participants, eight are looking to stay at their school. Making sure employees feel valued and seen is one of the leadership characteristics of a servant leader. Participants talked about feeling valued and seen by their Head of School and explained why they wanted to remain at their school as a result. The participants described how they felt their Head of School would do anything for them and vice versa, they talked about having a spring in their step, and supporting a new teacher. Participant SZ shared, “(He) makes you feel valued. And remembers things about you....I just I feel like he would do anything for me....I think almost everybody here would feel that way about him” (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Participant LR felt renewed when describing how she felt about her Head of School when she stated the following:

I do feel like I’m valued. I do have spring in my step, I do have joy, I don’t complain to my husband, I felt there’s a lot more gratitude coming out of my mouth this year than there was this time last year. (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

Participant JM, who is a new teacher, felt supported by the Head of School when she offered the following comment:

I think especially because I’m a new teacher, she took interest in me when I feel like I’m obviously the youngest of all of my colleagues and still, I’m working on getting my master’s in the next year. And she gave me confidence...understanding my value, even though I’m new and not as experienced as some of my veteran colleagues, she just made me feel very valued in that way. (JM, personal communication, November 8, 2023)

**Feeling Heard.** Ten participants talked about how their Head of School made them feel heard. Making sure employees feel heard is one of the leadership characteristics of a servant leader. Participants talked about being heard by their Head of School and explained why they wanted to remain at their school. They gave examples of Heads of Schools making sure all voices were heard, they were offered a voice in decision-making, and teachers could bring concerns to their Head of School. Participant SJS felt strongly about the importance of being heard by their Head of School: “And if I had a Head of School that I didn’t feel was listening to me, then I would look to go somewhere else quicker. So that’s really important to me” (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Participant JW talked about his Head of School ensuring all voices were heard when he said, “‘Tom’ did a really good job with that he was really in tune with all the stakeholders. His leadership style was one in which every voice was heard, acknowledged, important” (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023). Participant LR commented on being part of the interview process for division head candidates:

We participated in the interviews, we participated in feedback. Overwhelmingly, the faculty had a feeling about one particular candidate, and it was heard, and they were selected. And so I think that was another very visible way of showing support. And also that we are valued for our wisdom, knowledge, understanding, or recognizing of what we need. And that felt like we were being heard. (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

**Feeling Supported.** Eleven participants talked about how their Head of School made them feel supported. Of the 11 participants, 10 of them stated that they intend to stay at their school. One of the leadership characteristics of a servant leader is making sure employees feel supported. Further, not feeling supported by the Head of School or administration was one of the top reasons teachers leave their schools, according to the literature on this topic. The participants described how important it is to feel supported by their Head of School with examples of



supporting the teachers' ideas, supporting their needs, and being supportive of their initiatives. The participants talked about how important it is that they were supported by their Head of School. Participant MA talked about feeling supported by the Head of School for their ideas when by stating, "And they're like, great, go for it. We'd love to see you do that. So that kind of support I really appreciate" (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Participant JP talked about Heads of School supporting the teacher's needs: "We see what your needs are. And here is what we are able to offer to support those needs (JP, personal communication, October 11, 2023). Participant SZ talked about the Head of School's support of their committee: "Another teacher and I are the co-chairs of our sustainability committee for our campus. And he has been, like, 100% supportive of what we've wanted to do" (SZ, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Support from the Head of School influences these teachers to want to remain at their schools.

**Not Feeling Valued and Seen.** Ten participants talked about how their Head of School did not make them feel valued and seen. Of these 10 participants, seven are looking to leave their school. The participants described how they felt about their Head of School. Examples of not feeling valued included how one participant felt like a "draft horse," as well as insincere appreciation being shown, feeling replaceable, playing favorites, and not appreciating the teacher's time. Participant TN did not feel valued in the same sense that a "farmer values their draft horse" and stated, "He values us like a farmer valued his draft horses like he could not do his job without us. Yeah, nothing would exist....And that's how we all feel here....We feel like cogs in a wheel" (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023). In my second conversation with participant TN, she stated the following:

They consider us very replaceable, like, Okay, leave, that's fine. But then they find that they can't find anyone to do the job. And then they panic. And I'm like, maybe you shouldn't have acted like I was so dispensable. (TN, personal communication, October 2, 2023)

Participant SJS talked about how their Head of School essentially chose some teachers to value, support, and trust when they stated the following:

And I also think that he chooses people to value support and trust. And I'm sometimes not sure why. And then you can do whatever you want. He seems to choose the people that he feels like he will support and people that he will not. (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

Participant AK shared that the Head of School does not understand their job nor value their time when discussing teacher workdays on the school calendar:

He thinks that they all should be professional development days. Even the ones immediately preceding report cards and progress reports go home. He thinks they should all be filled with training and we should do report cards and stuff on our own time. The fact that teacher workdays are being taken away, makes me feel not valued. (AK, personal communication, October 13, 2023)

**Not Feeling Heard.** Eight participants talked about how their Head of School did not make them feel heard. Of the eight participants, four are looking to leave their school and four are looking to remain at their school. The participants described suggestions they made not being responded to, no proactive direct communication on the part of the Head of School, not showing empathy, not taking feedback and acting on it, and an overall sense of not feeling listened to by the Head of School. Participant TN spoke about the desire on the faculty's part to turn over a dean position so others would have an opportunity to participate in this leadership role:

The administration has never shown any interest in turning that over. And even though we've asked, we've told them that it's really kind of a greater service to the faculty to turn that over sometimes, to give other people opportunities for that, there has been no interest in doing that. (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

Participant LK commented, “The amount that I had direct communication with the Head at his initiative was virtually none” (LK, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Participant SJS commented on feeling that her ideas and those of others were dismissed: “He’s not even listening to them and really just shut them down. And he then didn’t have empathy for them. So they just left. Yeah” (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Participant LR had the opportunity to provide feedback about the Head of School and administration but was a bit dubious about the process:

I was skeptical and optimistic at the same time. Partially I was optimistic because finally, I had a venue to be able to really anonymously [provide feedback], so I was optimistic about that finally happening. But there’s still the element of skepticism: is it going to be more than just a checked box that we’ve done this? Are we actually going to take to heart the feedback that we’re receiving beyond a celebration of what we’re already doing? (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

Participant CKS said simply, “She didn’t listen to us” (CKS, personal communication, October 27, 2023), and Participant DM agreed and said, “And I don’t think people (administrators) listen to us much” (DM, personal communication, October 29, 2023). Finally, Participant AG related not feeling heard to not feeling trusted by their Head of School:

There’s got to be some kind of a breakthrough, you know, where I think the leadership really starts to listen....I’m trying to put myself in their shoes, and trust and communicate, and trust that they are really out for the best, they really do care, but maybe they just need to listen a little bit better....It’s all of us together, having to listen to each other, trust, and get to a better place. (AG, personal communication, November 16, 2023)

The feelings of not being listened to have frequently caused these teachers to consider leaving their school.

**Not Feeling Supported.** Five participants talked about not feeling supported by their Head of School. Of the five participants, two are looking to leave their schools. This is a conflicting finding that might be attributed to the role the division head has in the day-to-day

interactions with teachers while the Head of School may see them less frequently. Further, two participants talked specifically about not feeling supported in their potential for growth opportunities within their school. They talked about either being passed over for promotions or never told about the opportunity due to poor communication skills. Participant TN said, “I was rejected from all three of them and never given a reason why” (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023). Participant MA shared the following:

And not only [are] they're not posted....There's a recent, the head of Ed Tech just tapped, and we're announcing this person. And what, wait a minute, even though the positions available and or positions are created for people, like I've been looking for, like an academic dean type role...when was just kind of all sudden created and didn't even know as an opportunity....I wasn't the only one that was interested in it as well....They aren't even making these opportunities for growth available and you're in school, then that puts the writing on the wall too, I guess. (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023)

#### ***Theme 4: Connection***

The fourth theme that I discovered in my research was centered on connection or lack of connection with the Head of School. The feelings of connection were described by observing their Head of School making connections with the faculty, students, and parents. These feelings of connection extended to the faculty, and they, in turn, felt that they could share honest feedback with their Head of School. Conversely, participants who were looking to leave their school described feelings of disconnection. These feelings led to expressions of fear, mistrust, toxic workplace environments, and a desire to leave their school for another job. Eight participants spoke about feelings of connection with the Head of School. Of the eight participants, seven are looking to remain at their school. The participants spoke specifically about how connected they felt to their Head of School or disconnected from their Head of School and explained how it impacted their desire to remain at their school. When discussing why they felt connected to their Head of School, the participants described personal connections with them

made outside of school, their connections with the students, being present on campus, being relatable to teachers while maintaining proper professional boundaries, feeling understood, and being approachable with new ideas.

Participant JP shared, “Three years ago, she was the officiant for my wedding....We got married here on campus. So, I’d say we have a good relationship” (JP, personal communication, October 11, 2023). Participant SZ talked about their Head of School connecting with the kids and the faculty: “And the teachers where he just likes to ask a lot of questions, and learn about you” (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Participant SP shared how their Head is present when they said, “I feel connected because that person (the Head of School) is present” (SP, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Participant JM stated the following:

She’s very good at kind of breaking the boundaries between admin and teacher and she’s had social events and her mom comes in town to make jewelry for everyone. She’s like, come on over and get some free jewelry, you know. So she’s very good at breaking those boundaries, in a good way. (JM, personal communication, November 8, 2023)

Participant FB talked about feeling understood by her Head of School when she reported the following:

I have a very strong connection with her in a feel that she understands me more....It’s not like the previous director that will say something, and it will make me feel like diminished because my background or because if I get really tired, my English level goes a little low because I’m exhausted (FB, personal communication, November 11, 2023)

Finally, Participant EDP shared, “And he was approachable with new ideas” (EDP, personal communication, November 20, 2023).

