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# A Program Evaluation Of The Reasons Some Educators Do or Do Not Remain In The Teaching Profession

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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A Program Evaluation of the Reasons Some Educators Do or Do Not Remain in the

Teaching Profession


Joshua R. Karren

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program


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**Abstract**

According to Sutcher et al. (2016), hundreds of thousands of teachers (eight percent of the overall United States teaching force) leave the profession annually for various reasons. These reasons include dissatisfaction with some parts of their jobs, including poor leadership, lack of control over teaching, family or personal reasons, pursuing a job outside of education, retirement, and financial reasons. The purpose of this study is to understand why teachers choose to stay at their school, why they leave certain schools and what school and district leaders can do to keep teachers in their classrooms. The context of this inquiry is three Title I middle schools and two Title I high schools. My study demonstrated a combination of quantitative and qualitative data that matched current research, teacher surveys, and interviews with school and district leaders on what to do to keep teachers in Title I schools.

School leaders are responsible for creating a culture at their respective schools. Teachers want to work in a school environment where they feel appreciated, respected, and have a voice in the doings of the school. The surveys conducted in this study have shown overwhelmingly how important culture is to teachers. School and district leaders acknowledged the value of building community in their schools. District leaders should place school leaders with experience in building collaborative cultures to improve morale and, more importantly, increase teacher retention in their schools.

**Preface**

When I was an undergraduate student, I began my leadership journey. I learned the "softer" skills of being a leader. Some of these skills included but were not limited to actively listening to people, demonstrating empathy, and being supportive of those that I serve.

As I studied business in the mid-1990s, I was fascinated with company culture. I read books like *Built from Scratch: How a Couple of Regular Guys Grew the Home Depot from Nothing to $30 Billion* and *Nuts!: Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success*. I was enamored with these companies, and I considered them my exemplars in the company I wanted to work for when I finished my business degree.

When I became a substitute teacher, I gained an opportunity to observe the school's culture and evaluate the school to determine if I was a fit for that school. When an office person would not greet me with a "good morning", or teachers cared more for who I was covering instead of thanking me for filling the absence, I knew it was not a school for me if offered a full-time position.

I learned teachers and school leaders do care about culture. School leaders create a culture that makes teachers feel happy and respected. When teachers feel this way, they are willing to stay in their school. Teachers want a salary which is comparable to other professionals. However, when teachers are "paid" with respect, common courtesy, and the opportunity to have their voices heard, they will be present in their classrooms. Being present means, teachers are part of the culture that they help build with their school leaders.

The biggest lesson I learned about the writing process is that I must write in some capacity every day. My dissertation chair gave me great suggestions, such as writing on a post-it note, or dictating information on my phone, which were simple ways I can continue to write instead of staring at a blank white screen. These lessons were invaluable when I had writer's block or felt like I could not continue this process.

As I wrote this paper, it reaffirmed my belief system in how leaders need to treat their employees. One of my sayings is "please" and "thank you" are the most valuable words an employee can hear from a leader. People want to be valued and appreciated, and those things can quickly be done by leaders.

I grew as a leader because I connected my belief system to my research. I listened to what school and district leaders did to show how they value their staff members. Ultimately, their comments reinforced what I hope to replicate when I am a formal school leader.

My hope is teachers will stay in their classrooms and/or in the educational arena. Students will benefit from teachers who have a solid foundation in their community and love their subject matter. Additionally, I hope former students will be eager to inform their former teachers about their academic progress, graduations, or just telling the teacher how much their class meant to them.

When I decided to become a teacher, one of my mentors said, "It is going to take you 10 years before you become a solid teacher". He went on to explain that it will take time for me to learn how to teach, how to incorporate my procedures and routines, and learn content. One of the best pieces of advice was that I will be a better teacher the longer I teach because I will be better at serving my students. In any other profession, it

takes years to be considered a master, and teaching is no different than any other skilled

profession.

**Acknowledgments**

I express my sincere gratitude to my committee for their continued support and encouragement: Dr. Christie McMullen, my committee chair, who always remained positive with me during the process, and Dr. Tamara Cornwell for being another pair of eyes to catch my mistakes. In addition, I want to thank Dr. Carla Sparks for making herself available and being a light-hearted guide along the journey. I offer my forever thanks for the learning opportunities from all my professors.

My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the support of my classmates. I want to thank the teachers who took the time to complete my survey. I greatly appreciate the administrators that took the time to talk to me about their experiences. Also, I want to thank David and Kay Williams for being such great teacher role models for me to follow. The two of you have inspired future generations. Thanks to my mother for encouraging me to pursue this venture, challenging my thoughts, but most importantly, being the heads to my tails and to giving me the other side of the coin. Finally, to my caring, loving, and supportive wife, Jennifer, I express my deepest gratitude. Our conversations were enlightening, challenging, and beneficial. You are the more experienced teacher and hearing your input has been paramount in helping me better understand the experienced teacher. I look forward to continuing our conversation. My heartfelt thanks.

**Dedication**

To the future teachers: Thank you for joining the noblest profession.

To the past teachers: Thank you for being role models for our colleagues.

To the current teachers: Thank you for being the lifesavers weathering the storm.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

According to Goodwin (2018), eight percent of teachers leave the teaching profession or move to another school, which means about one and a half out of 20 teachers have left their school (p. 81). Teachers' morale and retention appear to have the numbers going in the wrong direction. While I was volunteering in an elementary school, I asked the teachers why they chose to become teachers. Based on those discussions, the teachers told me they went into education so they could make a difference in children's lives. In today's times, it appears it is not enough reason for why people decide to stay in the educational arena. Teachers are feeling burnt out, not supported by administrators and/or students' families, and pay not being paid equitably to the amount of work they put into their respective classrooms.

Culture is defined as the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school (Wagner et al., 2006). Culture is noticeable in how teachers interact with one another, how teachers interact with students, and how school leaders interact with teachers and students. Whether it is a positive or negative culture, it is felt by everyone in the building.

**Purpose of the Program Evaluation**

I chose this topic because teacher morale is something that I noticed ever since my first year of teaching. I was working at a Title I alternative school and just by talking to colleagues, I noticed how people did not seem to be energized by their work. After our guidance counselor left for another school, I took over the Sunshine Committee. The Sunshine Committee was a group of people tasked with boosting morale, celebrating

people's successes, and even providing condolences when a teacher lost a loved one. My first act was to organize an afterschool event at a local restaurant where people could connect to one another, but not talk about school, students, or work. About 95% of the staff showed up, had a good time, and wanted more events to enjoy camaraderie in the future. As I made it a monthly tradition, I slowly earned the nickname "Mr. Sunshine".

I want to understand what schools and district leaders do to keep their talent at their respective school and/or district. I was fortunate to work at a Title I school where the administrative team can boast that they had the highest retention rate in the district among Title I schools. However, I want to look deeper to see what the district leaders are doing to keep teachers in the district/profession. In addition, I want to know why teachers are leaving our district. More importantly, I want to know why they are leaving the profession.

One of the purposes of this study is to demonstrate what is essential to teachers regarding leadership and culture. Also, I aim to encourage current teachers to stay in their classrooms and improve their school communities. Lastly, I would like to show what school and district leaders can do to keep their teachers in the classroom.

This research is vital because more educators are leaving the profession. According to Walker (2022) of the National Education Association (NEA), as of February 2022, 55% are leaving the industry earlier than they planned. This attrition is an increase of 18% regardless of how many years the teacher(s) have been teaching.

Teachers were leaving the profession before the pandemic. Eighty-six percent of teachers surveyed said they have seen more teachers leave or retire early since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. The pandemic had such a negative impact because

teachers had to do more lesson planning, teach an online class or teach simultaneously, and use technology teachers have not used in the past.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were about 10.6 million educators in public education in January 2020, three months prior to the pandemic. In February 2022, the number of educators decreased to 10 million. During that two-year time period, the number of educators dropped six percent.

The methodology in this program evaluation was a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. According to Patton (2012), "more fully integrated mixed methods designs give equal status to quantitative and qualitative data" (p. 293). I surveyed teachers to help me identify how critical specific attributes are to them. These attributes included culture, school-based leaders, job opportunities, colleague relationships, etc. In addition, I interviewed school and district leaders to recognize their efforts in improving morale and increasing retention in their schools.

**Rationale**

Within the last three years of my teaching career, I have seen multiple teachers who gave their hearts and souls to their classrooms and school communities leave the profession. A few teachers left for district positions, while others left the profession entirely and started another career. When I asked my colleagues why they left the profession, some of their reasons were low pay, fatigue from working too much, and some wanting to feel supported by the administration team. I wondered what these schools or districts could have done to keep these teachers in the classrooms. I believe school and district leaders need to investigate why teachers are leaving the profession and see what they can do to keep teachers in the classroom.

My program evaluation is essential because if teachers continue to leave the profession in these numbers, the effect of not having enough well-qualified teachers in classrooms would be that content teachers, such as mathematics or language arts are not teaching students. Students will not learn from someone considered an "expert" in their field. Based on my observations at a Title I school, a learning gap develops when students continue to be taught by substitute teachers. It widens due to not being taught by a qualified teacher in the subject area.

This program evaluation is important to stakeholders because the teacher shortage is a problem across our country (Ansley et al., 2019). District leaders should want to know why teachers are leaving their districts, but more importantly, they need to know what they can do to retain teachers. Families in communities want to know who is teaching their children and if that teacher is qualified to do so. Based on my experiences, these families want to know if these teachers are staying to improve the school community.

School and district leaders need to reflect on his or her skills and/or actions which lead to their staff members choosing to stay at their school. School leaders are the ones responsible for creating an environment where people want to stay and teach. Therefore, the impact of a leader's actions or lack of actions will help determine if a teacher wants to stay or leave a respective school (Bukko et al., 2021).

According to Patton (2012), "developmental evaluation would document ongoing processes of adaptation and innovation to increase the capacity to do rapid and accurate environmental sensing and provide quick feedback for development" (p. 199). School leaders need to identify the reasons why teachers are leaving their schools. District

leaders need to recognize the skill set of the school buildings' leaders to ensure compatibility between the school leaders, teachers, and students.

**Goals**

My highest priority is determining why teachers stay in a particular school. To accomplish this, I surveyed teachers to determine what was important to them. In addition, I interviewed and surveyed school and district leaders to identify specific things they have done for teachers in their schools. Therefore, my three goals for this study are as follows:

- Goal 1: Identity what motivates a teacher to stay at a particular school.

- Goal 2: Evaluate what school leaders have done/can do for their teachers that can improve morale and subsequently increase retention.

- Goal 3: Recognize and acknowledge the various skill sets of school leaders and how those skills fit about keeping teachers in those schools.

Ultimately, "effective leadership appears to be a prerequisite to positive work contexts as, without it, educators cannot experience the conditions that allow them to be effective in their roles" (Ansley et al., 2019, p. 11). I have been around leaders who inspired me to do more in and out the classroom. Conversely, I have worked for leaders who did not have a school culture where I wanted to stay and/or contribute to their environment.

