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Retaining effective urban teachers in the age of accountability: How do successful urban schools address staffing challenges?

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dissertation

**RETAINING EFFECTIVE URBAN TEACHERS IN THE AGE OF
ACCOUNTABILITY: HOW DO SUCCESSFUL URBAN SCHOOLS
ADDRESS STAFFING CHALLENGES?**

by

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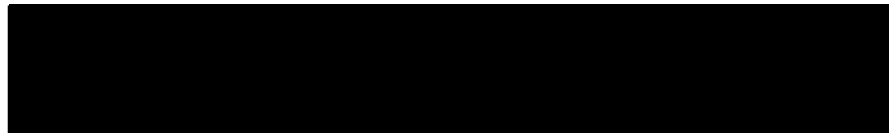
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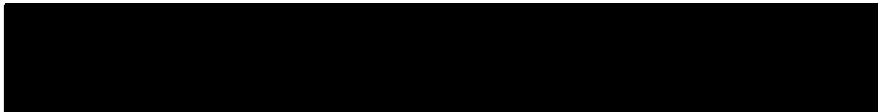
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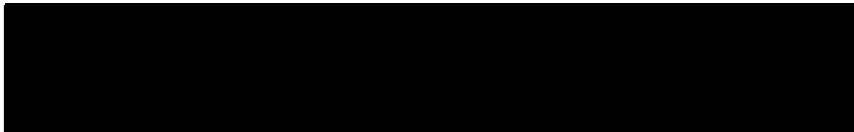
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ABSTRACT

Many urban schools struggle to retain their best teachers because of challenging work environments, poor salaries, and ineffective school leadership. The additional requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation for teachers to be highly qualified and the increased academic requirements of raising students to a proficient level in reading and mathematics mean that these schools face additional challenges to retaining teachers. Little research has been done on teacher retention in relation to NCLB in urban schools, but the few studies available have suggested that NCLB has had a negative impact on teacher morale and retention in urban schools. The research project was a paired case study that examined teacher retention in four urban schools, contrasting two schools that showed improvement under NCLB in terms of student achievement with two

schools that did not show improvement. This study used human resource data, teacher and principal interviews, and school improvement plans to answer the following three research questions: 1) Does the teacher retention rate remain constant as schools improve? 2) Is there a pattern of teacher retention in improving schools? 3) What do improving schools do to attract, train, and retain teachers? The results showed that all schools had increased levels of teacher retention from the beginning of the study until the end. Improving schools had slightly higher rates of teacher retention, especially among teachers who were determined to be desirable. There was some evidence that as student achievement rates rose in improving schools, so did the rate of teacher retention. Lastly, the findings suggest that schools that were improving were also schools that embodied many of the factors that teachers are looking for in a school, including strong school leadership, positive working conditions, and other supports for teachers new and experienced, such as professional development and mentoring. This study has several limitations, such as a small sample size and a limited pool of human resource data. The findings have important implications for urban school districts that are trying to retain quality teachers.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation is a report of a paired case study examining the effects of the No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB) (2001) on teacher retention in urban schools. The study is based primarily upon data collected in four schools in the Prince George's County Public School District in Maryland. The first chapter of this dissertation presents the background of the study, defines the problem, describes its possible significance, and presents an overview of the methodology used. The chapter concludes by summarizing the limitations of the study and defining the major terms used throughout this dissertation.

Context of the Problem

Effective teaching is at the heart of raising student achievement, but quality teachers are difficult to attract and retain. Teacher effectiveness and teacher retention have been persistent problems in the United States, particularly in urban schools. The United States Department of Education (DOE) estimated that between 2.0 and 2.5 million new teachers would be needed in the decade between 1998 and 2008 (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This forecast was based on anticipated increases in the student population, reduction in class sizes, and retirement of veteran teachers in the United States. The shortage of teachers was expected to be further exacerbated by the fact that new teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. During their first five years of teaching, new teachers have an attrition rate as high as 50% (Gursky, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith,

2003). New teachers report being unprepared to face the challenges of the classroom, resulting in a revolving door of teachers who teach for a few years, but then leave the profession (Peske, 2006). The attrition rate for new teachers is even higher in urban schools and schools which have large populations of minority and low-income students. New teachers leaving the profession presents a significant problem, but not all attrition results from teachers leaving the field of teaching entirely. Many teachers leave urban schools in favor of non-urban teaching environments in order to escape the effects of poverty and low socio-economic status that make urban students more challenging to teach (Peske, 2006).

Schools must not only retain teachers, but they must also retain the best and most highly qualified teachers if they want to see improvement in student achievement. Highly qualified teachers in urban schools are the most difficult to retain because they are desirable to other districts. They often have a wealth of job opportunities in districts that are perceived as easier to work in. Thus, urban schools have become a training ground for novice teachers to prove themselves; however, once these teachers have a few years of experience, they move on to more comfortable and higher paying positions (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). In most instances, these teachers move from lower achieving districts to higher achieving districts. Even within a single school district, over time the most effective teachers tend to move to higher achieving schools with lower numbers of minority and low-income students (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). There is a nascent body of research that suggests that as the number of urban schools

being classified as failing under NCLB increases, teachers appear to be leaving these same schools in higher numbers (Sunderman, 2004).

Teacher retention has usually been studied apart from the issue of student achievement. It is not enough for schools to have a high rate of teacher retention; it is becoming increasingly clear that to succeed, schools need also to attain a high rate of student achievement. NCLB is the spotlight that has illuminated this need to balance teacher retention and student achievement in schools in the United States. NCLB requires that all students be proficient in mathematics and reading by the year 2014, and it holds schools accountable for making steady progress towards that goal in the interim. NCLB has posed a tremendous challenge to urban schools as it requires them to demonstrate continual improvements in student achievement with a specified time frame. In addition to student achievement goals, NCLB requires that all of a school's teachers be highly qualified in the subjects they teach. This represents a change for many state certification laws and has necessitated changes in staffing in many schools. NCLB has driven increases in student testing, expansion of teacher and administrator accountability, and implementation of new measures of teacher quality. These impacts have changed the landscape of public education in recent years and have presented a major challenge to teacher retention in urban schools.

In response to the requirements of NCLB, schools have made changes to their curricula to ensure that all students attain the required level of student achievement, and have adjusted their teacher staffing to ensure that all faculty are highly qualified in their subjects. In making these changes, however, teacher

retention is likely to have been damaged. While some level of teacher turnover may be a net positive as the standards of teaching are raised, schools will likely need to focus on retaining those teachers who are driving the most significant improvements in student achievement. The increased volume of student testing linked to NCLB, including the corresponding student level identification information provides the required data to determine the effectiveness of teachers in raising student achievement scores. With this data in hand, school districts will be seeking out those teachers who have demonstrated their ability to raise student achievement. Given the inherent teacher retention challenges in urban schools, it is critical that to determine the factors that will increase their ability to retain the most effective urban educators.

Statement of the Problem

The landscape of education has changed since the passage of the NCLB, and the recruitment, evaluation, and retention of teachers are also changing. Increased accountability and a focus on changing the way schools operate will likely translate into increased teacher attrition in the short term. At the same time, however, it is critical for schools to identify strategies to retain their most effective teachers in order to deliver on the objectives linked to NCLB.

The purpose of this study was to analyze patterns of teacher retention in urban schools that had consistently raised student achievement under the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as to examine how these schools attracted, trained, and retained highly effective teachers. This study compared teacher retention

patterns in urban schools that have continually met the student achievement challenges of No Child Left Behind to retention patterns in similar schools, that have not demonstrated improvements in student achievement.

The following research questions framed this study:

1. Does the teacher retention rate remain constant as student achievement improves in the improving schools?
2. Is there a pattern of teacher retention in schools since the passage of NCLB? Does this pattern differ in improving and non-improving schools?
3. What strategies do improving schools employ to attract, train, and retain highly effective teachers? Are there differences between improving and non-improving schools?

Professional Significance of the Study

The problem of teacher retention affects schools on many levels. First and foremost, students deserve to be taught by the most effective teacher possible in order to reach their potential (Rivkin, 2005). Students in urban schools are even more in need of highly effective teachers because of the additional educational and social challenges they often face at home (Coleman, 1987). Consistency of teaching style and strong student-teacher relationships are important for all students, but for urban students these factors are particularly crucial. Students have been shown to perform better when they have a longer personal history and solid relationship with their teachers (Coleman, 1987). When there is a high

rate of turnover among teachers, it becomes challenging to build these relationships and student performance tends to suffer.

A high rate of teacher turnover also has a significant financial impact on a school district. When new teachers are recruited into a district, they must be trained and mentored during their initial years. If a teacher leaves the district after only a few years, this training and mentoring process must be re-initiated with another new teacher. In addition to this, school districts with high rates of turnover must also bear significant expenses associated with recruiting and hiring new teachers to replace those who have left.

High teacher turnover rates also have an effect on the performance of a school. Schools with higher rates of teacher turnover often have lower rates of student achievement. This mark of failure can result in the school receiving sanctions under NCLB, which can in turn lead to significant financial challenges, as well as a decrease in faculty morale.

Principals and district leaders have long struggled to find a solution to the challenge of teacher retention, and this study seeks to bring the issue of retention into the age of education accountability. There has been much research on the topic of teacher retention, but most of this research has not touched on the topic of teacher effectiveness or with the link between retention and student achievement. Not all teacher retention is positive; in fact, some planned turnover may be necessary for schools to improve and change to meet the needs of their students.

This study compares teacher retention rates in successful urban schools with teacher retention rates in similar schools that have failed to realize gains in student achievement levels. Retention data from the selected schools were analyzed in order to identify patterns of teacher retention and what strategies have proven to be effective in retaining highly successful teachers. This study represents an important shift in the focus of teacher retention research and the results will provide valuable information for urban schools struggling to retain their most talented teachers.

Overview of Methodology

This study is a paired case study of four urban schools located in Prince George's County, Maryland. The schools were selected to include two schools that have consistently shown improvement under NCLB, as well as two schools that have shown little or no improvement under NCLB. The schools were all selected from the same school district to ensure that issues such as salary and benefits were not a determining factor in the rates of teacher retention. The schools were screened based on their student achievement data and their willingness to participate. Teacher retention data were collected from each school covering the 2003-2008 school years. Additional data including teacher hire dates, termination dates, and reasons for leaving were also collected, when available.

School improvement plans were reviewed and analyzed in order to determine the strategy each school took to address teacher retention.

Teachers and principals from each school were interviewed in order to determine their understanding of the challenges of teacher retention. These interviews provided valuable insight into school-specific teacher retention issues, as well as how these issues may be addressed in other urban schools.

This section provides only a brief introduction to the methodology of this study. A full description of the methodology can be found in Chapter 3.

Definitions

This section will define some of the key terms used in this study.

Teacher retention: For the purposes of this study, teacher retention is defined as the percentage of teachers that remains in a school from one school year to the next. A percentage teacher retention rate was calculated for each school based on the number of teachers remaining in year (n+1) versus the total teacher headcount of the school in year (n). The teacher retention rate factors in all teachers returning to the school for school year (n+1).

Teacher turnover: For the purposes of this study, teacher turnover is defined as the percentage of teachers that leave the school in a given school year. A percentage rate was calculated for each school based on the number of teachers leaving the school before the start of year (n+1) versus the total head count of the school in year (n). The teacher retention rate reflects teachers leaving the school for all reasons including voluntary departures, terminations, promotions, and retirements.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001. It is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson. ESEA was the first attempt by the federal government to regulate educational standards from the federal level. ESEA addressed the needs of low-performing schools and provided funding for these schools in order to raise the standards of education in

them. NCLB is the reauthorization of this act and also works to reduce the educational gap between students and schools in a variety of ways. There are three components of NCLB that directly relate to this study. First, NCLB requires states to implement standardized testing of students in grades 3 to 8 in public schools in reading and mathematics. It mandates that schools set a goal of total proficiency by 2014 and sanctions schools if they do not meet this target. Second, the NCLB legislation also requires more rigorous standards for teacher certification, in particular requiring teachers to be highly qualified in their content areas. Third, NCLB requires districts to increase the use of research-based practices and mandates professional development for all teachers, and provides increased funding in these areas.

Limitations

One key limitation is the availability of consistent human resources data from school districts. Even within the same school district, it can be difficult to ascertain the real reason why teachers leave different schools. A second key limitation is the relatively small sample size of this study. With data available on only four schools, caution must be taken before extrapolating the results to urban school districts, especially those with significantly different characteristics than Prince Georges County. This study also relies heavily on interview data collected from teachers and principals. While interview data provide a rich source of information, they are inherently qualitative and can be influenced by many factors including the bias of the interviewer and truthfulness of the interviewee.

To counter some of these problems, the researcher built rapport with the interviewees by explaining her background and explaining the purpose of the study in order to reduce effects of bias.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

A large body of literature focuses on teacher retention in urban schools. This chapter will review this literature with respect to three key questions: 1) Is teacher retention a problem? 2) Which teachers are leaving the field completely? 3) Why do teachers leave, and what will make them stay?

Is Teacher Retention a Problem?

The current literature supports the hypothesis that teacher retention is indeed a problem for schools. High teacher turnover rates can have many negative effects on school districts, including increased numbers of less experienced and/or less qualified teachers in the classroom, increased costs for teacher recruitment and training, difficulty implementing or sustaining school improvement initiatives and a breakdown of student-teacher relationships.

Impact of Turnover on Faculty Experience Level and Qualifications

Teacher effectiveness and quality are difficult attributes to quantify; however, many researchers have identified teacher experience level and qualification level as useful proxies. Schools with high rates of teacher turnover are more likely to have more inexperienced and/or less qualified teachers. As both teacher experience and level of qualifications have been positively linked to student achievement, high levels of teacher turnover represent a significant problem for schools.

Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) investigated the relationship between student achievement and several potential proxies for teacher attributes, including professional credentials, type of educational institution attended (selective vs. non-selective), teacher test scores, type of certification (permanent or provisional, subject specific, and National Board Certification), experience, and demographics (race and gender). Their study was conducted in high schools based on results from standardized, multi-subject, year-end exams. Clotfelter et al. found that teachers who were fully credentialed in the subject area and grade level they were teaching elicited higher achievement from their students. In addition, the data showed that teachers from selective schools were also able to elicit higher rates of achievement from their students. Lastly, the researchers found that teacher experience was positively correlated with higher levels of student achievement. However, the impact of teacher experience was most significant in the first two years; after that time the effect of experience was minimal. This means that teachers with three or more years of experience are not necessarily less effective than teachers with ten or more years of experience.

Clotfelter et al. (2007) went on to examine the correlation between student achievement and a broader set of teacher characteristics. They found that students performed better when taught by teachers who had higher-level professional credentials, who attended more selective educational institutions, or who had more extensive teaching experience. In addition, these teacher characteristics have an even more significant impact on the performance of students with low-income or minority backgrounds. This last finding highlights

how critical it is for urban schools to attract and retain fully credentialed, experienced teachers with degrees from the best educational institutions.

Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) conducted a similar study examining the relationship between student achievement and various teacher attributes using reading and mathematics test scores of students in grade three to grade seven as the measure of achievement. They found that much of the variation could not be explained by observable teacher characteristics such as certification or degree. The effects also could not be explained by characteristics of the school the students were attending. Rivkin et al. determined that while there was no consistently observable teacher characteristic that predicted student achievement, the teachers clearly elicited highly variable levels of achievement across similar student populations. Teacher experience was the only characteristic that Rivkin et al. found to have an impact. Similar to other studies, additional years of teaching experience improved student achievement, but these effects were significant only during the first three years of teaching. After the first three years of teaching, additional years of experience did not lead to higher levels of teacher effectiveness.

Teachers in their first two to three years in the profession are not as effective at eliciting high achievement from their students (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Rivkin, 2005; Strong, 2006). These less experienced teachers also tend to have more classroom management problems and use less refined instructional strategies (Kain & Singleton, 1996). Beginning teachers spend more time learning how to create lessons and to refine their classroom management

skills. Many new teachers understand the urgency of raising the level of student achievement, but are overwhelmed by the amount of work needed to master the curriculum and the instructional strategies necessary to help struggling students (Kauffman, Johnson, & Kardos, 2002). Students in urban schools are more likely to be exposed to a large number of less experienced teachers and therefore are more likely to be negatively affected by their weaknesses.