### ***Theme 5: Cultivating Trust***

The fifth theme that emerged from the study was the importance of Heads of Schools cultivating trust with their faculty. Five participants talked about feelings of trust with their Head of School. Of the five participants, four are looking to remain at their schools. They described

how they felt trusted by their Head of School or that they trusted their Head of School to lead them well. These feelings of trust influenced the teachers desire to remain at their school. The previous theme of connection led to feelings of trust in the Head of School and teachers intending to stay at their schools as a result. Participant JW indicated that he can trust his Head of School when he said, “I could just trust that the best decisions were being made” (JW, personal communication, October 30, 2023). Participant FB talked about trust due to her Head of School taking responsibility when something did not go well and being vulnerable in front of the faculty when she shared the following:

I do trust. I feel confident that she’s about to make the best decisions. I know she’s been very mindful of what she decides to do will affect the rest of the community. And I know she has the level of capacity to admit if something that she decided to do didn’t go well. (FB, personal communication, November 16, 2023)

**Trust Through Having Curricular Autonomy.** The participants talked about the importance of curricular autonomy. Ten participants talked about having a great deal of autonomy by their Head of School and division head. Of the 10 participants, six indicated they would remain at their school and four shared that they are looking to leave their school. As curricular autonomy is a primary factor for teachers to teach in independent schools, it was not a surprise to me to hear them talk about it and feel that they had a lot of it at their school. Curricular autonomy was mentioned both by those looking to remain at their school and those looking to leave their school. For those looking to leave their school, some felt that there was perhaps too much curricular autonomy. This topic is interesting as one could view it as the Head of School and administration trusting employees with curriculum, or one could view it as if they are not providing oversight and accountability.

However, it was acknowledged by all of the 10 participants that teachers stay in independent schools for curricular autonomy as it is a driving force in their decision making. Participant MA stated, “I’ve been given a lot of autonomy, I think they’re very good about that. And so, you know, I’ve actually introduced three new courses at the school” (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Participant GH said, “I like the idea that I can actually do real teaching” (GH, personal communication, November 18, 2023). Participant SJS felt they had too much autonomy when they shared the following:

Yeah, I feel like I have a lot of autonomy and I (think) almost too much. That’s actually why I think some teachers stay here because they can do whatever they want to in their classroom....I also think maybe our students are not benefiting because it’s too autonomous and everyone’s too different....Well, we have a new division director this year, who yes is starting to do that because our last division director of 20 plus years was not at all was not doing that at all. And autonomy, [she] loved autonomy and independence and was not checking up on people. So now this new division director who just came in this year is very much like wait, what is happening? We need to have some guidelines...autonomy within guardrails, if you will, independence within guardrails, she’s starting to articulate that. But because our Head of School was never really involved in that part of the running of the school, he kind of just let our previous division director do whatever he did, and now he’s letting our current one do what she’s doing, which is actually gonna be good. (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

**Lack of Trust Leads to Unhappiness with the Head of School’s Leadership.** Through the interview process, I learned a lot about teachers who were unhappy with their Head of School’s leadership. Nine participants described emotions that are related to a lack of connection leading to overall unhappiness with the Head of School’s leadership. Of these nine participants, five are looking to leave their school. The participants described feeling lied to, fearful, observed inconsistencies in mood and decision making, poor work ethic and attendance, feelings of unrest, discrimination, and, as a result, some felt that their schools have become toxic workplace environments. Faculty sometimes went to the Board of Trustees to file complaints against their Heads of Schools. In other cases, the Heads remained, and teachers and students left in droves.

Participant TN shared that there is a lot of unrest in the faculty at their school, “Unfortunately, I think it is coming from the top” (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023). Participant MA talked about tensions in the faculty meetings: “Faculty were getting quite frustrated to the point where there’s just kind of this sudden meeting, after school in this room, people were just venting notes are taken, you know, given to the Head” (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Participant LK shared their unhappiness when they said, “If he weren’t leaving. I probably would have thought about retiring earlier. I think a lot of people feel like they are working harder than he is” (LK, personal communication, October 19, 2023). Participant SJS also shared that the issues are coming from the top, “The Head of School actually kind of spearheads where the feelings of unrest, if you will, lie....That’s the general consensus” (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Participant JW talked about discriminatory issues when they said the following:

Absolutely, our, our LGBQA community felt especially afflicted and they saw any chance they could to bolt and everyone was just unhappy....And then there was a point to where academic leadership got together, or the department heads got together and wrote a letter to the Board, we don’t feel like this is in the best interest to the school that he continued as Head, and we all signed it. (JW, personal communication, October 31, 2023)

Participant AG talked about disrespectful comments to the leadership when they shared the following:

There’s all these disrespectful responses with the leadership. I don’t think the disrespect is good. And I also understand where some of it’s coming from. And no one has said, “This is not okay. It needs to stop.” So it continues.... (AG, personal communication, November 16, 2023)

**Lack of Trust Leads to an Unhealthy Culture.** I learned that a lack of trust as previously described can lead to an unhealthy faculty culture. Nine participants described feelings of an unhealthy culture stemming from a lack of trust with the Head of School and their



leadership characteristics. Of the nine participants, five are looking to leave their school. A couple of the participants talked about how the previously collegial atmosphere has changed in an unhealthy way under their current Head of School. Participant MA talked about lack of collegiality when they shared, “And people just had a good time together. None of that’s happening anymore” (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Participant SJS talked about how the Head of School will host an event and no one really wants to go when they said, “It seems people are like, ‘Oh, I feel like I have to go. It’s at our Head of School’s house....I should show my face.’ But they don’t really have that much fun at them” (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023). Participant CKS talked about how complaining brings the culture down:

How long can you complain? If you’re just miserable? Just go, you know, at some point, you have to decide, not commiserate all the time with each other, because you’re just bringing each other down to this dark, deep hole. And so I think that this place can be toxic. (CKS, personal communication, October 27, 2023)

### **Qualitative Findings for Research Question 3**

The third research question asked the following: To what extent and in what ways do the teachers describe a sense of purpose in their work, and is it related to their Head of School’s servant leadership attributes? As I looked to answer this research question, I identified the sixth and seventh theme in the interviews. Sixth, participants spoke about compensation and its importance and lack of importance to them. Seventh, participants talked about the role of the division head and how the Head of School needs to appropriately coach them up. This last construct emerged even though it was not a focus of the study, suggesting that this is a critical factor in understanding Head of School servant leadership. When the participants felt fairly compensated and their division heads were leading them well, they felt a sense of purpose in

their work and looked to stay at their school until they retired. Further, it was important to these same participants that the Head of School embodied the previously mentioned servant leadership attributes as detailed in the five previous themes of communication, cultivating a culture of appreciation, compassion, connection, and cultivating trust. It was notable that the respondents seemed not as concerned with compensation as an item of importance to them. They also pointed to the division head or principal as the person they related to most closely, thus highlighting the importance of the Head of School's role in hiring, coaching, and mentoring the senior administrative team. Their colleagues and direct supervisors had a closer impact on their desire to stay at their schools and contribute to the feeling of a sense of purpose in their work as independent school teachers.

### ***Theme 6: Compensation***

Similar to the findings in the survey results, teacher compensation is not a topic that is as important to the respondents in relation to the servant leadership characteristics to influencing their desire to stay at their school. When asked, 15 participants talked about compensation. Six talked about the importance of transparent compensation, and nine participants talked about unclear compensation. However, the participants did talk about their desire for a transparent compensation policy.

**Transparent Compensation.** Six participants talked about having a transparent compensation system. Of the six participants, four indicated that they were looking to stay at their school. Participant TS talked about the process at their school related to the transparency of what they are paid in comparison to other independent schools when they shared, "They usually, like every couple of years, will show us. And they talked about how it's competitive with other schools" (TS, personal communication, October 12, 2023). Participant SP was a little unsure if

their compensation system was transparent and also did not give it much thought when they shared the following:

I would have it probably. I'm trying to think here, because I honestly don't think about that very much. I mean, it was transparent for me...but relative to others. I personally don't ask other people. I don't know if institutions or employers are obliged. So I guess we're transparent...transparent within I think the institutional requirements. (SP, personal communication, October 18, 2023)

**Fair Compensation.** Eight participants talked about their compensation being fair in comparison to their peer schools. Of these eight participants, six participants indicated that they intend to stay at their school. Participants commented on increased compensation and compared it to public acknowledgment, and feeling that they were paid in line with their peer schools. Participant LR talked about how their school has increased teacher compensation when they stated the following:

And then the second thing was in the paycheck. I recognize I'm in a private institution, I recognize that there are benefits that come with that. But at the same time, we're in an economy where I still need to be able to make a living wage. And so in the past year, both of those things, they've taken considerable strides to make that happen. Both public acknowledgment, faculty (compensation), has increased. (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

Participant NS felt that they were paid appropriately when they shared, "I am right on par with what I would make someplace else" (NS, personal communication, November 6, 2023).