According to Bukko et al. (2021), "central to success is a principal who fosters relationships and creates a positive climate through specific leadership actions and interpersonal behaviors that build and sustain trust" (p. 58). Similar to students, when teachers know leaders are consistent in supporting them, teachers will be more content and more willing to help their struggling students. Likewise, students will want to do

better in their classes, knowing that their teachers care about their academic success and well-being. Scholars have also found that in schools characterized by high trust, principals and teachers work together to set goals, monitor progress, and meet students' needs. According to Bukko et al., (2021), "teachers in high-trust schools express professional satisfaction, feel more efficacious, and share social capital" (p. 59).

Teachers are likelier to stay in their schools when they feel valued and appreciated. Students benefit from a full-time, certified teacher who knows their content and builds relationships with them and their families. Students make gains or show proficiency on state assessments when their learning environment is stable and supported by the teacher. When school leaders support their teachers, it positively impacts students and many aspects of the school.

## Definition of Terms

**Culture:** a collection of behaviors and beliefs associated with a particular group.

**Morale**: emotional or mental condition concerning cheerfulness, confidence, zeal, etc., especially in the face of opposition, hardship, etc. ("Morale", 2022).

**Retention**:  power to retain, capacity of retaining.

**Title I**: Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.

**Positive work culture**: one that prioritizes the well-being of employees, offers support at all levels within the organization, and has policies in place that encourage respect, trust, empathy, and support. (Andreev, 2023).

**Research Questions**

By the time a teacher leaves their school, it is too late for a school leader to try to convince the teacher to stay at said school. Based on my experiences, the school leaders are genuinely surprised, but sadly, some of them thought the school was better off without these teachers. I used my previously mentioned goals to help direct my research questions.

Goal 1: What motivates a teacher to stay at a particular school?

1. What are specific actions leaders can do to keep their teachers?

Goal 2: Evaluate what school leaders can do/did for their teachers that can improve morale and/or increase retention.

1. How do teachers interpret these efforts by school leaders and how does it affect school culture?

Goal 3: Recognize and acknowledge the various skill sets of school leaders and how those skills fit in relation to keeping teachers in those schools.

1. How are district leaders assigning school leaders to schools and its impact on school culture?

**Conclusion**

Prior to entering my doctoral program, I was always interested in morale and teacher retention. I have been teaching for ten years. In the first five and a half years, I worked at three different schools. I have been at my current school for four and a half years. I teased my administration team about the things they did to keep me around longer than expected. As a result of my program evaluation, I learned what school leaders are doing to keep his and her teachers at their respective school. In addition, I identified

what district leaders can do to help school leaders become better leaders. By having

better school leaders in the building, school culture will be positively impacted, and

teachers will thrive.

**Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

Why did you become a teacher? This is a question most teachers encounter from those who are not in the classroom. Based on my experiences, people outside the field of education do not understand why anyone would want to teach in today's times. A quick joke is that we became teachers to ensure we have our weekends and summers off. The short list of reasons why people chose one of the most noble professions is that they love children, love the subject matter, or the ever-popular answer "to make a difference".

At the beginning of my research, I searched scholarly articles, books, my current and former textbooks, and educational websites on my topic. My primary search engine was EBSCO Host with National Louis University. My keywords were teacher retention, morale, recruitment, and culture. Of all my resources, 22 of them are from 2016 to 2022. There were outliers ranging from 2003 to 2015, but most of those resources were limited to one in each year, with three of them from 2012. Therefore, I categorized my review into three categories: culture, retention, and recruitment.

**Culture**

According to Goodwin (2018), teachers in Finland are respected more than their counterparts in the United States. Finland's view of teachers is compared to architects, doctors, and lawyers. However, in the United States, teachers are overwhelmed by the workload, expectations of the district, and parents. Goodwin (2018) found teachers leave for a variety of reasons. These reasons include dissatisfaction with some aspect of the job, family/personal reasons, pursuit of another job, retirement, and/or financial reasons. Fifty-five percent of teachers are dissatisfied with the leadership, lack of autonomy, and experience too much pressure on standardized testing with little support. Forty-three

percent teachers leave the profession for family or personal reasons, 31% decide to leave

for other opportunities, 31% retire, while 18% leave because the compensation is not

enough. (Goodwin, 2018, p. 81)

In addition to teachers leaving the profession, the number of students enrolled in

education programs has fallen. According to Goodwin (2018), in 2009, there were

approximately 650,000 U.S. college students in education programs. Five years later, the

number dropped to 451,000 college students enrolled in these programs, which is about a

31% decline in five years, or about 40,000 students a year!

Jennings et al. (2017) examined the impact of professional development of

teachers' social/emotional levels and the impact on their instruction. This is important

because if teachers feel valued and appreciated, they are more likely to stay at their

school. This was a quantitative study and Jennings et al. identified factors that led

teachers' feelings of emotional fatigue, lack of mindfulness, psychological distress, time

urgency, and teacher efficacy.

Albert (2020) demonstrated the importance of having mentors for novice teachers.

Both novice and experienced teachers need resources to feel supported in teaching their

respective curriculum. In addition to mentoring, support can include observing an

experienced teacher in their classroom, attending professional development, and having a

school-based support system to help these teachers. Therefore, all teachers can benefit

from these experiences.

Specifically, Albert (2020) provided a pseudo-anecdote of an email exchange

between a principal and his novice teachers. The principal knew the positive impact of

having a mentor teacher for beginning teachers. The experienced teachers can relay

information to new teachers on the school's policies, curriculum, and can speak on the relationships between administration and the faculty and staff members.

Bukko et al. (2021) researched practices a principal employed to build trust among his teachers which created a culture of trust and respect. Teachers felt their voices were heard and validated by the principal. By having a transparent leader, the faculty and staff members knew the principal can be trusted. According to Boies and Fiset (2019), central to success is a principal who fosters relationships and creates a positive climate through specific leadership actions and interpersonal behaviors that build and sustain trust.

Bukko et al. (2021) found five common themes in their study. These themes are benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence. According to the teachers, when the principal shows benevolence, they are showing the belief that they want the teachers to do well. The participants believed when the principal knew and understood them as people and trusted them as professionals, the teachers were appreciative, but still knew they are expected to perform. The impact on teachers was that it created "professional relationships, compassion with accountability, and meaningful evaluations that encourage risks creates a climate in which teachers feel valued and capable" (Bukko et al., 2021, p. 66).

Honesty is when the principal's words match their actions (Bukko et al., 2021). The participants believed effective principals stay true to their commitments, clearly communicate their beliefs, and treat everyone with respect. In addition, the principal demonstrated dedication to teachers' success. Also, when the principal has integrity and

respect and holds a commitment to student achievement and teachers believe it as well, new teachers quickly learn it is a team effort at their school.

Openness is when an individual is transparent with information and supports reciprocal trust (Bukko et al., 2021). Teachers believe the principal should show humbleness and model how to be a learning leader. A willingness to learn allows teaches to be vulnerable. They want the principal to be able to explain reasons and provide data for initiatives, and the principal genuinely listens to teachers' ideas. Having a principal willing to listen to their teachers' ideas create a climate where it is a joint effort in achieving the school's goals.

Reliability is when an individual's behaviors are consistent (Bukko et al., 2021). Teachers want the principal to be consistent in actions and communication. Teachers do not want to waste time or energy in trying to understand a principal's desires. Also, teachers communicated that knowing what to expect helps reduce their stress levels.

According to Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003), "Competence is communicated when an individual performs duties in ways that demonstrate knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in ways that meet or exceed expectations" (p. 184). Teachers anticipate leaders know the standards enough to provide meaningful feedback. Teachers value a principal that is knowledgeable about the learning process and is willing to be vulnerable and admit they do not know something but will ask for input and time to find the answer(s).

As a former substitute teacher, the school environment is an aspect I paid close attention to. I would make mental notes based on how I was treated by the office staff members, teachers, and by administration. The school environment can be a deciding

factor when substitute teachers decide to teach full-time. It is more impressive when teachers choose to teach in a restricted environment, such as a correctional institution.

Murphy (2018) studied teachers' commitment when they were teaching in a juvenile correctional facility. She interviewed five teachers as they gave the reasons why they chose to teach there, but more importantly, why they are staying in the prison setting. The reasons why these teachers stayed is because they had a supportive work environment, and they had a chance to collaborate with other colleagues. This study illustrated the importance of culture is in a school. In addition, it emphasized the impact of school leaders on school culture, which determines if a teacher stays or leaves a certain school.

Ansley et al. (2019) sought the reasons why teachers at high needs schools (HNS) chose to leave or stay at these respective schools. According to Haynes (2014) and Ingersoll et al. (2014), HNS generally experience 50% greater turnover rates than average. Therefore, teachers leave HNS for schools that have higher-achieving students. Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that teachers stayed at HNS because working conditions were satisfactory and school climate was positive. Therefore, school leaders must create an environment where there are satisfactory working conditions that promote high-quality work experiences.

Ultimately, school leaders have a direct impact on what they do to help teachers. Working conditions affect teachers' experiences, which ultimately impact student outcomes (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Higher job satisfaction is associated with lower job stress, higher teacher efficacy (Martin et al., 2012), positive interactions among school members, and more robust job commitment.

**Retention**

Chiong (2017) researched why teachers were staying in the profession and how the reasons might have changed over time. He surveyed over 900 teachers that range from their first-year teaching to over 30 years of teaching experience. Chiong determined as teachers increase their experience and mastery of the subject, it led to them wanting to stay longer in the profession. In addition, as confidence in their teaching skills grew, teachers understood the curriculum more and felt more prepared to teach the content. Additionally, Rosenberg (2020) recognized the positive impact of pairing a novice teacher with an experienced veteran, which would be beneficial to both teachers.

Rosenberg (2020) examined a pilot program in Louisiana to determine how a rural school retained their novice teachers in the industry, and more importantly, at their school. They created a schedule where a novice teacher would be paired with an experienced teacher and the two could collaborate on lesson planning and delivery. First, the novice teacher watched the experienced teacher deliver the lesson. Next, the novice teacher would deliver the same lesson. Finally, the experienced teacher followed up with the novice teacher to see how the lesson went in the new teacher's classroom. This pilot program allowed the novice teacher an opportunity to see how a lesson is planned and executed in the classroom. In addition, it allowed for dialogue between teachers to determine what went right with the lesson and how it can be improved in the future.

Hasselquist and Graves (2020) studied retention on mid-level experienced teachers that teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. There were four common themes among these teachers: setting boundaries, shifting priorities/focus, building a professional support network, and innovating in the classroom. These teachers

wanted to ensure that their time was just as valuable as their other colleagues that teach other subjects. Also, they wanted time to build a supporting cast of teachers that understand the content along with the other commitments of CTE teachers. Lastly, these teachers wanted the opportunity to teach their content in an untraditional manner but would be just as effective.

Kamrath and Bradford (2020) wrote a case study examining why teachers chose to stay or leave an urban elementary school. Kamrath and Bradford examined factors that convinced staff members to stay at this school. In addition, they looked at the reasons why people chose to leave the school. Teacher retention was impacted by the deliberate systems that school leaders implemented. Retention was impacted if school leaders could identify reasons why people are leaving, then they recognize and appreciate staff members to ensure that they are willing to come back to teaching at said school.

Imran et al. (2017) studied teachers' motivation and commitment to the organization on its impact on retaining teachers. Also, they looked at the teachers' work presence to see if that had an impact on any motivational factors. When teachers feel motivated, their commitment is high, and they are more likely to stay at their respective school. Latifoglu (2016) studied teachers with different types of employment (full-time, half-time, relief assignment) and principals that determined their career trajectories. He looked at factors on why these teachers decided to stay or leave the profession.

