Abstract

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF
Erin Mooney Martin for the degree of Doctor of Education in Higher Education
Presented on August 3, 2020
Title: <u>A Grounded Theory Study on Teacher Empowerment and Retention in High-poverty, Urban Schools</u>

Abstract approved:

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Christopher Benedetti, Ph.D., Dissertation Committee Chair

The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers seek and experience empowerment in high-poverty, urban school and how empowerment increases retention. This study included a review of literature to provide context on empowerment and retention in high-poverty, urban schools. To further analyze the idea of teacher empowerment and retention within high-poverty, urban schools, a qualitative, grounded theory study was completed. Through the process of remotely interviewing teachers in middle schools within Lawrence, Massachusetts, data were collected and analyzed on reasons teachers continue to stay in high-poverty, urban schools based on their experience working within these settings. Findings identified teachers feeling empowered when having autonomy over their curriculum, and having the ability to provide authentic input into school-wide decisions.

A Grounded Theory Study on Teacher Empowerment and Retention in High-poverty, Urban Schools

By

Erin Mooney Martin

A DISSERTATION

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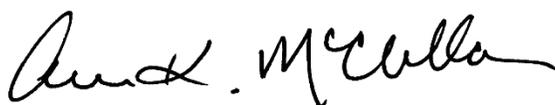
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                                                      Erin Mooney Martin, Author

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Finally, to my husband Gene, and daughter, Cam. Gene, you have been my encouragement, my thought partner, my cheerleader, and my joy throughout this. You celebrated every success and encouraged me when I was challenged. Thank you for your endless words of encouragement and understanding. Cam, you were born when I was still

working on my degree. I hope one day you will see the power in education and that you

can do anything you set your mind to. You two are my livelihood and my whole heart.

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A Grounded Theory Study on Teacher Empowerment and Retention in High-poverty, Urban Schools
Erin M. Martin, Plymouth State University
Dissertation Defense: August 3, 2020
Executive Summary: August 3, 2020

Introduction: The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers seek and experience empowerment in high-poverty, urban school and how empowerment increases retention.

Problem of Practice: Studies indicate that because teacher demand is high and supply of teachers is low, high-poverty, urban school districts have higher rates of teacher attrition, deal with more pressing teacher shortages, and replace up to one-fifth of their entire faculty each year. This often leaves poor, non-White, low performing students with the least skilled teachers (Lankford et al., 2002). Teacher turnover results in a revolving door where inexperienced teachers are continually replaced by other inexperienced teachers, and this results in decreased student academic achievement (Rinke, 2011).

Research Method: This was a qualitative, grounded theory study using remote interviews to learn from teachers about their experiences working in high-poverty, urban schools.

Summary of Findings: Findings identified teachers feeling empowered when having autonomy over their curriculum, and having the ability to provide authentic input into school-wide decisions.

Limitation(s) of Study: The study was limited to only two schools facing special circumstances in the district of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The implications of this study may not be generally applied to other high-poverty, urban schools in other cities or states. An addition limitation was the author's bias based on their experience working in close proximity to the participants.

Recommendations/Significance of Study: Future studies should continue to focus on ways to empower teachers through development at different levels of expertise.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my four parents. To my father and stepmother and mother and stepfather, thank you for the countless hours you have spent watching our daughter Cam while I spent weekends and vacations writing and taking classes. I cannot thank you enough for your care and support. Dad, whenever I thought about giving up, I would think about you working all day and going to class all night so you could be a first-generation college graduate. Your perseverance and determination to provide for our family and give us the opportunity to achieve and succeed will never go unnoticed. Mom, your dedication to lifelong learning inspired me to apply to Plymouth. Your belief in me when I couldn't believe in myself gave me the perseverance necessary to continue. You gave up your own dissertation process so you could spend more time with me as a baby. Thank you for inspiring me to finish what you started and for your continued legacy and leadership in education. You have left me with big shoes to fill. You two are my foundation and my village.

Chapter One: Moving from a Problem to a Problem of Practice

Teacher attrition from the profession remains a pressing problem. Twenty-five percent of our country's teachers leave the profession after just one year of teaching (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). In high-poverty schools, teachers are 50% more likely to leave than in schools with low-poverty student populations (Eckert, 2013; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003). High-poverty, urban schools can be defined as schools located in or neighboring large cities in which at least 50% of the students are eligible for a free and reduced lunch (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). There are several reasons why teacher attrition is high in high-poverty urban schools . Reasons include lack of teacher preparation (Eckert, 2013; Tamir, 2009; Whipp & Geronime, 2015), lack of commitment to teaching in schools in large cities with a high number of low-income students (Freedman & Appleman; Knell & Castro, 2014; 2009; Whipp & Geronime, 2015), less qualified teachers are placed in high-poverty, urban schools (Eckert, 2013; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Wronowski, 2018), and job dissatisfaction (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001; Wronowski, 2018).

Social, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives on the Problem

High-poverty, urban schools have been researched to great depths regarding student achievement and teacher preparedness. Urban schools are more segregated than rural schools. Rural schools are both less segregated and have a high number of White students (Tieken, 2017). Urban high-poverty students are taught by more new, underprepared, and less experienced teachers. This contributes to the gap in achievement between Black and Latino students and White students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Jacob, 2007; Rose & Gallup, 2006; Veltri, 2008). High attrition rates in urban schools not only costs schools thousands of dollars for

each teacher who leaves the profession, but academically, continued attrition results in reduced education quality for students (Ingersoll, 2003; Rinke, 2011; Ware & Kitsantas, 2011).

There is an educational inequity rooted in geography (Tieken, 2017). Due to America's history of property rights, schools are funded by local property taxes and populated by local children. The relationship between property and educational opportunity is racialized due to our country's history of oppression. This history of power and oppression has ensured people of color remain property-poor and therefore are underserved in education (Donnor, 2012; Parsons & Turner, 2014; Tieken, 2017).

Social Perspectives

Teacher retention is considered desirable for several reasons, two of which include the financial benefits for school districts and the positive impact on student achievement (Rinke, 2011). Ware and Kitsantas (2011) estimated that teacher turnover costs the United States over seven billion dollars annually. Teacher attrition can cost school districts upwards of eight thousand dollars for each teacher who leaves the profession (Ingersoll, 2003; Rinke, 2011). Academically, low teacher retention rates can result in deficient education for students in urban schools. Lankford et al. (2002) wrote:

> Throughout the United States, nonurban students are 50% more likely to perform at a basic proficiency level than their urban peers. In high poverty settings, urban students reach basic proficiency half as often as their nonurban peers. In New York State, Urban students are four times more likely than their suburban peers to perform below basic proficiency. (p. 55)

Urban, low-income communities experience the most extreme turnover rates and suffer from acute staffing issues (Ingersoll, 2003; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Because high-poverty schools

often fill vacancies with underqualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000), minority students are instructed by those who are not prepared to teach.

Despite the multiple challenges presented in high-poverty urban schools, there are many reasons why teachers choose to stay in the profession (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Knell & Castro, 2014; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). Among these reasons are commitment and sense of mission to urban youth (Dee et al., 2006; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Henkin & Holliman, 2009; Knell & Castro, 2014), prior experience in an urban setting (Whipp & Geronime, 2015; Wronowski, 2018), and substantive preparation (Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Teacher attrition negatively affects students when they lose experienced teachers (Henkin & Holliman, 2009). In order to decrease attrition rates, it is essential to examine some of the reasons why teachers decide to stay within these settings.

Knell and Castro (2014) described the intrinsic and altruistic motivators for working in urban schools. Intrinsic motivators refer to inherent qualities of the profession, such as working with youth and inspiring them. The altruistic motivators refer to teaching as a socially valuable activity and describe teachers as having the desire to make a positive contribution to society and wanting to serve as a role model to youth. Tamir (2009) also referred to teachers having altruistic reasons for entering and staying in urban schools, such as the need to help and watch children grow and the notion of teaching as a vocation and an act of service.

Freedman and Appleman (2009) similarly discussed teachers' desire to make a positive impact on students, stating teachers' initial reason for entering the profession was the commitment to improve educational opportunities for urban youth. Whipp and Geronime (2015) discussed the term "urban commitment" defined as "pursuit of a teaching position in schools which are located in large cities with high numbers of low-income students" (p. 804). They

argued that teachers who express urban commitment tend to continue teaching longer and are more likely to be effective teachers. Whipp and Geronime wrote teachers who express strong and sustained commitment to teaching in urban schools are more likely to take their first teaching position in such schools and less likely to transfer to a school with fewer low-income students and more White students. Whipp and Geronime (2015) added that these teachers are less likely to discontinue teaching altogether. In addition to increasing retention, urban commitment can positively affect student motivation, achievement, and engagement (Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

Urban teachers having prior experience in urban settings has been linked to retention (Whipp & Geronime, 2015; Wronwoski, 2017). Whipp and Geronime found that teachers who attended a K-12 urban school were more likely to want to teach in an urban area. In addition to school attendance, cross-racial friendships, unpaid volunteer work in community organizations, and employment in multi-racial settings "before and adjacent to teacher preparation have been linked to multicultural awareness and sensitivity that is presumably needed by teachers who commit to and continue teaching in urban schools" (Whipp & Geronime, 2015, p. 803). Andrews (2009) found that students who tutored in an urban community organization made preservice teachers more motivated to teach in urban schools. Outside of community service and prior experiences before college, teacher preparation in higher education settings has been examined. Whipp and Geronime stressed the importance of placement of student teaching in a high-needs setting. They stated that such field placements were influential factors for students who went on to teach in high-poverty settings. They also found student teaching in school with more limited English proficiency students predicted increased preferences to work in underserved areas.

Cultural Perspectives

Multiple studies have been conducted focusing on school factors related to retention. Collectively, these studies have shown teachers tend to continue teaching in schools and school districts with a larger number of White students who perform well on standardized tests (Johnson, 2004; Rinke, 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). At schools with this demographic, the perception is that teachers will have access to adequate resources, and they will receive support from administrators and colleagues (Whipp & Geronime, 2015, Wronowski, 2018). Wronowski (2018) discussed the overall teacher shortage but stated that there is still a proportionally larger number of vacancies in urban, high-needs schools compared to their suburban counterparts. Eckert (2013) wrote that teachers who work in high-poverty, urban schools face many challenges including students coming from neighborhoods troubled with gang violence, high dropout rates, high pregnancy rates, and low scores on standardized tests (Gregory et al., 2010; Lankford et al., 2002; Niguera & Wells, 2011). These challenges are often related to the fact that the students are living in poverty (Eckert, 2013).

High-poverty urban schools often serve disadvantaged students, especially ethnic minorities, and are less likely to hire highly qualified teachers (Eckert, 2013; Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Many teachers make the choice to leave schools that serve students who are low-performing, poor, and non-White (Boyd et al., 2011). Of all public schools, those located in urban, low-income communities face higher turnover rates and are challenged with staffing problems (Ingersoll, 2003; Wronowski, 2018)**.** One study examined teachers who moved schools often went to a school with wealthier students (Johnson, 2004). Whipp and Geronime (2015) found that White teachers without previous urban experience or a background in teaching tended to have larger declines in commitment to teaching in urban schools. Often, high-poverty, non-

White, low-performing students are left with the least skilled-teachers, thus making it a challenge to staff urban schools with qualified teachers (Rinke, 2011, p. 640). Ronfeldt et al. (2013) showed that turnover has a harmful effect on students in mathematics and English. Additionally, this harmful effect is worse in schools with a higher number of African-American students (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Historical Perspectives

Racially segregated and unequal education has been an issue in both rural and urban locations since that late 1800's and early 1900's (Tieken, 2017). One of the leading factors was the flight of rural Black families that occurred after World War II. Post-war, residential developments emerged outside of cities nationwide (Jackson, 1987). These developments offered inexpensive options for home buying, specifically for White families. Tieken (2017) wrote, "Racial restrictions, lenders' discriminatory risk assessments, and realtors' biases ensure that Black families were kept out of the suburbs" (p. 392). Suburbs and small towns became spaces primarily for White families, and communities of color grew isolated in city centers (Aiken, 1985).