Participant NS, who is at a Boarding School, talked about fair compensation when they offered the following comment:

But I also understand that you can't just give everybody the raises they want. So I offered to teach an extra class. And because the standard is four classes, I teach five. So after teaching the standard, an extra class and an extra night of duty between those that make another \$8,500 a year off of that. So, you know, "Harry" made sure that happened. When I said I would teach another class, he said, that can be done....That's not a problem. (NS, personal communication, November 6, 2023)

**Nontransparent Compensation.** Nine participants talked about their compensation not being transparent. Of these nine participants, six indicated that they are looking to remain at their school. This finding goes with my quantitative finding that other factors are more important than compensation to faculty. Participants commented on the lack of transparency in compensation from their Head of School. They also spoke about the faculty striking backdoor deals with the Head of School. Participant TN shared some thoughts concerning the rumor mill swirling around teacher compensation when they stated the following:

Just someone the other day told me, three or four days ago, that the stipends for class Dean ran from \$1,500 a year to \$8,000 a year in that range for being a class Dean. I don't know if that's true. But that's what someone told me. So they have made a lot of noise about creating more transparency. I'm not completely sure it's true. (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

Participant MA talked about deals being struck with the Head of School behind closed doors with faculty when he stated the following:

That actually dates back to the old Head of School, I mean, struck deals left and right. And nobody knows who's making what. And it was interesting, because when the new head came, his name is "Bob." One of his main things he said, you know, there's no transparency. I plan to bring that, you know, bring transparency. Like that's gonna be part of one of my initiatives....I think three or four years passed, and nothing had happened, and someone finally brought it up....He kind of said, well, you know...I think he just had no idea what skeletons were in the closet. And once he realized, I don't think he could figure out any way to reconcile that is my guess. I don't know. (MA, personal communication, September 25, 2023)

**Unfair Compensation.** Eight participants talked about unfair compensation. Of the eight participants, four indicated that they are leaving their school. They shared stories about general concern of not being paid fairly, feeling pressure to keep students at their school so that the school could give them a raise, and having consultants brought in to look at their compensation. Participant LK talked about concerns related to not being paid fairly when they said, "There is a

lot of concern that we are not being paid fairly. But whether or not that's true, no one's said"

(LK, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Participant JG stated the following:

The salaries weren't really going up very much. They (faculty) left for some schools that pay more and have better benefits....So it's sort of like, we're putting it back on you to make sure the school stays healthy, then we'll give you a raise. (JG, personal communication, October 14, 2023)

Participant SJS talked about a committee that was looking at their teacher compensation when they shared the following:

Actually, we have a committee on compensation as you speak, because people are not happy about that at all....We did bring in consultants to see if there was inequity in pay based on gender and their conclusions were that they were not because everyone was convinced that there was. (SJS, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

### ***Theme 7: Coaching the Administrative Team***

Another theme that emerged from my interviews was the importance of the administrative team to the teachers. Seventeen of 20 participants talked about the relationship that they have with their direct supervisor, which is their division head. The participants reported having a closer day-to-day relationship with their division head rather than with their Head of School. The importance for the Head of School to hire, coach, and terminate if needed, in an effective manner, the division head, was of great interest to the participants in this study. They also expressed a desire to have a voice in the hiring process. Their relationship with their division head was important to them in their daily fulfillment of their job.

Eight participants talked about the school having a strong administrative team, and nine participants talked about the school having a weak administrative team. Participant AK shared an analogy when describing how the Head of School functions and the division head functions by stating the following:

I guess the thing is, for a Head of School...I felt like a Head of School is more “big picture.” You don’t have to be the one responsible for buying the paint...the division principals....They probably know your teachers better. Maybe they should be making the decisions that are day to day affecting teachers...rather than just like trying to do all of the things at once...paint the picture, get the paints, make sure that the frame is...it doesn’t always have to be delegation. (AK, personal communication, October 13, 2023)

**Strong Administrative Teams.** Eight participants talked about the importance of a strong administrative team and what that meant to them on a daily basis. Of the eight participants, six participants indicated that they plan to remain at their school. The participants shared stories about how well their Head of School did in hiring, coaching, and retaining the second-level administrators, in particular, the division head who is their direct supervisor. Being led well by their division head influenced them to remain at their school. Participant LK talked about their administrative team when they said, “Yes, in fact, like we have an extraordinary second level” (LK, personal communication, October 13, 2023). Participant SZ said how hiring great administrators reflects well on their Head of School:

He has made sure to hire really good people....So my division director for the upper school is someone who he’s known for a while, maybe even taught his kids or something, I think at another independent school....She became our division director....She also is amazing. And so the fact that he hired her, and she’s been so awesome, has also reflected really well on him. (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023)

Participant LR talked about how being led well by their division head made them feel valued by sharing the following:

There was a leadership change within our portion of the whole school...I’m in the upper school...We had some leadership changes here. And those are, they’ve been tremendous as well. So currently, I feel like I’m in a community that does value me, is showing that regularly and I’m being led well. (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

The participants also talked about feeling valued to be part of the hiring process for their division heads. Participant LR shared the following:

We're, where's your voice and all of this? We were, we participated in the interviews, we participated in feedback. And overwhelmingly, the faculty had a feeling about one particular candidate, and they were selected. And so I think that was another very visible way of showing support. And also, that we are valued in our wisdom, or knowledge or understanding, or recognizing what we need. (LR, personal communication, October 20, 2023)

The participants also talked about the importance for the Head of School to hold the department heads accountable. Participant SP shared the following:

But also accountability, because, you know, you can appoint a department head and sort of it gives them autonomy for them. But I guess the question is, is checking in on the department head, and making sure that they are being a good manager? (SP, personal communication. October 18, 2023)

**Weak Administrative Teams.** Conversely, nine participants pointed out how challenging their workplace environment was when the administrative team was weak. Of the nine participants, five indicated that they are looking to leave their school. In some cases, they were not visible, did not seem to care about teacher morale, and were not connected with their faculty. Participant TN shared the following about their Assistant Head of School:

And this person. She came in mid-year last year....No one knows her. We were at commencement last year. And one of my colleagues, someone who's been here longer than me, who was standing in line said, "Who is that stranger standing in the middle of our line walking into commencement?" Like, no one knows her. She doesn't know any of us. (TN, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

Participant MA talked with his division head about faculty morale when he shared, "Hey, John (division head), are you ever worried about morale on campus at all, you know, the faculty, and he just looks stunned. He's just like, morale? Well, he goes, "'You don't see anyone leaving do you?'" (MA, personal communication, September 2, 2023). Participant CKS talked about how their leadership team makes decisions in a vacuum without teacher input by stating the following:

And then underneath the president, you have a senior management team that makes this as the other maybe problem of people retention, I think, is that you have a senior

management team that makes all kinds of decisions for students, faculty, programming, all of that, but none of them are teachers, none of them have been teaching here. (CKS, personal communication, October 27, 2023)

These feelings influenced their desire to remain at their school.

**Sense of Purpose.** Finally, in looking to answer my third research question, my hypothesis was that if the Head of School exhibits servant leadership characteristics and teachers feel valued, recognized, and trusted, it will lead to teachers feeling a sense of purpose in their work, leading to higher levels of teacher retention. In my study, 14 participants talked about a sense of purpose in relation to the work they conduct at their schools. Of the 14 participants, nine participants indicated that they are looking to stay at their school. The participants talked about making a difference in what they do, the importance of the impact that they are making on their students, witnessing happy children and parents, and feeling respected by their peers. Participant DM talked about impact by stating the following:

I just feel like I have an impact on their lives. You know, often parents come and say, you know, my child does this. Can you tell her or tell him not to do it? Or just say yes, of course. (DM, personal communication, October 29, 2023)

Next, Participant NS shared, “You feel like you make a difference in kids’ lives here” (NS, personal communication, November 6, 2023). Finally, Participant SZ said, “I love going to work” (SZ, personal communication, October 18, 2023). It was not clear in my study if the servant leadership attributes of the Head of School contributed to the sense of purpose that the respondents felt in their work as teachers. Their sense of purpose seemed to derive from the work that they do every day with their students.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

In reviewing the research questions and the study’s findings from the survey respondents and participants in the interview process revealed that these servant leadership attributes of their



Head of School are important to them and are a factor in their expressed desire to stay at their independent schools. The findings show that the servant leadership characteristics of their Head of School influenced their desire to stay through seven major themes:

1. Communication from the Head of School. The participants described the importance of clear communication from their Head of School.

2. Head of School creating a culture of appreciation.

3. Compassion. Regarding compassion, participants discussed the importance of feeling valued, heard, and seen by their Head of School.

- 4 Feeling connected to the Head of School. The participants described feelings of the connection.

5. Head of School cultivating trust. Participants felt trusted by their Heads of Schools and trusted them. The participants provided examples of trust, including curricular autonomy.

6. Importance or lack of importance regarding compensation. The survey results and the semi-structured interviews showed that the participants who looked to remain at their school were not concerned about compensation. However, those who were looking to leave their school were concerned about compensation.

7. Importance of the Head of School in hiring, retaining, coaching, and developing the division heads who work closely with the faculty.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Introduction**

This study aimed to determine if there is a relationship between the servant leadership characteristics of the Head of School and independent school teachers' desire to remain at their schools. Do these leadership characteristics decrease the expressed intention of teachers to leave their schools? Through the findings of this study, I learned that the servant leadership characteristics of the Head of School do influence teachers' expressed desire to remain at their schools. In this chapter, I will share the implications of these findings for Heads of Schools and offer recommendations for their practice. Then, I will share the scholarly contributions of this study to the work on servant leadership. Next, I will discuss the limitations of the study and future implications for research on this topic. Finally, I will provide a final summary of the study and conclusions.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The findings of this study have several implications for Heads of Schools to consider and recommendations for Heads of Schools to implement in their day-to-day practice. While not an exhaustive list, these five recommendations were derived from my findings and are connected to the seven themes I found in the quantitative and qualitative research I conducted. Hopefully, these recommendations will be useful for Heads of Schools so they will consider implementing them into their practice to increase teacher retention in their independent schools.

#### ***Emphasize Effective Communication***

One interesting finding in this study was how the teachers talked about their desire to provide feedback on strategic initiatives that were developed by the Head of School. The success or failure of major initiatives relies on the teachers' willingness to buy into their ideas. It is

important for Heads of Schools to hold up “mirrors” to themselves by receiving feedback from their faculty while looking out the “window,” which articulates what is ahead of them in their strategic plan. In my findings, I learned about the importance of asking for, receiving, and acting on feedback from the faculty about the Head of School’s leadership characteristics. Eight of 20 participants in the semi-structured interviews shared the importance of an open feedback loop. The leadership characteristic of being a strong or good communicator seemed paramount in the participants’ views. It increased their confidence and trust in the Head of School to lead their community well. Further, I learned that the strong Head of School communicators not only increased their level of trust with the faculty, but also solidified a stronger feedback loop between the faculty and the Head of School.