Miller et al. (2020) researched the connection between person-organization and person-group fit and teacher retention. They measured the teacher's type of fit of the person to the organization. The authors conducted surveys to see how participants determined their level of agreement or disagreement with certain statements that

determined their connection to the school, colleagues, and if their professional interests are aligned with the school. When leaders implement or have systems in place where teachers feel connected to the school, it is more likely that teachers will stay at the respective school.

Based on my experiences and conversations with teachers, district leaders are not doing enough to help school leaders. Instead, they are placing leaders in buildings where the expectations for teacher and student performance are low, and morale is low too. For example, when teachers find out who their principal will be, the teachers ask their friends what they know about the "new" principal and base their opinions of them on what they learn. Instead, district leaders need to match school leaders based on the school's needs and the leader's strengths. This matching will occur quickly when the teachers can provide input on what they think the school needs are at the given time.

**Recruitment**

Podolsky et al. (2017) studied what school districts did to recruit new teachers. Also, they interviewed former teachers to identify reasons why people left the profession. Podolsky et al. recorded five strategies that would maintain or increase school districts' teacher retention and recruitment practices. These five strategies are the following: strengthen teacher preparation, improve the hiring of teachers, improve teachers' compensation, provide support to new teachers, and improve teachers' working conditions. Therefore, districts and school leaders need to identify factors to be implemented to assist in attracting and retaining their teachers.

Saunders and Ash (2017) found that a university's teacher preparation program coupled with professional development helped pre-service teachers develop their teacher

identity. They examined if there were a connection between teacher identity and staying in the field. Saunders and Ash determined when teachers are prepared adequately with curriculum and understand the procedures of a classroom, teachers are more willing to stay in the classroom.

Gunther (2019) researched factors that contributed to the retention of teachers. The author wanted to quantify the relative importance of monetary and non-monetary job factors to practicing teachers as they consider the attractiveness of hypothetical schools. It is relevant to my study because districts must come up with benefits (outside of pay) for teachers to stay in their respective districts. This impacted my research because the findings support that both monetary and non-monetary factors can retain teachers in their school and/or district.

**Conclusion**

One of the responsibilities of the leadership team in a school is to build and maintain culture among its staff members. School administrators can implement systems to create culture. In addition, when teachers feel their input is valued and appreciated, they are more likely to stay at the respective school (Jennings et al., 2017). Therefore, it is a connection between having an inviting and respectful culture and teachers choosing to stay at their respective school.

Podolsky et al. (2017) identified factors that could potentially impact teachers' decisions to enter or stay in their district. When new teachers feel prepared and feel they will be more effective in the classroom, it improves student achievement, and teachers will likely remain in the classroom. High-performing districts can utilize a multi-step hiring process when there is enough time to evaluate a candidate's fit based on his or her

experience and candidates meet with the schools' other teachers and staff members.

Districts can improve teachers' pay by being competitive in both monetary and non-

monetary factors with nearby districts. Fourth, when there is a community of caring,

teachers are empowered to solve problems and have frequent, fun faculty social

interactions, which can improve teacher morale (Jenkins, 2017). Finally, teachers'

working conditions strongly predict whether a teacher stays or leaves the classroom or

the district.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

The purpose of my mixed methodology study was to examine what school leadership teams at Title I schools are doing to improve morale and keep teachers from leaving the profession. Teacher turnover is causing teacher shortages across public schools across the United States (Ansley et al., 2019, p. 3). Therefore, many school and district leaders are trying to determine ways to improve morale and retain teachers within the district.

## Research Design Overview

This program evaluation was a mixed-methods design, which combined quantitative and qualitative data (Patton, 2012). First, I surveyed how leadership systems created by school leaders affect the reasons why teachers stay or leave a school. I interviewed school leaders to identify what systems they used to improve morale at their schools. Second, I surveyed former teachers to determine why they chose to leave the profession. I sent out a survey to 350 teachers at five Title I schools in the southeastern part of the United States. In addition, I interviewed current school and district leaders to determine what systems they implemented to keep morale high. I also investigated reasons why teachers stayed at their respective schools. Also, I surveyed former teachers that left the profession. Lastly, using this methodology, I answered my research questions because I could see if there were any current themes of (a) why people stay at their school, (b) what school and district leaders did to keep their teachers, and (c) why people have left the profession entirely.

The survey, which took an estimated two minutes to complete was given to current teachers of five Title I schools. For a complete list of questions to current

teachers, see Appendix A. The interviews for school and district leaders took approximately 30 minutes and were held on Zoom for recording purposes. For a complete list of questions to school and district leaders, see Appendix B. The questions I asked former teachers can be found in Appendix C.

**Participants**

There were three stakeholder groups in this program evaluation: teachers, school administrators, and a district leader. I sent a total of 350 surveys to teachers and 223 teachers from the five schools responded. In addition, I interviewed four current school administrators from two schools and a district leader at a southeastern school district. Specifically, I interviewed one principal and one assistant principal from at each of the two middle schools to determine what they are doing to keep their staff members employed in their schools. To maintain confidentiality, I did not interview the administrators at my workplace. I sent a survey to all 350 current teachers to determine the reasons why they chose to stay at their respective schools. For the 223 teachers who responded to the survey, age ranged from 20-70 years old and included both genders. I interviewed two school administrators at two middle schools to identify what these school leaders do to increase morale and improve retention. Lastly, I surveyed four former teachers to determine the reasons why they left the teaching profession.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

*Teacher Survey*

I surveyed 350 current teachers spanning five Title I schools and 223 teachers from three middle schools and two high schools responded to the survey. I sent an email

to the respective schools introducing myself and my study. I sent an email once a week for three weeks asking for teachers to complete the anonymous survey (see Appendix A).

### School Administrator/District Leader Interviews

I interviewed two school administrators (one principal and one assistant principal) from two different Title I middle schools. In addition, I interviewed a district leader. Each interview conducted lasted approximately thirty minutes. The interviews were conducted over Zoom and audio recorded so they could be referenced or referred to later. An email with the consent form was sent out prior to each interview (see Appendix B).

### Former Teachers Surveys

I surveyed four former teachers to see why former teachers left the profession. The list of questions can be found in Appendix C.

## Data Analysis Techniques

A Likert scale was utilized in the current teacher survey to identify how important a leadership trait or system is to determine if a teacher chooses to stay or leave a school. This helped determine how important these traits are in a school according to teachers. I will be able to identify specific skills and practices that had the more positive influences on teachers.

I conducted the interviews with school leaders and district personnel to see if there were any common themes between the leaders. As I listened to the interviews, I took notes to identify strategies school and district leaders have done for their teachers. The analysis enabled me to connect how these leaders' actions impacted the school's culture and teachers in a positive manner. This helped me to identify specific actions school and district leaders did to improve morale at their respective schools. Also, it

means it can be duplicated at other schools to keep teachers at their respective schools and keep morale high in these schools. After listening to all interviews and rereading the transcripts, three categories for the leaders' responses were determined. These categories include incentives, culture, and support of teachers.

**Ethical Considerations**

Survey participants completed consent forms prior to taking the survey. The survey was online and anonymous. I did not collect names from any of the participants. The participants told me what grade level they taught but I had no way of knowing the identity of the participants. For the interviewees, they received an email consent form prior to the interview. I used a pseudonym for interviewees to maintain their confidentiality.

There are no anticipated risks to participants in this program evaluation beyond that of everyday life. Participation is voluntary. For interviews, participants did not have to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable.

I chose the participants from five Title I schools within the region of the researcher. I selected the school leaders and district leader based on the school where the teachers completed the survey. The participants could leave the study at any time.

**Limitations**

The limitations were the small sample size of five Title I schools, and I only surveyed teachers located in the western part of the district. In addition, I did not survey teachers or administrators from non-Title I schools to compare reasons why people leave or stay at a specific school. Also, the number of teachers completing the survey was a small sample size compared to the number of teachers working for the district. Another

limitation was not having enough leadership perspectives on how to improve morale and increase retention at Title I schools.

There were not enough leaders during the study available to interview during the research period. I did not interview more school leaders because it was during the summer and the school leaders were on vacation or busy with other professional duties. However, I was able to secure four interviews with school leaders and one interview with a district representative.

**Conclusion**

Over 200 current teachers (n=223) took the time to complete the survey. Five school and district leaders were able to meet with me to discuss their beliefs on why teachers are staying or leaving their schools. School leaders were candid in sharing their thoughts on systems they put in place to keep teachers at their school. In addition, school leaders gave suggestions on what can be done to keep teachers in the district. Finally, a district leader provided insight into what district leaders can do to help school leadership teams and teachers.

**Chapter Four: Results**

The purpose of this study was to identify the skills that school and district leaders possess to keep teachers at their schools. School leaders are responsible for creating a culture of respect, integrity, and collaboration. I surveyed 350 teachers and received 223 responses across five schools to identify how vital school leaders' skill sets are concerning why teachers stay or leave a given school. Two high schools and three middle schools participated in this study. First, I met with each school's principal asking for permission to survey the teachers via email. Then, I sent out an email to the faculty members asking them to take two minutes of their time to complete the survey. Also, I asked the school leader if I could interview with them later. Next, I used a Likert scale to determine how influential a leadership trait or school culture is to those taking the survey about choosing to stay at their school. Also, I interviewed a principal and assistant principal at two different schools to identify specific systems they put in place to retain their teaching talent in their school. Further, I interviewed a district representative to determine what district leaders can do to support school leaders and teachers. Also, I surveyed four former teachers to see why former teachers left the profession.

**Findings**

I asked a total of five survey questions to 223 current educators at five schools. I am presenting the answers to each survey question in the same order by sharing responses from educators in School A (n=23), then School B (n=31), School C (n=9), School D (n=30), and School E (n=20). Lastly, I share the responses from the group of teachers that did not identify their home school (n=110) for each question. I recorded the response with the highest score first throughout the findings.

*Teacher Survey*

**Survey Question 1: How important is school culture to your job satisfaction?**

*School A.* School A is a Title I high school with approximately 1,600 students and 92 teachers. The school's demographics are the following: 57.0% White, 28.0% Hispanic, 8.0% Black, 5.0% Multi-Cultural, 1.0% Asian, and 0.5% of subgroups. Twenty-three (25% of the school population) of the teachers answered the first survey question (see Figure 1). The most common response was school culture was very important to job satisfaction from 47.8% of teachers (n=11). In addition, 26.1% (n=6) reported it was unimportant, 17.4% (n=4) indicated it was important, 4.3 % (n=1) reported neutral, and 4.3% (n=1) reported school culture was somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.