In 1974, the Supreme Court's *Milliken v. Bradley* decision prevented Detroit, MI, from drawing upon its neighboring suburban districts to achieve desegregation (Tieken, 2017). Tieken (2017) described this decision as giving districts:

> another tool for avoiding desegregation: by fragmenting large districts into smaller units, officials could rewrite district boundaries, allowing entire urban areas to maintain racially separate systems. More recently, courts decisions have frustrated voluntary desegregation efforts, and the reversal of desegregation court orders has released dozens of districts from pursuing desegregation. (p. 394)

Urban schools have experienced this segregation most blatantly. In city schools, Latino and

Black students have little contact with White students (Reardon, Yun, & Eitle, 2000). In the

2005-2006 school year, roughly two-thirds of Black and Latino students and one-third of Asian

students in major cities went to school where ten percent or less of the student body was White

(Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008). Rural schools are both less segregated and have a higher

population of White students than urban schools (Tieken, 2017).

Kozol (1991) discussed school conditions of an elementary school in the North Bronx

with principal, James Carter. Carter described his school saying, "Ideal class size for these kids

would be 15 to 20. Will these children ever get what White kids in the suburbs take for granted? I

don't think so. If you ask me why, I'd have to speak of race and social class" (Kozol, 1991, p.

108). Kozol continued on the topic of segregated schools by asking if White students and Black

students will every go to school together in New York. Carter replied, "I don't see it. I just don't

think it's going to happen. It's a dream" (p. 109). As Kozol and Carter sat in a room with broken

windows and holes in the ceiling covered by plastic garbage bags, Carter pointed to the

conditions and said, "This, would not happen to White children" (Kozol, 1991, p. 109).

Teachers who work in high-poverty, urban schools often encounter challenging situations

such as "students who are abused, members of gangs, have criminal records, are exposed to

rampant drug use and alcoholism at home, and generally live in conditions that middle class

Americans have no concept of" (Wronowski, 2018, p. 559). Additionally, students who attend

these schools suffer from disadvantages, such as lower funding, a lack of parental involvement,

and little academic preparation (Eckert, 2013). Tieken (2017) described urban segregated schools

as fundamentally and blatantly unequal to those of Whiter and wealthier children. Schools with a

higher population of Black and Latino students typically have higher poverty levels than schools

where the majority of students are White (Orfield, 2012). Urban schools face greater teacher

turnover, less qualified and experienced teachers, lower teacher salaries, less rigorous

coursework, and lower quality facilities and curricular materials (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2008).

The inequity between these schools has an overwhelming effect of students, such as higher drop-

out rates and lower college completion (Orfield, 2004). The results of this inequality is that it

sorts students into a social and economic underclass (Tieken, 2017).

Local Contextual Perspectives on the Problem

For the past eight years, I have worked in Lawrence, Massachusetts, at a public school

named UP Academy Leonard. Schueler et al. (2017) described Lawrence as a mid-sized

industrial city about 30 miles north of Boston and as one of Massachusetts's most economically-

disadvantaged communities. Almost 40% of the population in Lawrence is foreign born,

including many residents who came from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico (Schueler et

al., 2017). In May of 2012, the state of Massachusetts took over the Lawrence Public School

district due to a majority of schools chronically underperforming academically (Schueler, 2019).

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education took over the district by

exercising authority and appointing a receiver who was granted legal powers, including those

previously assigned to the Superintendent and School committee (Schueler et al., 2017).

Lawrence had been rated a Level 5 district, the lowest rating in the state's accountability system

(Schueler et al., 2017). Lawrence students are more likely to be low income and Hispanic, with

80% of students learning English as a second language (Schueler et al., 2017). The district's

student population consists of 93.4% who identify as Hispanic and 63.4% considered

economically-disadvantaged (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education, n.d.). Schoolwide, 69% of teachers are retained yearly compared to 72.1%

districtwide and 84.8% statewide. Based on this data, teachers who work within the district are

less likely to stay at their schools compared to other schools within the state. Selected

populations of students at this school are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

UP Academy Leonard Selected Populations

Title	% of School	% of District	% of State
First Language not English	82. 6	72.1	21.9
English Language Learners	39.9	35.9	10.5
Students with Disabilities	14.2	19.2	18.1
High Needs	91.0	84.4	47.6
Economically-disadvantaged	63.9	63.3	31.2

In January 2012, Massachusetts appointed Jeffrey Riley as the Receiver of the Lawrence

Public School district. He was given complete authority of the previous superintendent and

school Committee, as well as discretion to alter the bargaining agreement, extend the school day,

and require teachers to reapply for their positions (Scheuler et al., 2017). Riley did not require all

staff to reapply for their positions. However, through classroom observations and collecting data

on teachers deemed low performing based on student data, attendance, and principal reports,

eight percent of teachers were removed prior to complete turnaround (Schueler et al., 2017). Two

years of turnaround data were analyzed (Schueler et al., 2017), and one finding was that teacher

quality accounted for the change in student achievement.

The Candidate's Leadership Perspectives on the Problem

Working in high-poverty, urban schools comes with many challenges (Boyd et al. 2011;

Eckert, 2013; Ingersoll, 2003; Rinke, 2011; Ware & Kitsantas, 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015;

Wronowski, 2018). With continued teacher attrition, low student achievement, and minority

students receiving education from inexperienced teachers, there is an injustice that exists in America's urban schools (Kozol, 1991; Tieken, 2017). To approach the challenge of teaching in a high-poverty, urban school, the problem was examined with a lens of servant leadership.

Greenleaf (1970) defined servant leadership as:

The natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. (p. 15)

Northouse (2019) described a servant leader as one who has a social responsibility for the those less privileged. If inequalities and social injustices exist, a servant leader tries to eliminate them (Northouse, 2019). The literature reports low income students underperform on cognitive assessments in all subject areas compared to more affluent students (McKinney et al., 2008). However, research shows that effective educators can improve the academic outcomes of low-income students (McKinney et al., 2008). As a servant leader, I see an injustice and inequity in the education of high-poverty, urban students versus their affluent peers. In my experience working in high-poverty, urban schools, students are often behind academically and are instructed by teachers who are unqualified to be working with them. Every year in my career as an educator, there has been at least two teachers on staff who have not been formally trained in education. Administration often needs to fill empty positions because teachers have not renewed their contract and there is little desire to work in our district. Every child deserves a quality education, and the goal of my research is to move closer to eliminating the inequalities present in our current system.

Specific Problem of Practice

Machtinger (2007) described high poverty schools as below average in student

achievement and graduation rates. Studies indicate that because teacher demand is high and

supply of teachers is low, high-poverty, urban school districts have higher rates of teacher

attrition, deal with more pressing teacher shortages, and replace up to one-fifth of their entire

faculty each year (Ingersoll, 2003; Matchinger, 2007). This often leaves poor, non-White, low

performing students with the least skilled teachers (Dee et al., 2006; Lankford et al., 2002).

Teacher turnover results in a revolving door where inexperienced teachers are continually

replaced by other inexperienced teachers, and this results in decreased student academic

achievement (Rinke, 2011). There have been multiple studies on reasons why many novice

teachers leave the teaching profession in poor urban schools (Boyd et al., 2011; Chester &

Beaudin, 1996; Dee et al., 2006; Darling-Hammon, 2000; Eckert, 2013). However, little has been

done on why teachers remain in these settings and the factors that contribute to low attrition.

With a closer examination of the experience of being a teacher in Lawrence, MA, the goal is to

contribute to the research on teacher retention from a different lens. Through the process of

interviewing teachers, the goal is to collect and analyze reasons teachers stay in high-poverty,

urban schools and how empowerment influences that decision. To reach this goal, the focus will

be on these research questions:

RQ1: How do teachers seek and experience empowerment within your high-poverty,

urban school?

RQ2: How does empowerment increase the likelihood of retention?

Chapter Two: Review of Knowledge for Action

Review of the Literature: Theoretical Sources

Of all public schools, those located in urban, low-income communities face higher turnover rates and are challenged with staffing problems (Ingersoll, 2003; Wronowski, 2018). Ingersoll (2003) discussed school staffing problems, noting that the demand for qualified teachers is due to teachers leaving their jobs for reasons other than retirement. Ingersoll (2003) examined how limited faculty input into school decision-making is one reason associated with higher rates of turnover (p. 501). One way of increasing input is through examining teacher empowerment. Teacher empowerment can be increased in high-poverty, urban schools through teacher autonomy and self-efficacy (Boyd et al., 2011; Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Heck & Brandon, 2015; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Whipp & Geronime, 2015; Wronowski, 2018).

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process where people, organizations, and communities gain greater control over their lives and obtain rights (Rappaport, 1981, 1987; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) suggested ways to measure the construct of empowerment in different contexts to study processes that are empowering and to distinguish empowerment from other constructs. Zimmerman's theory of empowerment included both processes and outcomes (Swift & Levine, 1987, Zimmerman, 2000). The theorist suggested that actions, activities, and structures may be empowering, and the outcomes of such processes result in a level of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). Both empowerment processes and outcomes differ because no single standard can fully capture its meaning for people in all settings (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman (2000) described an example of a 16-year-old mother and a recently widowed middle-aged man. The behaviors necessary for these two people to become

empowered are different, thus making empowerment context and population specific

(Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment processes and outcomes are different and need to be

distinguished (East, 2001; Zimmerman, 1995, 2001).

Zimmerman (2000) described empowering processes as "ones in which attempts to gain

control, obtain needed resources, and critically understand one's social environment are

fundamental. The process is empowering if it helps people develop skills so they can be

independent problem-solvers and decision-makers" (p. 46). Empowered outcomes refer to

operational empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). However, empowered outcomes are

different depending on the analysis of empowered individuals, organizations, and community

(Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). Empowerment theory can be examined at the individual,

organizational, and community level (East, 2001; Peterson, 2014; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000).

Zimmerman (2000) outlined a comparison of the three levels as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

A Comparison of Empowering Processes and Empowered Outcomes Across Level of Analysis

Level of Analysis	Process ("empowering")	Outcome ("empowered")
Individual	Learning decision-making skills Managing resources Working with others	Sense of Control Critical awareness Participatory behaviors
Organizational	Opportunities to participate in decision-making Shared responsibilities Shared leadership	Effectively compete for resources Networking with other organizations Policy influence
Community	Access to resources Open government structure Tolerance for diversity	Organizational coalitions Pluralistic leadership Residents' participatory skills

(Zimmerman, 2000).

At the individual level, empowerment can be referred to as psychological empowerment (Zimmerman 1995, 2000). Psychological empowerment includes beliefs about one's competence, efforts to exert control, and an awareness of the socio-political environment (Zimmerman, 2000). This includes identifying those with power, their connection to the issue of concern, and the factors that influence their decision-making (Zimmerman, 2000). Psychological empowerment can be broken down into three areas: perceived control, citizen participation, and direct efforts to develop empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). Perceived control is the belief that one can influence outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) noted that outcomes can be achieving a goal or avoiding an undesirable situation. Perceived control is broken down into three domains: personality, cognitive, and motivational (Zimmerman, 2000). Citizen participation refers to participating in community groups. Through participation, one can exercise a sense of control and competence. Lastly, psychological empowerment is a combination of personal beliefs about control, involvement in activities to exert control, and a critical awareness of one's environment (Zimmerman, 2000).

When examining organizational empowerment, a distinction between empowered organizations and empowering organizations needs to be made (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) described the difference between empowering and empowered as "organizations that provide opportunities for people to gain control over their lives are empowering organizations. Organizations that successfully develop, influence policy decisions, or offer effective alternatives for service provision are empowered organizations" (p. 51). Empowered organizations flourish among competitors, meet goals, and develop to enhance effectiveness. An empowering organization may have a little influence on policy but offers members a chance to advance skills and a sense of control (Zimmerman, 2000). Organizations that have participatory decision-

making structures add opportunities for members to increase their psychological empowerment. Zimmerman (2000) stated, "An organization that provides opportunities for member participation is decision-making could be considered an empowering organization" (p. 52). Additional chances for decision-making in organizations suggest that participation leads to greater productivity and gratification (Zimmerman, 2000).

An empowered community is one that introduces efforts to improve the community, responds to threats to quality of life, and provides opportunities for resident participation (Zimmerman, 2000). The structure and relationships between community organizations and agencies also help to define the extent to which a community is empowered (Zimmerman, 2000). An empowered community has well-connected organizations that are considered both empowering and empowered. Additionally, there are places for involvement in activities such as crime prevention, planning commissions, and health care (Zimmerman, 2000). An empowering community also includes accessible resources for the community such as recreational facilities, protective services, and health and mental health care (Zimmerman, 2000).