Through this study, I have learned that Heads of Schools should prioritize effective communication with faculty members, including seeking feedback and actively listening to their concerns. Creating an open feedback loop fosters trust within the school community. As I found in the literature, clear communication is important as it relates directly to employee engagement and work performance (Vogelgesang et al., 2013). As mentioned previously, teachers must provide leaders with real-time feedback to maintain a continuous improvement culture. The Head of School needs to provide an environment where faculty feel psychologically safe (Coyle, 2018).

Teachers need to know that they can make mistakes and that the administration will be there to support them with issues regarding parents. Finally, active listening is a core leadership skill (Baker et al., 2019). Teachers want to feel heard by their leaders. I learned through the findings that the Heads of Schools who were initially perceived by their teachers as not doing a good job at their school and who asked for feedback and acted on it were able to change the

perceptions of the faculty on their Heads of Schools, which impacted them positively. These same participants changed their minds about leaving their school due to the changes they saw in their Head of School's leadership characteristics.

### ***Invest in Leadership Development***

In the literature, it was clear that increased job satisfaction for employees came through feeling valued by their supervisors (Wong & Davey, 2007), and providing work-life balance makes employees feel valued (De Smet et al., 2021). Also, school leaders can provide teachers with a voice and choice, which makes them feel valued (Allensworth et al., 2009; Kirk & McDonald, 2001). Heads of Schools should invest in leadership development for their administrative team, particularly their division heads. Providing coaching, mentoring, and professional development opportunities can strengthen leadership skills and enhance the overall effectiveness of the administrative team. Hiring strong division heads reflected positively according to the participants in this study.

The participants looking to remain at their school commented on how the Head of School did the little things well, such as taking the time to write notes of appreciation, providing back-to-school gifts, and remembering conversations about their personal lives. These small tokens of appreciation provided opportunities for connection with their Head of School. Many times, Heads of Schools feel that they need to provide grand gestures to show their appreciation to faculty. I learned from the interviews that teachers appreciate the smaller tokens of appreciation and less about the larger items. As Heads of Schools have tried to combat teacher attrition, some have provided larger salary increases, bonuses, and other forms of compensation. I learned from the study that, while the participants appreciated these items, they were less concerned about

compensation and more interested in knowing that their Head of School demonstrated servant leadership attributes.

### ***Foster Connection and Trust***

Heads of Schools should prioritize building strong relationships with faculty members through small gestures of appreciation, transparent communication, and accountability. Fostering a sense of connection and trust can contribute to a positive work environment and enhance teacher retention. Once the faculty members formed trust and loyalty with their Heads of Schools, I learned through the interviews that teachers would do anything for the Head of School and had no desire to leave their schools. Connection and trust take time, so Heads of Schools should invest the time and effort needed with their teachers to grow these relationships.

Further, Heads of Schools should be intentional about fostering connection and trust with their teachers. Otherwise, different priorities will rise to the top, and these areas will be ignored, which can lead to a lack of connection and distrust. Finally, when the leadership characteristics of their Heads of Schools were acted on, those actions built trust, and the teachers felt valued, seen, and especially heard by their Head of School. As I found in the literature on servant leadership, these findings are similar and aligned with previous studies in other business sectors (Muzira et al, 2020; Seto & Sarros, 2016).

### ***Prioritize Fair Compensation***

In reflecting on the topic of compensation, the participants shared the importance of a transparent compensation system. When Heads of Schools were open about how teachers would be compensated, it led to greater trust from the faculty to the Head of School. I also learned that compensation was important to those who were not intending to stay at their school, whereas it was less important to those looking to remain at their school until retirement. In the literature, I

learned that, although teacher compensation does play a critical role in retaining teachers, it is not the sole factor (Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Stronge et al, 2011). In comparing the findings with the literature, it is interesting to note that the participants in this study were not as concerned about increased compensation and talked only about fair compensation. It was not a major factor in teachers' decisions related to staying at their school or leaving their school.

Again, transparency and perceived fair pay were what the participants mentioned in the study. Heads of Schools should ensure that compensation policies are transparent, equitable, and competitive. Fair compensation is essential for attracting and retaining talented faculty members and maintaining teacher satisfaction. By providing a fair and transparent compensation system, teachers felt that they could become more effective educators (Ganser, 2000). In my study, the participants echoed these sentiments and state further that a transparent and fair compensation structure created greater trust between them and their Head of School.

### ***Involve Faculty in Decision-Making Activities***

As the division heads have the closest relationship with the teachers, the participants talked about how important it is to have someone in the division head role that they trust is doing a great job. Heads of Schools who are observed by teachers as highly capable in the hiring process of division heads received high marks in the interviews. Further, Heads of Schools need to mentor and coach their division heads to lead their teachers well. Heads of Schools should involve faculty members in decision-making processes, particularly those related to hiring, curriculum development, and strategic planning. Providing opportunities for faculty input can increase engagement, morale, and satisfaction among teachers. It is important for Heads of Schools to consider creating committees that include faculty members in the aforementioned

areas and others where they will have a voice and choice in decision-making practices, thus improving faculty culture.

### **Scholarly Contributions**

As I entered this research, my conceptual framework included three types of what I called educator conditions, which were based on the literature on servant leadership. These educator conditions are associated with a positive teaching work environment. These are (a) positive faculty culture, (b) transparent teacher compensation, and (c) curricular autonomy. When these conditions are in place, they fulfill the needs that, according to the literature, are important to teachers. These needs include (a) sense of belonging and recognition, (b) feeling valued and seen, and (c) feeling trusted by their administrators. My hypothesis at the outset of the study was that these educator conditions will be fulfilled when the teachers are led by a servant leader. The servant leadership characteristics I hypothesized to be most important include empathy, inspirational leadership, authenticity, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment, building community, and listening while emphasizing the importance of seeking the will of the people they serve. Based on this conceptual framework, teachers led by servant leaders should feel a sense of belonging, feel valued and seen, and trust and be trusted by their leadership. This approach should provide teachers with an environment where they can thrive and want to remain for a long time.

As I reflect on my conceptual framework after reviewing the research, it is clear that the literature was accurate, and the mixed-methods approach to this study validated the literature and my hypothesis. My conceptual framework was largely confirmed by my research and has significantly added to the field of servant leadership. Importantly, my survey was the largest ever conducted through NAIS, and the 20 interviews further validated my conceptual framework and

gave more credence to my research. My research suggests that servant leadership is a useful framework for understanding leadership in independent schools, which is an under-studied topic in leadership more broadly. In reviewing the literature on servant leadership and considering my research questions, I believe that my study has significantly added to the field of leadership in the following areas. First, the participants who expressed a desire to stay at their school were concerned with the servant leadership characteristics of their Head of School, as they were a factor in their expressed desire to remain at their school. I had several statistically significant findings in my study that further the research on servant leadership. Based on my findings, I suggest the most important servant leadership characteristics are active listening, showing respect, understanding the needs of the community, encouraging and motivating, clearly articulate a vision for the future, inspirational leadership, developing strategies, creating an environment for learning and growth, and anticipating challenges. Further, my findings suggest the servant leadership framework is useful and valid and is worthy of future research and consideration. Second, based on the quantitative and qualitative research, the respondents who expressed a desire to remain at their school were less concerned about compensation than those who had expressed a desire to leave their school. This finding is significant and adds to the field of study on teacher retention, particularly for those who work in independent schools.

My study did focus on the defining characteristics of a servant leader, according to Greenleaf (1970), which are a desire to serve others, a focus on building relationships, a willingness to listen and empathize, and a belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. Based on my analysis of more established directions in school leadership literature, I identified a subset of the servant leadership characteristics on which to focus. Therefore, my survey specifically addressed the 10 servant leadership characteristics identified by Spears (1995):



1. Listens when I talk to them.
2. Displays empathy: shows genuine respect, care, and concern for my well-being.
3. Healing: addresses conflict and other issues in a constructive manner.
4. Awareness: understands my needs and concerns.
5. Persuasion: encourages and motivates me to perform at my best and creates a supportive environment.
6. Conceptualization: develops a clear vision and inspires others to work towards achieving common goals.
7. Foresight: anticipates future challenges and opportunities and develops strategies to address them.
8. Stewardship: manages resources and assets to ensure long-term success.
9. Commitment to the growth of their people.
10. Building community: creates a sense of belonging, collaboration, and support

However, my study did not focus on the following personal qualities of servant leadership, which are humility, authenticity, interpersonal awareness, and stewardship (Van Dierendonck, 2011). These characteristics did come through in some of the interviews as the participants described the leadership characteristics of their Heads of Schools, but they were not key themes of my study. Overall, my findings have added a significant amount of research to the field of study on servant leadership and teacher retention in independent schools.

### **Limitations**

A few areas from my qualitative research revealed conflicting results among those who indicated they were looking to leave their school and those looking to stay at their schools. These

areas include not feeling heard, nontransparent compensation, not feeling supported, and sense of purpose.

### ***Not Feeling Heard***

Of the eight participants who mentioned that their Head of School did not make them feel heard, four participants were looking to leave their school, and four indicated that they were looking to remain at their school. Perhaps one might surmise that the four who were looking to stay at their school are at larger independent schools and did not have a lot of interaction with their Head of School. As I mentioned previously, teachers tend to have daily interactions with their division heads and not their Head of School. Although this was not the focus of my study, this relationship may explain this conflicting information. Their determination to remain at their school may have been based on other factors and less on not feeling heard by their Head of School.