**Figure 1**

*Teacher Survey Question 1: School A*
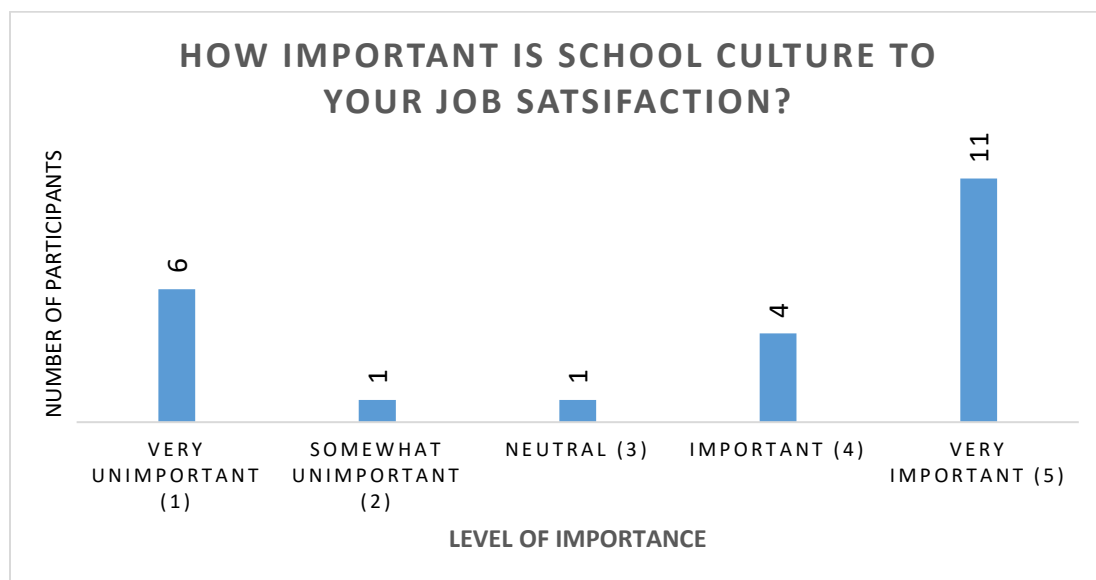


*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 23)

**School B.**  School B is a Title I high school with a little over 1,200 students and 66 teachers. The school's demographics are the following: 74.4% White, 15.3% Hispanic, 4.8% Black, 4.1% Multi-Cultural, 1.1% Asian, and 0.3% of subgroups. Thirty-one (47% of the school population) of the teachers answered the first survey question (see Figure 2). The most common response was culture was very important for job satisfaction for 48.4% of teachers (n=15).  In addition, 29.0%. (n=9) indicated it was important, 16.1% (n=5) indicated neutral, 6.5% (n=2) indicated unimportantly, and no respondents reported school culture was somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.

**Figure 2**

*Teacher Survey Question 1: School B*



*Note.*  Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 31)

**School C.** School C is a Title I sixth through eighth grade middle school with approximately 750 students and 55 teachers. The school's demographics are the following: 72.5% White, 17.0% Hispanic, 4.7% Black, 0.5% Multi-Cultural, 0.0% Asian,

and 0.8% of subgroups. Nine (16% of the school population) of the teachers answered the first survey question (see Figure 3). The most common response was school culture was very important to job satisfaction for 55.6% of the teachers (n=5). However, 33.3% (n=3) found it unimportant. In addition, 11.1% (n=1) found it important and no teachers reported school culture was neutral and somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.

**Figure 3**
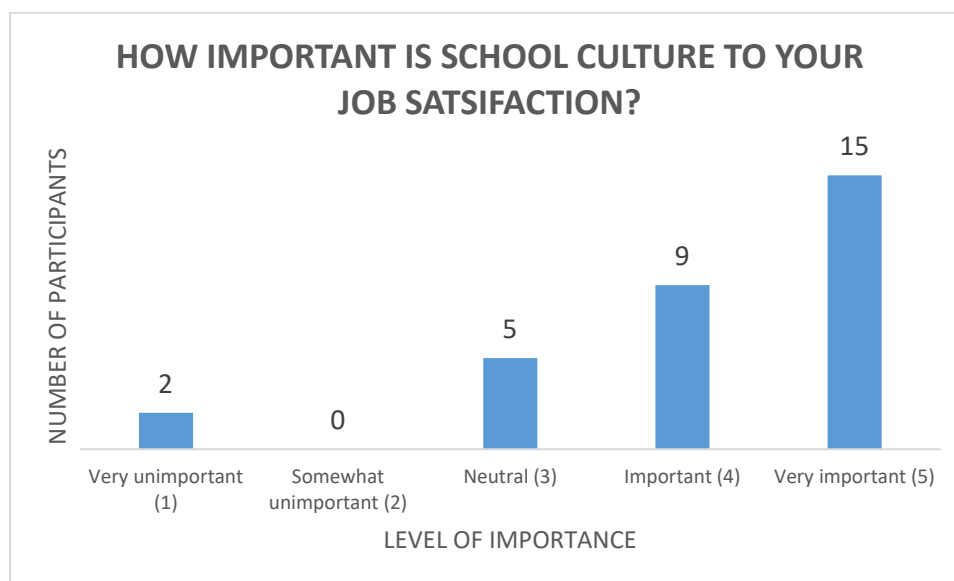
*Teacher Survey Question 1: School C*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 9)

**School D.** School D is a Title I sixth through eighth grade middle school with approximately 1,000 students with 77 teachers. The school's demographics are the following: 54.3% White, 26.5% Hispanic, 10.2% Black, 6.3% Multi-Cultural, 2.5% Asian, and 0.0% of subgroups. Twenty-three (25% of the school population) of the teachers answered the first survey question (see Figure 4). The most common response was school culture was important to job satisfaction for 46.7% of teachers (n=14). In

addition, 36.7%. (n=11) found it very important, 10.0% (n=3) indicated it was very unimportant, 3.3% (n=1) indicated it was neutral, and 3.3% (n=1) indicated school culture was somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.

**Figure 4**
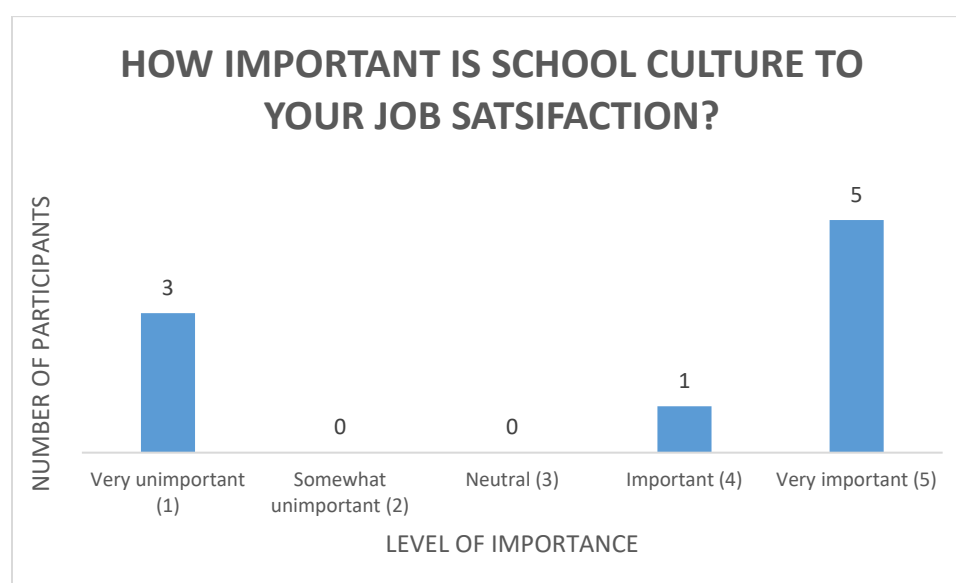
*Teacher Survey Question 1: School D*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 30)

**School E.** School E is a Title I academy that serves fourth through eighth grade with approximately 1,000 students and 54 teachers. The school's demographics are the following: 73.9% White, 15.9% Hispanic, 3.6% Black, 4.7% Multi-Cultural, 0.0% Asian, and 1.9% of subgroups. Twenty (37% of the school population) of the teachers answered the first survey question (see Figure 5). The most common response was school culture was very important to job satisfaction from 70.0% of the teachers (n=14). In addition, 15.0% (n=3) indicated it was neutral, 10.0%. (n=2) found it was important, 5.0% (n=1)

indicated it was very unimportant, and no teachers indicated school culture was somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.
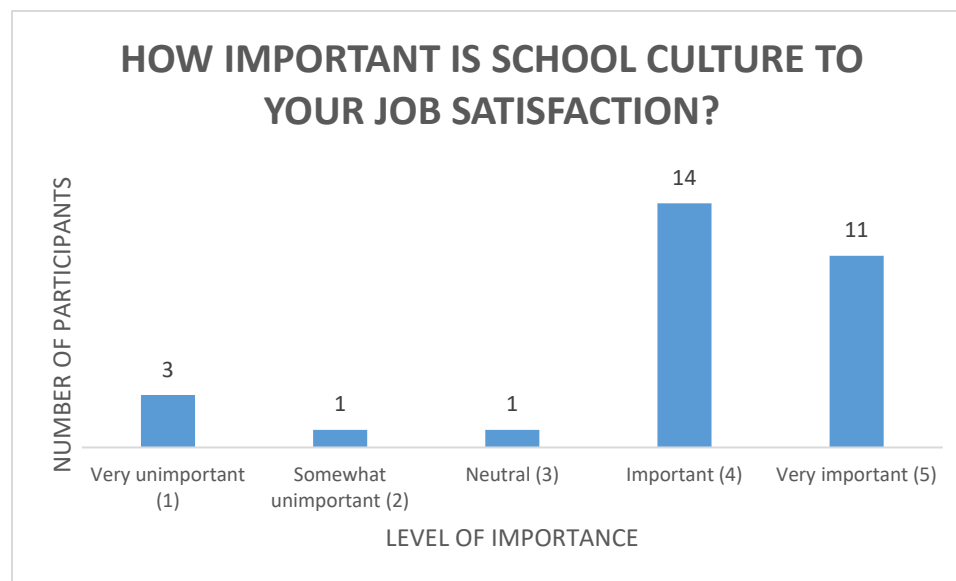
**Figure 5**

*Teacher Survey Question 1: School E*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 20)

**School not Identified.** When I first wrote the survey, I did not ask teachers to identify at which school they worked. Still, I added that question after the first 110 responses—knowing which school allows me to make correlations between the interview responses and the teachers' survey responses. Figure 6 is a graph of how the remaining 110 teachers answered the first survey question. The most common response was school culture was very important to job satisfaction for 54.5% of the teachers (n=60). In addition, 26.4%. (n=29) reported it was important, 10.9% (n=12) reported it was very unimportant, 4.5% (n=5) indicated it was neutral, and 3.6% (n=4) reported school culture was somewhat unimportant to job satisfaction.
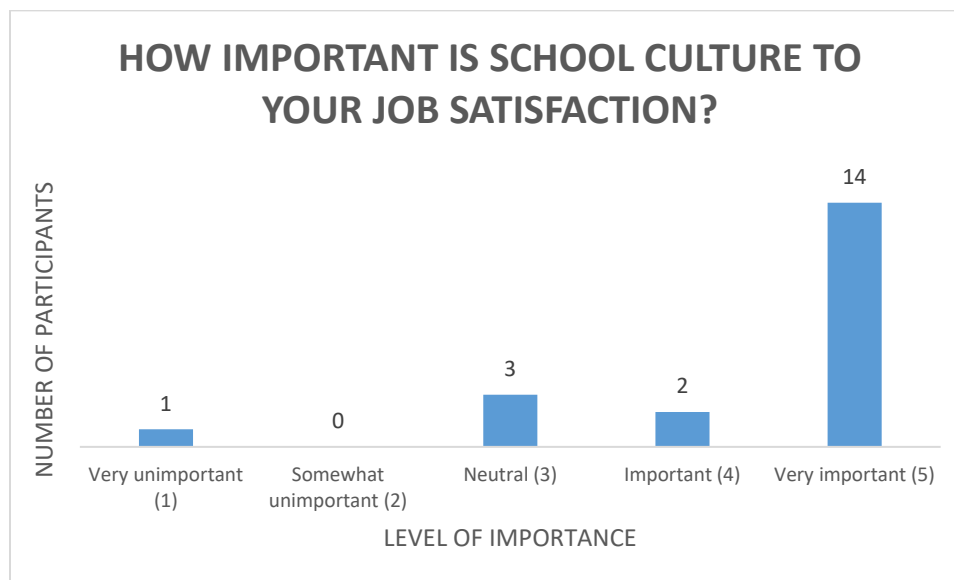
**Figure 6**