The empowerment theory is a useful construct to help redefine roles as professionals and community collaborators. However, it is not a remedy for all problems, and it is not applicable in all contexts. Zimmerman's theory connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment and suggested that people need opportunities to become active in community decision-making in order to improve their lives, organizations, and communities (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman stated:

> individual participants may develop a sense of empowerment even if wrong decisions are
> made because they may develop a greater understanding of the decision-making process,

develop confidence to influence decisions that affect their lives, and work to make their

concerns known. (p. 58)

Self-efficacy

Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy is based on the assumption that psychological

procedures serve as revenues of producing and strengthening expectations of personal efficacy.

Within this analysis, efficacy expectations are "distinguished from response-outcome

expectancies" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Bandura (1997) defined outcome expectancy as a

person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is

the belief that one can successfully achieve the behavior necessary to produce the outcomes.

Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated because "individuals can believe that a

particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but if they entertain serious doubts

about whether they can perform the necessary activities such information does not influence their

behavior" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

Outcome expectations can be grouped into three forms. Within each form, positive

expectations act as incentives, and negative expectations act as disincentives (Bandura, 1997).

The first group of outcomes it the positive and negative physical effects of the accompany

behavior. The positive forms include sensory experiences, whereas the negative forms are

aversive sensory experiences such a pain and physical discomfort (Bandura, 1997). The second

class of outcomes is positive and negative social effects. The positive side includes expressions

of interest and approval. The negative side includes disinterest, disapproval, and social rejection

(Bandura, 1997). Lastly, the third outcome includes the positive and negative self-evaluative

reactions to one's own behavior. Self-efficacy theorists distinguish degrees of control by

personal means.

Autonomy

Autonomy is used broadly and is equivalent to other terms such as liberty and self-rule (Dworkin, 2015). It is equated with integrity, independence, and individuality (Dworkin, 2015). One feature held constant from one author to another is that autonomy is a desirable quality (Dworkin, 2015; Eckstrom, 1993). Ekstrom described autonomy as being self-governed. To act autonomously is to act on one's own reasons (Eckstrom, 1993). Dworkin stated, "The central idea that underlies the concept of autonomy is indicated by the etymology of the term: autos(self) and nomos (rule or law)" (p. 11). The concept of self and what determines this definition is necessary to understand the construct of autonomy. Eckstrom defined the self as "a particular character together with the power for fashioning and refashioning that character" (p. 600). There is a natural extension to persons being autonomous when decisions and actions are their own (Dworkin, 2015). Dworkin believed that autonomy functions as a moral, political, and social ideal.

Politically, autonomy is used as a basis to dispute against the design and functioning of political institutions that attempt to impose a set of ends, values, and attitudes on society (Dworkin, 2015). This imposition could be based on theological views, visions of a good society, or the importance of attaining excellence along some dimension of human achievement (Dworkin, 2015). Autonomy is used to oppose perfectionist or paternalistic views (Dworkin, 2015).

<div align="center">

Review of the Educational Research Literature: Empirical Sources

</div>

There are several empirical studies on teacher empowerment, self-efficacy, and autonomy and the literature varies on specific definitions of these terms. Studies on teacher empowerment show positive effects of organizations, institutions, and schools (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Dee

et al., 2006; Marks & Louis, 1997; Wronowski, 2018). Ladd (2011) defined teacher

empowerment as "a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge

of their own growth and resolve their own problems" (p. 238). This definition closely aligns with

the theory of empowerment and gaining control over a person's life and rights (Zimmerman,

1995, 2000). Empowerment, autonomy, and self-efficacy have shown the positive effects on

teachers and retention in high-poverty, urban schools.

Teacher Empowerment

Studies on teacher empowerment reveal the effects on organizations, institutions, and

schools (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Dee et al., 2006; Marks & Louis, 1997; Wronowski, 2018).

Ingersoll (2003) discussed how limited faculty input into school decision-making is one factor

that leads to higher turnover. One way of increasing input is through examining teacher

empowerment. However, teacher empowerment can also come with some setbacks. At times,

empowerment can make teachers feel isolated as well as detracting from instruction if teachers

are not prepared to take on added responsibilities (Chester & Beaudin, 1996, Dee et al., 2006;

Marks & Louis, 1997).

Individual empowerment creates a collaborative culture among teachers and increases the

quality of student learning (Heck & Brandon, 1995; White, 1992; Wronowski, 2018). Marks and

Louis (1997) discussed the construct of teacher empowerment as an essential element for

building an intellectually focused school culture that focuses on teaching and learning. Marks

and Louis were uncertain if teacher empowerment made an impact on student achievement.

However, through analysis of a questionnaire, they were able to support the idea that faculty

empowerment resulted in greater schoolwide attention to instruction and student learning.

Ladd (2011) studied teacher working conditions in North Carolina using surveys to determine the "extent to which teachers' perceptions of their working conditions are predictive of their independent departures from schools, dependent of other factors that may also predict departure, including the racial or socioeconomic mix of the school's students" (p. 235). This survey used the term *teacher empowerment* to refer to a number of questions about the degree to which teachers contribute to educational planning, spending, and hiring decisions. Findings from this study showed the importance of school leadership. Educators want to participate in schoolwide decision-making (Ingersoll, 2003; White, 1992; Wronowski, 2018). Support of teachers, including sharing a vision, creating a trusting environment, and participating in shared decision-making, showed teachers are less likely to plan to leave or actually leave the school (Ladd, 2011). Wronowski also found that school leadership is an important component in teachers feeling empowered. However, Wronowski discussed two further ways of increasing empowerment: limiting outside influences in schools and increasing teacher voice. Examples were reviewed in which teachers believed they were not heard at any level, including school, district, state, or national (Wronowski, 2018). Additionally, Wronowski spoke about teachers lacking control over professional development and the frustration that is felt as a result. After interviews with participants, Wronowski characterized them as feeling voiceless within their schools and powerless to create any meaningful change.

Along with increased decision-making and supportive administration, teachers need personal growth within their field (Boyd et al., 2011; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Wronowski, 2018). Boyd et al. found teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they have the opportunity to contribute to schoolwide decisions on issues such as materials, scheduling, and professional development programs. Likewise, Wronowski pointed out teachers lacking control

over professional development and the resulting frustration. In a qualitative study of eight

teachers, Wronowski found all participants feeling voiceless and being unable to provide input or

feedback to administration. Through this study, teachers expressed frustration with the lack of

power over decisions on development programs that are added and changed from year-to-year

(Wronowski, 2018). Teachers felt disenfranchised and no longer empowered as professionals.

Teachers could be more empowered as individuals if they could participate in collaborative

learning, which is difficult to obtain when teacher voices are limited. When teachers are unable

to participate in the selection of professional development opportunities, teacher empowerment is

negatively affected (Wronowski, 2018).

In some cases of teacher empowerment, there are disadvantages. Empowerment

involving decision-making can cause conflict among staff, and at times, staff without enough

experience or expertise can detract from instruction (Marks & Louis, 1997). Kruse and Louis

(1997) discovered teacher empowerment through teams can limit openings for cross-team

communication, which can also lead to tension on staff. Additionally, Pugh and Zhao (2003)

found that teachers can feel secluded when their feelings of empowerment were undermined by

administration. Kanter (1983) warned against empowerment in the form of decision-making used

as a control mechanism. Marks and Louis (1997) stated:

> Managers may involve workers in a minimal way-for example, in consultation on a
>
> predetermined course of action or in implementing policies that were formulated at a
>
> higher level. While strategies of nominal participation pay lip service to worker
>
> involvement, they aim at inducing worker compliance. (p. 246)

Teacher empowerment comes with its challenges. If efforts to create opportunities for

empowerment are disingenuous, teachers can become cynical and disheartened (Kanter, 1983).

Self-efficacy

Teaching self-efficacy is an important characteristic that can be associated with predicting retention, teacher performance, and student outcomes. Though self-efficacy and retention are both characteristics influenced by a number of elements, there is an empirical relationship between high self-efficacy and a willingness to continue teaching (Creasey et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Eckert, 2013; Ware & Kitsantas, 2011). Whipp and Geromonime (2015) noted the importance of teacher efficacy in predicting the choice to teach, as well as the choice to continue teaching in urban schools specifically. Chester and Beaudin (1996) described self-efficacy when discussing teachers as "beliefs about confidence to affect students' performance and about confidence to perform specific tasks as well as beliefs about the causes of teachers' or students' performance" (p. 236). However, Eckert defined teacher efficacy as "a teacher's cognitions (perceptions) related to his or her capacity as a teacher and preparedness" (p. 77). Regardless of the multiple definitions, researchers have found self-efficacy to be an important construct when examining teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools.

Teachers who have strong self-efficacy have been described as able to promote learning, collaborate with other teachers and families, and effective at managing their classrooms (Ware & Kitsantas, 2011). Gibson and Dembo (1984) predicted that teachers who believed student learning can be influenced by effective teaching, and who also have confidence in their instruction, should have longer perseverance and stronger academic focus than teachers who have lower expectations concerning their ability to impact student learning. The relationship between self-efficacy, academic focus, and feedback behaviors were examined, and Gibson and Dembo found that teachers with high efficacy engaged in practices connected to high student achievement gains. Chester and Beaudin (1996) examined teacher efficacy beliefs in a teacher's

first year in an urban setting. Noting that efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward teaching occur

during the first year, Chester and Beaudin emphasized the importance of understanding factors

that enhance or weaken novice teachers' self-efficacy in urban schools to create a foundation for

examining teacher retention. Likewise, Creasey et al. (2016) discussed the obstacles facing first-

year urban teachers and studied teachers while they were in pre-service training with the

intention of helping teachers manage classroom challenges and encouraging them to stay in the

profession. Developing self-efficacy to positively affect urban students could be difficult to

achieve during pre-service training because repeated experience empowers self-efficacy

(Bandura, 1997; Creasey et al., 2016), and pre-service training does not provide the repetition

needed in a short amount of time. Creasey et al. noted the barriers related to urban teaching self-

efficacy were somewhat different from those associated with teachers' intentions to work in

urban communities. By and large, barriers concerning inadequate training in urban education

were related to lower self-efficacy.

Autonomy

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) believed that if teachers are to be empowered as

professionals, then, like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best

treatment for their students as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients. This freedom

has been defined as teacher autonomy. Autonomy in this sense is described as teachers

perceiving that they control themselves and their work environment. Pearson and Moomaw

(2005) discussed the relationship between teacher autonomy, stress, work satisfaction,

empowerment, and professionalism. They believed that in order for teachers to be empowered

and treated as professionals, they need to have freedom and flexibility in their decision-making

regarding their classrooms and students. Teachers will be more satisfied in their positions and are

more likely to stay within their field if they have autonomy in their classrooms (Boyd et al., 2011, Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Pearson and Moomaw found that as teacher autonomy increases, teacher empowerment also increases. Additionally, as perceived empowerment and professionalism increase, on-the-job stress decreased (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

Dee et al. (2006) suggested that schools with greater levels of empowerment, communication, and autonomy will show more commitment to their organization. Boyd et al. (2011) found that teachers who had autonomy in their classrooms and could influence school policies appeared to have greater satisfaction with their work. Furthermore, Boyd et al. administered a survey that concluded that teachers believed they had the most autonomy in determining the amount of homework assigned and the least in selecting course texts and other instructional materials.

However, Willner (1990) believed that autonomy needs to go beyond the classroom. Autonomy can be easily observed in settings where teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with administrators and assist in decision-making concerning curriculum and scheduling. Additionally, teachers are more likely to stay employed in schools where they have the opportunity to contribute to schoolwide decisions such as choice of materials, scheduling, and choice of professional development programs (Boyd et al., 2011; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) believed that teachers perceived a greater sense of professional autonomy when traditional bureaucratic governance models do not exist, and they have more authority in the instructional process. White (1992) studied decentralized schools and the relationship between how authority is allocated and the impact on teachers. In this study, teachers were provided more freedom to give input on schoolwide decisions, such as budgetary, curriculum, and staffing decisions. Ninety-two percent of teachers indicated they were satisfied

with the amount of influence they were able to provide on school decision-making. This was an opportunity to voice concerns, and teachers believed they had more input, influence, and autonomy to make school decisions. White's (1992) study found teacher participation in schoolwide decision-making improved teacher morale, provided teachers space to collaborate with one another, improved working relationships between teachers and administrators, increased student motivation, and improved recruitment and retention of quality teachers.