### ***Nontransparent Compensation***

Of the nine participants who talked about their compensation not being transparent, six indicated that they want to remain at their school. As we learned in the quantitative data, for those looking to remain at their school, compensation was the least important factor of the five factors from which they chose, which were compensation, supportive Head of School, relationships with colleagues, mission alignment, and being trusted by the Head of School. This finding suggests that compensation is not as important to those who are looking to remain at their school.

### ***Not Feeling Supported***

Five participants talked about not feeling supported by their Head of School. Of the five participants, two are looking to leave their schools. This is a conflicting finding that might be

attributed to the role of the division head in the day-to-day interactions with teachers, whereas the Head of School may see them less frequently. Again, they may not feel supported by their Head of School but do feel supported by their division head, and that is why they remain at their school.

### *Sense of Purpose*

Of the 14 participants who talked about having a sense of purpose in relation to the work they do at their schools, nine indicated that they are looking to stay at their school, and five are looking to leave their school. How can teachers who are looking to leave their school still have a sense of purpose in what they do? My hypothesis is that they love teaching their students in the classroom and look past parts of the school that they might not like. My interpretation of the conflicts is based on the role that the division head has in the daily interactions with the faculty. The Head of School could display servant leadership characteristics; however, if the division head is more of a command and control leader, as an example, the faculty will not be happy and will want to leave their school. Although this issue was not a focus of my study, if Heads of Schools and division heads are not aligned in their leadership styles, it may lead to greater teacher attrition. Finally, this issue creates a challenge to my hypothesis as I cannot fully support it with my research.

One of the largest limitations of my study is the lack of evidence-based research on the topic of servant leadership. I developed my own survey based on the 10 servant leadership characteristics developed by Spears (1995). Therefore, I based my survey on a leadership construct that had not been fully researched. Also, my survey was not validated and, in hindsight, contained some items that may have been more open to interpretation than I realized. This may

have introduced some error or imprecision. Both of these reasons are why my mixed-methods design was important. It allowed me to fully explore my concept through multiple means.

The quantitative aspect of my study was not designed to identify directionality or cause (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The qualitative aspect of my study was designed to produce a deeper understanding of my conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2008, 2013). To the extent that there is a relationship between servant leadership and teacher retention, additional research will be required. There may have been concerns on the participants' part that their Head of School would learn the information they shared in the interviews. To help offset their concerns, I reassured each of them that all information would be anonymized and never shared with their Head of School.

As my study focused on the role of the Head of School, one of the limitations of my study is I did not focus on the relationship between the division head and the teacher. What I learned through my study was the importance of that particular relationship and its influence on teacher retention. The division head and the teacher have daily interactions whereas the Head of School and the teacher may have only occasional contact with each other. Although the Head of School sets the tone for the culture, the division head carries it out with the faculty on a daily basis. It was not a topic that I researched but one that someone should consider researching through the servant leadership lens.

Another limitation involved the sample. I could survey only independent school teachers with an email account with NAIS. One might surmise that the 15,284 teachers with an email address with NAIS are more engaged with the organization as they proactively sign up for an NAIS account. It also could mean some of these teachers created an account with NAIS to register for the Career Center to look for another job. Further, NAIS surveyed only those within

the specified group (Berndt, 2020). NAIS currently has over 1,615 members or participant schools. Also, there was not a lot of variation in the responses. This lack of variation could be attributed to either the survey's failure to capture existing variation or to a true lack of variation among respondents' views on the questions. Additional research should explore these questions.

Finally, despite the valuable insights gained from this study, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Although the sample size was relatively large for a teacher population, the participants were drawn from a specific geographic region and type of school (i.e., independent schools). Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias and the implications of all this for generalizability.

### **Implications for Future Study**

Future research could explore the relationship between servant leadership attributes and teacher retention in other educational contexts, such as public schools. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how changes in leadership practices over time impact teacher satisfaction and retention. Even though the respondents and participants in my study did share the importance of servant leadership attributes of their Heads of Schools, my study was not designed to examine causality. As I learned the importance of the teacher's relationship with their direct supervisor, the division head, an interesting future study would be to conduct a similar mixed-methods study and ask about the servant leadership characteristics of their division head and how it might influence their desire to remain at their school.

### **Final Summary and Conclusions**

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between servant leadership attributes of Heads of Schools and teacher retention in independent schools. The findings highlight the importance of transparent communication, effective leadership

development, fair compensation policies, fostering connection and trust, and involving faculty in decision-making processes. These initiatives lead to higher teacher satisfaction based on my findings. In particular, my statistically significant findings prioritized active listening, showing respect, understanding the needs of the community, encouraging and motivating faculty, articulating a clear vision for the future, being an inspirational leader, developing key strategies to move the school forward, creating an environment for learning and growth for teachers, and anticipating challenges. I conclude that these areas are consistent with other research-based leadership constructs while adding to the literature on servant leadership with a strong research-based study of 2,000 teachers across the country.

By prioritizing these areas, Heads of Schools can create positive work environments, enhance teacher satisfaction, and improve teacher retention rates. Ultimately, Heads of Schools who practice servant leadership in their independent schools can contribute to their independent schools' long-term success and sustainability by retaining more teachers. Finally, by leading as a servant leader, the Heads of Schools are more likely to foster trust and commitment among their team members, increasing job satisfaction and motivation (Joseph & Winston, 2005). All independent schools can benefit from a Head of School who is a servant leader.

## Appendix A: Survey

### Dennis Chapman. Teacher Survey for Proposal

#### Leadership Characteristics

1. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

- 0-4 Years
- 5-9 Years
- 10-14 Years
- 15-19 Years
- 20-24 Years
- 25 years or longer

2. Are you:

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African American
- Asian
- Latinx/Hispanic
- Native American
- Middle Eastern
- Multiracial
- International
- Prefer not to disclose this information
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to say

4. In which region of the country are you located?

- East
- Mid Atlantic
- Mid West
- New England
- Southeast
- Southwest
- West



5. Are you in your:

- 20s
- 30s
- 40s
- 50s
- 60s
- 70s or older

6. What degree(s) do you hold?

Please check all that apply

BA/BS in Education	<input type="radio"/>
BA/BS	<input type="radio"/>
M.Ed.	<input type="radio"/>
MA/MS	<input type="radio"/>
Ed.D	<input type="radio"/>
Ph.D	<input type="radio"/>
M.B.A.	<input type="radio"/>
J.D.	<input type="radio"/>
Other...	<input type="radio"/>

7. In which division do you teach?

- Early Childhood Education (Infant - PreK4)
- Lower School (K-5th grade)
- Middle School (6th-8th grade)
- Upper School (9th-12th grade)

8. Which of the following statements most accurately describes your future plans as a teacher

- Leave my current school as soon as possible
- Leave my current school when I get a better opportunity;
- Leave my current school eventually;
- Stay at my current school indefinitely;
- Stay at my current school until I retire;
- Leave education, but work in a different industry next year

9. On a scale from 1 to 5 , with 1 being not at all important to 5 being extremely important, how important are the following Leadership Characteristics in your Head of School to you?

My Head of School....

	5 - Extremely important	4 - Very important	3 - Important	2 - Somewhat Important	1 - Not Important
Really listens when I talk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shows genuine respect, care, and understanding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Addresses conflicts and other issues in a constructive manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands the needs and concerns of our community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourages and motivates me to perform my best through positive relationship-building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Develops a clear vision of the future and inspires our community to work toward achieving common goals.

Anticipates future challenges and opportunities, and develops strategies to address them.

Understands the needs of my community and serves those needs.

Creates an environment that encourages learning and growth.

Fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, and support.

10. Please rank the following in order of importance related to your desire to remain at your current school? With 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. \*

5 - Most impo... 4 - Very impo... 3 - Important 2 - Not very i... 1 - Not import...

Compensation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A supportive ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mission align...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trusted by my...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you are willing to be considered for a follow-up interview, please include your name, email address, and phone number. All conversations will be anonymized.

Your answer

---

Please list any additional thoughts or comments you would like to share with the researcher:

Your answer

---

The link to the above survey is [here](#).

## Appendix B: NAIS School Demographics

Region	%
East (NJ, NY)	9%
Mid-Atlantic (DE, DC, MD, PA, VA)	20%
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WV, WI)	12%
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	10%
Southeast (AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN)	20%
Southwest (AZ, AR, CO, KS, LA, NM, OK, TX)	7%
US Territories (GU, PR, VI)	0%
West (AK, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

School Type	%
Boarding	1%
Boarding Day	10%
Day	88%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%</b>

School Gender	%
Boys	4%
CoEd	86%
Girls	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%</b>

School Grades	%
Elementary	29%
Elementary-Secondary	58%
Secondary	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>97%</b>

School Size	%
Under 201	13%
201-300	9%
301-500	24%
501-700	17%
701+	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%</b>

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The purpose of my interviews is first to explore the relationships and dynamics I will not be able to test for in my survey. For example, a Sense of Purpose will take a lot of work to measure quantitatively. I will take both an inductive and deductive approach to the qualitative aspect of my study. From an inductive perspective, I am still determining what I will find during these interviews. And from a deductive perspective, I have particular items that I want to explore with the interviewees, such as a sense of purpose. Furthermore, I am looking to understand the accuracy of my conceptual framework. In addition, I will be identifying other themes that arise through my interview process. I would then reapply it as a code as well.