Urban and low-income schools have been found to have higher rates of teacher turnover and therefore higher proportion of less-experienced teachers (Olson, 2003). In a *Quality Counts* report, Olson concluded that at the elementary level 15 percent of the teachers in high-minority schools and 13 percent in high-poverty schools have less than three years of experience. This is in contrast to upper-middle class schools, which had only 9 percent of teachers with less than three years experience (Olson, 2003). Rivkin et al. (2005) also found that minority schools had higher rates of teacher turnover, resulting in higher proportions of less experienced teachers in those schools (Rivkin, 2005).

A report conducted by the Education Trust also reported that students in high-poverty and high-minority schools were taught by more new and inexperienced teachers than students in middle or high-income schools were. The data showed that children in both high poverty and high-minority schools were twice as likely to have new or inexperienced teachers (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Since urban schools have higher rates of turnover in general, students in these schools could be taught by several new teachers in the same year, thus compounding the negative effects of inexperience.

Urban schools have also been shown to have higher rates of unqualified teachers. Teachers with proper credentials and those who attended selective schools have been found to be more effective in terms of eliciting student achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). The *Quality Counts* report (Olson, 2003) found that high-poverty and high-minority schools have more uncertified teachers. For example in California 23 percent of teachers in the lowest achieving schools lacked proper certification. This is in sharp contrast to higher achieving schools, where only 6 percent of teachers lacked the appropriate credentials. Olson also reported that in New York State less than half of the teachers in the lower achieving schools were fully certified. It should be noted that these examples of less qualified teachers in urban type schools represent older data collected before the requirements of NCLB were put into effect.

Peske and Haycock (2006) also reported that students in high-poverty and high-minority schools were considerably more likely to have teachers providing instruction outside their areas of expertise. The teachers may have been certified, but not in the area in which they are teaching. This was most frequently observed with mathematics teachers. In middle schools, Peske and Haycock found that 53 percent of students in high-poverty schools and 49 percent of students in high-minority schools were being taught mathematics by teachers who had earned neither a college major nor minor in mathematics. This was in comparison to 38 percent of students in middle and upper class schools and 40 percent of students in low-minority schools (Peske, 2006). This finding is a critical one for urban

school districts and their students, as mathematics is one of the subject areas assessed every year from grade three to grade eight under NCLB.

Effects of Turnover on Costs for Teacher Recruitment and Training

High rates of teacher turnover lead to increased costs for school districts. The added expense is driven by the need to recruit and hire new teachers, as well as to offer these new hires potential incentives and bonuses. In addition, districts must bear the cost to train these new hires.

While the cost of teacher turnover is difficult to quantify and varies from school district to school district, several recent studies have explored the financial impact. A study of teacher turnover in Texas estimated that it costs approximately \$8,000 to replace every teacher who left a school district, suggesting that the annual cost of teacher turnover in Texas was approximately \$329 million (Linda Darling-Hammond, 2003). The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district in North Carolina estimated that it spent \$11,500 for each individual case of teacher turnover. That money went to recruit, hire, and train a replacement teacher (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) recently examined the costs associated with teacher turnover by looking at both the costs for individual schools and the costs for the central office of the school district. They found that individual urban schools spent \$70,000 a year on teacher transfers, which included both teachers leaving schools in favor of another school in the district and those who left the district entirely. Non-urban schools spent slightly less, but

still spent approximately \$33,000 per year. These were just the costs borne by the individual schools. This study also found that urban school districts spent an additional \$8,750 for every case of teacher turnover while non-urban districts spent an additional \$6,250 on miscellaneous expenses. Altogether, the NCTAF estimates that the total yearly cost of teacher turnover for districts around the country was approximately \$7.3 billion (Alliance for Education, 2005).

Negative Effects of Teacher Turnover on School Improvement Initiatives

High rates of teacher turnover also make it difficult and expensive for schools to implement and sustain improvement initiatives (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004). In order to chart the course for the upcoming year, schools are required by NCLB to write a School Improvement Plan (SIP) each spring. These plans analyze the data from the previous school year and determine what steps need to be taken to improve student achievement. Examples of these initiatives include adopting a new reading model or purchasing new mathematics textbooks. Teachers participate in professional development and then implement the new initiative. When there is a high level of turnover in a school, it can be difficult to maintain momentum for continuing these types of initiatives from year to year. New teachers need to be trained, while teachers who have left take their knowledge with them. SIPs are especially important for schools that are determined to be “in need of improvement” under NCLB because they present the strategies for change and become the baseline for evaluation of progress by the state departments of education. These schools will

continually need to provide expensive training for new teachers to ensure that they are able to implement the strategies outlined in the SIPs.

Schools with high rates of teacher turnover may also suffer financial sanctions for having less qualified teachers. Under NCLB, schools face consequences if they fail to maintain a highly qualified staff. As of September 2006, NCLB required that all teachers be highly qualified. This means that teachers must have a degree in the subject area that they teach, pass a content area test in their subject area, or meet certain stringent state licensure requirements to ensure that they are highly qualified. If schools are unable to meet the requirement fully, they are required to create a plan and take appropriate steps to ensure future compliance. Currently there is not a direct financial consequence for districts that are not in compliance, but there is an indirect cost linked to additional paperwork and recruiting.

Effects of Teacher Turnover on Student-Teacher Relationships

In addition to the negative financial and learning consequences of high rates of teacher turnover, students are also likely to suffer from the lack of strong and lasting relationships with teachers. This is certainly a less tangible impact of teacher turnover, but one of great importance to students, and in particular those in urban schools. Coleman (1987) described the importance of teachers' relationships with students as an important component of social capital. Social capital refers to the amount and kind of support that children have in their relationships with their families and communities. In past societies, children

were raised and educated by family members at home and they also would ultimately work close to the home. This gave them a large amount of social capital since they were closely connected with family members. As society has become more industrialized, children have suffered from weaker familial bonds and correspondingly less social capital. As a result, schools have become responsible for filling many of the roles that families used to fill for children. Teachers can make up for some of that lost social capital by nurturing long-term, caring relationships with students (Coleman, 1987). This is unlikely to happen in environments where teachers are leaving the school within only one to two years after arriving. Therefore, in schools with high rates of teacher turnover it will be harder for students to maintain these supportive relationships with teachers.

Which Teachers are Leaving?

In order to understand the problems of teacher retention, it is important to understand which teachers are leaving the profession across all types of schools, as well as specifically within urban schools. Teachers who leave the profession tend to do so under a common set of circumstances including: 1) in their first years in the profession or at retirement; 2) when there is a racial mismatch with their students; 3) when they have attractive alternative career options; and 4) when schools have specific characteristics predisposing them for high rates of teacher turnover.

Loss of Early Career Teachers and Retirees

When teacher retention rates are analyzed based on total time spent in the teaching profession, a surprising U shaped pattern emerges. While older teachers leave the profession at relatively high rates due to retirement, it turns out that early career teachers are leaving at equally high rates, with mid-career teachers the least likely to leave the field (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). The U shaped pattern highlights the fact that young teachers are making choices early in their careers whether or not to remain in teaching. This is especially true in urban districts where the challenging conditions often force the issue. Research conducted in two urban districts by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard found that the majority of teachers did not expect to still be teaching in their schools in five years (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004).

Racial/Ethnic Mismatch of Teachers and Students

Another important factor in urban teacher attrition is the racial or ethnic match or mismatch between teachers and the students they teach. Teachers tend to remain in schools where their race or ethnicity is similar to the student population (Strunk & Robinson, 2006). Urban districts generally have higher minority populations, presenting an additional challenge if their teacher population and recruiting pool have an ethnic makeup different from that of the student population. However, if urban districts are able to recruit minority candidates, these teachers are more likely to remain in those schools and in the teaching profession long-term (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

Loss of Teachers to Alternative Career Options

Supply and demand in the broader labor market also influences teacher turnover. Teachers who have higher levels of academic ability and those in hard to staff areas are more mobile and harder for urban districts to retain. Teachers who enter the profession with higher academic ability have been shown to have higher rates of attrition. This is particularly true for mathematics and science teachers due to the increased opportunities they are offered (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Certain teaching positions have especially high rates of attrition, most notably special education teachers. Special education teachers work with some of the most challenging students and have greater administrative responsibilities than other teachers. In addition, they may have job opportunities in more desirable districts (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). Filling these hard to staff positions with quality teachers is one of the greatest challenges for urban districts since these are some of the areas that exhibit the most significant achievement gaps between urban students and their suburban peers.

Characteristics Predisposing Schools for High Rates of Teacher Turnover

It is important to note that when teacher attrition is high within a district, there is still wide variation of attrition rates among the individual schools. Certain school characteristics correlate with increased rates of teacher turnover. The single most important factor in teacher retention is school demographics. Schools with higher proportions of minority, low income, and low performing

students tend to have the highest levels of teacher attrition (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Shen, 1997). One study conducted in the state of Washington found that even in suburban settings, schools with higher percentages of minorities and low-income students had elevated rates of teacher attrition (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006). Urban schools in general have higher percentages of minority and low-income students and therefore typically have the highest rates of teacher turnover.

A second characteristic of schools with high rates of teacher turnover is that once turnover among teachers is high, it tends to stay high. This is consistent with the observation that schools with high percentages of teachers with three or fewer years of experience have higher rates of turnover (Shen, 1997). Situations like this are most likely exacerbated by a lack of school community, leadership, or poor working conditions. As a result, an increase in the rate of teacher turnover needs to be addressed immediately by the school and district or the ethos of the school, particularly as it relates to teacher collegiality and working conditions, may become even less inviting.

Why Do Teachers Leave and What Will Make Them Stay?

There are several main factors that lead teachers to move from school to school or leave the profession completely. These factors include working conditions, ineffective school leadership, salary/benefits, and the stresses associated with meeting the requirements of NCLB.

Working Conditions

Working conditions are an important factor in teacher attrition. An article in Educational Digest that analyzed reasons that teachers left the profession and found that 32 percent of teachers surveyed left because of poor working conditions ("Support New Teachers and Keep Them Teaching", 2005). Working conditions can include many elements such as the condition of the physical plant, amount of work, school climate, and relationships within the school.

Robertson, Hancock, and Allen (2006) examined the reasons that teachers leave certain schools. They surveyed and then interviewed a group of novice teachers in order to determine what factors they found difficult and would lead them to resign from a school. They found that classroom management was a major factor for these teachers. New teachers reported that they did not come to teaching expecting to have to deal with so many behavioral issues in the classroom. Paperwork and the amount of extra time the job required were also significant problems for new teachers. Many reported that they were unable to find time for themselves and felt overwhelmed with the job. All of the new teachers suffered from an inability to reconcile their idealized images of teaching with the reality of their work. Part of the frustration for these teachers stemmed from the lack of strong relationships with their faculty peers and minimal support from parents.

Berry (2008) surveyed a very large group (1,700) of National Board Certified Teachers about what they thought were the challenges to retaining teachers. Presumably, these National Board Certified Teachers represented the most

accomplished and effective teachers who would be ideal candidates to recruit to work in an under-performing or otherwise high-need school. Berry was looking to determine what factors would attract and retain these most desirable teachers. First, he found that these teachers wanted to work in schools with a certain type of leadership. They wanted to have a say in school administration, as well as to work under a well-trained and confident principal. In particular, they did not want to work for a principal who felt threatened by them. They also reported that the quality of the facilities were important and that smaller class sizes would be necessary for them to move to a high-need school. Lastly, the teachers said that teachers should be specially prepared to work in a high-need school, and that they should be trained to serve special populations. For example, teachers entering high-need schools should receive training on working with students who are learning English, as well as receiving targeted field experiences and mentoring in order to better prepare them.

These findings on working conditions are confirmed by a number of other studies. Schools without effective discipline policies and consistent enforcement are less likely to retain teachers (Birkeland & Johnson, 2002). Discipline and classroom management issues are a special concern for teachers in urban schools and a major influencer of teacher effectiveness. Teachers are more likely to remain in schools where teachers work together as professionals especially when time is built into the school day in order for them to work together (Birkeland & Johnson, 2002; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Teachers leave schools where they

feel that they do not have input into school decision making (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Shen, 1997).

School Leadership

School leaders set the tone for their institutions and have the power to directly influence the working conditions for their teachers. A report in Educational Digest concluded that 38 percent of teachers who left teaching cited “poor administrative support” as the reason for their decision (“Support New Teachers and Keep Them Teaching,” 2005). Teachers are more likely to remain in schools with strong administrators who are instructional leaders, have good communication skills, show compassion for their teachers, and include teachers in decision making. Teachers value administrators who understand and address their problems and concerns (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Shen, 1997). Teachers also look for administrators who are able to help them become better teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

The Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) studied the relationship of principal leadership and teacher retention. They isolated a number of principal behaviors and characteristics that resulted in increases in teacher retention.

- 1) These principals had characteristics of successful entrepreneurs including, being risk-takers, being visionary leaders, being self-motivated and tenacious, being problem solvers, and having a commitment to their jobs.

- 2) These principals believed that instructional, operational, and strategic leadership are equally important.
- 3) These principals understood the value of people and enjoyed helping them succeed and grow.
- 4) These principals were trained in the practical aspects of school leadership as well as the theory.

Greenlee and Brown (2009) examined the relationship between principal behavior and teacher retention, but also focused on high-need schools. They surveyed a group of teachers in order to identify the principal behaviors that encouraged teachers to stay in a school with a high number of disadvantaged students. The most important factor to these teachers was that the principal created a positive school climate and supported conditions that made the staff willing to focus their attentions on academic excellence. Teachers also wanted the principal to have integrity and to understand teaching and learning. They wanted a principal who prioritized time to “think, plan, and work together” (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). These factors support the idea that teachers want to have strong and confident leadership that allows them to have input into decision-making.

Principal leadership behaviors have a direct impact on how many new teachers remain in their schools. Brown and Wynn (2007) conducted a study that examined the connections between principal behaviors and the retention of new teachers. They found that new teachers remained in schools where principals were aware of the specific needs of new teachers and were proactive about

addressing these needs. New teachers also were more likely to remain in schools where the principals were committed to professional growth for teachers and for themselves and where the schools functioned as a family. The new teachers were also looking for supportive principals who shared leadership and targeted support in using curriculum materials. One other strategy that has been proposed to help new teachers is to help them understand the realities of teaching and to balance these realities with an idealized notion of teaching (Robertson, Hancock, & Allen, 2006). This is particularly important in urban districts where students and parents may seem unappreciative and unsupportive. All teachers look for similar support from their principals, but principals who are successful in retaining new teacher are informed about the needs of new teachers and tailor the type of support they need in order to be successful.

Salary and Benefits

Salary is an important, but disputed, factor in the teacher retention literature. Districts with higher salaries have lower rates of attrition. Attrition is highest when the salaries are lower for teachers with Master's degrees and many years of experience (Shen, 1997). Some evidence suggests that when states adopt salary scales consistent across the state there are lower levels of inter-district transfers (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006). While salaries are important to teacher retention, they are not more important than demographic factors and working conditions (Ingersoll, 2001).

While higher salaries have been shown to reduce teacher attrition, not all financial incentives are an effective means of retaining teachers. A qualitative study of the Massachusetts Signing Bonus program found that the incentives offered to teachers neither attracted nor influenced teachers to remain in the classroom (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). Teachers who received the bonuses were already committed to careers in teaching and were more attracted to the quick route to certification than the bonus. Even with the bonus, the majority of the teachers left the profession because of poor working conditions and lack of school-based support. The Massachusetts Signing Bonus program had been heralded as a solution to the problem of attracting high quality candidates to urban school districts. The bonuses that teachers received were substantial, totaling \$10,000 in three years, in addition to the training they received in the program. Teachers in the program also were subject to financial consequences if they decided to leave their high-need school in the form of a payback clause requiring them to return a portion of the money they had received. None of these incentives and consequences led to teachers remaining in the urban schools targeted by the program. Teachers who received the bonuses were already committed to attempt careers in teaching and were more attracted to the quick route to certification than the bonus. Even with the bonus, the majority of the teachers left the profession because of poor working conditions and lack of school-based support.(Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004).

Greenlee and Brown (2009) also surveyed teachers about what incentives would attract them to schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students.

They did find that a 5-10 percent increase in salary would attract teachers to these schools. Teachers also wanted autonomy and financial resources to create innovative curriculum and were looking for tuition reimbursement and more opportunities for professional development.

Districts with higher salaries also tend to have high rates of teacher retention. Moreover, teachers tend to move to other districts to increase their salaries (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). This is especially true for teachers who are higher up in the salary scale and those with advanced degrees (Shen, 1997). One of the most convincing pieces of evidence was revealed when Washington State University created a system in which there was very little salary variation state-wide. This policy change resulted in less movement of teachers between districts and higher rates of teacher retention even in schools with higher rates of minority and low-income students (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006). In general it appears that incentives and salary raises can be part of a solution for retaining teachers, but such initiatives will not work in isolation. This is especially true in urban schools where working conditions and leadership are primary concerns.