Three findings from this study indicated the importance of including teachers in decision-making and providing them with the autonomy and flexibility to include input and influence. The first was increased decision-making raised teachers' interest in teaching. Second, increased decision-making reduced teacher isolation. Lastly, increased decision-making raised teachers sense of self-esteem both in their jobs and their personal lives. This study underscores the importance of providing teachers with autonomy to contribute to schoolwide decisions not only in curriculum but in other areas as well.

Though much of the literature describes an encouragement of teachers having autonomy over various aspects of their career, what can appear like autonomy to one teacher may seem like isolation to another (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; White, 1992). One teacher may view autonomy as a means to gain freedom from restriction or supervision from administration. A different teacher may view it as an opportunity to develop collegial relationships and accomplish tasks that extend beyond the classroom. While some teachers flourish on autonomy, others may view it as a way for leadership to avoid their duties and responsibilities (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). Willner (1990) noted that autonomy does not mean teachers should be alienated. Specifically, teachers who are isolated in a classroom without collaboration with colleagues or significant feedback is not the intended spirit of autonomy (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). Teachers have the

need to control their work environment and to have decision-making authority. Although there

are many reasons teachers have for leaving their jobs, autonomy, or lack thereof, seems to be a

critical factor in the motivation of teachers to stay or leave the profession (Boyd et al., 2011;

Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; White, 1992).

<center>**Data from Relevant Stakeholders**</center>

Teachers who work in schools serving high-poverty, minority students in urban settings,

face a multitude of challenges. In addition to the challenges associated with educating students

living in poverty, the teachers in these schools are generally less experienced and have higher

rates of attrition (Ingersoll, 2004). Studies examining the benefits of teacher retention find that

increased teaching experience generally has a positive impact on student learning (Eckert, 2013).

Retaining teachers is especially challenging for schools in high-poverty, urban schools (Boyd et

al., 2007; Eckert, 2013; Ingersoll, 2001) Researchers have been unable to determine not only

how to best prepare teachers for the responsibilities of teaching and staying in high-poverty,

urban schools, but also how to gauge and evaluate incoming teacher qualifications (Levine,

2006; Matchinger, 2007). Eckert (2013) asserted that there is a need to investigate teacher quality

and preparation for working in high-poverty schools, noting that simply monitoring teacher

credentials is not enough. However, Eckert stated, "The federal definition of a 'qualified teacher'

is based almost entirely on the assumption that teachers holding certain credentials will be more

likely to ensure student success" (p. 77).

Aligning with Eckert's (2013) claim of teacher qualifications being limited to credentials,

the state of Massachusetts lacks information on retention and qualifications outside of licensure

and years spent within the state or district. In the 2018-2019 school year, Massachusetts retained

87.5% of its teachers (Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education,

n.d.). Out of the twenty-one high-poverty school districts, the average teacher retention was

82.2% (DESE). In the district of Lawrence, Massachusetts, 74.2% of teachers were retained in

the 2018-2019 school year. The state of Massachusetts distinguishes teacher qualifications as

experience (teaching within the state for three years) and licensure (DESE). In Massachusetts,

97.2% of teachers are licensed, and 81.7% of teachers are experienced (DESE). Within the

district of Lawrence, 92.1% of teachers are licensed and 61.8% of teachers are experienced

(DESE). At my current school, 88.5% of teachers are licensed and 53.8% of teachers are

experienced (DESE). Though these numbers demonstrate licensure, experience, and rates of

retention, little can be found on the factors leading to retention within the state.

Measures taken within schools to empower teachers, provide autonomy, and increase

self-efficacy are limited. Although the importance of teachers' sense of efficacy has been

identified, researchers are not certain how to conceptualize and measure the construct (Gibson &

Dembo, 1984). In a survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics (1994), trends in

teachers' views of teaching, plans to stay, and job satisfaction were analyzed. Table 3 illustrates

teachers' who had planned to stay based on how they viewed their environments.

Table 3

Teachers' Who Had Planned to Stay Based on Factors in the School Environment

Environment Factors	Teacher Perceptions of Resource Availability	% of Teachers Who Plan to Stay
Faculty cooperation in school	High	43.4
	Low	30.0
Administrative support in school	High	40.0
	Low	29.4
Teacher influence on teacher evaluation	High	40.0
	Low	32.3

Teacher influence over budget	High	38.1
	Low	31.9
Teacher influence on school discipline in classroom	High	37.9
	Low	29.7
Student interest and involvement	High	34.7
	Low	25.8
Students' respect for teachers	High	34.2
	Low	25.3
Teacher control over teaching techniques	High	33.4
	Low	26.8

Source: National Center for Education Statistics survey, 1993-1994, public school teacher questionnaire, p. 53, as cited in National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997, p. 23

Through analysis of the percent of teachers who planned to stay within their schools, it is interesting to note teachers who perceived that they had low levels of control over discipline in their classroom are the smallest number of teacher who planned to stay. The words "influence" and "control" are repeated several times in the survey results on teachers' perceptions on their schools. Control and influence are also words that are used when discussing empowerment and autonomy. Despite teachers' need for empowerment, efficacy, and autonomy within their practice, much of the public data are focused on credentials. Studying how teachers perceive being empowered within their schools could increase retention in high-poverty, urban schools.

Summary

When working in high-poverty, urban schools, teachers are faced with many challenges, including larger enrollment than suburban schools, low-income and low-achieving students, unqualified teachers, fewer instructional resources, and less control over curriculum (Dee et al., 2006; Stotko et al., 2007; Whipp & Geronime, 2015; Wronowski, 2018). Teachers are more likely to leave high-poverty, urban schools within the first five years of their career due to

several reasons (Boyd et al., 2011; Dee et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2003; Whipp & Geronime, 2015; Wronowski, 2018). Among those, lack of empowerment, low self-efficacy, and limited autonomy all contribute to attrition. Within the constructs of empowerment, efficacy, and autonomy, the ideas of control, influence, freedom, input, and decision-making continue to arise when discussing teachers and their retention within high-poverty, urban schools. Though there are many reasons for low teacher retention within these settings, after analysis of the literature, it seems likely that through increased empowerment and autonomy, the result could be higher teacher efficacy, which could lead to higher retention. By increasing these three constructs, teachers might be more likely to stay in high-poverty, urban schools. Students in these settings need to receive education from qualified teachers who perceive being empowered to do their jobs well. Upon completion of this study, findings will positively contribute to increased teacher retention and quality education for high-poverty, urban students.

Chapter Three: Methods and Design for Action

Study Purpose and Design

The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers seek and experience empowerment within their high-poverty, urban school and how empowerment increases the likelihood of retention. A qualitative, grounded theory was used. Qualitative research allows the researcher to learn about the personal experiences of participants and to determine meanings through culture. The purpose of this type of study is to generate or discover a theory for a process or an action (Creswell, 2013). Grounded theory allows the researcher the opportunity to learn about teachers' experiences of empowerment. The use of grounded theory allows the researcher the opportunity to discover the experiences of participants, to determine meanings, and to connect at a human level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To answer the research questions, how does one seek and experience empowerment in a high-poverty, urban school, and how does empowerment increase the likelihood of retention, the researcher interviewed teachers from the Lawrence, Massachusetts school district. Through interviews, perspectives of the participants could be understood, which contributed to the development of empirical knowledge. The aim was to understand how teachers seek and experience empowerment in their high-poverty, urban school and how that contributes to retention.

Interview questions were formed around gaining knowledge and understanding of how teachers in Lawrence, Massachusetts experience the process of being empowered as teachers within their high-poverty, urban school. The study was grounded in data from participants in district schools (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative interviews were conducted to allow the participants to speak to their experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants and Data Sources

Participants in this study were selected from public schools in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Purposeful sampling was the method for choosing those who participated in interviews. In grounded theory, the researcher selects those who can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2013). Information on the interview process was distributed to all schools within the district. The district consisted of five charter schools, five private schools, and 25 public schools. Within all of those schools, there were 19 elementary schools, ten middle schools, five high schools, and one kindergarten through twelfth grade school (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Letters of recruitment were sent to all 35 schools with the intention of receiving an even distribution among elementary and secondary teachers.

Lawrence is one of the most impoverished cities in Massachusetts, with 63.4% of its student population classifying as economically-disadvantaged (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). Educators who teach in this district work with the targeted population in a setting that fits the description of high-poverty and urban. Teachers who work in Lawrence can speak to their experience working in these settings. In grounded theory research, the number of participants recommended is 20-30 (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There were 24 interviews for this project. Qualitative interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis and participants' were kept confidential. For the purpose of this study, interviews were the sole data source. Participants were asked open-ended questions to elicit their views and opinions (Corbin& Strauss, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection and Specific Practices

To begin the data collection process, the researcher obtained necessary permissions. IRB approval for the study was granted. I then filled out a research proposal form for the district, which received approval from individuals of authority. Access to sites and study participants was then granted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Individuals of authority in this particular study were the Lawrence Public Schools Assistant Superintendent, the Superintendent, and the principal of the site under study. After receiving permission, interviews with teachers from the district took place. Interview participants received letters of consent, which included the following information: the purpose of the study, the procedures used to collect data, the right to withdraw from the study at any time, the protection and confidentiality of participants, the known risks, the expected benefits, and the signatures of both the participant and researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Participants were invited to participate in a virtual interview through the use of a Zoom conference call. I included the possibility of follow-up emails to obtain more information if necessary. Interviews took place at a time that was convenient for the participants. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes. Questions were centered around the constructs of empowerment, self-efficacy, and autonomy, and the research question, how do teachers seek and experience empowerment within your school? Participants were asked about their experience as an educator and what steps are taken to empower teachers. If a participant brought up another topic outside of the predetermined interview questions that proved to be important to the study, I followed through on that topic in an email after the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

With permission from the participants, interviews were recorded via Zoom and later transcribed for analysis. Additionally, I took notes during the interview in the event recording equipment failed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Transcribed interviews were saved using

numbers or pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. To ensure verifiability, I repeated the

process of listening to the interviews and ensuring accuracy in the transcripts. Interview data are

kept on a USB flash drive that requires a password to access to maintain the confidentiality of

participants. Materials such as field notes, printed transcriptions, and the USB flash drive are all

kept in a locked safe located in my home office.

Data were gathered until reaching the point of saturation. Saturation was apparent when

no new categories or significant information emerged from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018;

Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Emails were sent to participants to ensure clarity on themes that

emerged from interviews. Data saturation occurred when each category and theme were explored

in depth by identifying various properties and dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Data Analysis and Evaluation

After participant interviews were transcribed, analysis of data took place through the

process of coding. Saldana (2009) defined a code as "most often a word or short phrase that

symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a

portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). The language-based data used for analysis in

this study was interview transcripts. Coding breaks data apart and groups concepts together that

define areas of data that qualify in terms of categories or themes. Categories of information were

formed based on participant data (Corbin & Strauss, 2013). Within each category are

subcategories that reveal a variety of dimensions.

During coding, I reflected through the use of memos and conceptualized the meaning of

the data. Memos served as written records and a critical component of the data analysis (Corbin

& Strauss, 2008). Memos began with the first analytic session and continued throughout the

entire analysis process. Memos moved the analysis forward and were equally important as the

research itself (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Though a list of concepts and a log of memos were

kept, I needed to take time to think about the data and write memos to maintain the ideas and

understanding that came from analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)**.**

        After the initial phase of coding, I participated in the process of axial coding, which

relates concepts to one another (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Axial coding is fitting for studies using

grounded theory methodology. Grouping similarly coded data decreases the number of codes

developed in the first phase of coding (Saldana, 2009). Through axial coding, I made

connections between data sets and continued to use memos as a tool for reflection. Information

from the axial coding phase was organized into a figure, called a *coding paradigm* that presents a

theoretical model of the process under study (Creswell, 2013).

        Lastly, I interpreted the meaning of the themes and categories through integration as a

final step of analysis. Through integration, categories around a core category, or the main theme

of the research, were linked (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Triangulation was then used to create

verifiability and credibility within the study. Triangulation examines evidence from sources to

justify themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through use of qualitative interviews, participant

checks, and expert checks, the data will be triangulated to add credibility to the study.