*Teacher Survey Question 1: School not Identified*
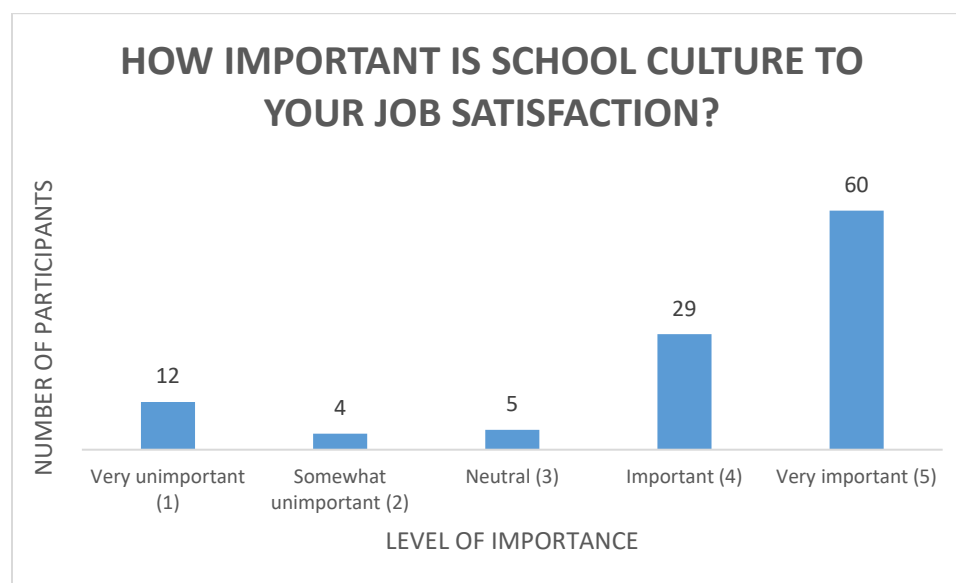


**HOW IMPORTANT IS SCHOOL CULTURE TO YOUR JOB SATISFACTION?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to how important school culture to job satisfaction (n = 110)

Overall, approximately 79% of teachers find school culture to be very important and important to job satisfaction. In addition, more teachers in high schools than middle schools answered school culture was very unimportant.

**Survey Question 2: How important is administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction?**

*School A.* As shown in Figure 7, the highest response for School A was very important with 47.8% (11 responses). The important category had 17.4% (four responses). The neutral category had 8.7% (two responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 4.3% (one response). The very unimportant category had 21.7% (five responses).

**Figure 7**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School A*
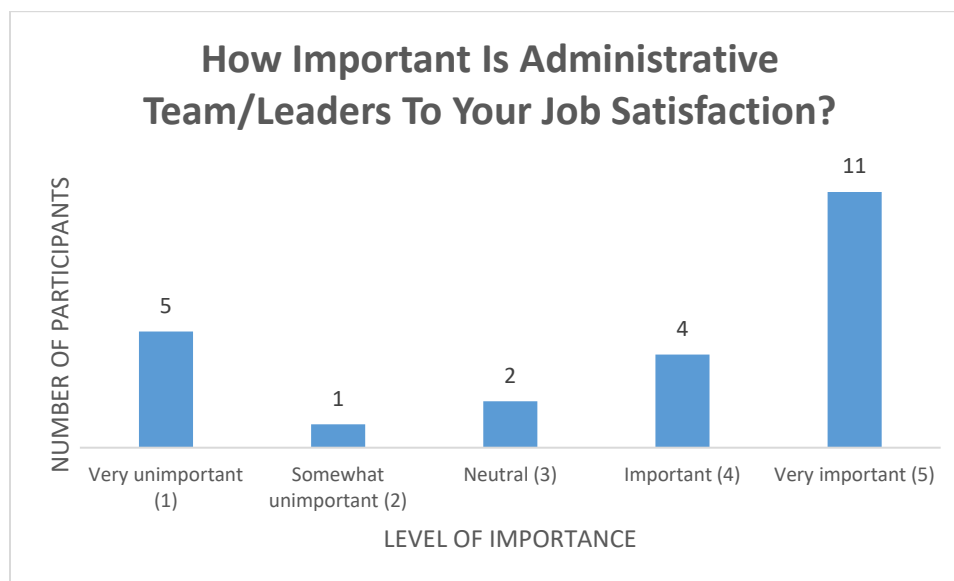


*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 23)

**School B.** In School B (see Figure 8), the highest response was very important with 54.8% (17 responses). The important category had 25.8% (eight responses). The neutral category had 9.7% (three responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 9.7% (three responses).

**Figure 8**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School B*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 31)

**School C.** As shown in Figure 9, the highest response for School C was very important with 55.6% (five responses). The important category had 11.1% (one response). The neutral category had 0.0% (zero responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 33.3% (three responses).

**Figure 9**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School C*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 9)

**School D.** In School D (see Figure 10), the highest response was very important with 56.7% (17 responses). The important category had 26.7% (eight responses). The neutral category had 0.0% (zero responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 6.6% (two responses). The very unimportant category had 10.0% (three responses).

**Figure 10**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School D*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 30)

**School E.** In School E (see Figure 11), the highest response was very important with 50.0% (10 responses). The important category had 30.0% (six responses). The neutral category had 10.0% (two responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 5.0% (one response). The very unimportant category had 5.0% (one response).
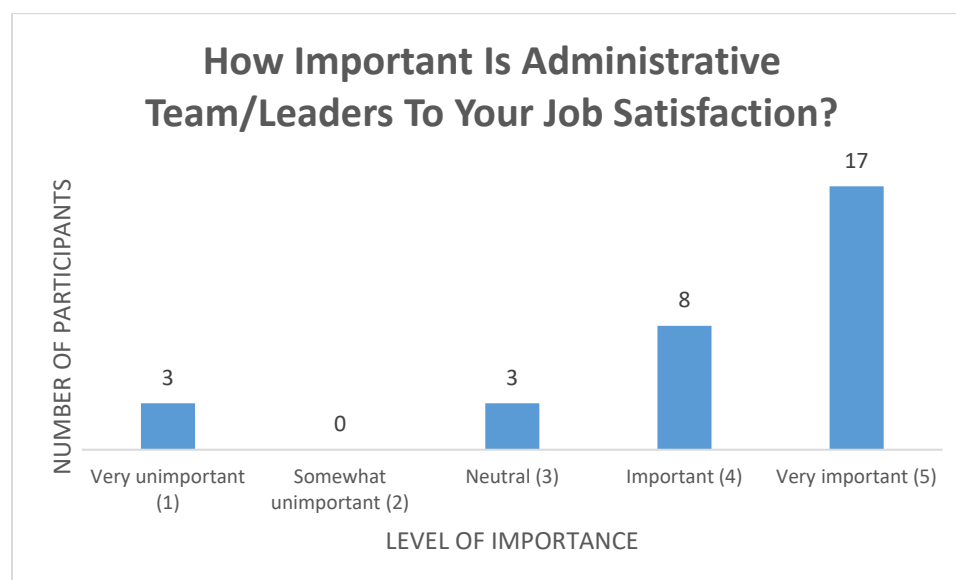
**Figure 11**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School E*
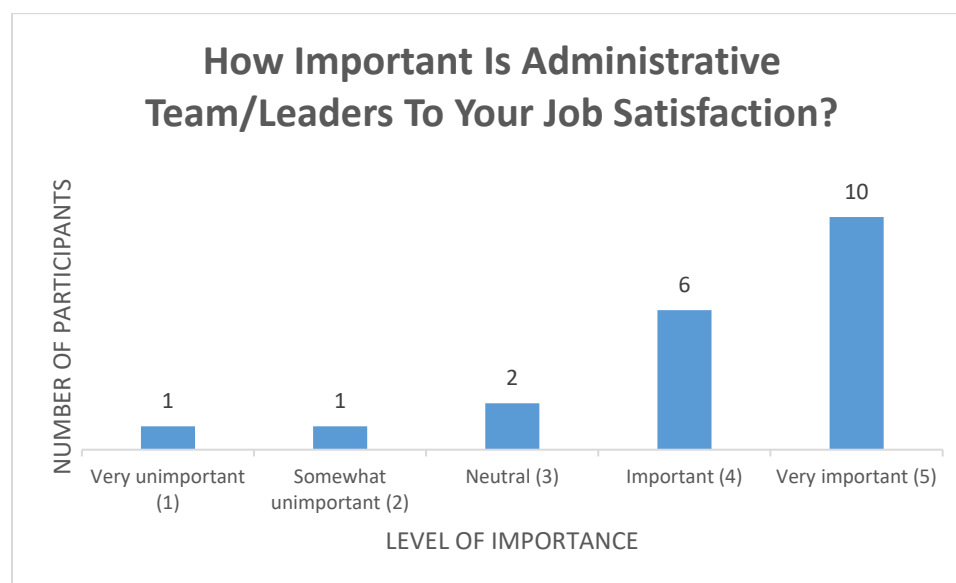


*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative

team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 20)

***School not Identified.*** When I first wrote the survey, I did not ask teachers to

identify at which school they worked. Still, I added that question after the first 110

responses—knowing which school allows me to correlate the interview responses and the

teachers' survey responses. Figure 12 shows how the teachers who did not identify their

home school answered the second survey question: How important are the administrative

team/leaders to your job satisfaction? The highest response was very important, with

64.5% (71 responses). The important category had 19.1%. (21 responses). The neutral

category had 3.6% (four responses). The somewhat unimportant categories each had

4.5% (five). The very unimportant category had 8.2% (nine responses).

**Figure 12**

*Teacher Survey Question 2: School Not Identified*



**How Important Is Administrative Team/Leaders To Your Job Satisfaction?**

(Bar chart) NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (y-axis) vs LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE (x-axis)

- Very unimportant (1): 9
- Somewhat unimportant (2): 5
- Neutral (3): 4
- Important (4): 21
- Very important (5): 71

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to how important administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction (n = 110)

Overall, 80.0% of teachers believed school administrative team leaders are essential to job satisfaction. There is a strong connection between the administration team and their teachers. District leaders need to know this fact about placing school leaders in certain schools. When a school leader promotes a positive work climate, teachers are more likely to have higher job satisfaction.