Effectively helping teachers make smooth transitions into a school district and providing them support during their first year of teaching has a positive effect on teacher retention. Mentoring programs reduce the rate of teacher attrition by providing support to new teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Strong, 2005). However, all mentoring programs are not equally

effective in reducing the rate of teacher turnover. Mentoring programs that include the following components have been found to be most effective:

- 1) A mentor in the same teaching area
- 2) Common planning time with teachers in the same subject area
- 3) Regularly scheduled collaboration with teachers
- 4) Being a part of an external network of teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Mirroring the power of working conditions as a key component in teacher retention, school factors also play a role in an effective mentoring program.

School leadership is essential for a good mentoring program. Principals must view mentoring as important and provide the necessary time and resources for it to be effective (Ingersoll, 2002; Monsour, 2003). In addition, principals must have an understanding of the growth process of the new teachers and allow the room for them to grow professionally during the course of the year. Beyond the principal, when the school as a whole has a climate and culture that nurtures mentoring and a support for new teachers, there is a higher rate of teacher retention (Monsour, 2003). Supportive school environments for all teachers, new and old, should lead to higher rates of retention.

In order for mentoring to be effective, school leaders need to make sure that the program is comprehensive, including a serious commitment of time and resources. Fletcher and Strong (2009) studied two types of mentoring programs and confirmed that new teachers who had mentors who were fully released from their teaching duties showed better gains in student achievement than teachers

who had site-based mentors who were also responsible for teaching their own classes. This was true even though the demographic data on the students in the study would have predicted the opposite.

Mentoring has also been found to be effective at reducing the rate of attrition of teachers in hard to staff areas. Gehrke and McCoy (2007) surveyed special education teachers to determine factors leading them to either stay in their current school role, move to a new school, or move to a non-special education role. The most important factors in determining whether these teachers stayed was having a network of support, a subject specific mentor, and access to assistance regarding the use of resources and materials (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Special education positions are often hard to fill and are perceived as being very difficult jobs, so it is especially important that targeted mentoring and support can positively affect their rates of retention.

New urban teachers may have specific knowledge gaps which need to be addressed via mentoring programs. Addressing these gaps is critical to ensuring that these new teachers not only stay in urban schools, but also that they are effective at their jobs. These key gaps relate to skills for teacher survival, teacher success, onus of responsibility, and fostering a social justice stance (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009). In the study by Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, and Dana (2009), teacher survival and teacher success refer to the mentor having to balance helping the new teacher survive in a challenging environment with helping them focus effectively on student learning. Onus on responsibility refers to the fact that the mentors must take responsibility for the success of the new

teachers who are under their care. In addition, urban mentors need to foster a commitment in the new teachers they work with to social justice. In order for mentoring programs in urban schools to function effectively, mentors need to be trained to work with new teachers in a research-based manner and must tackle the job seriously and professionally.

New research provides promising evidence of the importance of mentoring not only as a tool for reducing teacher attrition, but also in raising the achievement of students taught by new teachers. A study in California compared the student achievement of new teachers in three districts who received varying levels of mentor support throughout their first three years of teaching. The students in the district who received the highest level of support had the best student achievement outcomes (Strong, 2006). While this study may have problems with selection bias the findings do suggest that it is possible that mentoring can improve levels of student achievement.

In addition to mentoring, hiring teachers who are prepared to work in a challenging urban environment could be one of the keys to reducing attrition. Freedman and Appleman (2008) examined a program that trained teachers specifically to work in urban schools. Graduates of the Multicultural Urban Secondary English Program (MUSE) received specific training to work in urban schools and the program fostered an identity for these new teachers as urban teachers. The study showed that these graduates stayed in urban schools significantly longer than regularly trained teachers. In fact, almost all of the teachers took jobs in urban schools (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Part of the

challenge for urban schools may be recruiting candidates that are specially prepared to teach in the unique and challenging urban school environment.

Stresses Associated with Meeting NCLB Requirements

Research has just commenced on the effects of NCLB on teacher retention. Under NCLB, many urban schools have been declared under-performing for failing to make steady progress towards the goal of proficiency for all students in reading and mathematics by 2014. Teachers in these schools not only experience the stigma of being declared under-performing, but many also face staffing, curriculum, and other significant changes as the school is forced to improve its performance.

A study conducted by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University(Sunderman, 2004) examined the feelings of urban teachers about the requirements of NCLB and how their schools are responding. This study found that teachers agreed with the vision of NCLB, but wanted to ensure that schools were evaluated fairly. Teachers thought that identifying schools as under-performing would not lead to improvement and that NCLB would unfairly reward or punish the wrong teachers. Additionally, teachers felt that NCLB sanctions would cause teachers to transfer out of under-performing districts. In fact, the majority of teachers in these districts did not think that they would be teaching in the same district in 5 years. Teachers felt that NCLB sanctions would be the primary reason for these transfers citing the perception that NCLB forces teachers to ignore parts of the curriculum, leads to policy churn, and limits the

amount of time teachers have to collaborate. The present study is one of the first examining the relationship between teacher retention and NCLB in urban schools. More research needs to be conducted in this area, but Sunderman's study suggests that it is possible that NCLB will lead to more teacher attrition in urban schools.

Summary

This literature review provided an overview of the relevant research relating to teacher retention, its specific impact on urban schools, and current thoughts on how retention patterns may change under NCLB. The key takeaways messages from the review of the literature include:

- Teacher retention is a problem for all schools, but most significantly for urban schools. This problem is linked to the lower proportion of highly effective and experienced teachers on urban school faculties.
- Teacher effectiveness has been shown to have a positive impact on student achievement. While effectiveness is difficult to quantify, specific teacher characteristics have been linked to higher student achievement including: full certification in the subject area being taught better academic qualifications including training at more selective educational institutions; and teacher experience within the first three years of teaching(Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Rivkin, 2005).
- Urban schools have fewer teachers with effective characteristics, and in particular urban teachers are often providing instruction out-of-field or

without full certification (Peske, 2006). Urban schools also have more new teachers with less experience (Olson, 2003; Rice, 2003). This could be a result of challenging conditions and high rates of teacher turnover.

- Schools are financially impacted by teacher turnover due to the costs associated with recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers. (Alliance for Education, 2008; Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004)
- High teacher turnover makes it difficult for schools to maintain school-wide initiatives to improve student learning because new teachers continually need to be trained in these strategies (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004).
- Schools could incur sanctions under NCLB because of a lack of highly qualified teachers.
- Students are affected by a loss of significant relationships when teachers leave a school after only a few years (Coleman, 1987).
- Teachers are leaving teaching at the beginning and end of their careers resulting in a “U-shaped” pattern of attrition (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).
- Teachers are more likely to leave schools where there is not a racial or ethnic match between the teacher and students (Strunk & Robinson, 2006). This is bound to harm urban schools where there are higher numbers of minority students.
- Teachers are also more likely to leave schools that already have problems with teacher retention, resulting in a repeating cycle of attrition (Shen,

1997). This means that the problem of teacher retention needs to be addressed quickly before a school begins to lose even more teachers.

- Teachers do stay in certain schools, and there are several factors that have been found to be effective at retaining teachers in schools. Working conditions are one of the most important factors including facilities, access to materials, positive school climate and relationships with parents and other teachers (Berry, 2008; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Greenlee & Brown, 2009).
- School leadership is a key factor driving teacher retention. Highly effective teachers are looking for supportive leaders who are able to access resources for their schools and who are willing to involve them in decision making about the direction of the school (Berry, 2008; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Greenlee & Brown, 2009).
- Salary and benefits are the main methods schools use to attract teachers; however, salary and benefits alone will not retain them, as positive working conditions are also critical (Greenlee & Brown, 2009).
- Mentoring is one of the most effective tools schools have to train and retain new teachers. A good mentoring program can raise the rate of retention of new teachers and improve their effectiveness in the classroom. In order for mentoring to be successful, school leaders need to make a significant commitment to mentoring via principal support, full-time commitment for mentors, subject-specific mentor-mentee pairing, training for the mentors (Berry, 2008; Fletcher & Strong, 2009), and specific

mentoring targeted for the needs of urban school teachers. (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009)

- The literature on teacher retention has only begun to consider the influence of NCLB on teacher retention, with very little focus to date specifically on the effects in urban schools. This consideration was a major motivation for this study.

Despite this existing literature on factors affecting teacher retention, there has been very little research on patterns of teacher retention. Does school change effect teacher retention? Also, it is critical to remember that all teacher retention is not positive, and some attrition may in fact be necessary as an under-performing school begins to improve. This study was designed to shed some light on this interesting avenue of investigation.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used for this study. An overview of the methodology is outlined, followed by descriptions of the four research sites. The variables and instruments are presented, as is a full description of the analytical procedures.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a paired case study design (two schools to two schools) employing both quantitative and qualitative methodology in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between teacher retention and student achievement in the era of NCLB. Four schools from the Prince George's County Public School district in Maryland were selected for study.

Research Site

This study was conducted in the Prince George's County (PGC) Public School District located in the state of Maryland. PGC shares borders with Washington, DC, on its north, east, and south sides; the county is considered to be part of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. PGC is a densely populated county with 828,770 residents in 2007, with a largely African American population (65%). PGC gained recognition in 2007 by being named the wealthiest county in America with a majority African American population. (Chappell, 2006) The county's size and its unusual population make it an

interesting place to conduct a research study on teacher retention in urban schools.

PGC is the second largest school district in Maryland and the 18th largest school district in the United States. PGC's 130,000 students are educated in the 208 schools contained in the district (Prince George's County Board of Education, 2008).

The PGC school system is diverse not only in terms of race and ethnicity, but also in terms of socio-economic status. The student population is approximately 74% African American, 17% Hispanic, and 5% Caucasian. Just under half of the population of the school district (48%) qualifies to receive free or reduced price meals, highlighting the economic diversity of the county, with its mix of higher, middle, and lower income residents. (Prince George's County Board of Education, 2008)

Academically, PGC has been continually improving since the beginning of Maryland School Assessment (MSA) testing for NCLB. In 2008, fourteen elementary schools and three high schools exited "School Improvement". In 2009, another 14 schools met their annual yearly progress requirements and are therefore on track to exit "School Improvement". The 2008 Annual Report states that "Scores rose at every grade level, in every subject, and in every subgroup year over year, demonstrating that new programs and additional investments made to improve academic performance are benefiting the children of Prince Georges County." , p 5)

There are many on-going initiatives in the district that aim to improve student achievement. Three programs are relevant to the sample schools and are briefly described below.

One of the major initiatives in the district is the FIRST (Financial Incentive Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers) program which seeks to increase teacher accountability and provides incentives for those individuals working in select schools and subject areas. FIRST was initiated in 2007 with \$17.1 million in federal funding with a primary objective of providing an incentive for teachers who choose to work in “hard-to-staff” schools or subject areas. To receive the reward, teachers must participate in professional development, voluntarily undergo a “rigorous evaluation process,” and ensure their students meet achievement standards. One of the schools in this study’s sample is a FIRST school (James Madison School) (Prince George's County Board of Education, 2008).

The second initiative that is relevant for this study is the Performance Management program. This program is designed to ensure that teachers and schools are using achievement data to improve student learning. The district has collected a variety of tools that allow schools to analyze achievement data to “prioritize activities that advance its core goals” (Prince George's County Board of Education, 2008, p.4). Teachers in the district receive professional development training on the use of these tools, as well as coaching to ensure that the tools are used correctly. The tools are intended to assist teachers and administrators in selecting and utilizing specific teaching strategies that will help students improve

their academic achievement. All schools in the district participate in Performance Management.

A third relevant initiative is the America's Choice program, a subsidiary of the National Center of Education and the Economy. America's Choice is a school-wide program designed to align instruction in struggling schools. The America's Choice middle school program focuses on providing participant schools with "rigorous standards, high quality coaching, and professional development for faculty, parent, and community engagement" (Prince George's County Board of Education, 2008, p.4). The program includes resources that are aimed at helping schools in which a significant number of students are not meeting achievement standards. America's Choice provides training, instructional materials, and a framework for improving school achievement. The Abraham Lincoln School from the sample in this study participates in the America's Choice program.

Participants

The interview participants came from the four selected schools in the PGC public school system. The names of the schools have been disguised throughout the text of this dissertation in order to protect the privacy of the participating teachers and principals. The selected schools have been given the following code names: Abraham Lincoln Middle School, George Washington Elementary School, James Madison Elementary School, and Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School.

Schools were selected via a two-step process. First, the researcher selected a list of possible schools to be approached for participation based on their test scores, size, population, history, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. Adequate Yearly Progress refers to the amount of improvement a school needs to make each year in order to have all students proficient by 2016. Invitations were sent to a number of schools in the district, and with the assistance of a PGC mentor principal, commitments to participate in the study were obtained from the principals of the four selected schools.

Within the schools, teacher participants were invited by the researcher and the principal to participate in the interviews. In each school an invitation was sent to all teachers describing the purpose of the study and asking them to consider participating. In each school the process was slightly different. In one of the schools, the teachers participated during their lunch time while in the other three schools the teachers participated during a preparation period. Principals assisted the researcher in arranging for meetings and asking teachers to participate.

School Profiles

Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School

Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School is a kindergarten through Grade 6 elementary school with a total 235 students. The school has 24 teachers and a teacher to student ratio of 15:1. Franklin D. Roosevelt is not considered a Title 1 school; however 45% of the students attending the school meet the requirements

for free or reduced price lunch. The demographics of Franklin D. Roosevelt are similar to the rest of the district in that the vast majority of students are African-American (90.9%). Franklin D. Roosevelt is part of the Comprehensive Special Education Program and therefore provides specialized programs to approximately 100 special education students (Franklin D. Roosevelt School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Although constructed in the 1950s, the building is well maintained, clean, and very orderly. The hallways and classrooms are decorated warmly and student work is displayed on the majority of bulletin boards. Uniforms are mandatory for students.

The faculty at Franklin D. Roosevelt is divided evenly between special education (12) and regular education teachers (12), with both groups having a differing range of experience. The school improvement plan states that 44% of the faculty had been teaching for 1 to 4 years, while 12% had been teaching for 6 to 10 years. Nearly half of the faculty have been teaching at Franklin D. Roosevelt for 10 or more years. Franklin D. Roosevelt has been working closely with PGC Human Resources to attract highly qualified teachers and to provide support for new hires through a New Teacher Academy. This Academy provides new and non-tenured teachers with support for curriculum development, instruction, behavioral management, pedagogy, and assessment (Franklin D. Roosevelt School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Franklin D. Roosevelt has worked to improve the climate of the school by implementing a character education program. Students are recognized and rewarded for positive behavior, good attendance, and academic success.

Franklin D. Roosevelt has struggled to achieve AYP status under NCLB. The school has improved its reading scores from a 2004 baseline of 40.6% proficiency to 58.1% proficiency in 2008. While this shows a trend towards improvement, these gains were insufficient to allow the school to meet AYP in 2008. Similarly in mathematics, students showed improvement scoring on average 36.1% proficient in 2004 as compared to 52.1% proficient in 2008. Again this increase was not large enough to allow the school to meet AYP in 2008. In 2008, Franklin D. Roosevelt achieved AYP only among the Hispanic subgroup(Franklin D. Roosevelt School Improvement Plan, 2008).

George Washington Elementary School

George Washington is a kindergarten through Grade 6 elementary school with a total of 390 students and 16 classroom teachers. George Washington is a Title 1 school in which 78.8% of its students meet the requirements for free or reduced price lunches. During the 2007-2008 school year, George Washington became part of the America's Choice program that provides reading skills assistance to students who are struggling with literacy (George Washington School Improvement Plan, 2008).

George Washington is located in an economically diverse community that includes empty nesters, young professionals, and working class families. The

demographics are slightly different from the rest of Prince George's County, with only 50% African Americans, but the student body is also composed of significant white, Asian, African, and Hispanic communities of approximately 10% each (George Washington School Improvement Plan, 2008).

George Washington is located in an older building, but it too is well maintained. The hallways are quiet and orderly, and the bulletin boards are filled with student work. In general the environment seems warm and inviting. According to the most recent school improvement plan, George Washington has tried to create and maintain a positive school climate through adopting a "zero tolerance policy for fighting, bullying, and disrespect." (George Washington School Improvement Plan, 2008) Support staff work with students who struggle to maintain positive behavior and provide incentives and rewards for students who are able to improve.