Limitations

        Limitations to the study include personal bias and investment in the study, proximity to

participants' school district, and the sensitivity of conducting research with human subjects.

Based on my experience teaching in Lawrence, Massachusetts, I may have had preconceived

notions of data results from participants and interviews. Experience working in similar schools

may have caused me to lean toward certain themes and to look for evidence that supported my

position (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, I am employed as a teacher in the same

district as participants. When conducting data analysis, it was essential to remain data-driven and focused on what was in the transcripts. Going into the study, I had a bias based on working in similar settings and had preconceived ideas about teacher empowerment. Though professional experience can increase researcher sensitivity, it can also prevent the researcher from reading data correctly (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I needed to remain focused on the data to prevent imposing concepts onto the data due to familiarity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Summary

Through conducting a qualitative, grounded theory study, the researcher intended to learn more about teachers' experiences with empowerment and how it is sought within their high-poverty, urban schools. Based on constructs discovered in the literature, I conducted interviews with participants on topics revolving around empowerment, autonomy, self-efficacy, and retention. A qualitative approach allow for gaining perspectives from a group of urban teachers who work in similar settings to address the research problem. The desired outcome of the study was to create a theory that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge based on empowerment and retention in high-poverty, urban schools.(Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Recommended Actions

Discussions of the Findings

When seeking approval from this district for access to sites and participants, individuals in authority minimized the number of schools that could be sampled. The original intention to recruit participants from all 35 schools within the Lawrence, Massachusetts, district was reduced to two schools. These schools are unique to others in the district due to their partnership with an educational management organization, the UP Education Network, based out of Boston. Both schools were part of the 2012 state takeover and were selected to be managed by independent operators due to their low achieving status. The two schools continue to partner with the UP Education Network.

School principals received letters of recruitment to distribute to teachers through their work emails. After receiving the letter of invitation, 24 teachers gave consent to participate in the study. Interviews lasted between 20-25 minutes. However, there was one shorter interview that took only nine minutes and one that lasted 42 minutes. All interviews were conducted using the virtual conference tool, Zoom, and were recorded for transcription. I took notes during the interviews to have written data as a backup precaution in case of a technological breakdown.

Participants

To create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I started the interview process by asking participants to describe their school, how long they had been teaching at their current school, and how many years they had been in education overall. See Table 4 for participant experience. Participants were then asked to compare their current experience as a teacher with prior experience. Describing current school experience allowed

participants to smoothly transition into the rest of the interview questions, which were based

around the constructs of empowerment, autonomy, and self-efficacy.

Table 4

Participant Teaching Experience

Teacher	Network experience	Prior experience	Years total in education
1	7 years	2 years	9 years
2	7 years	2 years	9 years
3	1 year	0 years	1 year
4	7 years	8 years	15 years
5	5 years	1 year	6 years
6	2 years	5 years	9 years
7	8 years	0 years	8 years
8	7 years	5 years	12 years
9	1 year	6 years	10 years
10	4 years	8 years	12 years
11	2 years	1 year	3 years
12	6 years	0 years	6 years
13	3 years	0 years	3 years
14	6 years	1 year	7 years
15	3 years	0 years	3 years
16	6 years	1 year	7 years
17	4 years	3 years	7 years
18	3 years	0 years	3 years
19	1 year	1 year	2 years
20	6 years	0 years	6 years
21	2 years	0 years	2 years
22	1 year	1 year	2 years
23	3 years	5 years	8 years
24	5 years	1 year	6 years

Note: Three teachers in the list above had a break in their time at the UP Education Network.
They taught within the network, went to another school, and made the choice to return.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, Saldana's (2009) cycles of coding was used. To begin the analysis

process, interviews were transcribed and underwent two rounds of listening and reading

participants' responses to check for accuracy. After transcribing and checking for accuracy, the

data were coded for categories and themes.

Coding

Saldana (2009) recommended both memo writing and detailed line-by-line coding in the first phase of analysis. After multiple rounds of listening to and checking participants' responses to questions, several memos capturing thoughts and reflections from the interviews were written. I read through each interview in the initial coding phase underlining pieces of data that had the potential to be used as concepts later in the analysis process. Appendix F shows an extensive list of categories that emerged from the initial coding process.

After breaking down transcripts into initial codes, I looked for similarities and differences. Trends emerged within each interview question that were supported by multiple categories. In every interview question, there were responses that were repeated at least twice, indicating a similarity in participant responses that led to a category. Reflecting on individual interview questions and participant responses helped to shift into the second cycle of coding—axial coding.

Through the second cycle of coding, I reassembled data from initial coding to create subcategories in axial coding (Saldana, 2009. Trends emerged within each interview question that were supported by multiple categories. In every interview question, there were responses that were repeated at least twice, indicating a similarity in participant response that led to an axial code. Similar coded data were grouped together to create conceptual categories while also reducing the number of initial codes. Table 5 shows the axial codes.

Table 5

Axial Codes

Colleague support	Multiple platforms for input	Relatively little freedom
Feedback and coaching	Feedback heard but not	Pragmatic method of teaching
Observations	considered	Freedom varies on subject
Continual growth	Administration wants	Freedom varies on level of
Differentiated coaching	feedback and input	experience
Administration support	Teamwork	Freedom depends on time of
Systemic limitations	New and inexperienced	year
Administration can't say yes	Involvement depends on	Open administration
to everyone	personal levels	Peer encouragement
Administration involves	Teacher leadership team	Teacher leader
when they can	Administration gives person	encouragement
Salary	encouragement	Need to address all student
Behavior system	Less focus on testing	needs
Lack of recognition of where	Challenge to be a new teacher	Continued career growth
we are as a staff	Seek out staff of color	More curricular autonomy
Continued career growth	Packed school days	and creativity
Continues systematic growth		

After reducing the amount of initial data and creating a list of axial codes, I communicated with participants through email, inviting them to give feedback on the data to ensure there were no misunderstandings or lingering questions. Six out of the 24 participants responded within the one-week deadline provided. The six participants who responded affirmed the list of axial codes, noting that it was comprehensive and aligned with what they were trying to communicate when interviewed. Once participant checks were complete I reflected on connections between the axial codes and the research questions and found the following themes: (a) cohesive collaboration, (b) experience divide, (c) supportive and directive leadership, (d) systemic limitations and benefits, and (e) functions of autonomy and empowerment.

Themes

Participants described their current school as a turnaround, neighborhood, public school in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The student body was labeled as low-income students who were students of color, primarily from the Caribbean—specifically, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Participants noted many students are English Language Learners (ELLs); however, the exact percentage of students who labeled as ELL was unclear. When reflecting on the first question, which asked participants to describe their school, I noted in a memo:

> Teachers seem to be unclear on exactly what the UP Network is and how it functions in
> our schools and how they are run. Teachers have said many things about the UP schools
> and its relationship with the network. For instance, I have heard current schools are
> public and charter schools. Or, it's a public school but uses charter school practices.

Though teachers were aware of their turnaround status and the partnership with the UP Education Network, the exact details of these terms and relationships were not always clear to participants.

Cohesive Collaboration

Those who had prior teaching experience in other schools discussed the difference between their former school and their current school, emphasizing the perception of isolation and lack of support in their previous school. One participant described her former school as a "very different model because you had to work really hard to see other teachers and get time with them and feel like a team because it was a lot more segmented." In both schools where participants are currently employed, teachers described a unique setting where students remain in their homerooms and teachers go to the students. While comparing past and current experiences, a teacher noted:

> I actually used my classroom to isolate myself from other teachers which did not help me
> to be a better teacher. It did not help with my mental state and collaborative learning.
> Whereas now, we have one teacher office and I'm surrounded by teachers and I have the
> same schedule as all the other teachers in my department so there's always someone
> around. There's at least one person around and I never have to make a decision on my
> own which is really helpful. It's really nice to bounce ideas off of other people especially
> those who are experts in their content and teaching as well.

Relying on other teachers to make decisions and having a team readily available to support in curricular decisions contribute to teachers feeling positive about their ability to teach. One participant described a perception of cohesion among the staff due to less turnover than they observed in traditional public schools. This participant explained:

> It has allowed the school to feel more united and more positive and a lot more productive
> because it's just a strong bond you have with people and just allows you to work a lot
> more cohesively and have a cohesive vision and I think that helps me personally as an
> educator to thrive.

Another participant explained that teaching should not be done in isolation. The collaboration and community this participant experienced contributes to feeling successful as a teacher. They described their environment as a place where it is:

> Understood that teachers can't do their job in a vacuum. In an efficient school you've got
> people all rowing in the same direction and collaborating with each other and there's
> common shared values and understandings about how the school runs and I think that
> level of support has been invaluable.

The community of teachers has not only kept them in their schools, it has also attracted teachers to come work in these settings. One participant explained, "I chose it deliberately because I thought it was a school that had a really positive strong professional culture." They continued on noting, "It's this web, I think, of strong teachers. Strong experienced teachers who continually care about growth and continually care about kids and are going to be in the work together as a team."

Another teacher articulated having no central place for teachers at their previous school, as well as a lack of collaboration among teachers. This participant explained, "One of the reasons I switched to this school was because they put a lot of emphasis on comradery and people working together." Having the space, time, and encouragement to collaborate with other teachers has provided them with an upbeat environment to work in, as well as contributed to teachers feeling positive about their ability to teach.

Experience Divide

The contrast between experienced and inexperienced teachers continued to emerge in the interview process. Teachers described a disparity between the amount of freedom they have with curricular flexibility, whether they are involved in schoolwide initiatives, believing they are valued, and experiencing comfort in their school setting. Participants spoke to the challenges and advantages provided to teachers, depending on their experience and newness to the school.

Participants were asked about how they experienced freedom and flexibility in their school and what challenges they faced. Several teachers spoke to a curricular freedom and the distinction between being an experienced teacher or new to the current school setting. One teacher described their experience saying, "I think I am granted a lot of freedom and flexibility

and independence as a, at our school, a veteran teacher, opposed to new teachers who are given a

specific curriculum that they have to use." Another participant stated,

> I think it depends on the teacher. If there is a teacher that has been there for a long time, I
>
> have found that you know, in my year and a half there, those teachers have a strong voice
>
> and they get to share that with their coach.

One teacher who described the broad range of experience at their school acknowledged their

autonomy over their curriculum but believed new teachers needed the support of specific

curriculum explaining:

> I have complete autonomy over my curriculum. I have to account for what I do and my
>
> supervisor knows pretty intimately what I am doing in my class but all of the choices
>
> about curriculum and everything I do really are mine to make. Whereas, you will also see
>
> new teachers who are in their first or second year who are using scripted curricula who
>
> are given the resources they need to be successful given that nobody in their first year can
>
> really effectively do everything well. I think the idea is to give them supports in as many
>
> areas as possible to work with.

The divide between new and experienced teachers was described as a positive characteristic of

the school because it gives new teachers the supports they need to teach well. However, there

was also a concern that the difference might seem unfair. A participant noted:

> If you are a newer teacher and you have to go to more meetings, and you have more
>
> restrictions on what you can teach it can almost seem unfair. They might think, why is
>
> this teacher doing whatever they want and why are they teaching whatever they want. I
>
> think it can cause some problems or lack of understanding.

Teachers referenced coaching as an element of flexibility and freedom. One of the administrative elements provided to support teachers was observations by a dean of curriculum, followed up by a coaching session. Teachers described coaching as flexible depending on the strength and tenure of the teacher. Relationships between teachers and coaches were discussed with the theme of an experience divide—specifically, experienced teachers believing their relationship was a thought partnership while new teachers believed the coaching was more directive and mandatory. A teacher described their coaching experience as "a thought partnership and trusting my judgement as a professional. I think that type of coaching is really useful and really works really well for teachers who have had several years under their belt and have shown results." Whereas, a different participant spoke about the challenges of flexibility:

> I think again, the experience. If a teacher really doesn't understand what they need to be teaching, there's little freedom. I don't want to say lack of trust but I think that it's better to say 'here take this curriculum as a guide' instead of figure it out on your own. And I think that goes hand in hand with the coaching piece. You are constantly doing a check in with someone above you so the freedom only goes so much when there's someone checking on you and guiding you.