**Survey Question 3: How important is having your opportunities for growth as a Team Leader, Department Head, Coach, etc. to your job satisfaction?**

*School A.* As shown in Figure 13, the highest response for School A was very important with 30.4% (seven responses). The important category had 17.4% (four responses). The neutral category had 21.7% (five responses). The somewhat unimportant

category had 17.4% (four responses). The very unimportant category had 13.0% (three responses).
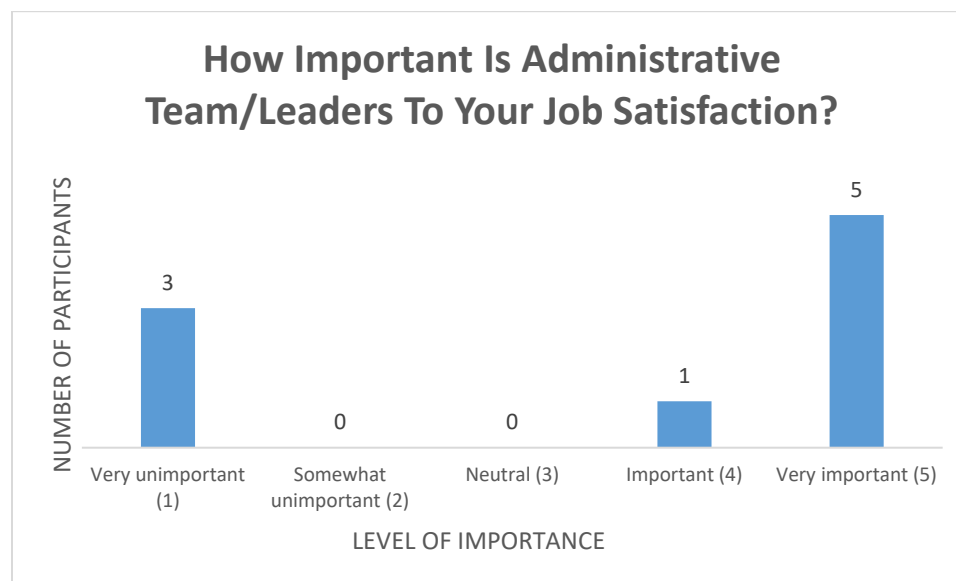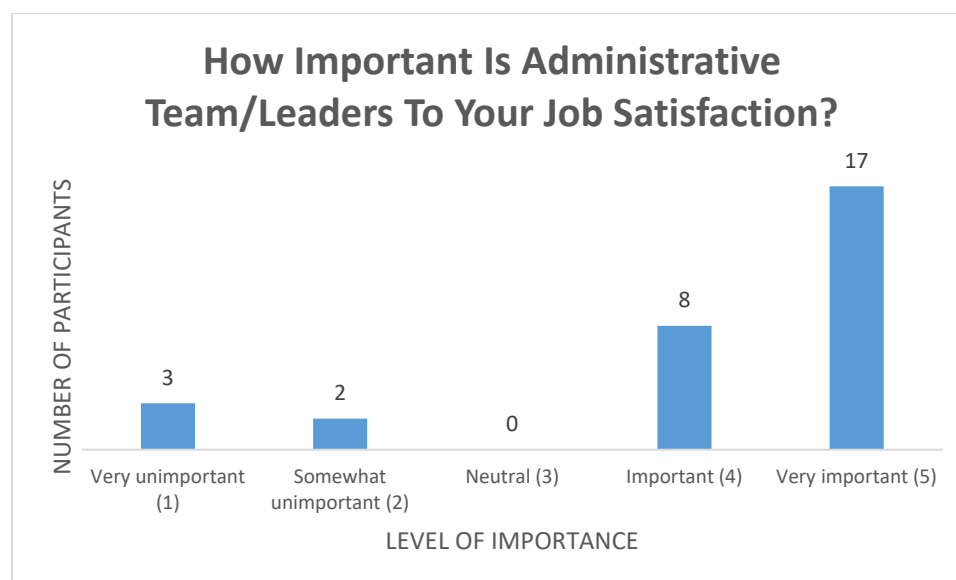
**Figure 13**

*Teacher Survey Question 3: School A*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important is having opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job satisfaction (n = 23)

**School B.** In School B, this time the highest category was not very important, but important (See Figure 14). The numbers were as follows. The very important category had 19.4% (six responses). The important category had 41.9% (13 responses). The neutral category had 19.4% (six responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 6.5% (two responses). The very unimportant category had 12.9% (four responses).
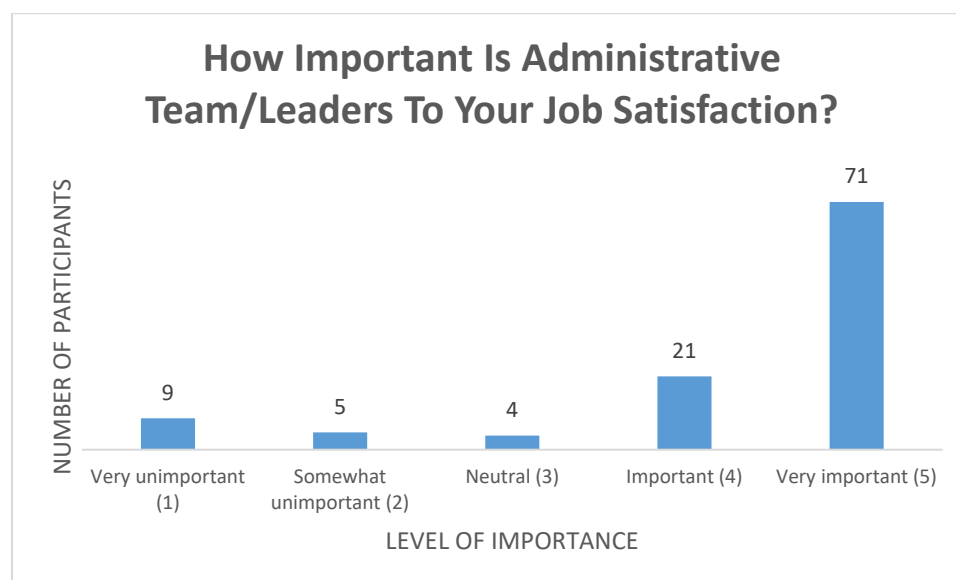
**Figure 14**

*Teacher Survey Question 3: School B*



**How Important Is Having Your Opportunities For Growth (Team Leader, Department Head, Coach) To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important is having opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job satisfaction (n = 31)

**School C.** In School C, this time the neutral category was the highest response (Figure 15). The numbers were as follows. The very important category had 0.0% (zero responses). The important category had 22.2% (two responses). The neutral category had 55.6% (five responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 22.2% (two responses). Again, the very unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses).

**Figure 15**

*Teacher Survey Question 3: School C*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important is having opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job satisfaction (n = 9)

**School D.** This time in School D, the highest response was important instead of very important (Figure 16). The numbers are as follows. The very important category had 6.6% (two responses). The important category had 46.7% (14 responses). The neutral category had 23.3% (seven responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 13.3% (four responses). The very unimportant category had 10.0% (three responses).

**Figure 16**

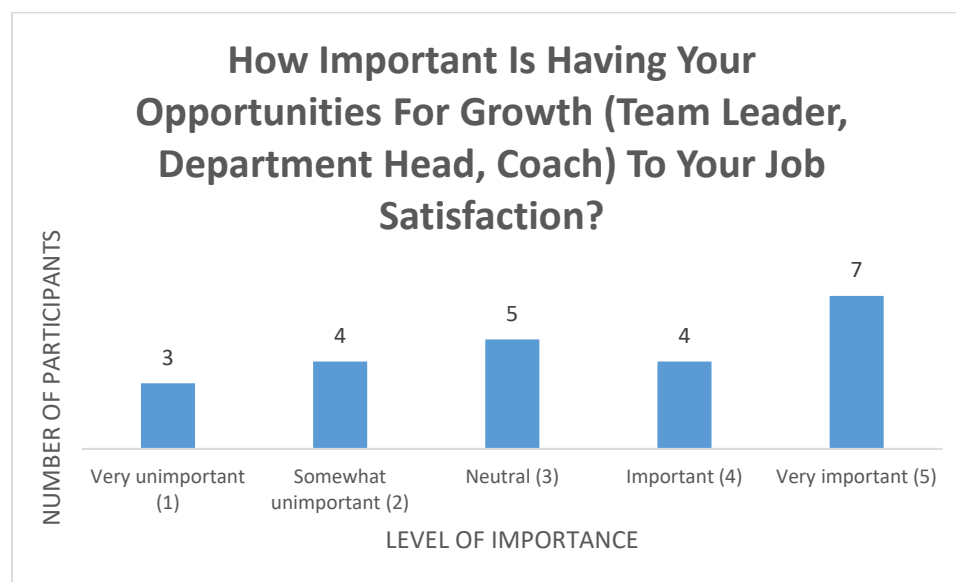*Teacher Survey Question 3: School D*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important is having opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job satisfaction (n = 30)

**School E.** This time in School E, the highest response was important ahead of very important (Figure 17). The numbers are as follows. The very important category had 25.0% (five responses). The important category had 40.0% (eight responses). The neutral category had 25.0% (five responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 5.0% (one response). The very unimportant category had 5.0% (one response).

**Figure 17**

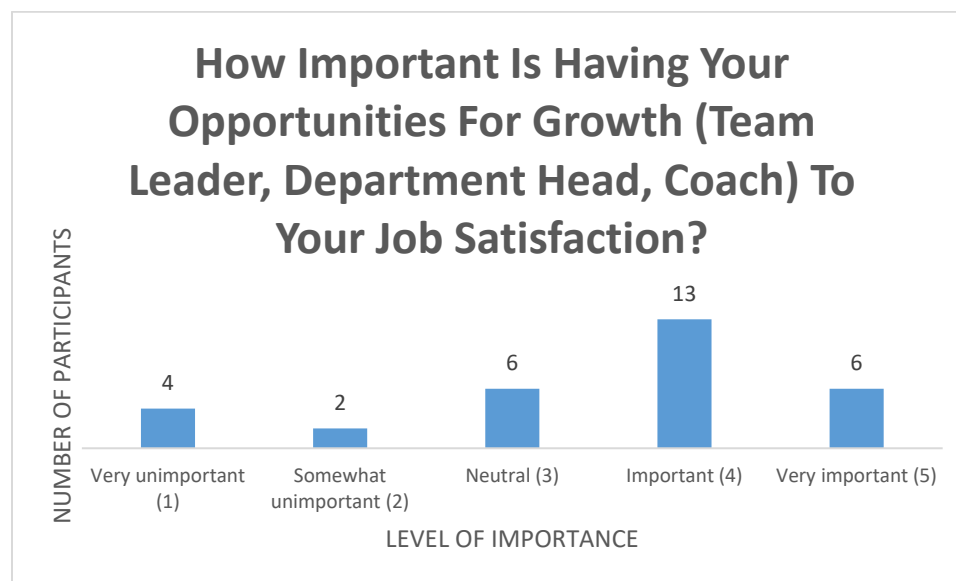*Teacher Survey Question 3: School E*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important is having

opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job

satisfaction (n = 20)

**School not Identified.** When I first wrote the survey, I did not ask teachers to

identify. Still, after the first 110 responses, I added that question—knowing which school

allows me to correlate the interview and teacher responses. Figure 18 is a graph of how

the remaining teachers answered the question teachers answered the third survey

question: How important is having your opportunities for growth (team leader,

department head, coach) to your job satisfaction? At this time, the highest response was

neutral. The important category had 25.5%. (27 responses). The very important category

had 18.2% (20 responses). The neutral category had 34.5% (38 responses). The

somewhat unimportant categories each had 13.6% (15 responses). The very unimportant

category had 8.2% (nine responses). Nine tenths of a percent did not answer this question (one response).