The George Washington School works to attract and retain highly qualified teachers by providing potential candidates with detailed information on the school's philosophy during the interview process. This includes the preferred pedagogical methods and their approach to data analysis. The school provides counseling for teachers for obtaining and maintaining highly qualified status via professional development. In addition, George Washington provides support through job-alike mentors who share the same job as the new teachers and for continued targeted professional development (George Washington School Improvement Plan, 2008).

George Washington met the requirements for AYP for the past two consecutive years (2006-2007 and 2007-2008). The school improved its reading scores from 53.5% proficiency in 2004 to an aggregate 83.3% proficiency by 2008. Similarly in mathematics, proficiency scores rose from 44.6 % in 2004 to 77.1% in 2008. In addition to achieving AYP in the aggregate, George Washington has also achieved AYP for all relevant subgroups allowing the school to remove its designation as “in improvement” as determined by the state.

James Madison Elementary School

James Madison Elementary School is a pre-kindergarten through Grade 6 elementary school with a total of 235 students. James Madison has 12 classroom teachers and a student to teacher ratio of 20:1. The school is not considered Title 1; however, 68% of its students meet the requirements for free or reduced price lunch. The demographics of James Madison are similar to those for the rest of the district in that the vast majority of students are African-American (87%), and nine percent of the student body receives special education services (James Madison School Improvement Plan, 2008).

James Madison is located in an older school building, but it is well maintained, clean, and very orderly. The hallways and classrooms are decorated warmly and there is student work displayed on the majority of bulletin boards. Uniforms are mandatory for students. James Madison uses a positive behavior intervention program to encourage students to behave in appropriate ways and to improve the school climate. Students in the school seem very friendly and

respectful of teachers and other adults (James Madison School Improvement Plan, 2008).

The teachers at James Madison are almost all certified (99%). James Madison is actively trying to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. They are involved in the Financial Incentives and Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers program (FIRST). James Madison hopes that this program will improve the quality of teaching as well as the support given to teachers in the school (James Madison School Improvement Plan, 2008).

James Madison has achieved AYP status under NCLB for the past three school years (2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008). The school has improved its overall reading scores from 42.4% proficiency in 2004 to 76.5% proficiency in 2008. Similarly in mathematics, students showed a significant positive improvement as proficiency scores rose from 25.1 % in 2004 to 79.5% in 2008. In addition to achieving AYP in the aggregate, James Madison has also achieved AYP for all of the relevant subgroups meaning that James Madison is no longer in "school improvement."

While the school has achieved AYP, they are continuing to try to raise their test scores and improve student achievement especially in targeted areas such as mathematics. Their 2008-2009 School Improvement Plan states that they would like to go from "good to great" in the coming years (James Madison School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Abraham Lincoln Middle School

Abraham Lincoln Middle School is a 7th and 8th grade school with approximately 531 students (Abraham Lincoln School Improvement Plan, 2008) and 40 members on its professional staff. The school is not considered Title 1, however 71% of the students attending meet the requirements for free or reduced price lunch. The demographics of Abraham Lincoln are similar to those for the rest of the district in that the vast majority of students are African-American (91.7%), and special education students make up 13.7% of the student population. Abraham Lincoln is part of the America's Choice program which seeks to assist students who are struggling with literacy to improve their reading skills. (Abraham Lincoln School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Abraham Lincoln is located in an older school building that appears slightly run down. Uniforms are mandatory for students. Abraham Lincoln has been addressing school climate issues, such as trying to reduce the number of discipline referrals by addressing student behavioral problems with the use of a pupil personnel worker and by enhancing teacher's classroom management techniques. In addition school leaders have implemented a character education program that teaches students positive behavioral skills. Students at Abraham Lincoln are recognized and rewarded for positive behavior (Abraham Lincoln School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Abraham Lincoln seeks to attract and retain highly qualified teachers through using induction and mentoring strategies in order to provide a high level of support for new teachers. These strategies include encouraging all new

teachers to participate in a professional learning community, assigning new teachers to strong teacher teams, as well as recognizing and rewarding teachers (Abraham Lincoln School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Abraham Lincoln has not achieved AYP in recent years, and since 2002 it has been identified as a “school in improvement.” In June, 2006, Abraham Lincoln was designated a school in “restructuring.” Reading scores in the school have almost remained stagnant between 2004 and 2008, rising from 38.9% to only 46.2% proficiency over this period. In mathematics, students showed a trend towards improvement, with proficiency rising from 16.9% in 2004 to 34.6% in 2008. Although this was a positive trend, the improvement was insufficient to allow the school to achieve AYP. In 2008, Abraham Lincoln made AYP only among the Hispanic subgroup (Abraham Lincoln School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Variables and Instruments

This study used teacher retention rates and student achievement as the primary variables. This section will define how these were calculated and what other instruments were used to obtain data relating to teacher retention rates and factors affecting teacher retention.

Teacher retention rates were calculated on a school basis. The teacher retention rate for a year was determined as the number of teachers who remained in the school in year (n+1) divided by the total number of teachers in the school in year (n). Considering that teachers leave a school for a variety of

reasons, it was important to classify teachers who left into three groups: “keepers,” “terminations,” or “retirements.” Teachers classified as keepers fell into the following categories of reasons for leaving: teaching in another state, teaching in another local unit, teaching in a non-public school, taking another position in another local unit, leaving to study, moving, resigning to take care of home responsibilities, illness, death, dissatisfaction with teaching, and cause unknown. The terminated categories were terminated for provisional/substandard certification, reduction in force, inefficiency, and bad conduct. Retirements were comprised of two categories: regular and retire/rehire teachers who were hired back after retirements to fill teaching gaps. Prince George’s County Human Resources collects “reasons for leaving” from all teachers who leave the district. These data were used in the present study to determine the reasons for teachers’ leaving and to categorize them as a keeper, termination, or a retirement. Since it was very difficult to determine which teachers principals actually viewed as keepers without additional data, these categories were determined to be the best proxy for this information.

For the purposes of this study, student achievement was defined as Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores in Reading and Mathematics. As dictated by NCLB, all public schools in Maryland assess students in third through eighth grade on reading and mathematics each year. A proficiency level is calculated for each subject and grade level. Schools in Maryland determine their Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) each year and try to meet this target. The AMO is the percentage of students who need to be proficient in each subject

that year in order to reach whole school proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The AMO is used to determine whether or not a school has met the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements under NCLB. AMO scores for each school and AYP status were used to determine the progress each school has made. In the present study schools are classified as either improving or non-improving schools. Improving schools had AMO/AYP scores that have been consistently increasing while non-improving schools had stagnant or decreasing AMO/AYP scores. The improving schools in this study were George Washington Elementary School and James Madison Elementary School. The non-improving schools were Abraham Lincoln Middle School and Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School.

This research used a case study approach. Much of the information came from interviews with principals of both improving and non-improving schools. A standard interview protocol was used focusing on teacher retention, changes in school mission and structure, factors that affect teacher retention, and initiatives aimed at increasing teacher retention. The principal interview protocol can be found in Appendix B. The researcher asked principals if the interview could be recorded, but they were not comfortable with this approach. Instead detailed notes were taken during each interview. Directly after the interviews, the researcher wrote up summaries including additional details from memory.

At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained the purpose of the study and explained that their responses would not be attributed to them by name and that the name of their school would be disguised in the final report.

The researcher attempted to build rapport with the principals by explaining that she is a former principal and discussing the reasons for her interest in this topic. All of the principals seemed comfortable with the interviewer and appeared to answer openly. Responses to the principal interviews were coded to match themes from the literature review, as well as to capture emerging themes. The coding themes are outlined in Table 1. For each theme, I determined whether the theme was being mentioned in a positive or negative manner, and a check was placed in the correct box. New codes were added as themes were mentioned in the interviews.

Teachers in each school were interviewed to determine their opinions on teacher retention and factors that have contributed to increases or decreases in student achievement. All teachers who participated in the interviews were volunteers. It was deemed by the researcher to be not feasible to conduct individual interviews due to time and scheduling constraints, so the teachers were interviewed in focus groups. Potential teacher focus group participants were approached by the researcher and the relevant principal and invited to participate in the study. Teachers spoke to the researcher either during a lunch break or preparation period, and they were offered a light lunch or snacks in order to encourage their participation.

Table 1 *Coding Themes Used for Interviews*

Themes from Literature Review	Salary
	Benefits
	Working Conditions: Physical Plant
	Working Conditions: Behavioral Problems
	Working Conditions: Hours
	Working Conditions: Paperwork
	Working Conditions: General
	Working Conditions: Respect
	Leadership: General
	Leadership: Style
	Leadership: Lack of Input to teachers
	Mentoring: Lack of Support
	Mentoring: Lack of Program
	School Demographics
	Requirements of NCLB
Emerging Themes from Interviews	Challenges of Certification
	Change in Leadership
	School Climate General
	Special Education Population
	Rigorous/ Stressful environment
	Predictable Scheduling
	More Staff/ Aides Needed
	Working Conditions: Personal Security
	Working Conditions: Negative Colleagues
	Working Conditions: Location
	Lack of Parental Support
	Leadership: Instructional Leader
	Leadership: Culturally Competent Leader
	Hazard/ Incentive Pay
	Benefits for Living and Working in Community (mortgages, loans, etc)
Relationships with Staff	
Making a Difference	

The teacher focus groups ranged in size from two to approximately fifteen participants. A standard interview protocol was used (Appendix C), and

responses were recorded and transcribed, and emerging themes were coded based on categories defined in the literature review.

I began each focus group session by explaining the purpose of the study and her background as an urban educator and current position as a teacher. I then asked the participants to fill in the information sheets and informed consent forms. I also informed the teachers that their comments would remain confidential and would not be linked to them in any way in the final document. I also explained that she was not linked to the school district in any way. Teachers in the focus groups overall seemed comfortable with the interviewer and seemed to answer honestly.

A School Improvement Plan (SIP) review was conducted in each school prior to the interviews. SIPs are written each year by schools to articulate their missions and goals for the upcoming year. For this study, these plans were reviewed to identify changes in curriculum, school structure, or instructional techniques that may affect teacher retention and student achievement. Changes in the information in these documents over time were used to supplement the interview findings and to enrich the emerging case studies.

Validity

I directly addressed issues of validity that are inherent in qualitative studies such as interviewer bias and interviewee honesty. I attempted to address issue of validity through building rapport with participants, clearly explaining

the purposes of the study, and ensuring that participants understood that their responses would remain confidential.

The first important step to ensuring validity was to build rapport with participants. I introduced myself at the beginning of each interview. I explained her background as a former urban principal in Massachusetts. I then explained that I was currently living and working in Switzerland as a teacher. This information seemed to make the participants feel comfortable that the researcher understood their role as an administrator or as a teacher. They were also put at ease by my assurances that I was not a part of the district and was removed from the district politics.

The second step I took to ensure that the interviews were open and honest was to describe the purpose of the study. I informed participants that this study was part of my doctoral research on teacher retention in urban schools with a focus on the effect of NCLB. I did not explain that the schools I was using were divided into improving and non-improving. I did not feel that this was relevant for the participants and if anything would put participants in the non-improving schools on the defensive.

Finally, I informed the participants that their responses would remain confidential. The schools would be renamed and I would not link any quotes to their names or use their names in any way in the final report. Teachers and principals seemed to understand this and seemed relaxed in the interviews. Teachers in some of the schools seemed rushed especially ones who were interviewed during their lunch break, but they seemed to trust that I was

independent and they appeared open in their responses. These strategies were implemented in order to increase the validity of the interview data.

Procedures

The Prince George's County Public Schools Office of Accountability was approached in spring 2008 about participating in this study. One of my relatives working in the PGC Human Resources Department suggested that the district was diverse and might fit the requirements of the study. I completed a research application and permission was granted in October, 2008, to conduct research in the district.

Schools that met the requirements of the study were identified and invited to participate via mailings, email messages, and telephone calls. In addition, I was referred to a mentor principal in the district who provided assistance in contacting candidate schools. The final four schools were selected by the end of December 2008: Abraham Lincoln Middle School, Franklin D. Roosevelt Elementary School, James Madison Elementary, and George Washington Elementary School.

The Human Resources Office was contacted in December, 2008, in order to request the relevant teacher retention data. I met with the director of Human Resources, and once the request for data was approved, the Human Resources team prepared a data file for me.

Initial telephone conversations were conducted with each school principal and face-to-face meetings were scheduled for March 2009. With each school, I

discussed the best way to engage teachers for interviews. Since school schedules and structures varied there were no uniform times available, but all agreed to help me recruit interview participants.

During this same time frame, SIPs were obtained from the participating schools. With the permission of district officials, SIPs and test data were obtained directly from the district website. I reviewed and coded each plan.

Principal interviews were conducted in March 2009. A standard interview protocol was used, but interviews were semi-structured in order to allow the interviewer to address gaps in the teacher retention data and information that emerged from the SIP reviews. I allowed the principals to digress from the interview at times in order to share other thoughts and ideas they had on the topics discussed. I used prompts and asked questions to encourage the participants to extend their answers. Initially, I wanted to record the interviews, but the principals were uncomfortable with this format. I took notes during the interviews and wrote out detailed notes immediately after the meetings. Responses from the interviews were coded based on themes from the literature review. I also expanded the number of categories based on additional themes that emerged during the interviews.

Teachers were also interviewed in March 2009. The format was slightly different in each school, but all interviews were conducted in focus groups. Principals in each school recruited teachers to be interviewed during either a lunch break or preparation period. The groups ranged in size from 2 to 15 teachers. The teachers were volunteers and were rewarded with either a light

lunch or snacks. All teachers were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire (Appendix D) as well as a letter of informed consent (Appendix E). A standard interview protocol was used, but interviews were only semi-structured to allow for exploration of emerging themes. Similar to the principal interviews, the interviews were not recorded. I took notes and rewrote them directly after the interviews including additional information added from memory. Responses were coded based on themes from the literature review.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques depending on the nature of the data. Quantitative data analysis included the following techniques: 1) teacher retention rates were tallied by school, year, and category of leaving teacher (i.e., keeper, terminated, and retired) and 2) descriptive statistics were also run to see if there were patterns of teacher retention and student achievement in and among these schools.

The quantitative data were supplemented with the results of the interviews and SIP reviews. Qualitative techniques were used to create a detailed picture of these schools. Interviews were coded to determine the themes from the literature as well as any additional themes that emerged from the interviews. Improving and non-improving schools were compared using both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter contains the results of the data analysis and key findings of this study. The results are organized based on the problem statement outlined in Chapter One and the key research questions are answered in the following order:

1. Does the teacher retention rate remain constant as student achievement improves in the improving schools?
2. Is there a pattern of teacher retention in schools since the passage of NCLB? Does this pattern differ in improving and non-improving schools?
3. What strategies do improving schools employ to attract, train, and retain highly effective teachers? Are there differences between improving and non-improving schools?

Comparison of Teacher Retention Rates

The overall teacher retention rate as calculated for each subject school represents the average teacher retention rate over the six-year period covering the 2003-2008 school years. The overall retention rate reflects the average percentage of teachers remaining on the faculty versus those leaving for any reason. Table 2 shows overall average teacher retention rates for all schools as well as relevant school data. The highest individual school year teacher retention rate observed was 97.3% at James Madison in 2007. The lowest individual school year teacher retention rate observed was 78.9% at Franklin D. Roosevelt in 2005.

The improving schools had slightly higher rates of teacher retention than did the non-improving schools. James Madison had an overall rate of 92.9% and George Washington had an overall rate of 89.1%, compared to Abraham Lincoln's overall rate 87.5% and Franklin D. Roosevelt's rate of 87.4%. This difference, though, was not found to be significant ($p = .012$). There was a large amount of variance between the rates for schools in different years.

In order to gain greater insight into the retention levels at each subject school, the data on teacher departures were broken down based on reason for leaving into three categories: "keeper," "terminated," and "retirement." Keepers were defined as teachers whom the administration might have liked to maintain on the faculty (see Appendix A for a complete list of reasons and codes). It is difficult to say which of these teachers an individual principal felt were actually "keepers," but these reason codes provided the best proxy for that determination.