I plan to interview faculty members who opt in to be interviewed. The interviews will be approximately 60 minutes each. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed digitally using the Otter.AI artificial intelligence software. I will review all interviews for accuracy. The rationale for utilizing interviews is to receive information directly from teachers regarding my research questions. The key will be to ask questions that elicit thoughtful responses. These will be semi-structured, and I plan to have set questions and allow for an open-ended interview style with some analysis and interpretation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

### Questions:

The following are my questions for the open-ended, semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me about your school.
2. How long do you plan to stay?
3. What factors contribute to your desire to [stay long-term; leave; leave eventually, etc.]?
4. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your work and at your school?
5. Educator Conditions:
  - a. Do you have the autonomy and power to make curricular decisions in your classroom?
  - b. Do you feel a sense of belonging at your school?
  - c. Are you appropriately recognized for your work?
  - d. Do you feel fairly compensated based on your peer schools?
  - e. Is your compensation system transparent?
6. Teacher Conditions:
  - a. Do you feel valued by your school leader?
  - b. Do you feel supported by your school leadership?
  - c. Do you feel that your school leader trusts you?

### Appendix D: Code Book

Code	Abbr	Definition: Descriptions of ...
Articulates a Clear Vision	ACV	HOS articulates a clear vision
Board of Trustees	BOT	Teachers bringing issues to the Board
Burned Out	BRN	Teachers describe feeling burned out
Curricular Autonomy	CA	Faculty feel they have autonomy over their curriculum
Closed Feedback Loop	CFL	Faculty do not feel there is an o
Caring Leader	CL	Teachers describe a caring leader
Connection	CNT	Faculty feeling connected to their HOS
Connected to HOS	CONN	Teachers feel connected to their HOS
Disconnected to HOS	DCONN	Teachers feel disconnected to their HOS
Does not Articulate a Clear Vision	DNACV	The HOS does not articulate a clear vision
Feeling Appreciated	FA	Faculty feel appreciated by their HOS
Fair Compensation	FCOMP	Teachers describing their compensation to be fair
Feeling Heard	FHRD	Faculty feeling heard by their HOS
Faculty Perceptions	FPERC	Faculty describing their perceptions of actions taken by the HOS
Fear	FR	Teachers describing feelings of fear
Feeling Supported	FS	Faculty feeling supported by their HOS
Feeling Trusted	FT	Faculty feel trusted by their HOS
Feeling Valued	FVLU	Faculty feeling valued by their HOS
Good Communication	GCM	The HOS is a good communicator
Good Follow Up	GFLUP	Faculty describe their HOS as good with follow up



Good Listener	GLIS	Teachers feel their HOS is a good listener
Happy with Leadership	HL	Teachers describe being happy with leadership
High Morale	HM	Teachers describing teacher morale being high
Inconsistency in decision making as a Leader	IL	Teachers describing inconsistent decisions made by HOS
Internal HOS appointment	INTERNALHOS	An internal candidate appointed as HOS
Lack of Community	LOCOMMUNITY	Teachers describing a lack of community
Lack of Opportunities for Growth	LOG	Teachers describing lack of growth opportunities
Lack of Transparency in Decision Making	LTD	Teachers describing a lack of transparency in decision making by the HOS
Connections to the Mission	MISSION	Teachers describing ways HOS connects their communication to the Mission of the school
Not Connected	NCNT	Faculty not feeling connected to their HOS
Negative Leadership	NEG	Teachers describing negative leadership attributes
Not Caring Leader	NCL	Teachers describing their HOS as not caring about them
Not Feeling Appreciated	NFA	Teachers not feeling appreciated by their HOS
Not Fair Compensation	NFCOMP	Teachers describing their compensation to not be fair
Not Feeling Heard	NFHRD	Teachers not feeling heard by their HOS
Not Feeling Seen	NFS	Teachers not feeling seen by their

		HOS
Not Feeling Supported	NFS	Faculty not feeling supported by their HOS
Not Feeling Trusted	NFT	Teachers not feeling trusted by their HOS
Not Feeling Valued	NFV	Teachers not feeling valued by their HOS
Not Present on Campus	NPOC	Teachers describing HOS not present on campus
Not Recognized by HOS	NREC	Teachers not feeling their work is recognized by the HOS
Not Transparent Compensation	NTCOMP	Teachers feel comp is not transparent
Not Trust in the HOS	NTRUSTHOS	Teachers describing not trusting their HOS
Open Feedback Loop	OFL	Faculty feel there is an open feedback loop to the HOS
Owns Mistakes	OWNMIST	The HOS owns their mistakes publicly
Poor Communication	PCM	The HOS is a poor communicator
Poor Follow Up	PFLUP	Faculty describe HOS as poor with follow up
Poor Listener	PLIS	Teachers feel their HOS is a poor listener
Present on Campus	POC	Teachers describing HOS present on campus
Positive Leadership	POS	Teachers describing positive leadership attributes
Issues of Race	RACE	Teachers describing issues of race
Recognized by HOS	REC	Teachers describing their work being recognized by the HOS
Retention Issues	RI	Teachers leaving their school
Relational Leader	RL	Teachers describe a relational leader

Strong Admin Team	SAT	Teachers describe a strong admin team
Sense of Belonging	SB	Teachers describe a sense of belonging
Sense of Purpose	SOP	Teachers feeling fulfilled in their work
Teacher Attrition	TA	Teachers describing teacher attrition
Transparent Compensation	TCOMP	Teachers feel comp is transparent
Transparent in Communication	TIC	Teachers describing transparency in communication by the HOS
Teacher Retention	TR	Teachers describing why they stay
Trust in the HOS	TRUSTHOS	Teachers describing feelings of trust for their HOS
Unhealthy Culture	UC	Teachers describing an unhealthy culture
Unhappy with Leadership	UHL	Teachers describe being unhappy with leadership
Weak Admin Team	WAT	Teachers describe a weak admin team

## Appendix E: Participant Demographics of the Sample

Item	No.	%
Years of Service		
0-4	481	24.49
5-9	505	26
10-14	304	15.48
15-19	240	12
20-24	205	10
25 or longer	229	12
Race		
No Answer	9	.46
White	1,361	69
Black	137	7
Asian	106	5
Latinx/Hispanic	168	9
Native American	0	0
Middle Eastern	9	.46
Multiracial	58	3
International	22	1
Prefer not to disclose	94	5
Gender		
No Answer	4	.20
Male	517	26
Female	1,390	71
Non-binary	15	.76
Prefer not to answer	38	2
Region		
No Answer	7	.36
East	352	18
Mid Atlantic	313	16
Midwest	264	13
New England	175	9
Southeast	406	21
Southwest	126	6
West	321	16
Age Range		
No Answer	4	.20
20s	89	5
30s	368	19
40s	612	31
50s	599	31
60s	258	13
70s or older	34	2

College Degree		
No Answer	2	.10
Bachelor's degree	522	.27
Graduate degree	1,247	63.49
Doctoral degree	161	.8
Less than bachelor's degree	17	.87
Other	15	.76
Teaching Division		
No Answer	5	.25
Early Childhood Ed (Infant-PreK)	123	6
Lower School (K-5th grade)	557	28
Middle School (6th-8th grade)	492	25
Upper School (9th-12th grade)	787	40
Day or Boarding School		
No Answer	366	19
Day School	1,429	73
Boarding Component	169	9
Coed or Single Gender		
No Answer	614	31
Single Gender	236	12
Coed	1,114	57
Elementary or Elementary and Secondary		
No Answer	595	30
Elementary	401	20
Elem-Secondary	693	35
Secondary	275	14
Size of School		
No Answer	232	12
Fewer than 200 students	260	13
Between 201 to 300 students	223	11
Between 301 to 500 students	419	21
Between 501 to 700 students	289	15
Between 701 to 999 students	232	12
1,000 or more students	309	16

---

$n = 1,964.$

## **Appendix F: Informed Consent**

### **Voluntary Informed Consent for Interview**

You are invited to participate in this study because you opted in for an interview through the survey distributed by NAIS

This study is being conducted by Dennis Chapman, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose for my interview is to examine to see if there is a relationship between certain types of leadership styles and teachers intent to stay at their independent schools.

**PROCEDURES:** The individual interview will be set at a convenient time for you, lasting no more than thirty minutes. The conversations will be recorded so that they can be transcribed.

**COMPENSATION:** There will be no financial compensation for participation.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential, except as may be required by law. If any publication results from this research, you will only be identified by a pseudonym. None of your responses will be shared with anyone at your school.

**WITHDRAWAL:** You are free to choose not to be interviewed. You are free not to answer particular questions during the interview. You can end the interview at any time. Your decisions will not impact your relations with the school, NAIS, or researcher.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT:**

I have read the above information. I have asked any questions and received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in this study. I have received a copy of the consent form.

Signature of Participant:

Name of Participant:

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

## Appendix G: Email to NAIS Faculty

Dear Colleague:

In partnership with the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), a researcher at The University of Pennsylvania Mid-Career Doctoral Program is conducting a study to understand from the teacher's perspective if specific leadership characteristics of the head of school lead to teachers' intent to stay at their independent school. This confidential research will offer recommendations for heads of schools in their leadership journeys and provide insights into what teachers say are the most important leadership characteristics of their Heads of Schools.

We are gathering responses from the NAIS faculty. **You are receiving this email as an NAIS faculty member.** Aspects of this survey are the property of NAIS and may be used for future research and publication. This survey should take 3-5 minutes to complete. You can complete part of the survey and return later to finish the process (your answers will be saved). You can also use the back button at the bottom of the survey (do not use the back button on your browser) to see previous sections. **Four participants will be randomly selected to receive a \$50 gift card from Amazon.**

Confidentiality: Your survey responses will be used strictly for research purposes. Your responses will not be shared with anyone at your school, including the administration. While confidentiality can never be completely ever be guaranteed in research, all measures will be taken to ensure the privacy of your responses and that neither you, your school, nor any of its personnel will be identified without your consent. Responses will only be shared in aggregate, meaning neither individual teachers' responses nor individual schools' data will be used in this research. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and any individual may withdraw at any time. You have the opportunity to opt in for a follow-up interview. Interview participants will have the opportunity to choose their pseudonyms.