In addition to curricular differences with this experience divide, newer teachers touched on being involved in schoolwide initiatives and giving input in staff discussions. One participant described ample opportunity to get involved with schoolwide decision-making and initiatives but did not want to have too many responsibilities so they opted for minimal involvement. One teacher believed they were unheard and said, "I feel like new staff, especially staff that don't usually speak up, I feel like we don't get encouraged a lot." Later in the interview they brought up:

I just feel that the staff that has been there the longest time, they feel more, it is easier for

them to just speak up and try to find solutions to whatever problem we are trying to fix

because they have more experience with our system and the network. I feel like new staff

may find themselves overwhelmed with all the new things they have to learn and the new

system and I wonder if that's why it's hard for us to speak up and get new points on the

table.

Similarly, a participant expressed the need to be comfortable in order to speak up in staff

discussions and pointed out that the same teachers always speak first in all staff discussions.

They said,

Sharing any ideas I do have is definitely nerve wracking, especially thinking about the

beginning of the year when you have these amazing teachers who have had all this

experience, what does little me have to say that could even compare?

Some teachers who have been in the school for more than three years reflected on the difficulty

of adjusting to the school at the beginning of their experience. One participant described, "There

is definitely a learning curve in the beginning which I think can make difficulties for new

teachers. I'm much happier mow than I was a year and a half ago." Another teacher discussed

different elements of the school they needed to learn before feeling comfortable at work:

I had to figure out the behavior system before I could feel comfortable building a

curriculum, before I could feel comfortable being flexible with a curriculum, and I think

as a first year teacher doing that brand new, it was a super hard struggle for me and for

most people I've talked to coming into the school as a newbie and doing all those things.

While being a new staff member comes with its challenges, those who have been at the school and consider themselves veteran teachers believed they were valued and empowered due to their tenure and the autonomy that comes with it.

Supportive Directive Leadership

The leadership team at the two schools has a unique model in that teachers have a direct relationship with a dean of curriculum as opposed to solely a principal. The deans were referred to using multiple descriptive words including direct supervisor, leadership, manager, and coach. Administration at the two schools were discussed positively in interviews with participants noting that they believed they were supported by their leaders in their instruction and growth as professionals. Teachers discussed the many ways administration looks for input on schoolwide decisions. However, though multiple outlets to provide feedback are present, input is not always considered in final decision-making. Teachers believed they were encouraged to participate in schoolwide initiatives, but there is recognition that some items are not up for debate.

Participants referenced their relationship with their deans as one of the reasons they feel positive about their ability to teach. Deans complete regular observations of teachers and provide feedback to increase instructional skills and student achievement. One teacher described the constant feedback they receive after an observation from their dean:

> When you don't have that constant feedback you could be doing something great and no one notices so it's great in both senses. You know what needs to be fixed but also knowing that you're doing some things well because you can't always tell from your own perspective if something is working or not.

Receiving feedback from leadership has helped teachers to feel like valued members of the team and to believe that they are doing their jobs successfully. A participant noted:

I know in past years I didn't always feel valued and I was constantly doubting myself and

wondering if I was doing the right thing or teaching the way I was supposed to. The

support I have received in the past year has made me feel as though I can do my job and

can do it really well.

Leadership support and feedback has helped teachers to be confident in their instruction as well

as believe that they are valued as faculty. Additionally, teachers appreciate the professional

growth they have accomplished through coaching. Several teachers described experiencing

growth in their instructional skills because of manager observations, feedback, and meetings

discussing classes. Furthermore, participants noted that if they believed they were plateauing or

stagnating in their career, that would give them reason to consider leaving their current school.

Participants described the numerous platforms they use to provide input on schoolwide

decisions. Options such as weekly surveys, the Teacher Leadership Team (TLT), one-on-one

check-ins with managers, and all staff discussions during faculty meetings were mentioned

several times. Despite the various avenues available for teachers to provide input, participants

described the leadership team as a group that listens to all teachers but inevitably makes the final

decision. One participant said:

I don't want to frame it as a total democracy, I think administration makes decisions for

the benefit of the school and that's their job but I think whenever possible the staff is

consulted and there are different avenues for that.

Another teacher supported the idea of input being welcomed and heard but stated that some

issues are not up for debate and that asking for feedback is more of a formality. They said:

I will say, I think in an attempt to really want to include teachers in that decision-making

process, I don't always see the follow through. So I feel like we are asked a lot, maybe

more than necessary, for our feedback and our opinions, but, then it feels like decisions

are made at an admin level and I sometimes feel as though something is lost in that

process. Either our decisions or our opinions were not included in the decision-making

process or they were but to what extent?

A participant noted that the leadership team wants teacher input:

I feel like the opportunity is there for teachers to voice their opinion. Sometimes I feel

like the decisions are already made and the listening is kind of like procedural, but I think

for the most part, teacher feel like their voices are heard.

Participants believe they are supported and encouraged by their leadership team. Additionally,

they say that are heard when giving input. However, they are aware administration is in a

position where it is challenging to meet all needs, and some decisions are not negotiable.

Systemic Limitations and Benefits

When responding to various questions regarding teacher experience within schools,

participants often reflected on the systems in place that lead to both benefits and limitations. A

participant described the systems and challenges to flexibility saying:

The challenges have their roots, to an extent, in the turnaround aspects of our school, that

it once was, and the kind of legacy of that is powerful in terms of curriculum and

discipline systems. So ways of doing things, like processes and protocols, and that I think

there's a lot of, I think that stems from the turnaround days and the kind of charter models

where we find the most effective way of doing something and everybody does it that way.

In a sense that has limited, to an extent, a little bit of flexibility.

Participants explained the beginning of turnaround as a time when all of the staff were young and

new. A teacher described the model working when "there were a lot of really new or youngish

teachers, and by new I mean maybe a few years of experience." Elements of systemic limitations include student compliance, the lack of differentiation between teachers and their development, a procedural structure for instruction, and added responsibilities outside of teaching. With these systemic elements, there were also benefits portrayed as well for most of the limitations described.

Student Compliance

The schoolwide systems of behavior and classroom procedures were referred to multiple times as both unique elements to their current schools and one that made participants reflect on the objective behind these systemic operations. Participants discussed the behavior system within the school, explaining the need so students felt safe in their environment and were able to learn. One teacher explained the background reason for implementing a behavior system in turnaround saying, "Where I teach, historically behavior has been a big deal. Misbehavior has been a big deal and an obstruction to obtain instruction and being able to feel like they're in a safe environment." A participant believed one of the reasons they felt positive about their ability to teach was because of this system:

> There are some foundational systems at the school that make me feel comfortable that let me focus on instruction. I'm talking about schoolwide systems for classroom management. I appreciate that we have those because then I'm not, I feel like I'm not having conversations about managements and behavior. We have the deans to help with that. All the teachers have time to align on that every week in our team meetings so as a result I get to really focus on instruction and I know that's where my energy get to go.

While many teachers agree that behavior systems in place help students to feel safe within their classroom and help them focus on learning instead of being distracted by

misbehaviors, there was a concern that it could limit teacher-to-student relationships as well as unfairly impact students of color. One teacher acknowledged the benefits and limitations of the system saying:

> The behavior system is very controversial. There's pros and cons to it and there's a lot of pushback on how effective and how fair the system is and what it does to students of color. However, I feel like the behavior system at the school really brings out the best in students.

On the other hand, a participant described the system as unrealistic and not normal "except for in our school." This participant also voiced concern about the impact this system has on students of color explaining:

> The students are predominately students of color and you have largely educators who do not identify the same way reinforcing this behavior system and thinking about what message is that sending to kids and how they think about their everyday life.

The behavior system and how it affects student and teacher relationships was questioned. One participant reflected on the behavior system as a way to get compliance from students but noted their desire for it to change eventually. This participant hoped for growth in the behavior system saying:

> I would eventually like to see them go away or be adjusted in a way where teachers aren't so heavily reliant on the systems but can use influence in a way to encourage students because sometimes it feels relationships are very surface level.

Another teacher noted that even though the behavior system built safety and communication between teachers and students, it can inhibit building organic relationships with students.

In addition to behavior systems, participants referred to the classroom environment,
noting the schools' unique set-up where students stay in their homerooms all day. Teachers do
not have their own classrooms, and they move from class to class to instruct. One participant
found this limiting because teachers do not have a spot to "organize and make their own."
Another participant agreed on the structure being unique but expressed concern over newly hired
teachers being surprised about not having their own classroom. Despite the systemic element
being a limitation, this teacher also acknowledged the benefits stating, "We are more of a family
than just coworkers coexisting in the same building. We share spaces, we share students, we
share ideas and I think that you have to be on board for wanting that collaborative sphere." Other
participants expressed the desire to have students move throughout the day. Because of the
unique structure of the school, students do not switch classes, and several participants mentioned
this as limiting on part of the students. One teacher noted, "Our kids don't move very much, if at
all." While it was stated that there had been progress made since initial turnaround, participants
communicated wanting more opportunity for "kids to be kids" and have less limitations on
movement throughout the day. Participants desired systemic change in classroom setup to
incorporate more socializing and movement throughout the day.

Pragmatic Instruction and Testing

Participants described being limited in their style of teaching and explained
administration to have a vision of what teaching should look like. When expressing desire to
branch out and be creative in their curriculum and instruction, one teacher described the
procedural schedule in a class:

> I think the pragmatic way people have learned to teach. You start with the do now, then
>
> you have direct instruction, and guided practice before independent practice and your exit

> ticket. I feel like that structure is a lot of what I feel like I've felt myself challenged by
>
> and I feel like it's so static and that's exactly how I used to plan my lessons even with the
>
> flexibility that I had.

Several participants said that administration has a clear vision of instruction. One participant described:

> I think admin sets the tone in regard to the way we teach and our philosophy about
>
> teaching but I think typically if you're a teacher who has been there for more than a year
>
> or two chances are you have probably bought into that view of teaching and that
>
> approach.

Teachers equate this prescribed style of teaching to needing to perform well on state tests. One participant explained their lesson structure lack of creativity by stating:

> The challenge is that it doesn't fit within the frame we think as educators and also our
>
> administrators think as well, as the perfect route, because we typically, at our school, put
>
> an emphasis on student achievement according to state standards but also benchmark and
>
> interim assessments and the MCAS. Because the MCAS doesn't do those things, it
>
> doesn't seem as valuable to implement.

> Participants referenced multiple days spent in the school year taking tests to prepare for

state testing but recognized the need to have a baseline for how students perform. One teacher articulated positive feelings toward benchmark and state testing because they provide clarity on standards students needed to meet, as well as provide a measurable anchor for student growth. Another participant recognized the intention behind limiting curricular freedom saying, "I think my school cares so much about urgency and closing the achievement gap and doing that as soon as possible and because of that they believe the best way is to micromanage." Though curriculum

and instruction can be limiting to some participants, others believe they benefit the students and their academic growth.

Expectations Outside of Teaching

The amount of time spent on other responsibilities outside of planning and teaching continued to emerge in interviews. One participant explained,

> The school that I work at now, there are a lot of expectations, a lot of duties, a lot of tasks, a lot of responsibilities for teachers and I think it has the right intention but it's a lot of time for teachers.

Another teacher echoed the perception of having many required duties outside of teaching and questioned if the school could:

> Get closer to creating balance. Whether it's creating different strategies to make our days easier or more manageable, changing some of the systems that exist so teachers can find enough time to do the things that matter, which is creating lessons, or making sure that they're working on curriculum and not all the other stuff the school requires.

Participants expressed the desire to have more time to focus on designing curriculum and preparing lessons without having to worry about additional responsibilities. One participant explained the need for thoughtfulness around a teacher's schedule and "making sure teachers are encouraged to focus on what's important and what's not important. What's important is our kids learning and making progress and there are a lot of other things that get in the way." Teachers reflected on the other aspects of being a teacher but described an abundance of extra responsibilities that kept them from focusing on the important goal of planning and student success. While most teachers responded to this theme as limiting, one participant voiced extra duties as opportunities to build relationships with students.

Lack of Recognition of Staff Development

The participants were sampled from schools that were both part of a turnaround in 2012. Several participants recognized the schools as having younger staff at the beginning of turnaround years. However, in the eight years since turnaround happened, the staff has grown, yet the development provided for teachers has remained the same. One participant described wanting variation in professional development for staff who have differing levels of experience saying, "Differentiation and rethinking what professional development looks like, and rethinking what leadership in a school looks like is so critical for longer term teacher retention so that advanced teachers have meaningful avenues to further growth." Echoing this teacher's desire for differentiation in development but also expressing the need to recognize the school is not in the same place as it was in 2012, one participant noted:

> There are changes happening within a structure and I wonder if the structure as a whole might need to be slightly adjusted in terms of recognition of teachers as leaders. The structure of our school is such that it worked really well when there were a lot of really new teachers but there's some growing pains.