Table 2 *Demographic Data for Schools*

School	Grades	Students (#)	Title 1 School Status	Minority Students (%)	Improving or Non-improving	Free or Reduced Lunch Status	Overall Teacher Retention Rate ('03-'08)
George Washington	PK - 6	390	Yes	90%	Improving	79%	89.1%
James Madison	PK - 6	240	No	94%	Improving	64%	92.9%
Abraham Lincoln	7-8	567	No	94%	Non-Improving	n/a	87.5%
Franklin D. Roosevelt	K-6	235	No	97%	Non-Improving	45%	87.4%

Teachers who were terminated for any reason, including “lack of certification,” “reduction in force,” and “for cause,” were grouped as terminated. Although reduction in force teachers may not have been terminated “for cause,” generally teachers who are terminated as a result of a reduction in force are the least experienced teachers in a given area. The final group was retirement, which included those teachers retiring for the first time, as well as retire/ rehire teachers who were temporarily filling gaps in the district after their official retirements. The reasons for leaving that the district collected were not very specific. It would have been better to have individual data on teachers, but this was not possible. These categories provided a proxy for whether or not a teacher is desirable or not to a school.

The overall average percentage of keepers among all of the teachers who left was calculated for each subject school over the 2003-2008 school year period. The percentage of keepers lost varied between schools from 0% to 75%. The improving schools, James Madison (52.8%) and George Washington (36.5%), had lower percentages of keepers among their teachers who left versus the non-

improving schools, Abraham Lincoln (53.1%) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (64%). Table 4 shows all of the percentages of teachers leaving by category. It appears that the improving schools did a slightly better job of retaining teachers whom the administration wanted to keep on the faculty. Although this result does show a slight trend it is not statistically significant ($p = .09$).

Table 3 *Teachers Leaving by Category*

School	% Leavers who were keepers	% Leavers who were terminated	% Leavers who retired
Improving Schools			
James Madison	52.8	30.5	16.7
George Washington	36.5	18.0	45.5
Non-Improving Schools			
Abraham Lincoln	53.1	24.2	22.7
Franklin D. Roosevelt	64.0	17.8	18.2

The overall average percentage of retirements among all of the teachers who left was also calculated for each subject school covering the 2003-2008 school year period. There was great variation in the observed rates, with the percentage of retirements ranging from 0% to 100% across the schools in a given year.

And finally, the average percentage terminated teachers among all of the teachers who left was calculated for each subject school over the six-year study period. This metric did show a trend, with the improving schools having a higher percentage of teachers leaving due to termination than the non-improving schools. James Madison and George Washington had overall average percentage of terminations among leaving teachers of 30.5% and 18%, respectively. The non-improving schools, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, had percentages

of termination of 24.2% and 17.8%, respectively. Again this result was not significant ($p = .43$) at least partially because of the high level of variance between the rates at each school each year.

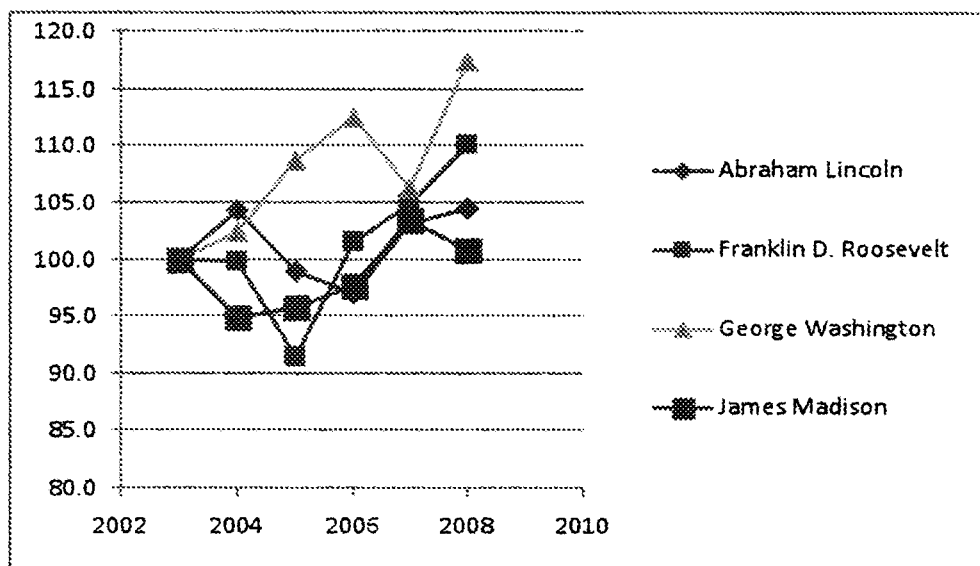
After examining the results of the comparison of teacher retention rates, it was determined that there are some differences; however, because of the high level of variance in each of these schools' rates, none of these results was statistically significant. This was in part due to the small size of some of these schools. It may be more important to examine the rate of change in such schools. The second research question calls for an examination of the changes in these schools in order to find patterns of teacher retention.

Patterns in Teacher Retention Rates

Annual teacher retention rates between the subject schools were compared to identify potential patterns over time. The teacher retention rate did not remain constant for any of the schools from 2003, the first year of the study. All of the schools have had years in which the teacher retention rate fluctuated up or down versus the prior year. Figure 1 shows the normalized annual retention rates of all of the schools from 2003-2008. The values were normalized to "100" for comparison based on each school's 2003 retention rate. All schools did show a slight trend toward increasing teacher retention from the first year (2003) to the final year (2008) of the study. George Washington, one of the improving schools, had the highest rate of change during the course of the study. George Washington started with one of the lowest rates (82.6%) and rose to 96.9%, which was one of the highest rates.

As mentioned in the previous section, all of the schools showed increases in teacher retention from the beginning of the study in 2003. The two improving schools showed steady increases in teacher retention in parallel with improvements in student achievement based on standardized test scores. These

Figure 1 Comparison of Normalized Annual Teacher Retention by School



results are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. In the case of both improving schools, there was no more than one year over the six-year study period in which the teacher retention rate did not increase as compared to the prior year. These one-year declines in teacher retention can be explained for both of the improving schools.

One of the improving schools, the George Washington, which showed increasing teacher retention rates up to 2006, a decline in 2007, then a resumption

of retention rate improvement in 2008. In 2007 George Washington was hit by three retirements, which had a major effect on overall retention for that year given the relatively small size of the school. When the retirements were taken out of the calculation for that year, the teacher retention rate returned to 93%, on par with the previously observed improvement trend for the school.

Figure 2 Comparison of MSA scores and Teacher Retention at George Washington

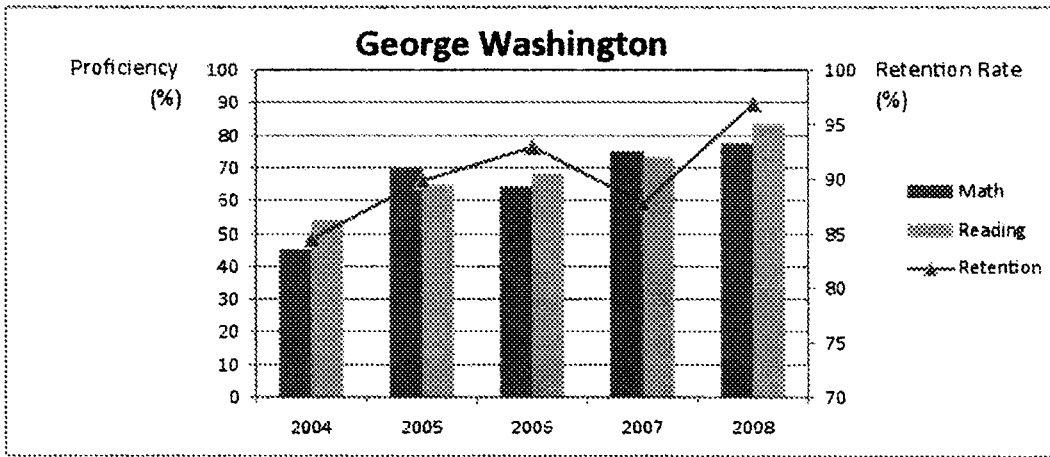
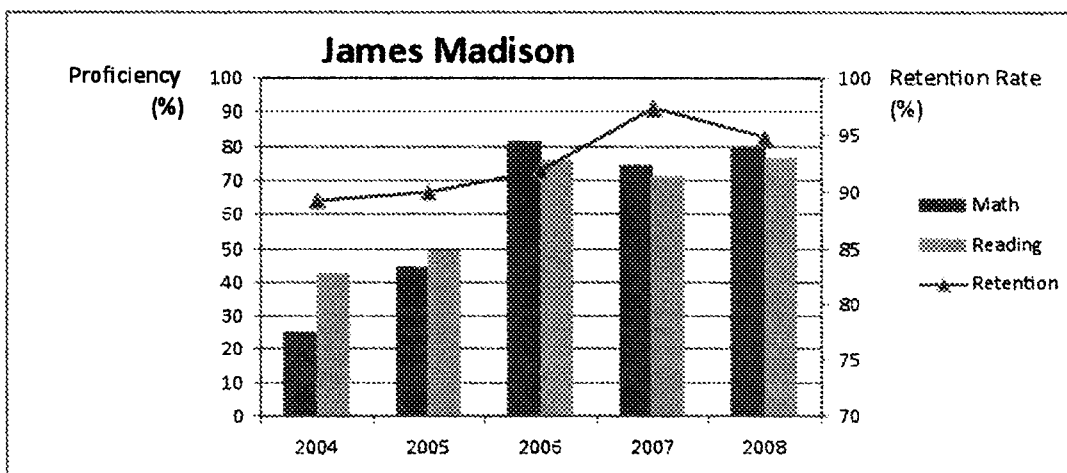


Figure 3 Comparison of MSA scores and Teacher Retention at James Madison

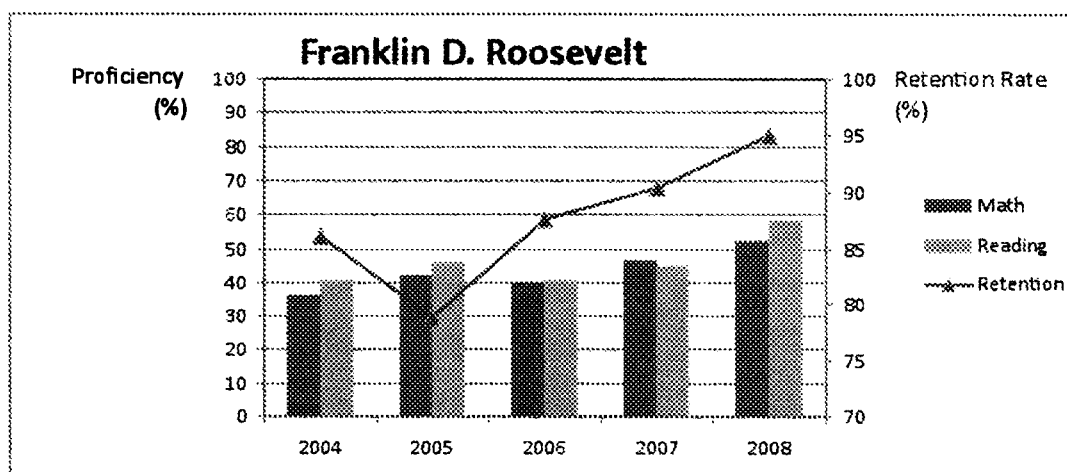


James Madison's situation was almost identical to George Washington's. James Madison also had steady increases in teacher retention from 2003-2007 followed by a slight decrease in 2008. Again, this decrease was linked to retirements, which had an outsized effect on the retention rate given the relatively small size of the school. In 2008, James Madison only lost two teachers, one of which was a retirement. Retirements are based on outside factors such as age or years of service and are therefore deemed beyond the control of schools. Without this retirement the teacher retention rate at James Madison would have remained the same or been slightly higher in 2008. This would give that school an overall rising pattern for the five years of the study that matches the observed increases in student achievement.

The non-improving schools also showed an overall increase in teacher retention, but they illustrate a different pattern of retention evolution over the course of the study. The pattern of teacher retention for Franklin D. Roosevelt, the first of the non-improving schools, is shown in Figure 4. Franklin D. Roosevelt was declared a "School in Need of Improvement" in 2004. During the 2005 school year, there was a drop in teacher retention from 86.1% to 78.9%. This drop was particularly significant because the majority of the teachers who left (12 out of 16 departures) were considered to be keepers or teachers the administration would have wanted to keep on the faculty. Of the four remaining departures in 2005, two were retirements and two terminations. It turns out that 2005 was a very special year in all other years of the study, no more than 4 or 5 keepers left in a given year. The reasons for the 2005 keeper departures were all

either “resigned: other” (n=7) or “resigned: with prejudice” (n=5). These are the least specific reasons given and could be a sign that teachers left as a result of the school being declared underperforming. After this initial dip, teacher retention steadily increased. MSA scores also increased during that time, but only minimally and not enough to remove the school from “Improvement” status. The school implemented a number of new academic programs and has been slowly improving its test scores.

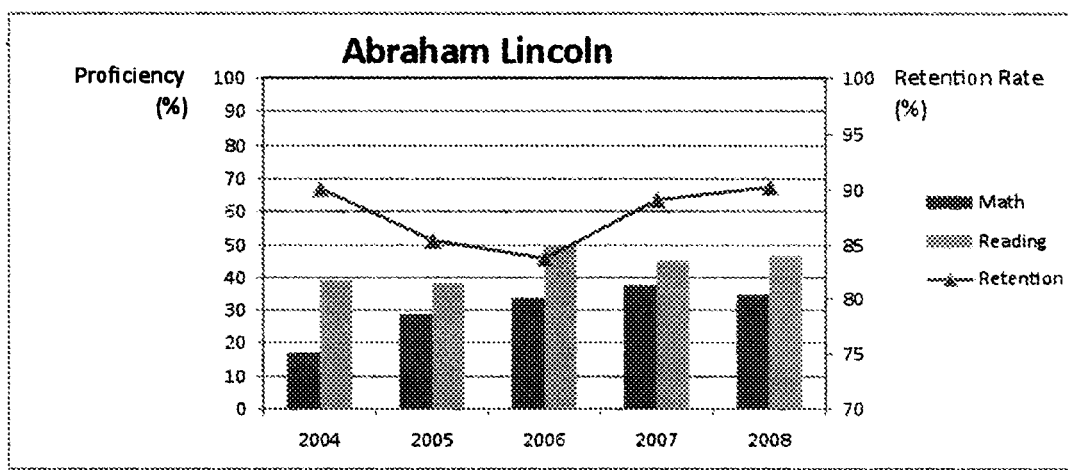
Figure 4 Relationship of MSA scores and Teacher Retention at Franklin D. Roosevelt



Abraham Lincoln was the other non-improving school and it also demonstrated an interesting pattern of teacher retention. The comparison of teacher retention and student achievement patterns for Abraham Lincoln is shown in Figure 5. Abraham Lincoln was already declared to be a school in “improvement” in 2002, the year before the data collection for this study began. From 2003 to 2006 teacher retention declined steadily. In 2006 Abraham Lincoln was placed in “restructuring”, a higher level of sanctioning under NCLB. Interestingly in 2006, Abraham Lincoln had the highest number of terminations,

six of which were a result of teachers lacking proper certification and one for cause (defined as immorality, misconduct, insubordination, willful neglect of duties). This could be a direct result of the start of the restructuring process, as the school was required to immediately improve the quality of its teachers. The dip could also have been the result of a planned change in leadership. The current principal took over leadership in 2006, so this may also have led to higher rates of turnover in 2005. From 2006 until 2008, teacher retention has increased at Abraham Lincoln. Academic achievement remained stagnant and new programs have been put in place to address this problem.

Figure 5 Relationship of MSA scores and Teacher Retention at Abraham Lincoln



steady increases in teacher retention and student achievement, interrupted only by dips in their teacher retention rates linked to retirements in those years. In contrast, the non-improving schools have demonstrated a different pattern of retention. These schools have shown overall increases, but have had temporary

declines in teacher retention when they have been sanctioned for failing to meet AYP standards.

Attracting, Training, and Retaining Highly Effective Teachers

The issue of attracting, training, and retaining key staff was addressed via interviews with teachers and principals, as well as through examining the SIP for each subject school. These qualitative data proved very useful for getting a fuller picture of each school and understanding what strategies had been used to address teacher retention in each school. In this section, the results are organized by sources of information (principal interview, teacher interview, or SIP). A final comparison section contrasts the findings across the three sources of data.

Principal Interviews

I interviewed principals from each of the four participating schools. The same set of research questions were used for each interview (see Appendix B), but the interviews were only semi-structured in order to allow for some level of digression on relevant topics. Notes were taken by the interviewer and transcribed directly after each interview. The responses were then coded by theme in order to analyze for trends across the interviews.

The first question asked of principals was whether or not teacher retention was a problem at their school. One of the most striking findings was that the principals of the improving schools both answered “no” while the two principals of the non-improving schools both answered “yes.” While the sample size is

limited, it is still interesting that this question elicited such contrasting answers from the two groups.