Please email [dchap03@upenn.edu](mailto:dchap03@upenn.edu) with any questions or concerns. Thank you very much for your participation.

### **Follow this link to the Survey:**

Take the Survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19x2Vc-yzbSyMwn7wqp6yAiZzae36HJkHXeLM0SC2XCE/edit?usp=drive\\_web](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19x2Vc-yzbSyMwn7wqp6yAiZzae36HJkHXeLM0SC2XCE/edit?usp=drive_web)

Sincerely,

Dennis Chapman

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, N., Grigsby, B., & Peters, M. L. (2015). Does leadership matter? Examining the relationship among transformational leadership, school climate, and student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 10*(2), 1-22.
- Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., & Mazzeo, C. (2009). *The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago public schools* (ED505882). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505882.pdf>
- Al-Safran, E., Brown, D., & Wiseman, A. (2014). The effect of principal's leadership style on school environment and outcome. *Research in Higher Education Journal, 22*, 1-19.
- Anderman, E. M. (1991). *Teacher commitment and job satisfaction: The role of school culture and principal leadership* (ED375497). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED375497.pdf>
- Aydin, B. (2019). Administrator behaviours that make teachers feel valued. *European Journal of Education Studies, 6*(8), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3531865>
- Babarskienė, J., Grubliauskienė, J., Kryvenko, I., & Vaičekauskaitė, R. (2022, March 7-8). *The "new normal" in education: Experiences of existential learning of young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic* [Conference session]. 16th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, Online.
- Baker, E. L., Dunne-Moses, A., Calarco, A. J., Gilkey, R. (2019). Listening to understand: A core leadership skill. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 25*(5), 508-510. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000001051>



- Ballou, D., & Podgursky, M. (1998). Teacher recruitment and retention in public and private schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 17(3), 393-417. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1520-6688\(199822\)17:3<393::AID-PAM2>3.0.CO;2-B](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1520-6688(199822)17:3<393::AID-PAM2>3.0.CO;2-B)
- Bass, B. M. (1999). Two decades of research and development in transformational leadership. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(1), 9-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135943299398410>
- Bass, B. M. (2000). The future of leadership in learning organizations. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(3), 18-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190000700302>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership: A response to critiques. In M. M. Chemers & R. Ayman (Eds.), *Leadership theory and research: Perspectives and directions* (pp. 49-80). Academic Press.
- Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 425-469. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669821>
- Bernate, C. (2022). *NAIS research: Teacher retention in independent schools*. National Association of International Schools. <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/fall-2022/research-insights-teacher-retention-in-independent-schools/>
- Berndt, A. E. (2020). Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(2), 224-226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420906850>
- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and Quantity*, 36, 391-409. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020909529486>

- Brill, S., & McCartney, A. (2008). Stopping the revolving door: Increasing teacher retention. *Politics & Policy*, 36(5), 750-774. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2008.00133.x>
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews. Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.
- Brower, T. (2021, September 19). *Empathy is the most important leadership skill according to research*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2021/09/19/empathy-is-the-most-important-leadership-skill-according-to-research/>
- Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts*. Random House.
- Brown, G. (2016). Leadership's influence: A case study of an elementary principal's indirect impact on student achievement. *Education*, 137(1), 101-115.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Quit levels and rates by industry and region*. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t04.htm>
- Clason, D. L., & Dormody, T. J. (1994). Analyzing data measured by individual Likert-type items. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 35(4), 31-35. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.1994.04031>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). Stayers, leavers, lovers, and dreamers: Insights about teacher retention. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(5), 387-392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487104270188>
- Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810911100108>
- Coyle, D. (2018). *The culture code: The secrets of highly successful groups*. Random House.

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Crippen, C. (2004). Servant-leadership as an effective model for educational leadership and management: First to serve, then to lead. *Management in Education, 18*(5), 11-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089202060501800503>
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (2003). Wanted, a national teacher supply policy for education: The right way to meet the “highly qualified teacher” challenge. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*, 33-34. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v11n33.2003>
- David, G., & Kirby, S. N. (1997). Teacher turnover and teacher quality. *Teachers College Record, 99*(1), 45-56.
- Day, C., Flores, M. A., & Viana, I. (2007). Effects of national policies on teachers’ sense of professionalism: Findings from an empirical study in Portugal and in England. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 30*(3), 249-265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760701486092>
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1990). *The principal’s role in shaping school culture* (ED325914). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED325914.pdf>
- DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., & Schutz, P. A. (2018). Critical race mixed methodology: Designing a research study combining critical race theory and mixed methods research. In J. T. DeCuir-Gunby, T. K. Chapman, & P. A. Schutz (Eds.), *Understanding critical race research methods and methodologies* (pp. 166-179). Routledge.
- De Smet, A., Dowling, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Schaninger, B. (2021). “Great attrition” or “great attraction”? *The choice is yours*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www>.

mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours

- de Waal, A., & Sivro, M. (2012). The relation between servant leadership, organizational performance, and the high-performance organization framework. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 19(2), 173-190. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1548051812439892>
- Diliberti, M., Schwartz, H., & Grant, D. (2021). *Stress topped the reasons why public school teachers quit, even before COVID-19*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1121-2.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1121-2.html)
- Dworkin, A. G. (2009). Teacher burnout and teacher resilience: Assessing the impacts of the school accountability movement. In L. J. Saha & A. G. Dworkin (Eds.), *International handbook of research on teachers and teaching* (pp. 491-502). Springer.
- Ebener, D. R., & O'Connell, D. J. (2010). How might servant leadership work? *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 20(3), 315-335. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.256>
- Edmondson, A. C., Higgins, M., Singer, S., & Weiner, J. (2016). Understanding psychological safety in health care and education organizations: A comparative perspective. *Research in Human Development*, 13(1), 65-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2016.1141280>
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes*. University of Chicago Press.
- Engelhart, E. F. (2012). *The relationship of servant leadership on teacher satisfaction and teacher retention* (Publication No. 1022333178) [Doctoral dissertation, Lindenwood University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- Engels, N., Hotton, G., Devos, G., Bouckenooghe, D., & Aelterman, A. (2008). Principals in schools with a positive school culture. *Educational Studies*, 34(3), 159-174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690701811263>
- Farber, B. A. (1984). Teacher burnout: Assumptions, myths, and issues. *Teachers College Record*, 86(2), 321-338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146818408600207>
- Fielding, N., & Fielding, J. (1986). *Linking data*. Sage.
- Foley, B., & Torres, A. (2024). *The big picture: Hiring and retention in independent schools*. National Association of Independent Schools. <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/spring-2024/the-big-picture-hiring-retention-in-independent-schools/>
- Freiberg, H. J. (Ed.). (1999). *School climate: Measuring, improving, and sustaining healthy learning environments*. Psychology Press.
- Ganser, T. (2000). An ambitious vision of professional development for teachers. *NASSP Bulletin*, 84(618), 6-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019263650008461802>
- Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). *U.S. schools struggle to hire and retain teachers* (ED598209). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598209.pdf>
- Gary-Pointer, T. (2022). *Teacher job satisfaction and teacher performance evaluation* (Publication No. 29211511) [Doctoral dissertation, University of St. Francis]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Gius, M. (2015). A comparison of teacher job satisfaction in public and private schools. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 19(3), 155-164.
- Goe, L. (2007). *The link between teacher quality and student outcomes: A research synthesis* (ED521219). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598209.pdf>

- Goleman, D. (1998, March). The emotionally competent leader. *Healthcare Forum Journal*, 41(2), 36-38.
- Goleman, D. (2017). *Leadership that gets results*. Harvard Business Press.
- Goleman, D. (2019). *The emotionally intelligent leader*. Harvard Business Press.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2000). *Effective leadership: The power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business Press.
- Gray, L., & Taie, S. (2015). *Public school teacher attrition and mobility in the first five years: Results from the first through fifth waves of the 2007-08 beginning teacher longitudinal study* (ED556348). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556348.pdf>
- Gray, R., & Nunn, J. (2023). Data sharing in qualitative research. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 33(1-2), 4-5. <https://doi/10.1111/nae2.12049>
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255-274. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737011003255>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The servant as leader*. Center for Servant Leadership.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (2011). *What is servant leadership?* Center for Servant Leadership. <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>
- Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Guarino, C. M., Santibanez, L., & Daley, G. A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(2), 173-208. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543076002173>
- Halawah, I. (2005). The relationship between effective communication of high school principal and school climate. *Education, 126*(2), 334-346.
- Hansen, D. T. (1995). *The call to teach*. Teachers College Press.
- Harrison, J. L. (2011). Instructor transformational leadership and student outcomes. *Emerging Leadership Journeys, 4*(1), 82-136.
- Hill, A., Mellon, L., Laker, B., & Goddard, J. (2016, October). *The one type of leader who can turn around a failing school*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2016/10/the-one-type-of-leader-who-can-turn-around-a-failing-school>
- Hirschi, A. (2012). Callings and work engagement: Moderated mediation model of work meaningfulness, occupational identity, and occupational self-efficacy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 59*(3), 479-480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028949>
- Hughes, R. E. (2001). Deciding to leave but staying: Teacher burnout, precursors and turnover. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 12*(2), 288-298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190010015097>
- Humphrey, N., Curran, A., Morris, E., Farrell, P., & Woods, K. (2007). Emotional intelligence and education: A critical review. *Educational Psychology, 27*(2), 235-254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410601066735>
- Independent School Management. (2022). *What factors predict the likelihood a teacher says they will remain at your school?* [https://isminc.com/search/teacher\\_growth](https://isminc.com/search/teacher_growth)