As the school continues to evolve, participants described the desire for teachers with experience to be recognized for their expertise while making space to support new teachers. One participant described the necessity to help new teachers while they navigate the complexities of a school with complicated structures, such as the behavior management cycle and other procedural elements, while also trusting veteran staff to do their jobs without being micromanaged. Providing leadership opportunities for teachers to share their areas of expertise with the staff could be further developed. One participant communicated,

> I would like to see us as a school continue to say, 'here are chances to share your
>
> knowledge and to elevate practice in the service of kids and not have it feel like everyone
>
> is talked to as if they are newer teachers.

Because urban schools are often staffed with underprepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000), the schools where participants are employed are at an advantage due to the majority of teachers having experience—assuming experience makes one more prepared to teach within a high-poverty, urban setting. Twenty of the 24 participants are considered experienced based on Massachusetts' definition of experience, which is three or more years in a classroom within the state. However, the network schools have been around for only eight years and are used to working with inexperienced teachers.

Functions of Autonomy

Autonomy was referenced in regard to curricular freedom, involvement in schoolwide decisions, feeling encouraged to participate in schoolwide events, and having the desire to continue working within this setting. One participant described having higher job satisfaction due to the "degree of autonomy. I don't want to be micromanaged. I don't want my intellectual capital to be micromanaged. In other words, you hired me to be a teacher, let me be the best teacher I know how to be." Pearson and Moomaw (2005) reinforced the idea of empowered professionals having the freedom to prescribe what is best for students. As autonomy increases, empowerment also increases. Teachers who described working in an autonomous environment felt accomplished in creating a community where students were learning and successful. Furthermore, participants articulated that having tenure ensured more autonomy:

> I have been there longer than the majority of the people in the building and I think with
>
> some of the curricular autonomy and input on decision-making, I can only speak for

myself, but those are the things that have built over the six years I've been there, and

have helped me feel like a valued member of the community who wants to stay and like

to continue to grow this community.

Through involvement in schoolwide decisions and curricular flexibility, participants were more

likely to stay in their school longer. Participating in shared decision-making often increases the

likelihood that teachers will remain in their positions (Ladd, 2011). Teachers who believe they

are heard and are involved in decision-making voiced their desire to continue teaching in their

current schools.

Theory of Empowerment and Retention of Teachers in High-Poverty, Urban Schools

Multiple studies on teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools have illustrated the

negative effects on student learning when schools lose experienced teachers and have high

numbers of teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2003; Ladd, 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). The

participants of this study faced challenges that included not only working in a high-poverty,

urban school district that was in receivership, but also working in schools that are facing the

pressure of turnaround and network management. The majority of themes that emerged in this

study connect to one another through various responses from interview participants as well as

relating to the research questions. See Figure 1 for theory diagram.

Figure 1

Diagram of Theory
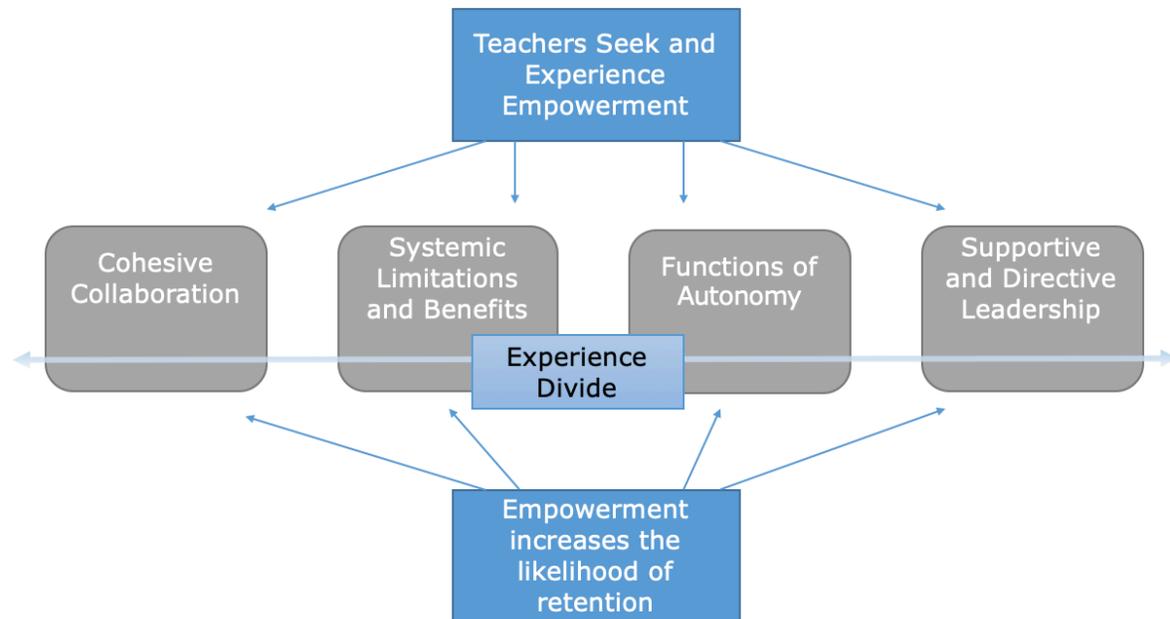
Teachers described seeking and experiencing empowerment in several ways throughout

their interviews. One way to increase empowerment is through expanding opportunities for

teacher voice and allowing space for teacher input and shared decision making (Ingersoll, 2003;

Ladd, 2011; Wronowski, 2018). Teachers referred to *supportive and directive leadership* when

describing their opportunity to provide input or feedback on schoolwide decisions. Participants

asserted opportunities to have their voices heard through staff meetings, weekly surveys, and the

Teacher Leadership Team. However, participants described a barrier to their voices being heard

due to *directive leadership* making the final decisions and not providing follow up with teachers,

as well as asking for feedback when decisions have already been made. Additionally, the theme

of *experience divide* connected to teachers using their voice to provide to input. Experienced

teachers described being heard and involved in decision making due to their tenure at the school

while new teachers felt they needed to compete with veteran teachers and were not heard in the

same way.

    Another way to seek and experience empowerment is through autonomy of curriculum.

The theme *functions of autonomy* connect with the theme *supportive directive leadership* and

experience divide in the autonomy that leadership provides to teachers. Teachers who were

deemed experienced often expressed gratitude for the autonomy they received to make curricular

decisions they thought best for their students. Participants described their tenure and expertise in

their content area as the reason for receiving more flexibility and autonomy in their instruction

and planning. However, teachers who were new to the school or inexperienced, were offered less

autonomy and were provided with scripted curriculum. While leadership often served as a

working relationship with more experienced teachers, newer teachers are provided with

directions on how to instruct and what materials to use in their classrooms. One barrier to

experiencing autonomy is the *systemic limitation* of state testing and the pressure to perform well

on assessments. Teachers in the content areas of math and English have the added restrictions in

their instruction due to standardized testing and the expectations of achieving high scores.

    Though teachers feel constricted at times, participants recognized their professional

growth because of the support they receive from their *supportive leadership*. Empowered

teachers have the need for continued professional growth (Boyd et al., 2011; Wronowski, 2018).

Because the goal of the school is to increase student achievement, teachers are grateful to

experience growth in their instruction and to have support from managers. Observations and

feedback from direct managers help teachers to feel confident in their craft and to increase their

positive feelings toward their ability to teach. When teachers grow in their profession, they

believe they are doing what is best by students and helping them to achieve academically.

However, teachers emphasized the need for new avenues and opportunities to continue developing as professionals so that their growth does not stagnate. One of the *systemic limitations* of the school was expressed by experienced teachers, noting the desire of more differentiation and recognition of veteran teacher expertise. Ladd (2011) stated teachers are empowered when they take control of their own growth. Based on anecdotal evidence from teachers, experienced teachers feel limited in the professional development opportunities provided at school and believe they are all spoken to as if they are new teachers.

The systemic components of the sample schools provide both limitations and benefits to teachers' empowerment. Due to the unique set-up of the school, teachers are required to work closely with one another in the same classrooms and share an office space which has contributed to the theme of *cohesive collaboration*. This systemic element brings a level of collaborative learning and growth to the staff, and the majority of participants spoke positively about being part of a team. Experienced teachers referenced cohesive collaboration as the reason for applying to their current school because they were attracted to the collaborative nature of the staff as well as wanting to be on a team of teachers who had several years of experience. *Cohesive collaboration* was mentioned multiple times when describing why teachers make the choice to stay at their school. Having a team of teachers to rely on created an atmosphere in the turnover schools that allows teachers to feel supported in their work and enjoy partnering with their colleagues to create strong instruction and results for students.

Continued instructional growth was noted as the reason why teachers feel confident in their ability to teach. Because of *supportive leadership*, teachers are able to reflect on their growth as educators and are disinclined to remain stagnant. Participants expressed the potential desire to leave their current school if they felt they were not growing as a teacher and appreciated

sustained improvement as educators. Furthermore, teachers feel confident in their ability to teach because of the *systemic benefit* of the behavior system at schools. Teachers articulated being able to teach well without the distraction of misbehavior. However, some participants viewed this as a *systemic limitation* because of the negative impact on students of color and inhibiting authentic relationship building between teachers and students.

Increase in empowerment could also increase the likelihood of teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools. Based on the challenging nature of working in these settings, teachers seek support to feel competent in their ability to teach as well as opportunities to be empowered. Expansion on differentiated opportunities for experienced teachers to grow professional, as well as more outlets for inexperienced teachers to be heard by leadership could increase the likelihood of retention in high-poverty urban schools.

Contributions to the Field of Educational Leadership

Considering the turnaround aspect of the schools sampled and the limited amount of experience these schools have in working with teachers who are more experienced, the UP Network might consider implementing new forms of development for the experienced teachers. In reaching their mission of transforming chronically-underperforming schools, it seems the UP Network has done so by using an approach that works with all teachers. Participants expressed the desire to receive differentiated support from managers and co-leaders from the school so they could grow at a rate appropriate to their expertise and experience levels. Due to the pressure of test results and the urgency to improve student achievement measured by these outcomes, the UP Network provides guidance to school leaders, who then communicate guidance and provide best practices of instruction to teachers.

Because urban schools are often staffed with underprepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000), the schools where participants are employed are at an advantage due to the majority of teachers having experience. Twenty out of the 24 participants interviewed were considered experienced based on the Massachusetts' definition of experience, which is three or more years in a classroom within the state. However, the network schools have been in operation for only eight years and are used to working with inexperienced teachers. Because there are now teachers who have several years of experience working in schools—specifically, in the network schools— stakeholders within the UP Network should examine how they encourage school leaders to develop experienced teachers. Additionally, implementation of differentiated development for teachers at all levels of expertise could be explored to further develop both experienced and inexperienced educators.

Henkin and Holliman (2009) described the negative effects on students when they lose experienced teachers. Providing teachers space for having control over their development might make a difference in lowering attrition numbers. When teachers take charge of their own growth and professional development (Ladd, 2011; Wronowski, 2018), feelings of empowerment increase. Retaining teachers has a positive impact on student achievement (Eckert, 2013; Rinke, 2011). Since the mission of the UP Network is to increase the academic success of students, and teacher attrition is harmful to student performance (Ronfeldt et al., 2013), the network should investigate different ways to empower teachers at all levels of experience to increase retention within their schools.

Recommendations for Educational Leadership for Social Justice

Conducting this research study was valuable in numerous ways. Learning about participants' experience and hearing their perspective has been enlightening. On account of my

tenure at one of the sample settings, there were several categories that emerged that I was unaware were areas of challenge for teachers.

One category in particular was the idea of the behavior system and how it makes students compliant. Furthermore, as a White teacher, I had not thought of the implications this system might have on students of color and how it is perceived, when I, as the White teacher, had implemented this system. Because the purpose of turnaround is to increase student achievement in underperforming schools, the UP Network is an advocate for social justice by increasing student learning and providing opportunity in schools where the majority of students are economically-disadvantaged (UP Education Network, (n.d.). However, if the purpose behind the behavior system is to build compliance, it could potentially be working against social justice.