Principals were then asked questions that focused on other themes from the literature. The following trends emerged from the interviews:

- Salary and Benefits: Principals agreed unanimously that salary and benefits were not a negative factor for teacher retention in the district. In fact, they reported that the salary and benefits package was one of the appeals in the district that allowed them to attract and retain teachers. Some principals had ideas about how to enhance the benefits for teachers in the district, especially those working in high-needs schools, but still said that overall compensation and benefits were not a negative factor in retaining teachers.
- Certification: Principals agreed that teacher certification was a significant factor in teacher retention since the passage of NCLB. Three of the four principals mentioned this as an important factor. This finding was also supported by the human resource data. One of the reason for leaving codes is “termination due to lack of teacher certification.” Across all schools, 34 teachers were terminated for lack of proper certification. These 34 un-certified teachers accounted for 19% of all the teachers who left the district during the study years. Even more striking is the fact that lack of proper certification was the reason for 87% of all terminations, a

fact to which many principals referred during their interviews. One of the principals of a non-improving school stated that when he became principal, he had to fill so many positions that many of the people he ended up having to hire were not properly certified. As a result, he needed to let them go at the end of the year and start over again, whether he thought they had been effective or not. Other principals commented that the requirement for teachers to be highly qualified and properly certified is good in theory, but that it sometimes makes it difficult to find and hire the right teachers. Three out of the four principals felt that they had lost some good teachers because of certification requirements.

- Mentoring: Principals also agreed on the need for mentoring, but felt differently about how well this was addressed in the district. Three out of the four principals stated that mentoring was important, and both of the improving school principals said that their schools had mentoring programs that supported and helped retain teachers. Both of the improving school principals also stated that they believed that mentoring was important, but mentioned that they could also support new teachers in their schools even without it because of the size of their schools and the quality of their staff. One improving school principal stated, "I think that mentoring is important to help teachers navigate the system although since this is a small school, I see every teacher every day

and can receive support from any of them.” The principals of the non-improving schools commented that the lack of mentoring support was a key reason why their schools were having difficulty retaining teachers. One non-improving school principal said that he had an effective mentoring program the year before, but that the funding had been cut at the end of the school year. The principal was left to find his own source of funding for the program, and, as he had been unable to do so, he was already anticipating the negative effects of the cancellation of the mentoring program on his teacher retention in the future. The other non-improving school principal had cobbled together a variety of mentoring programs. He said they were helpful but needed to be expanded. Stories such as these highlight a possible difference in the mentoring resources offered to teachers in improving and non-improving schools.

- NCLB Impact on Retention: Improving and non-improving principals also disagreed on the role of NCLB on teacher retention. Both of the improving school principals claimed that NCLB positively affected teacher retention in their schools, while the non-improving school principals said that NCLB hindered teacher retention. One improving school principal commented that NCLB had given teachers in her school clarity regarding their job requirements and had helped boost morale. She stated , “I think it is important that teachers understand why they are doing things a

certain way. This has been easy since our school has been recognized for doing well on tests. In this way NCLB has had a positive effect on morale.” The other improving school principal talked about the historic nature of NCLB as a force that has truly improved education for minority children. This principal maintained that NCLB had improved classroom instruction by raising the quality of teachers through stricter certification requirements and better professional development programs. Principals of the non-improving schools also said that NCLB was positive in that it raised the requirements for teachers, but that it also had harmed teacher retention, causing them to lose good teachers who did not meet the NCLB requirements.

- Leadership Style: One factor all principals agreed on was the importance of leadership style in retaining teachers. In particular, the principals all said that it was critical to be a supportive leader who was available for the staff. One principal stated that the best thing about his school was the culture that he nurtured as a leader. He said, “It is caring and loving. It is supportive, and teachers’ efforts are appreciated and recognized. I try to constantly give credit to teachers. When I received a principal award last year, in my speech I said that it should go to the teachers.” All of the principals admitted that their leadership style is a positive aspect for some teachers and a negative one for others. They seemed to

feel that this is a reality of the position and that their goal would be for teachers who do not appreciate their leadership style to either change or move on to another position.

- Teacher Empowerment: Both improving and non-improving school principals agreed that it was important for teachers to have input into how the school was run. When asked to describe her leadership style, one improving school principal stated that it was to empower the teachers. She went on to explain that under previous school leadership, teachers had to ask the principal permission to do many things, such as use colored paper. She said she had tried to give decision-making power back to teachers. She cited as an example an incident when the school was given an extra staff member and she asked the relevant teacher team how they felt this teacher should be used.

Teacher Interviews

Teachers were interviewed in focus groups ranging in size from two teachers to fifteen teachers. The researcher used a standard set of questions, but allowed the teachers to digress when appropriate. The following trends emerged from the interviews:

- Supportive Leadership Style: Teachers in both sets of schools agreed on the importance of a supportive leadership style in retaining teachers. One teacher stated that the principal “needs to

support teachers academically and behaviorally". Teachers referred to the need for principal support on a variety of levels. They said that principals needed to ensure that basic teacher needs were met- for example, they should make sure that teachers have the materials and supplies they need for classroom instruction. Principals were also viewed as instrumental in setting the tone for discipline in the building. This was particularly important for teachers in the non-improving schools. Teachers also wanted their principals' support in dealing with and providing a buffer from the central administration of the district. One teacher in an improving school noted that a principal must realize that a key piece of their role is "fighting for teachers."

- Teacher-Administrator Relationships: Teachers in both pairs of schools also commented that the relationships between teachers and school administrators were very important in creating a positive school climate and therefore retaining teachers. For example, one teacher noted that she knew and liked the principal, and the tenor of this relationship had specifically influenced her decision to remain teaching at that school. Another teacher was very emotional in describing how her principal had won her loyalty by being very supportive when she had a personal crisis outside of school. Another teacher in the same focus group added that the former principal would greet teachers at the door every

day, just in order to say good morning. This made them feel appreciated by the principal and helped build a real connection. This type of teacher-administrator relationship seemed to make a difference to teachers in both improving and non-improving schools.

- Paperwork: Teachers in both groups maintained that an overwhelming amount of paperwork was increasingly a factor that contributed to teachers leaving the district. Teachers in three of the schools noted the increase in paperwork as a specific negative for teachers. In two of the groups, NCLB associated paperwork was defined as the biggest challenge to teaching in their school. Teachers concluded that the increase in paperwork was a direct result of the new requirements of NCLB, especially when dealing with special education populations. Teachers said that they had to spend so much time on paperwork that they were left with less time for lesson planning. In some cases, the NCLB paperwork was cutting into the teachers' free time on evenings and weekends. Teachers in one school claimed that their principal requested additional paperwork above and beyond what is required by NCLB.
- NCLB: One issue on which there was disagreement between the groups of teachers was on the subject of NCLB. Teachers in non-improving schools overwhelmingly agreed that NCLB was a

negative for teachers and had negatively affected teacher retention. Many of them mentioned the increased paperwork following the implementation of NCLB, as well as the problems many teachers had obtaining or maintaining proper certifications. Several teachers in these schools stated that NCLB had ruined teaching as a profession. Several also mentioned that they felt as though they needed to move on in the curriculum even if the students had not yet mastered the content. One teacher described this phenomenon as, "There is exposure, but no time for review." Others noted a need to focus on bringing students up from the bottom rather than helping higher achieving students. Overall, these teachers were very angry about the testing requirements and the added pressure placed on teachers. They said there were too many variables related to student achievement that were beyond their control, such as the influences on students' lives outside of school. One teacher went so far as to say that she had opted out of testing for her own child who attended another school in the district. While some teachers in the non-improving schools admitted that NCLB had raised the standards for teaching, most of the teachers seemed very frustrated with NCLB. Nearly all of the teachers mentioned that NCLB had a negative impact on them personally, as well as on the teaching profession in general. Teachers in improving schools had both positive and negative things to say about NCLB. Some did say that

NCLB had made teaching less desirable, but others thought that it had improved their schools and that it made them better teachers. One teacher said, "It is nice to know that what you are doing is working." Many of the improving school teachers said that not much had changed for them because they had already been doing the necessary things in the classroom prior to NCLB. One teacher in an improving school expressed the impact of NCLB in the following way: "It (NCLB) is a positive for us now because we are doing well. When our school was not making AYP, it was tough. People started to look around at each other and wonder whose fault it was. There was a heaviness around the school." Teachers in the improving schools did express concern about it getting harder and harder to make AYP. They claimed that as their schools have improved they have lost funding because money has gone to schools with higher levels of need. One teacher said, "When we were in 'improvement' we got a lot of resources. Now that we are doing well, we are losing resources." Overall, the faculty in the improving schools felt somewhat more positively about NCLB and the changes it had made in their schools as compared to the faculty in the non-improving schools.

- Working Conditions: Teachers in non-improving schools were more concerned about working conditions than teachers in improving schools. Teachers in the non-improving schools stated

that student behavioral problems, poor physical plants, and a lack of respect all contributed to poor teacher retention in their schools. Teachers in the non-improving schools talked about lack of supplies, broken photocopiers that did not get fixed, and even a lack of physical security. Student behavior was of particular concern in non-improving middle schools, where many of the teachers maintained that behavior was a major factor in their peers having left the school. They stated that students were not motivated to learn and that teachers did not feel respected. Teachers in the improving schools talked little about these factors and in many cases, not at all.

- Leadership: Another area that highlighted a key difference in viewpoint between the two groups of teachers was their views on leadership. Teachers in the improving schools more frequently cited principal leadership style and potential to provide input into school decision-making as positives in their schools. Teachers in both of the improving schools said they felt that their principals trusted them and gave them input into decisions. When asked what the best thing about teaching in her school was, one teacher said, "I like the administration, especially the freedom given and the flexibility that I have." Teachers in these two schools had not always worked under principals that had involved them in the decision-making, but they welcomed the change. One teacher said,

“She [the current principal] is open to new ideas and listens to teachers....” This is a sharp contrast to the old principal, who we felt was a micromanager, authoritative, and insensitive to the needs of teachers.” All of these comments were in sharp contrast to the views of the non-improving school teachers, who offered that their principals’ leadership style and inclusion in school decisions were negatives. Teachers in the non-improving schools stated that they did not feel that they had consistent input into decision making. In one of the non-improving schools, teachers stated that only certain teachers had input to the principal’s ear, and others did not. They said that sometimes they were asked for input, but then their ideas were not seriously listened to or acted on by the principal.

- Salary: Salary was another factor that teachers in the improving and non-improving schools disagreed about. Teachers in the improving schools were more likely to say that salary was a deterrent to remaining in the district. In fact, half of all of the teachers interviewed in the improving schools felt that salaries were a negative factor in retaining teachers in their school. In contrast, only one teacher in the non-improving schools thought that the salary was a negative for retention. Teachers in the improving schools averred that many teachers had moved to neighboring Montgomery County where they believed the salaries were higher and the teachers did not need to work as hard. Another teacher stated that the better teachers tended to

leave for the higher paying districts and “better” communities. A teacher in one of the improving schools put it this way: “Good teachers leave for greener pastures, while poor teachers leave because they were ridden too hard.”

Comparison of Teacher and Principal Responses

There were many areas where teachers and principals agreed in the interviews. Teachers and principals agreed that leadership style was important to teacher retention. Both teachers and principals said that it was important for leaders to have positive and supportive relationships with teachers, as well as that teachers should have input into the day-to-day running of the school. They agreed that teacher certification presented a new challenge to teacher retention under NCLB and that mentoring was a useful tool to train and retain teachers. However, there were several important points on which the views of the two groups differed, which can lead to better knowledge about teacher retention issues. In particular, by identifying disconnects in teacher and principal thinking about teacher retention, strategies can be developed to improve understanding between principals and teachers. However, there were several important points on which the views of the two groups differed which can help us better understand teacher retention issues. In particular, by identifying disconnects in teacher and principal thinking on teacher retention, strategies can be developed to get the two groups on the same wavelength.

The first of these disconnects between the teachers and principals concerns the issue of salary and benefits. None of the principals said they believed that salary was a significant factor in teacher retention in PGC. They said that the salaries were equivalent to those in other districts and that this was not a deterrent for teachers who wished to remain in the district. In contrast, teachers in the improving schools claimed that the salaries in neighboring districts were higher than those they received in PGC. They also argued that the workload in the neighboring districts would be less than at their current schools. The teachers interviewed in the improving schools also claimed that good teachers had left their schools to teach in these neighboring districts. In the non-improving schools, teachers agreed with the principals and did not see salary as a factor in teacher retention. It is important for principals to recognize that some of their teachers, especially those in improving schools, might think that they could be making more money for less work elsewhere. This could lead to schools losing their most effective teachers to perceived greener pastures.

The second area of disparity related to the topic of paperwork. Teachers in all of the schools discussed the amount of paperwork as a negative factor that affected their ability to do their jobs successfully and to find a positive work-life balance. According to many teachers, paperwork had increased since the passage of NCLB. Many of the teachers claimed that they committed considerable amounts of time to work outside of teaching hours. This was especially true for the teachers who worked in special education. In contrast, none of the principals noted the amount of paperwork as a potential issue for their teachers. In several

instances, they talked about programs in the schools that were aimed at improving student achievement through the use of data to examine weaknesses, which required teachers to submit lesson plans and student work to the principals on a weekly basis. Collecting and preparing these documents for the principals each week was given as one example of a very time consuming process that the teachers saw as being linked to NCLB. Adding new programs may be an effective strategy for raising student achievement, but these sorts of innovations may have a negative effect on teacher morale and, ultimately, on teacher retention.

All of the groups saw leadership as an important factor in teacher retention. Teachers in both groups wanted to have a supportive principal who gave them input into decision making in the school. Principals in the improving schools also said it was very important to give teachers input into school decision making. When asked about the effect of leadership style on teacher retention, the improving school principals referred to specific examples of how they included teachers in school decision-making. In the interviews with teachers in the improving schools, it was clear that the teachers recognized that the principal was giving them input into decision-making. In both schools, teachers also referred to specific examples that illustrated how they had provided that input. These teachers maintained that this empowerment contributed to their decision to stay in these schools.

In contrast, non-improving school principals were more focused on aspects of management as opposed to leadership in their interviews. They agreed

in theory about giving teachers input, but the examples of their leadership style that they gave were more focused on building management. For example, one of the principals talked about his knowledge of how to handle discipline problems and about making sure teachers knew what was contained in the SIP. The other non-improving principal focused on more of the strategies that she had put into place to improve student achievement. When asked where the ideas had come from, she said that she had learned about one strategy at a conference. Teachers in the non-improving schools largely agreed that they did not have input into school decision-making. One group of teachers said that their principal was very strict and intimidating as a person. They said that in their school, only certain teachers have input into decision-making, but not all teachers. Teachers in the other non-improving school commented that their principal was supportive, but he lacked direction.

Teachers in the improving schools agreed with their principals that they had input into decision making, while teachers in the non-improving schools said that they did not feel they had input even though their principals stated that it was important. Principals in the improving schools focused their leadership comments on teacher input, while principals in the non-improving schools more often discussed other topics related to leadership. This difference in focus on teacher empowerment is one of the major differences between the improving and non-improving schools and is a major factor in teacher retention in these schools.

The final source of information that was examined was the SIPs. All of the plans contained a section that addressed “Strategies to Attract (and Retain) Highly Qualified Teachers.” Each school addressed these needs in its own way, but there were some commonalities among the schools. The strategies for each school are outlined in Table 3.

Table 4 *School Improvement Plans: Common Strategies*

Strategy	George Washington	James Madison	Abraham Lincoln	Franklin D. Roosevelt
Type of School	Improving	Improving	Non-Improving	Non-Improving
FIRST grant		x		
Professional development to enhance teaching skill and knowledge	x	x	x	
Meetings w/ teachers to support them in attaining HQ status	x	x		
Encouraging National Board Certification		x		
Induction and mentoring for new teachers	x		x	x
Putting new teachers on strong teams			x	
Support from administration and other teachers		x	x	
Recruiting teachers at job fairs				x
Discussing strategies to attract and retain teachers with current and prospective teachers	x			

Professional development for teachers was one of the main strategies outlined in the plans to address teacher retention. Three of the four schools said that professional development was part of their plan with an emphasis on improving the instructional skills and knowledge of teachers. Mentoring was another main focus of the plans. Three of the four plans mentioned mentoring and induction as key strategies to train and retain teachers. Developing an environment where teachers are given support from both administrators and other teachers was a strategy in two of the plans. Two of the schools' plans focused on helping teachers attain or maintain highly qualified status through

meeting with them and supporting them in accessing the resources necessary to fulfill these requirements.