- Ingersoll, R. M. (1997). Teacher turnover and teacher quality: The recurring myth of teacher shortages. *Teachers College Record*, 99(1), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0161468197.09900118>
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Consortium for Policy Research in Education. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/rmi/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf>
- Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., Collins, G., & Harrison, B. (2021). The demographic transformation of the teaching force in the United States. *Education Sciences*, 11(5), 234-263. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11050234>
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Merrill, L. (2010). Who's teaching our children? *Educational leadership*, 67(8), 14-20.
- Ingvarson, L., Meiers, M., & Beavis, A. (2005). Factors affecting the impact of professional development programs on teachers' knowledge, practice, student outcomes and efficacy. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13, 10-11. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v13n10.2005>
- Joseph, E. E., & Winston, B. E. (2005). A correlation of servant leadership, leader trust, and organizational trust. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 26(1), 6–22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730510575552>
- Jotkoff, E. (2022, February 1). *NEA survey: Massive staff shortages in schools leading to educator burnout; alarming number of educators indicating they plan to leave profession.* National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/nea-survey-massive-staff-shortages-schools-leading-educator-burnout-alarming-number-educators>



- Kan, L. (2014). *How does teacher attrition compare to other professions?* Education Next.  
<https://www.educationnext.org/teacher-attrition-compare-professions/>
- Kane, P. (1991). Independent schools in American education. *Teachers College Record*, 92(3), 396-408.
- Kengatharan, N. (2020). The effects of teacher autonomy, student behavior and student engagement on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 20(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.4.001>
- Kirk, D., & MacDonald, D. (2001). Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 33(5), 551-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027.0010016874>
- Kock, N., Mayfield, M., Mayfield, J., Sexton, S., & De La Garza, L. M. (2019). Empathetic leadership: How leader emotional support and understanding influences follower performance. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 26(2), 217-236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051818806290>
- Konold, T., Cornell, D., Jia, Y., & Malone, M. (2018). School climate, student engagement, and academic achievement: A latent variable, multilevel multi-informant examination. *AERA Open*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/233285841881.5661>
- Kurtz, H. (2022, April 14). *A profession in crisis: Findings from a national teacher survey*. EdWeek Research Center. <https://www.edweek.org/research-center/reports/teaching-profession-in-crisis-national-teacher-survey>
- Lambersky, J. (2016). Understanding the human side of school leadership: Principals' impact on teachers' morale, self-efficacy, stress, and commitment. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 15(4), 379-405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2016.1181188>

- Langer Research Associates. (2019). *PDK poll 2019*. <https://pdkpoll.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PDKPoll2019Topline.pdf>
- Light, R. J., Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (1990). *By design: Planning research on higher education*. Harvard University Press.
- Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, 23(2), 175-181. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X\(95\)00006-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(95)00006-6)
- Liu, X. S., & Ramsey, J. (2008). Teachers' job satisfaction: Analyses of the teacher follow-up survey in the United States for 2000-2001. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(5), 1173-1184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.010>
- Liu, Y., Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Gümüş, S. (2021). The effect of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Mediating roles of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(3), 430-453. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220910438>
- Loewus, L. (2021, May 4). *Why teachers leave—or don't: A look at the numbers*. Education Week. <http://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teachers-leave-or-dont-a-look-at-the-numbers/2021/05>
- MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 12(1), 73-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120701576241>
- Maxwell, J. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. Rogg (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 214-253). Sage.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.

- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2008). Emotional intelligence: New ability or eclectic traits? *American Psychologist*, *63*(6), 503-504. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.6.503>
- Mollica, A., & Cambon, S. C. (2021, November 25). *Where U.S. workers are quitting jobs at record rates*. Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/where-u-s-workers-are-quitting-jobs-at-record-rates-11637836201>
- Morris, J. E., Lummis, G. W., Lock, G., Ferguson, C., Hill, S., & Nykiel, A. (2020). The role of leadership in establishing a positive staff culture in a secondary school. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *48*(5), 802-820. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741.143219864937>
- Murphy, W. P. (1954). The right to work statute. *Mississippi Law Journal*, *26*(1), 39-40.
- Muzira, D. R., Muzira, R., & Min, D. (2020). The concept of servant leadership in business management. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, *1*(1), 24-32. <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2020v01i01.0003>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2019). *The future of the teaching workforce*. <https://www.nais.org/learn/independent-ideas/january-2019/the-future-of-the-teaching-workforce/>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2020). *Head turnover in independent schools*. [https://www.nais.org/getmedia/53b827a3-b027-4a7e-af56-b43a5a2/d4b22/NAIS\\_Research\\_HeadTurnoverInIndependentSchools\\_2020.pdf](https://www.nais.org/getmedia/53b827a3-b027-4a7e-af56-b43a5a2/d4b22/NAIS_Research_HeadTurnoverInIndependentSchools_2020.pdf)
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2022a). *About NAIS*. <https://www.nais.org/about/about-nais/>

- National Association of Independent Schools. (2022b). *NAIS research: Head turnover at independent schools: Sustaining school leadership*. <https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/research/nais-research-head-turnover-at-independent-schools-sustaining-school-leadership/>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2022c). *Trend lines: What's on the horizon for teacher hiring?* <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2022/trend-lines-what-s-on-the-horizon-for-teacher-hiring/>
- Nelsen, J., Lott, L., & Glenn, H. S. (2013). *Positive discipline in the classroom: Developing mutual respect, cooperation, and responsibility in your classroom* (4th ed.). Harmony Press.
- Nguyen, T. D., Lam, C. B., & Bruno, P. (2022). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Learning Policy Institute. <https://learning.policy.institute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching>
- Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2005). The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29(1), 38-54.
- Perie, M. (1997). *Job satisfaction among America's teachers: Effects of workplace conditions, background characteristics and teacher compensation* (ED412181). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED412181.pdf>
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2020). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage.

- Rhodes, C., Nevill, A., & Allan, J. (2004). Valuing and supporting teachers: A survey of teacher satisfaction, dissatisfaction, morale and retention in an English local education authority. *Research in Education, 71*(1), 67-80. <https://doi.org/10.7227/RIE.71.7>
- Roberts, C. (2021). *The national teacher shortage crisis: Understanding teacher attrition and turnover* (Publication No. 28320105) [Doctoral dissertation, Edgewood College]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Russell, R. F. (2001). The role of values in servant leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 22*(2), 76-84. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437.730110382631>
- Sands, E. K. (2011). *Job satisfaction and its impact on teacher retention in the independent school* (Publication No. 3446510) [Doctoral dissertation, Immaculata College]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Sedgwick, M. G., & Yonge, O. (2008). “We’re it,” “we’re a team,” “we’re family” means a sense of belonging. *Rural and Remote Health, 8*(3), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH1021>
- Serow, R. C. (1994). Called to teach: A study of highly motivated preservice teachers. *Journal of Research & Development in Education, 27*(2), 65-72.
- Seto, S., & Sarros, J. C. (2016). Servant leadership influence on trust and quality relationship in organizational settings. *International Leadership Journal, 8*(3), 23-33.
- Sheather, J., & Slattery, D. (2021). The great resignation—How do we support and retain staff already stretched to their limit? *British Medical Journal, 375*, 2533-2534. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2533>
- Spears, L. C. (1995). *Reflections on leadership: How Robert K. Greenleaf’s theory of servant-leadership influenced today’s top management thinkers*. New York: Wiley.

- Spears, L. C., & Lawrence, M. (2002). *Focus on leadership: Servant-leadership for the twenty-first century*. Wiley.
- Speicher, L. L., & Francis, D. (2022). Improving employee experience: Reducing burnout, decreasing turnover and building well-being. *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, 21(1), 11-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cgh.2022.09.020>
- Spicer, F. (2016). *School culture, school climate, and the role of the principal* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Georgia State University.
- Steiner, E. D., & Woo, A. (2021). *Job-related stress threatens the teacher supply: Key findings from the 2021 state of the U.S. teacher survey*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1108-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-1.html)
- Stronge, J. H., Ward, T. J., & Grant, L. W. (2011). What makes good teachers good? A cross-case analysis of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(4), 339-355. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248711140.4241>
- Sull, D., Sull, C., & Zweig, B. (2022). *Toxic culture is driving the great resignation*. MIT Sloan Management Review. <https://sloanreview-mit-edu.proxy.library.upenn.edu/article/toxic-culture-is-driving-the-great-resignation/>
- Trastek, V. F., Hamilton, N. W., & Niles, E. E. (2014). Leadership models in health care—a case for servant leadership. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 89(3), 374-381. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2013.10.012>
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2017). Trust in education. In G. Noblit (Ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of research in education* (pp. 211-220). Oxford University Press.

- Van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1228-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
- Vieno, A., Perkins, D. D., Smith, T. M., & Santinello, M. (2005). Democratic school climate and sense of community in school: A multilevel analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(3-4), 327-341. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-8629-8>
- Vogelgesang, G. R., Leroy, H., & Avolio, B. J. (2013). The mediating effects of leader integrity with transparency in communication and work engagement/performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, 24(3), 405-413. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.01.004>
- Walker, T. (2022, February 1). *Survey: Alarming number of educators may soon leave the profession*. National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/survey-alarming-number-educators-may-soon-leave-profession>
- Wong, P., & Davey, D. (2007, July). *Best practices in servant leadership* [Paper presentation]. Servant Leadership Roundtable at Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, United States.
- Worth, J., & Van den Brande, J. (2020). *Teacher autonomy: How does it relate to job satisfaction and retention?* (ED604418). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604418.pdf>
- Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997). Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(1), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2162>
- Zamarro, G., Camp, A., Fuchsman, D., & McGee, J. B. (2021, September 8). *Understanding how COVID-19 has changed teachers' chances of remaining in the classroom*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-the-pandemic-has-changed-teachers-commitment-to-remaining-in-the-classroom/>