**Figure 18**
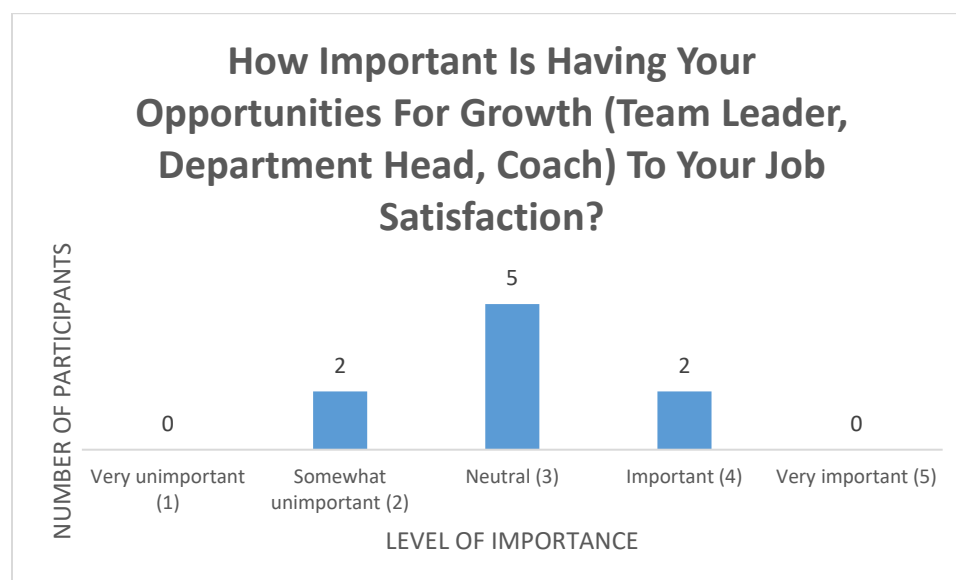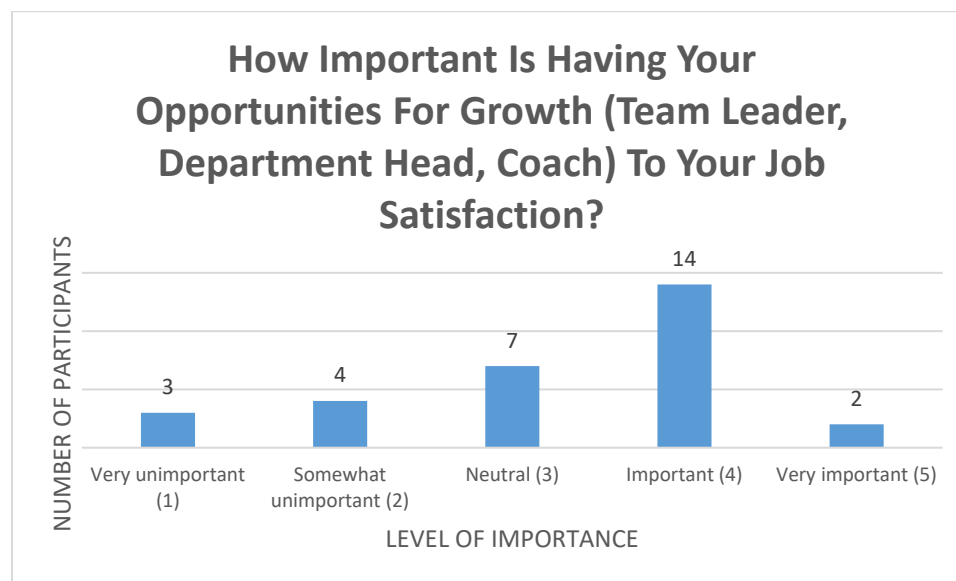
*Teacher Survey Question 3: School not Identified*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to how important having opportunities for growth (team leader, department head, coach, etc. to your job satisfaction (n = 110)

**Survey Question 4: How important is having your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction?**

*School A.* As shown in Figure 19, in School A, the highest response was very important, with 43.5% (10 responses). The important category had 17.4% (four responses). The neutral category had 13.0% (three responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 26.1% (six responses).

**Figure 19**

*Teacher Survey Question 4: School A*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 23)

**School B.** As shown in Figure 20, in School B, the highest response was very important, with 45.2% (14 responses). The important category had 35.5% (11 responses). The neutral category had 6.5% (two responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 3.2% (one response). The very unimportant category had 9.7% (three responses).

**Figure 20**

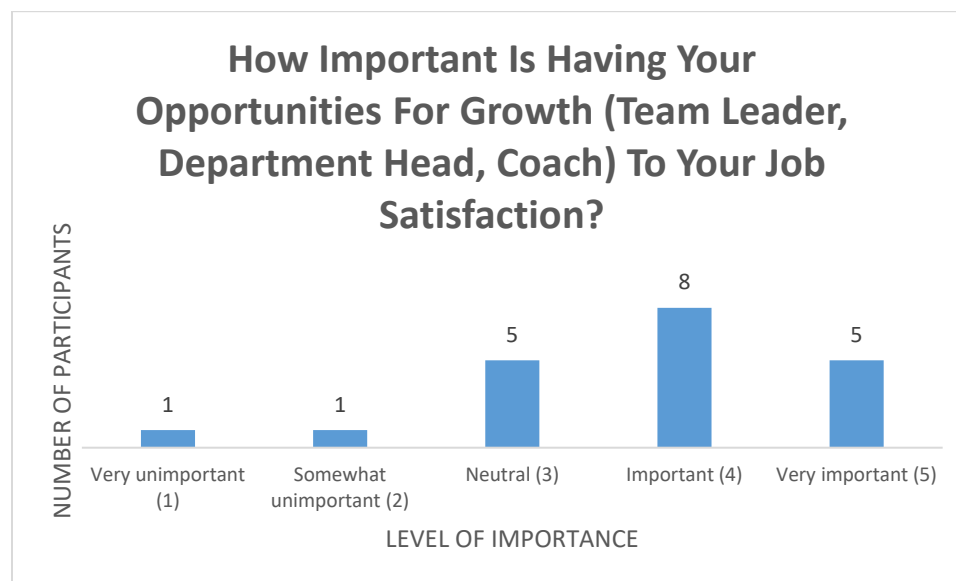*Teacher Survey Question 4: School B*



How Important Is Your Relationship With Your Colleagues To Your Job Satisfaction?

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 31)

**School C.** The fourth question in the survey was "How important is your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 21, in School C, the highest response was very important with 44.4% (four responses). The important category had 22.2% (two responses). The neutral category had 0.0% (zero responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 11.1% (one response). The very unimportant category had 22.2% (two responses).
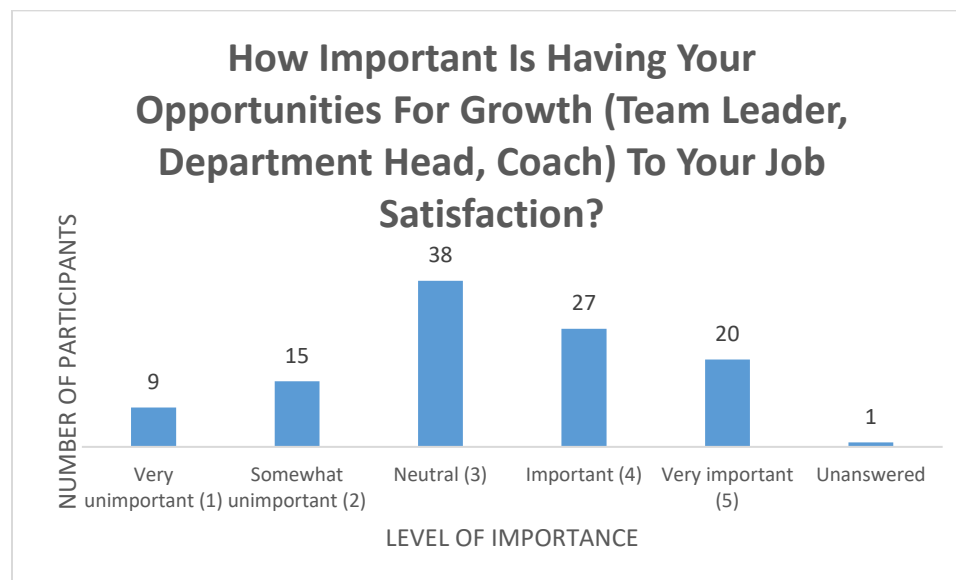
**Figure 21**

*Teacher Survey Question 4: School C*



**How Important Is Your Relationship With Your Colleagues To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 9)

**School D.** The fourth question in the survey was "How important is your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 22, in School D, the highest response was very important with 36.6% (11 responses). In addition, the important category had 36.6% (11 responses). The neutral category had 6.6% (two responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 6.6% (two responses). The very unimportant category had 10.0% (three responses). Three and a third percent did not answer the question (one response).
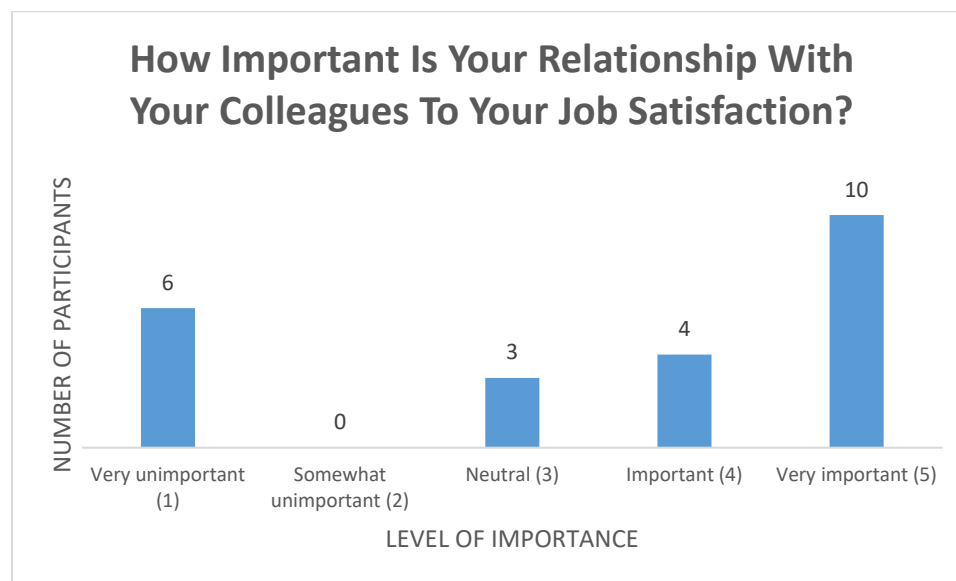
**Figure 22**

*Teacher Survey Question 4: School D*



**How Important Is Your Relationship With Your Colleagues To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 30)

**School E.** The fourth question in the survey was "How important is your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 23, in School E, the highest response was very important with 40.0% (eight responses). The important category had 30.0% (six responses). The neutral category had 15.0% (three responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 10.0% (two responses). The very unimportant category had 5.0% (one response).