Only one of the schools in the study participated in a structured district-wide program to address the retention of teachers. James Madison was involved with the FIRST (Financial Incentives and Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers) program. This program was described in Chapter 3. This program financially rewarded effective teachers who remained in challenging schools. This seemed like a targeted and promising program, but none of the teachers mentioned it as a factor in teacher retention nor did the principal.

The improving schools shared several strategies in their plans. Their plans noted that they wanted to support teachers in attaining highly qualified status. Both principals also mentioned this in their interviews. This was an important strategy since in all of the schools teachers were most often terminated for lacking proper credentials. In both teacher and principal interviews, it was revealed that some effective teachers were let go for failing to obtain highly qualified status. If the strategy of helping teachers attain regular certification works, it should be implemented in non-improving schools as well.

The improving schools also focused on offering professional development opportunities for teachers in order to increase their instructional knowledge and skills. The focus of the strategies in these two schools was to empower teachers to select their own professional development. In the plan of one of the improving schools there was even a separate section that focuses on how to involve teachers in using data to make decisions about students and instruction. This matched the

information from the teacher interviews in these schools in which teachers stated that they were empowered and had input into how decisions are made at their schools.

The only common focus of the two non-improving schools was on mentoring and induction activities. The plans of both of these schools stated that this was a key component of their strategy to retain teachers. Interestingly, mentoring was a focus at one of the improving schools (Abraham Lincoln), but they no longer had the funds to support the program. The principal stated that this was a negative factor in teacher retention as teachers were frustrated by the lack of a mentoring program. At Franklin D. Roosevelt there was a substantial mentoring program that was mentioned by both the teachers and the principal at their school.

Overall, the strategies at the non-improving schools seemed to lack focus and seriousness. For example, the SIP for Franklin D. Roosevelt only contained two strategies and had the shortest retention section of all of the plans. The two strategies were mentoring and recruiting at job fairs. For a school where the principal stated that teacher retention was a problem, this seems contradictory. The other non-improving school had a longer section that emphasized many of the same things as the improving schools. However, some of these ideas had clearly not been implemented. In contrast, these same sections in the SIPs of the improving schools were tightly focused and the strategies had been implemented, as evidenced by the teachers and principals all mentioning the strategies in their interviews.

The results of this study touch on a variety of issues related to teacher retention in urban schools. There are several areas where this information can be used to better inform schools on how to retain teachers. These results will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This final chapter begins with a restatement of the problem and methodology of the study. Then the significant findings will be summarized and discussed in relation to other research. Next the limitations of this project are outlined. Finally, implications of this research for current theory and practice and for further research are offered.

Statement of the Problem and Review of Methodology

This study was designed to examine teacher retention since the NCLB legislation was enacted in schools that have shown improvement in comparison to schools that have failed to show improvement. The study focused on the following questions.

1. Do teacher retention rates remain constant as student achievement improves in the improving schools?
2. Is there a pattern of teacher retention in schools since the passage of NCLB? Does this pattern differ in improving and non-improving schools?
3. What strategies do improving schools employ to attract, train, and retain highly effective teachers? Are there differences between improving and non-improving schools?

This study was a paired case study using both quantitative and qualitative methodology in order to better understand the relationship between teacher retention and student achievement since NCLB was enacted in 2002. Two sets of schools located in Prince George's County Maryland were compared. Two of the schools had continually made improvements in student achievement since the passage of NCLB. These two schools were considered to be the "improving schools." The remaining two schools had failed to show improvement in student achievement under NCLB and were considered the "non-improving schools."

In order to answer the questions outlined above, human resource data was analyzed to find the numbers of teachers leaving the school each year and their reasons for leaving. Interviews were conducted with teachers and principals in all of the schools to gain a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between teacher retention and NCLB, as well as to better understand the factors that aid schools in retaining effective teachers. SIPs were analyzed to determine the strategies schools were using to address the issues of teacher retention.

Overview and Interpretation of Significant Findings

The following section offers a summary and interpretation of the key findings of this study. This section is organized by problem statement as in previous chapters.

The first problem tackled by the researcher was to determine if the teacher retention rate remained constant as student achievement increased in the

improving schools. The findings were that teacher retention rates in all of the schools increased during the course of the study. However, improving schools had overall higher rates of teacher retention especially among keeper teachers (those who were not terminated or did not retire). A higher percentage of the teachers leaving improving schools left due to termination. None of these results proved to be statistically significant, so they should just be considered as trends.

It was anticipated that there would be greater variation in the trajectories of teacher retention between the schools, but overall teacher retention went up in all schools during the study years. There are two possible explanations for this result. The first is that during the study years, all schools across the state were being required to hire teachers who were highly qualified meaning that teachers who lacked these credentials were less mobile. This may have made it harder for teachers to leave the district. A second explanation is that the programs and incentives that the district has been putting in place during the study years led to a higher rate of retention for teachers across the entire district. And there was an increase in professional development as required by NCLB, which may have raised the teacher retention rate in all schools. It is not possible to determine a cause and effect relationship, but these are some possible explanations.

The findings from this study suggest that as schools improve so does teacher retention in those schools. This study found that as student achievement levels rose, so did teacher retention. Schools that are improving are also schools that contain many of the factors that teachers are looking for in a school including strong school leadership, positive working conditions, and other supports for

improving schools. In both cases there was a period of declining teacher retention rates leading up to or in the year directly after a sanction by the state for failing to make progress under NCLB. For example, in one of the non-improving schools the dip occurred after the school was placed in "Improvement." Sanctions by the state for failing to make AYP could be affecting the schools in two ways. First, teachers may decide to leave in anticipation of sanctions knowing that their jobs may be in danger or that their roles and responsibilities may change with the sanctions. Second, school leaders may decide that they need to make sure that all of the teachers they have are highly qualified as a result of the sanctions. This may mean that principals fire more teachers in anticipation of being sanctioned.

The final research question led to an examination of what the improving schools were doing to attract, train, and retain effective teachers. This question was answered through the use of interview data from teachers and principals as well as through the review of the SIPs.

The first finding in this area was that principals of improving schools did not see that they had a problem with teacher retention, while the principals of non-improving schools said that they did have a problem with teacher retention. This is supported by the fact that the improving schools had overall higher rates of teacher retention. While the rates were higher, the difference was not as large as one would expect to account for such a dichotomy. Principals in the improving schools may be satisfied with the quality of their teachers and have confidence that they will be able to attract another quality teacher if a position

teachers new and old, such as professional development and mentoring. In addition to these factors, schools that are improving their test scores and becoming recognized for doing so are likely to have a more positive school climate than schools that are continually being declared to be “not good enough.” In contrast, it would be difficult to maintain a positive school climate where student achievement is stagnant or declining and teachers are under pressure to turn everything around.

The second question the researcher was whether there was a pattern of teacher retention in these schools since the passage of NCLB and if the pattern was different in improving versus non-improving schools. In the improving schools, test scores and teacher retention rates rose in tandem. There were individual decreases for one year in each school, but in both cases these could be explained by an increase in retirements in that year. As teachers see success in their test scores and are rewarded for that success with public recognition, they feel more positively about working in that school. There are other factors that could explain the relationship of student achievement to teacher retention, including improvements in school leadership and increases in professional development. Success begets success, and improvements in student achievement will lead to improvements in many functions of the school including teacher retention.

The non-improving schools followed a consistent pattern as well. They both had overall increases in teacher retention rates during the course of the study, but also the trajectory of the increase was very different for the non-

does become available. In contrast, non-improving principals may have thought that they were losing the best teachers and that it would be difficult to fill open positions. This interpretation was supported by interviews with the principals. One of the non-improving principals talked about how difficult it had been for him to attract highly qualified teachers to his school. In contrast, one of the improving principals talked about the benefits of being able to fill some positions, as opposed to working with the teachers who were there before he became principal, so that he could hire teachers who shared his philosophy of teaching and of school improvement.

Staff (teachers and principals) in improving schools overall said they felt more positively about NCLB than staff in non-improving schools did. In the improving schools, staff often mentioned the benefits of NCLB, including increased levels of achievement for students, greater resources for their schools, and higher standards for teaching. Staff in non-improving schools mentioned more rigorous requirements and more work for teachers, an “impossible” job, and lack of satisfaction with teaching as a result of NCLB. This difference is understandable since teachers who are feeling successful at raising student achievement and are receiving positive recognition for their accomplishments are bound to feel more positively about NCLB. Teachers in the non-improving schools may agree in theory with the NCLB legislation, but may feel frustrated with the lack of improvement in student achievement in their school. This would lead them to disagree with the legislation. An alternative explanation is that teachers in the improving schools were already doing many of the things

required by the NCLB legislation before 2002 and so they were already more invested in these techniques and less change was needed in their teaching. This interpretation is supported by some of the teacher interview information. In one of the improving schools, the teachers stated that not much had changed since the passage of NCLB since they were already taking many of the necessary measures to raise student achievement.

One of the biggest NCLB factors impacting teacher retention is the requirement that all teachers be highly qualified. Staff in both improving and non-improving schools stated that teachers had been let go because they lacked highly qualified status and that in some cases these were effective teachers. Principals also agreed that they had lost effective teachers because of teacher certification. Furthermore, this finding was confirmed by the human resource data that showed that the highest number of terminations were a result of lack of teacher certification. This is an interesting, but not surprising finding. The NCLB requirement for teachers to be highly qualified has made it very difficult for some schools to staff teachers, especially in certain teaching fields. The effect has been most significant in the middle grades where teachers are required to be highly qualified in a content area as opposed to being a generalist teacher, as was common pre-NCLB. Increased requirements to become highly qualified have had an effect on all schools, but in theory this should diminish over time as teachers attain highly qualified status and educational institutions graduate teachers who have already fulfilled this requirement. This should be a temporary effect, but in

the meantime teachers without full certification should receive support in their quest for the status of highly qualified.

Leadership and leadership style were also found to be factors in teacher retention. Teachers in both sets of schools were looking for a strong, supportive leader with whom they could maintain a positive relationship. Teachers were looking for principals to advocate for them with central office staff, maintain positive working conditions, and be an instructional leader. In both sets of schools, teachers were also looking to have input into decision making in the school. While both sets of principals stated that they believed that teachers should have input into decision-making, only the principals in the improving schools gave concrete examples of how they empowered teachers. Teachers in the improving schools generally said that they felt more positively about their principal's leadership and that they did have input into decision making within the school. Teachers are more likely to remain in schools with good school leadership, especially when they feel that they have input into how the school is governed. The responses of staff in the improving schools illustrate this difference. Improving schools have higher rates of retention, higher rates of student achievement, and teachers who feel generally more positive about the leadership of their schools.

Working conditions were considered as a factor in teacher retention. Teachers in the non-improving schools overall felt that working conditions were more negative in their schools than did teachers in the improving schools. Teachers in the non-improving schools mentioned several negative factors in terms of

working conditions, including student discipline and the amount of work. Teachers in all of the schools talked about the increase in paperwork since the passage of NCLB. Teachers claimed that the amount of paperwork was unmanageable and would lead to a decrease in teacher retention. The topic of paperwork was a major concern for teachers, but none of the principals mentioned this as a factor. This finding is interesting since even teachers in schools that are showing gains in student achievement feel frustrated with the amount of paperwork. Teachers see the paperwork as a distraction to their core job of planning lessons and working with students. The increase in paperwork is attributed to the requirements of NCLB. Paperwork may seem like a necessary evil, but at some schools it seemed that it was taking up a significant amount of time. For example, teachers in one of the non-improving schools had to turn in to the principal each week lesson plans for all classes a week ahead of time as well as samples of graded work for any assignment. The increase in paperwork may register a necessary change in working conditions for teachers in the new age of accountability, but principals will need to recognize this as a legitimate concern for teachers. Good working conditions in general will increase teacher retention. Paperwork emerged as one of the most significant concerns in terms of working conditions in all of the schools and will need to be addressed as a significant factor in teacher retention.

A discrepancy between faculty in improving schools and those in non-improving schools concerning the role of salary and benefits in retention presents another interesting finding. Both principals and the teachers in the non-

improving schools said that salary and benefits were not a factor in teacher retention. However, teachers in the improving schools did see salary as an important factor and stated that other districts paid more for a less stressful job. Teachers in the improving schools said that teachers from their schools had left in order to work in these districts. This is an important finding since the teachers in improving schools are likely to be the teachers who will have more job opportunities as a result of their demonstrated success in the classroom. These are the teachers that the district would most like to retain. Principals and district administrators need to be aware of the perspectives of these teachers related to salaries and address these needs directly in order to retain these quality teachers.

The final key finding is that the improving schools were more likely to have included specific strategies in their SIPs to address teacher retention. The strategies in the plans for the improving schools were clearly implemented in the school and were frequently mentioned by both teachers and principals in the interviews. In contrast, the non-improving schools had plans that either contained little in the way of strategies to address teacher retention or contained strategies that were not implemented. The role of the SIP is to determine the direction that the schools will take to address key issues. The plan will have no effect unless schools implement those strategies. This is clearly a significant difference between the improving and non-improving schools.

Relationship of Findings to Previous Research

The results of this study largely confirm previous research, but do add some new findings to areas where there had been little or no research. Each of these areas will be addressed in this section.

School leadership has been shown to have a significant impact on teacher retention. Teachers value principals who understand the rigors of the classroom and are supportive of teachers in their schools (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Shen, 1997). This support includes maintaining positive relationships with teachers and ensuring that they have the resources that they need to teach effectively (Ingersoll, 2001; Shen, 1997). One of the most important factors in school leadership is that teachers want to have input into school decision-making (Berry, 2008; Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Shen, 1997). School leadership is particularly important for new teachers who often need additional support from a principal in order to become a successful and satisfied teacher (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). The findings of the current study largely support these findings. Teachers in all schools valued effective school leadership and were looking for a supportive school principal. Teachers in all of the schools wanted to have input into school decision making. In the improving schools these teachers said that they had input into school decision-making and that it was one of the factors that encouraged them to remain in their schools. School leadership continues to be one of the most important elements for an effective school and one of the primary factors in teacher retention.

Working conditions was another important element in the current literature on teacher retention. Teachers often cite poor working conditions as the primary reason for leaving a school (Robertson, Hancock, & Allen, 2006; "Support New Teachers and Keep Them Teaching," 2005). Working conditions include student behavior, school climate, facilities, and work-load (Robertson, Hancock, & Allen, 2006). The findings of this present study support the conclusions of the works in the literature on working conditions. Teachers in all of the schools were concerned about good working conditions. Teachers in the non-improving schools maintained that the working conditions in their school could be improved, especially in the areas of student behavior and parental support. Some teachers in these schools said that they lacked the time and resources necessary to do their jobs effectively. Teachers in the improving schools were generally happy with their working conditions, with the exception of excessive workload.

One new concept regarding working conditions, which emerged from this study, was the increase in paperwork for all teachers. Teachers reported that the amount of paperwork had increased significantly since the passage of NCLB. Paperwork is a concern for teachers because they say it detracts from the amount of time they have to plan lessons and work with students. They also feel that it harms their work-life balance. This is not something that has been mentioned in the previous literature and possibly is a result of changes in schools since the passage of NCLB.

Salary and benefits have often been researched in relation to teacher retention with conflicting findings. Many studies suggest that salary and benefits are not significant factors in teacher retention when working conditions are poor or school leadership is lacking (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). This was partially confirmed by this study. Teachers in the non-improving schools and all of the principals said that salary was not a significant factor in teacher retention in their schools. Other research suggests that salary and benefits will be a factor for certain teachers. Effective teachers who are highly qualified and have advanced degrees are desirable to other districts and therefore are more likely to be impacted by salary. This is true also of teachers in high-need areas such as mathematics, science, and special education. These desirable teachers are more likely to move to other districts in order to increase their salaries (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). In the present study, teachers in the improving schools were the only group who thought that salary was a negative factor in their current schools. They frequently referred to neighboring districts as having higher salaries and noted that other teachers from their schools had left for these districts.

Mentoring is one of the main tools that schools use to support and train new teachers. There is a large body of literature on mentoring and its effectiveness. Mentoring programs have been shown to reduce the rate of teacher attrition by providing support to new teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, Strong, 2005). Comprehensive mentoring programs have also been shown to improve teacher effectiveness in new teachers (Strong, 2006). All groups in the

current study said that they thought mentoring was important for teacher retention. Both of the improving schools and one of the non-improving schools had mentoring programs that the teacher and principals said were effective. One of the non-improving principals said that they previously had a good mentoring program, but the budget was cut for the current school year. Some of the teachers cited the importance of mentoring in supporting them in their first years of teaching, but other teachers in the same schools reported that they had not been supported well. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the district and the individual schools offer a variety of mentoring programs, so some teachers in the same school received higher levels of support than others. In general, the findings of this study support the idea that mentoring is important for retaining new teachers, but more research would have to be done in the area to make a conclusive judgment about its effectiveness in the schools studied.