Limitations

Limitations to the study include personal bias, my proximity to the sample population and setting, and restrictions on the sample setting. When the study began, I had worked in Lawrence, Massachusetts, for eight years, and I am currently employed at one of the schools used for participant sampling. Going into the study, I had several preconceived notions of how teachers might answer. Additionally, due to my working relationship with participants and the topic of interview questions relating directly to our shared workspace, teachers may have not have felt entirely comfortable answering questions. My original intention was to sample from all of the public schools within the Lawrence district. However, when seeking approval from the superintendent and assistant superintendent, I was told to sample only from the two schools managed by the UP Network, one being the school where I was teaching. This was an unexpected barrier in the research process and reduced the variety of teachers interviewed. Twenty participants worked at one school and the remaining four taught at the other.

Implications for Leadership Agenda and Growth

Empowerment of teachers in a turnaround setting is a topic I would like to continue studying. Because of the unique structure of the schools starting with younger staff, it would be interesting to examine how to better differentiate coaching and development practices for teachers ranging in their instructional abilities. Moreover, I would like to examine different ways that less experienced teachers can find comfort in voicing their opinions publicly despite having fewer years of experience in education. In addition to differentiation, I believe there is an opportunity for further research on the topic of White teachers working with students of color and the impact behavioral systems have in these scenarios.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Hello, *participant*.

I am hoping to learn more about your experiences as an educator within your school. Do you feel comfortable talking to me about this today?

I have some questions for you, and with your permission, I will be video recording your responses while taking notes so that I can capture the information you provide without relying on memory. Your answers will not be disclosed in association with your name or any identifiable personal information. Do you grant permission for video recording?

Please take as much time as you would like to answer these questions. Do you have any questions for me about this process before we begin? Please know that you are welcome to ask me questions at any point.

Questions:

1. Can you tell me a little about your job and school, including how long you have worked at this school and other schools as a teacher? If you have worked at different schools, how do current and past experiences compare?
2. What attributes of your current job and school help you to feel positive about your ability as a teacher?
3. How much job-related freedom and independence do you feel is currently allowed for you and other teachers at your school? What challenges to freedom and independence, if any, exist?
4. What is your current experience with providing input on school-wide decisions? How is your and other teachers' input valued in the decision-making process?
5. How much encouragement do you currently receive from leadership and peers at your school to be involved in grade/level and schoolwide initiatives? How do you typically respond to this encouragement?
6. What aspects of your school do you think could be changed or further developed that would improve your involvement with, and long-term commitment to, the school?
7. What job or school related factors would prompt you to consider leaving your current school?
8. Do you have anything else you would like to share about what was asked in this interview?

Thank you for engaging in this interview, *participant*. I am so grateful for your time and

participation. Would be open to me reaching back out if any follow-up questions emerge?

Appendix B: Email to Lawrence Public Schools Principals

Greetings Lawrence School Principals and Leaders,

My name is Erin Martin and I am a doctoral candidate at Plymouth State University. I am conducting a qualitative study for my dissertation and am studying teacher empowerment in high-poverty, urban schools. I am conducting remote, video conference interviews with teachers across the district. I have attached a letter of invitation to teachers and am hoping you would be willing to forward this to teachers at your school. Please reach out if you have any questions. You can contact me at eem1016@plymouth.edu and (603)860-7326. Additionally, please have teachers connect with me through email or phone if they are interested in participating. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Erin N. Martin

Appendix C: Plymouth State IRB Approval

Plymouth State
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

April 21, 2020

Dear Erin Martin

Study: *TTeacher Empowerment in High-Poverty, Urban Schools*
Approval Date: April 21, 2020

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 1101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol. Be sure to complete the Final Report Form when your research is finished.

If, during the course of your project you intend to make changes that may significantly affect the human subjects involved (particularly methodological changes), you must obtain IRB approval prior to implementing these changes. Any unanticipated problems related to your use of human subjects must be promptly reported to the IRB. The IRB may be contacted through Dr. Ryanne Carmichael, Chair of the IRB. This is required so that the IRB can update or revise protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary.

You are expected to maintain as an essential part of your project records, any records pertaining to the use of humans as subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to and received from the subjects as well as any executed forms, data and analysis results. If this is a funded project (federal, state, private, other organization), you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representatives of the University, State of New Hampshire, and/or the federal government.

Please note that IRB approval cannot exceed one year. If you expect your project to continue beyond this approval period, you must submit a request for continuance to the IRB for renewal of IRB approval. IRB approval must be obtained and maintained for the entire term of your project or award.

Please notify the IRB in writing when the project is completed. We may ask that you provide information regarding your experiences with human subjects and with the IRB review process. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your project. Any subsequent reactivation of the project will require a new IRB application. I have attached the Project Completion Form for your convenience.

Please do not hesitate to contact the IRB if you have any questions or require assistance. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can. Thank you for your cooperation and efforts throughout this review process. We wish you success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Clarissa M. Uttley
Clarissa M. Uttley, PhD
Institutional Review Board
cmutley@plymouth.edu

Plymouth State University. 17 High Street. Plymouth, New Hampshire, 03264

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation for Participants

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral candidate at Plymouth State University (PSU) in Plymouth, NH, and I am conducting a research project to examine how teachers seek and experience empowerment within high-poverty, urban schools middle schools. I am writing to invite you to participate in this project. I plan to work with approximately 20-30 teachers who teach in the Lawrence, MA school district. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in an interview session via a video conference. The interview consists of eight questions, and it is anticipated that the session will not exceed one hour of your time. In addition, I will ask you for permission to reach back out with any additional questions that emerge during the data collection period of May 2020-June 2020. The interview will be video recorded to ensure accuracy for transcription of data, and recordings will be coded so that participant names will not be associated with the files. Once video recordings are transcribed, the recorded files will be deleted. Per PSU Institutional Review Board policy, transcribed and written data will be kept locked in my home office cabinet for a three-year period. After this time period, all data files will be destroyed.

I will maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation and will take every precaution in responsibly securing data to reduce the likelihood of loss of confidentiality. Participation is strictly voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw or refuse consent, or to discontinue your participation in this study at any time without penalty or consequence. Participation in this study does not include compensation, and there is no cost associated with your involvement. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. Ryanne Carmichael in PSU IRB Chair at 603-535-3114 or rcarmichael@plymouth.edu to discuss them. I have enclosed the informed consent form that includes additional information about participating in this study. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Erin N. Martin

Ed.D. Candidate

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

VOLUNTARILY IN A RESEARCH INVESTIGATION

PLYMOUTH STATE UNIVERSITY

INVESTIGATOR(S) NAME: Erin M. Martin

STUDY TITLE: Teacher Retention and Empowerment in High-Poverty, Urban Schools Turnaround Middle School

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this research study is to learn more about teachers' experience within their high-poverty, urban turnaround middle school. You are being asked to be a participant in the study because you are a teacher working in a high-poverty, urban school district.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY
In this study, participants will be asked a number of interview questions related to their experience seeking and experience empowerment within their school. Participants will be asked to schedule a time to interview. Participants will be interviewed using a video conference through Zoom. The amount of time required to participate in the study is no longer than sixty minutes for the interview process. Additionally, the researcher will ask permission to reach back out through email if any questions arise during data analysis.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The risks to participants in this study are minimal and typical to what participants would normally experience in their professional and daily lives.

BENEFITS
There may be no direct benefits of participating in this study; however, the knowledge received may be of value to teachers, administrators and students.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The data generated by the study may be reviewed by Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board, which is the committee responsible for ensuring your welfare and rights as a research participant, to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with university regulations. If any presentations or publication result from this research, you will not be identified by name. As per federal guidelines, the information collected during your participation in this study will be kept for a minimum of three years.

I plan to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. There are, however, rare instances when I may be required to share individually identifiable information with the following:
- Officials at Plymouth State University (PSU),
- Regulatory and oversight government agencies,

I also may be required by law to report certain information:

- To government and/or law enforcement officials (for example, child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, or hazing). If I believe that such a report is required, I will follow the guidance of the PSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (and of the University's General Counsel) in making any such report, in order to provide as much protection for your privacy as possible while still complying with the law.
- To appropriate PSU authorities (e.g., disclosures involving Sexual Violence - which includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, relationship abuse, stalking [including cyber-stalking] and dating violence - must be reported to the PSU Title IX Coordinator or PSU Police).

Further, any communication via the internet poses minimal risk of a breach of confidentiality.

To help protect the confidentiality of your information, all data (video recordings and written notes) will be stored on a password protected USB drive to protect confidentiality. Once video recordings are transcribed, recorded files will be deleted. The transcribed and written data will be locked in the researchers' home office for a three-year period, and if confidentiality is breached the researcher will report it immediately to the PSU Institutional Review Board. The results may be used in reports, presentations, and publications.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION
You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason. If you choose to drop out of the study, you may contact the investigator and your research records will be destroyed.

COMPENSATION
You will not receive payment for being in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

INJURY COMPENSATION
Neither Plymouth State University nor any government or other agency funding this research project will provide special services, free care, or compensation for any injuries resulting from this research. The treatment for such injuries will be at your expense and/or paid through your medical plan.

QUESTIONS
If you have further questions about this study, you may contact Erin Martin, Principle Investigator, or Dr. Christopher Benedetti, faculty supervisor. You may contact Erin Martin by phone at (603) 860-7326 or email at eem1016@plymouth.edu. To reach Dr. Benedetti, you may email him at cjbenedetti@plymouth.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants, you may call the Chairperson of the Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board at 603-535-3114 (Valid until July 1, 2021).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
You understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You are free to withdraw or refuse consent, or to discontinue your participation in this study at any time without penalty or consequence.

You voluntarily give your consent to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signatures:

_____

Participant's Name (Print)

_____   _____
Participant 's Signature   Date

      I, the undersigned, certify that to the best of my knowledge, the subject signing this consent form has had the study fully and carefully explained by me and have been given an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the nature, risks, and benefits of participation in this research study.

      <u>Erin M. Martin</u>
Investigator's Name (Print)

___*Erin M. Martin*___   _____   _____5/7/20_____
Investigator's Signature   Date

      Plymouth State University's IRB has approved the solicitation of participants for the study until

Appendix F: List of Categories from Interviews

List of Categories from Interviews

Turnaround	Helps with self-awareness	Freedom varies on subject	Takes time to build trust	Involvement depends on interest and want
Low income	Administrative support	Tested subjects more rigid	Inexperienced teachers figuring out role	Grade level meetings
High number of ELLs	Manager relationship	Teaching to the test	Hard to compete with experienced teachers	Speak up in meeting
Urban poverty	Personal investment	ELA/Math tested subjects	Hard to meet all needs	Cohort initiatives
Neighborhood school	Differentiated coaching	Limited creativity	Top down	Department decisions
Similar to charter	Flexible coaching depending on teacher ability	Freedom varies on level of experience	Not going to agree on everything	Some decisions are non-negotiable
Coaching	Procedural method of teaching	More experience more trust	Everyone has a voice	Ability o handle it all
Feedback	Pragmatic method of teaching	More experience more autonomy	Goal to get feedback	New teachers not overly involved
Continued growth	Administration clear vision of teaching	Challenged to flexibility rooted in turnaround	Asks for input	Healthy departs
Improved practice	Same daily structure	Network guidance	Opportunity to voice opinion	Long school day
Builds Confidence	Formulaic teaching	Function as a team or not at all	Cohesive staff	Lack of SEL
validation	Specific style of teaching	Many platforms for input	Grade level meetings	Kids need to move
Team Collaboration	Teacher/student compliance	All staff discussions	Team oriented	Don't want to plateau
Teacher community	Lots of rules	Weekly surveys	Input messaged as valued	Instructional growth
Peer relationships	Micromanaged time	Teacher Leadership Team (TLT)	Little follow through	Still large academic gaps
Person growth	Moderate independence	Administration can't say yes to everyone	More to have than to use	Model worked when we were young
Progress		Math/ELA can't be creative	Method to vent	Everyone talked to the same
Improved practice		Testing for performance	Decisions already made	Recognize teacher leaders
Small goals		Testing too long	Trust to try new things	Elevate teacher leadership
Specific feedback		Unique school	Freedom to make independent decisions	
Personal check-ins				
New voices not heard				
Learning curve				