This study examined the relationship of NCLB to teacher retention. Previously there had been only a small body of research that addressed the changes for teachers since the passage of NCLB. One study found that teachers expressed concern that NCLB sanctions would increase teacher attrition in schools that were sanctioned under NCLB. Teachers in sanctioned schools could be frustrated by the changes in curriculum as well as the increased stresses and responsibilities of the job. Additionally, these teachers may suffer from a lack of morale after having their schools declared under-performing (Sunderman, 2004). Similar effects of NCLB were found in this study. Teachers in schools that had been sanctioned under NCLB (non-improving schools) voiced more frustration

with NCLB and complained frequently about how the requirements have made their job more difficult if not impossible in some cases. Teachers in improving schools expressed more positive feelings about NCLB and claimed that it had improved teaching and learning in their schools. Whether or not a school has been successful in raising student achievement under NCLB or not is a telling factor about how teachers respond to the legislation and how they think about their current schools. More research should be done in this area in order to fully understand the connection of NCLB to teacher retention.

This study was designed to seek a pattern of teacher retention in schools that have begun to improve student achievement. This is a promising area of research that thus far has not been addressed in the current literature. This present study offers some preliminary findings. Although it was a small sample size, a clear pattern could be seen in both the improving and the non-improving schools. In the improving schools, increases in student achievement paralleled increases in the teacher retention rate. In both schools there were temporary dips for one year in teacher retention, but these could be explained by an increase in the number of retirements in those years. In the non-improving schools, teacher retention rates were affected by sanctioning by the state for failing to make AYP. In both cases, teacher retention rates fell prior to or in the year of the sanctioning and then rose afterwards. This study had a very small sample size, but these findings represent a new perspective on patterns of teacher retention that should be followed up in future research.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study offer new perspectives on teacher retention in urban schools, but there are several limitations. The first major limitation of this study is the small sample size. Having only four schools allowed me to take an in-depth look at each school. Trends could be perceived across the schools, but it is likely that they would be clearer given a larger sample size. A larger sample size and a wider variety of schools would enhance the efficacy of a similar study.

Human resource data in schools is scarce and often vague. This is a limitation of this study. Schools have just recently been collecting the type of personnel data that other industries have been collecting for years. For example, Prince George's County just started to collect reasons for leaving from teachers in 2003. This data set was helpful, but it still provided only the most basic information about why teachers resigned. If schools could conduct exit interviews or survey teachers more fully about their reasons for leaving, the understanding of teacher retention in the district would be enhanced and researchers would be enabled to more fully study teacher retention.

This study was also limited by the amount of data collected. Time is very precious commodity for teachers. Due to lack of time in the teacher's day, I had to fit teacher interviews into either their break or lunch time. In addition, the lack of time forced the interviews into the focus group format. While there is some advantage to interviewing teachers in groups, it sometimes means that not all voices are heard.

This study was also limited by the validity of the interview data. I took steps to ensure that participants felt comfortable with my presence and trusted that their information would remain confidential, but it is still possible that they were not fully open and honest. To alleviate worries about validity, I triangulated the data from the interviews with the data from the other interviews and SIPs in order to gain a fuller picture.

Another limitation of the study was the combination of middle school and elementary school data. Only one of the schools (Abraham Lincoln) involved in the study was a middle school. Initially I looked to include in the study another middle school in the district, but no middle schools met the criteria for an improving school. Middle schools have special challenges under NCLB, including more difficulty recruiting highly qualified teachers since teachers need to be subject certified and the potential for more severe discipline problems. Future research should examine teacher retention at the middle school level.

There were several factors that also could have altered the perceptions of teachers in these schools beyond the scope of normal school activities. During the time of the interviews, there were rumors in the district that two of the schools (one improving and one non-improving) in this study were going to be reorganized and that there would be large scale job changes or layoffs for teachers. These rumors did turn out to be true and may have tainted teachers' perceptions and feelings about their schools.

Implications for Current Theory and Practice

This study has implications for educators at all levels. Many of the

findings of this study support previous research on teacher retention, but there are also some new findings that have implications for current policy and practice. Making the suggested changes in these areas could lead to higher rates of teacher retention, especially of the most effective teachers.

The role of a school leader is one of the most important factors in an effective school. Leaders influence all functions of a school and teacher retention in particular. A substantial body of research clearly shows what factors are important for teachers and what will encourage them to remain in a school. This research is supported by the current study, which found that leadership was one of the most important elements in teacher satisfaction. District leadership should ensure the hiring of principals who know how to share leadership within a school, be supportive of teachers logistically as well as instructionally, and maintain positive relationships with teachers. Good hiring is only part of the solution, since many principals are already in place in schools. Districts need to train and support principals in learning these important skills and to reward the principals who lead in this manner. In addition, districts need to terminate principals who are not able to lead effectively. The loss of good teachers is too high a price to pay for retaining ineffective leaders.

The role that NCLB plays in teacher morale and retention needs to be understood and when possible addressed in order to reduce teacher stress and attrition. Whether or not the basic requirements of NCLB need to be changed, its effect on teachers in struggling schools is subtle but powerful. When schools are continually labeled under-performing, the teachers feel demoralized, and those

who can find other positions will leave. This may seem to be a strategy that could be useful for creating change through turnover, but most likely the teachers who find other positions will be the more effective and accomplished teachers.

Therefore, without lowering the standards for NCLB, teachers need to receive support in raising student achievement by increasing resources, training teachers to be better at planning, and setting more realistic goals. If teachers in these schools could begin to see improvements in some areas then they would feel more positively about their schools. This would raise teacher morale and hopefully result in better retention of quality teachers.

Some of the requirements of NCLB may need to be changed in order to reduce teacher stress. One of the main findings of this study was that teachers were very discouraged by the increase in paperwork as a result of NCLB. Obviously, increasing the amount of paperwork was not one of the goals of this legislation, but it is one of the unforeseen side effects. The state requirements, as well as the additional district and school level requirements, added to fulfill the goals of NCLB need to be examined and streamlined to ensure that teachers have time to do their jobs effectively and also find balance in their lives outside of school. Another solution would be to hire additional administrative staff members to complete some of this paperwork, thereby freeing teachers to focus on classroom matters.

Staff in improving schools seemed to feel more positively about NCLB because they were receiving positive feedback and making gains. However, as mentioned in one interview, teachers may wonder if gains will be difficult to

maintain if resources are been taken away from the schools as they improved. It is important that improving schools continue to receive the resources that helped them improve in the first place. This has important policy implications on all levels.

Navigating the process of becoming a certified and highly qualified teacher is often very challenging for teachers. Many teachers in the schools studied were terminated for failure to maintain proper certification. Leaders in the two improving schools counseled teachers on how to attain certification and highly qualified status. This is a simple process seems to have had a positive influence on teacher retention. This is an easy and inexpensive step that schools can take to reduce the number of teachers leaving because of lack of proper certification. All struggling schools should implement such a system.

Teachers in the improving schools were the most likely to be thinking about moving to other districts to be rewarded with higher salaries. These teachers would be desirable to other districts as a result of their track records of raising student achievement in their current schools. It is not necessary to raise salaries in the whole district, but it is important to provide an incentive to these effective teachers to remain in these high need schools. The FIRST program mentioned previously is one example of a possible incentive program. Schools involved in the FIRST program pay teachers additional bonuses for working in high-need schools and areas. Possibly there are things beyond salary raises that would motivate these teachers to remain in their schools such as increased professional

development opportunities or potentials for acting as teacher leaders in their schools. District leaders must address the potential loss of valuable teachers.

Mentoring is the one reliable method of training and retaining new teachers. Mentoring programs need to be high quality and consistently administered across schools. In the district studied there were many different mentoring programs offered to certain groups of teachers. For example, there was a mentoring program specifically for teachers who were career changers.. Many schools offered school-based mentoring programs as well. This variety of programming had led to a fragmented and inconsistent approach to mentoring in the district. A further problem is that schools needed to finance their school programs from their existing budgets. In some cases this meant they had no mentoring program in a given school year. Mentoring is too important for the district to ignore and delegate to the schools. Financing for mentoring programs need to be prioritized and offered to all schools.

Writing the yearly SIP is a way for stakeholders in schools to prioritize goals and to commit to implementing strategies to achieve these goals. This is one of the most positive requirements of the NCLB legislation and one way that schools can involve teachers directly in school decision-making. School leaders should take this process seriously and involve teachers in the planning process. Strategies to attract and retain teachers should be included in these plans and should be specific, targeted, and measurable. School staff should look to the existing research as well as the needs of their own school to determine the most appropriate and promising strategies for their schools. Most importantly, once a

strategy is in the plan, the school leaders need to communicate it to teachers and implement it fully.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study explored the relationship between teacher retention and student achievement in urban schools and how teacher retention has been impacted by NCLB. There are many additional avenues of research that should be pursued in order to extend the scope of this study.

This study was limited to an in-depth look at four schools. A similar study conducted with a larger sample size would be useful to confirm the findings of this study. It would also be interesting to look at a variety of urban schools, including high schools and more middle schools.

It is necessary for educators to understand the patterns of teacher retention as schools improve. In order to expand upon this area of research, this idea should be developed and researched further. It would be interesting to better understand times of change or improvement in other types of schools besides urban schools, as well, and one way to do this would be to look at suburban and private schools as well. It would also be helpful to explore the literature from research in business and management on employee retention and see if there are lessons that can be applied to schooling. For example, a study could examine a similar population, such as health care workers in the non-profit sector, in order to see if there were findings that could be used to shape educational policy on teacher retention.

Additional research seems needed on why teachers are leaving their schools. Currently there is very little data available in Prince George's County as to why teachers leave. The Human Resources department has recently added the reason for leaving code to their files, but this is only the most basic of explanations for teachers leaving. A study that interviewed teachers that leave or change schools might obtain a fuller picture of the reasons behind such changes. It would also be informative to interview principals about each teacher who leaves in order to better understand how the principal honestly viewed the teacher in terms of effectiveness. Considering how difficult it is in public education to terminate teachers, especially those with tenure status, principals may put pressure on certain teachers in hopes they will leave. These leavers might look statistically like keepers, but would in fact not be teachers whom the principal wanted to retain.

A final area for future research would be a longer-term look at the effects of NCLB. Teachers in the improving schools noted that prior to their school making improvements, they had been given many additional resources, but now that they were no longer considered a high-need school those resources were being sent elsewhere. Under the NCLB legislation, schools need to continue to make improvements until they reach full proficiency for all students. This is a daunting challenge, even for schools that have already made significant improvements. Research into the long term effects of NCLB would offer much additional information about how schools in general, and teacher retention in particular, are affected by this legislation.

Appendix

Appendix A

Code/ Reason for Leaving	Category
10-Death	Keeper
20-Retirement	Retired
25-Resignation - Rehire-Retire	Retired
31-Dropped - Provisional/Substandard Certificate	Terminated
33-Dropped - Inefficiency	Terminated
34-Dropped - Immorality, Misconduct, Insubordination, Willful Neglect of Duties	Terminated
38-Dropped - Reduction in Force	Terminated
42-Teaching in Another State	Keeper
43-Teaching in Another Local Unit	Keeper
45-Teaching in Non-Public School	Keeper
46-Teaching in Other Position in Local Unit	Keeper
61-Resigned - Study	Keeper
62-Resigned - Moved	Keeper
65-Resigned - Home Responsibility	Keeper
66-Resigned - Personal illness	Keeper
67-Resigned - Dissatisfied with Teaching	Keeper
68-Resigned - Other	Keeper
68-Resigned - With Prejudice	Keeper
69-Resigned - Cause Unknown	Keeper

Appendix B

Principal Interview Protocol

Principal Interview Protocol

Background Questions: Could you tell me about your school and your role as principal in the school.

Follow-up Questions

- How long have you been principal of this school?
- Were you in this district before you became principal?
- What is the biggest challenge your school is facing?

Teacher Retention: What are the challenges to teacher retention at your school?

Follow-up Questions

- How do you plan to address teacher retention?
- Are there any quality teachers who have left your school district. Why do you think they left?
- Not all teacher retention is positive. Have you let teachers go that you were happy about?

NCLB: What effect has NCLB had on your school?

Follow-up Questions

- Has NCLB changed the way teachers teach in your school?

- Has it had an effect on teacher retention?

Leadership: Strong school leadership has also been shown to have a positive effect on teacher retention. Do you agree?

Follow-up Questions

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- Do you feel that you have been supported as a leader in this district?
- What effect do you think your leadership has on teacher retention?

Working Conditions: Talk to me about the environment in your school.

Follow-up Questions

- What measures have you taken to create positive working conditions in your school?
- Do you feel these have helped?
- Do changes in working conditions improve teacher retention?

Salary and Benefits: Is salary a factor in teacher retention in your district?

Follow-up Questions

- Are other benefits a factor in teacher retention in your district?
- Do you feel that as a principal you can overcome the effects of salary on teacher retention?

Mentoring: What role do you think mentoring plays in teacher retention?

Follow-up Questions

- Does your school have a mentoring program?
- Does the mentoring program effectively support new teachers?
- How would you improve the mentoring program?

Final Questions: What else would you like to add about your school?

Follow-up Questions

- What is the best thing about teaching in your school?
- What is the biggest challenge?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your school or teacher retention?

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Protocol

Background: Why did you become a teacher? How did you end up in this district?

Follow-up Questions

- How long have you been a teacher of this school?
- How long have you been teaching?
- Have you always taught in an urban school?
- Have you considered leaving this school? If so why and for what opportunity?
- Why did you stay?
- If you leave, what would be the reason?
- What is the biggest challenge your school is facing?

Teacher Retention: Do you feel that teacher retention is a problem in your school?

Follow-up Questions

- Does your school have a specific plan to address teacher retention?
- Have there been effective teachers who have left your district? If so, why do you think they left?
- Have there been ineffective teachers who you have been glad to see leave the district? If so, why do you think they left?

NCLB: How has NCLB changed your school?

Follow-up Questions

- Since the passage of NCLB how has teaching in your school changed?
- What initiatives have been undertaken to raise student achievement under NCLB?
- Do you think these initiatives had an effect on teacher retention?
- What effect overall do you think NCLB has had on teacher retention?

Leadership: Strong school leadership has also been shown to have a positive effect on teacher retention. Do you agree?

Follow-up Questions

- How would you describe your principal's leadership style?
- Does your principal allow teachers to have input in school decision-making?
- What effect do you think your school's leadership has on teacher retention?

Working Conditions: How do working conditions affect you as a teacher?

Follow-up Questions

- Do you feel that your school has positive school climate?
- Are student discipline problems addressed efficiently and consistently?

- What are the biggest factors affecting school climate in this school?

Salary and Benefits: Is salary is a factor in teacher retention in your district?

1. Are there factors that can make up for a lower salary?
2. Are other benefits a factor in teacher retention in your district?

Mentoring: How do you feel about mentoring?

Follow-up Questions

- Does your school have a mentoring program?
- Does the mentoring program effectively support new teachers?
- How would you improve the mentoring program?

Final Questions: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your school or teacher retention?

Follow-up Questions

- What is the best thing about teaching in your school?

What is the biggest challenge?

Appendix D

Teacher Focus Group Information Form

Name:

School:

What subject(s) and age group do you teach?

How many years have you been teaching?

How many years have you been teaching in PGCPS?

How many years have you been teaching in this school?

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Name _____ School _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Phone# _____

I, _____, hereby authorize Cove Davis to interview and/or administer an open response questionnaire to me as part of a research study on teacher retention. The information gathered during this process will be used as part of Cove's dissertation research on teacher retention. I understand that this research will examine the relationship between teacher retention, NCLB, and student achievement in urban schools. In particular, the researcher seeks to understand the pattern of teacher retention that occurs in schools as they begin to meet the goals of NCLB. As a participant in this study, I will be questioned about teacher retention, school climate, school leadership, and other information related to this topic. Any information provided or quotations will be used **anonymously**. I have been told that, as a courtesy, a summary of findings from this research will be shared with participants. I have also been advised that there are no risks to the participants.

I understand that if I choose to withdraw my consent, I can do so at any time and all interview information and/or questionnaire information will be destroyed.

I have read and understand this release form. I voluntarily grant permission for the requested information to be used by Cove Davis for the above purposes.

Signature

Date

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Curriculum Vitae