**Figure 23**

*Teacher Survey Question 4: School E*



**How Important Is Your Relationship With Your Colleagues To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 20)

**School not Identified.** When I first wrote the survey, I did not ask teachers to identify. Still, I added that question after the first 110 responses—knowing which school allows me to correlate the interview and teacher responses. Figure 24 is a graph of how the remaining teachers answered the question teachers answered the fourth survey question: How important is your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction? The highest response was very important with 46.3% (51 responses). The important category had 31.8%. (35 responses). The neutral category had 8.2% (nine responses) The somewhat unimportant category had 4.5% (five responses). The very unimportant category had 9.1% (10 responses).

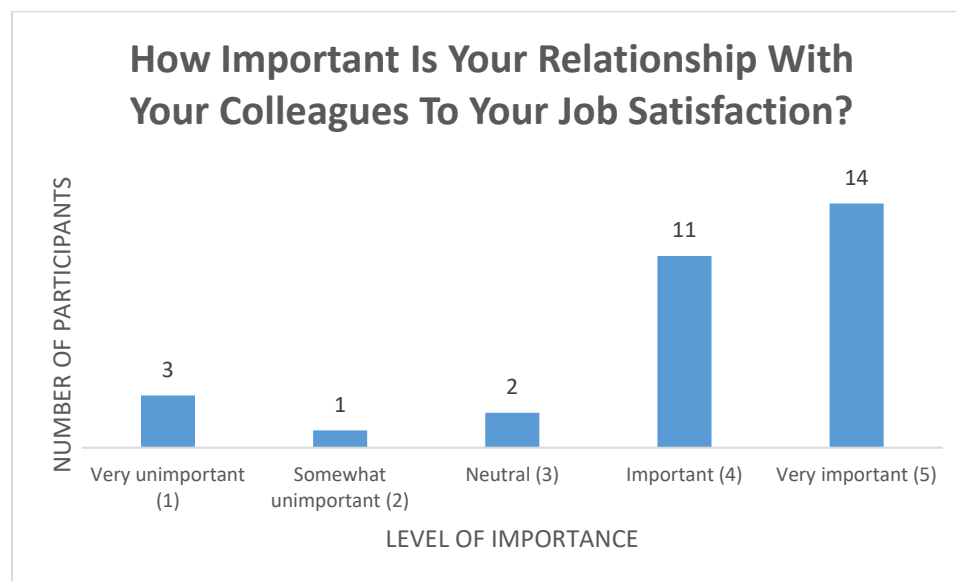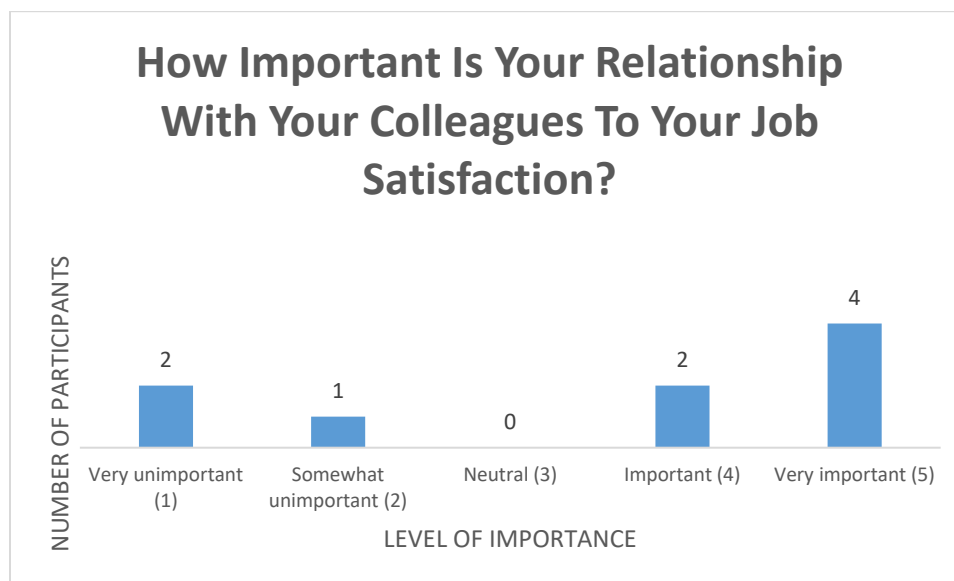**Figure 24**

*Teacher Survey Question 4: School not Identified*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 110)

**Survey Question 5: How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction?**

*School A.* As shown in Figure 25, in School A, the highest response was very important with 34.8% (eight responses). The important category had 30.4% (seven responses). The neutral category had 4.3% (one responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 30.4% (seven responses).

**Figure 25**

*Teacher Survey Question 5: School A*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 23)

**School B.** The fifth question in the survey was, "How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 26, in School B, the highest response was very important, with 51.6% (16 responses). The important category had 16.1% (five responses). In addition, the neutral category had 16.1% (five responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 3.2% (one response). The very unimportant category had 12.9% (four responses).

**Figure 26**
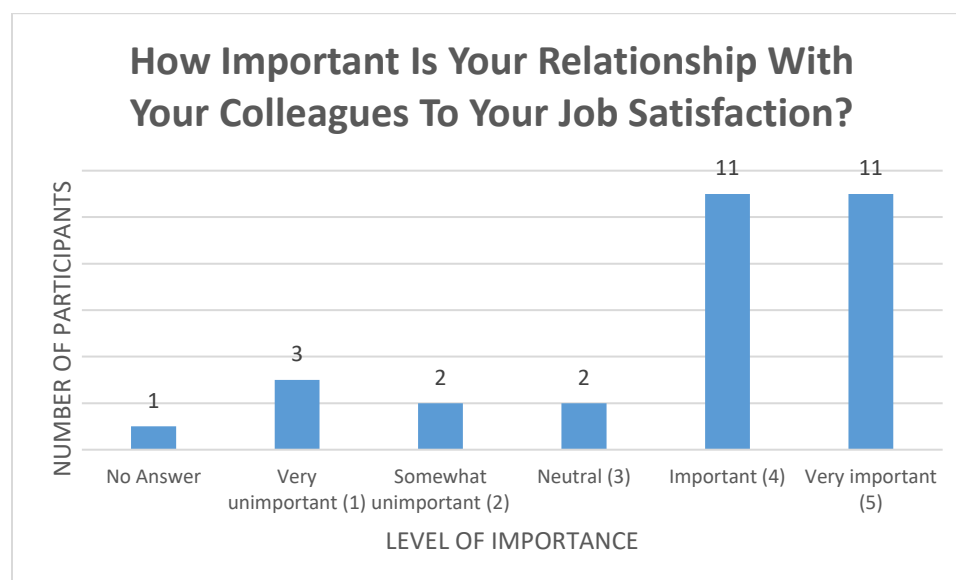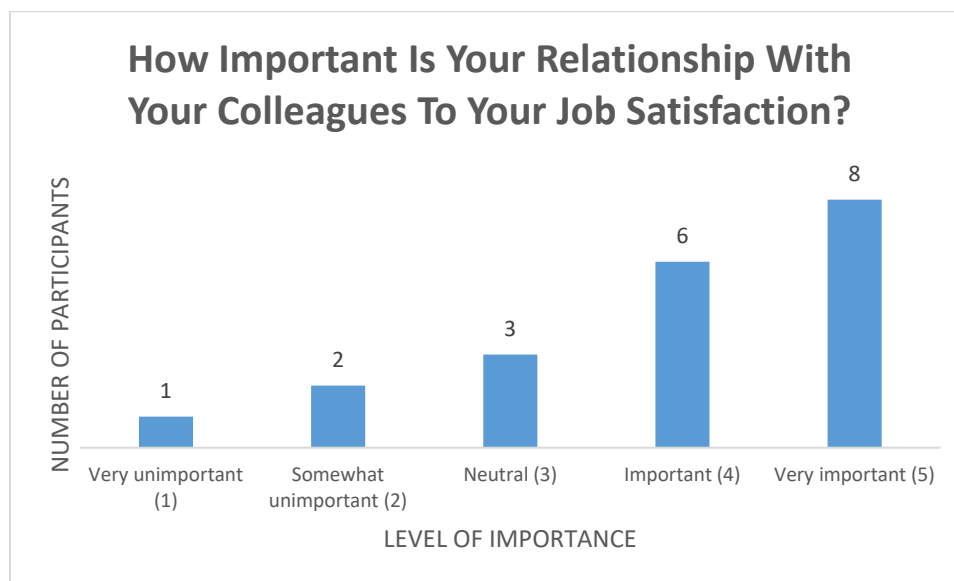
*Teacher Survey Question 5: School B*



*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 31)

**School C.** The fifth question in the survey was, "How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 27, in School C, the highest responses were very important and very unimportant with 33.3% (three responses each). The important category had 22.2% (two responses). The neutral category had 11.1% (one response). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 33.3% (three responses).

**Figure 27**

*Teacher Survey Question 5: School C*



**How Important Is Your Subject(s) You Teach In Relation To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 9)

***School D.*** The fifth question in the survey was, "How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 28, in School D, the highest response was very important, with 60% (18 responses). The important category had 16.6% (five responses). In addition, the neutral category had 16.6% (five responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 3.3% (one response). Also, the very unimportant category had 3.3% (one response).
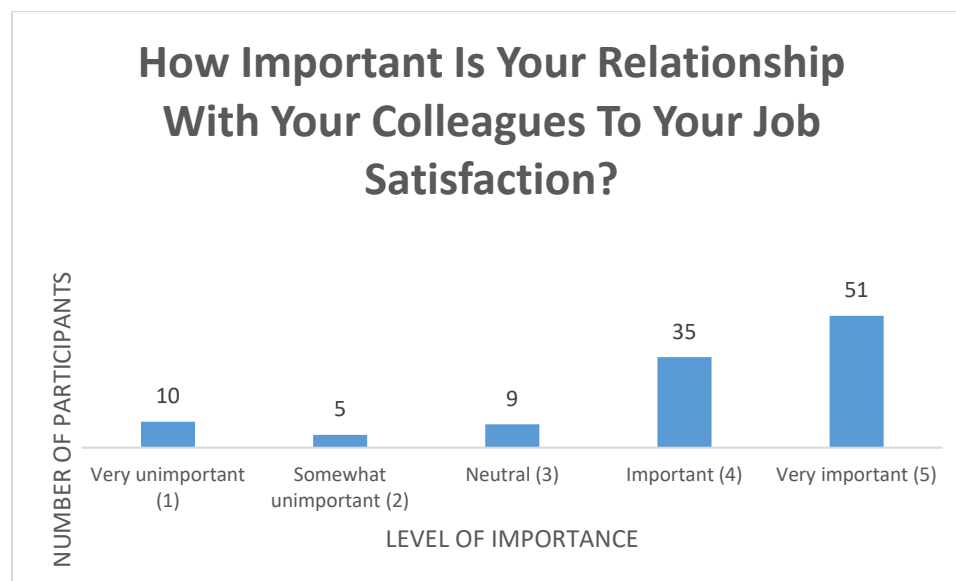
**Figure 26**

*Teacher Survey Question 5: School D*
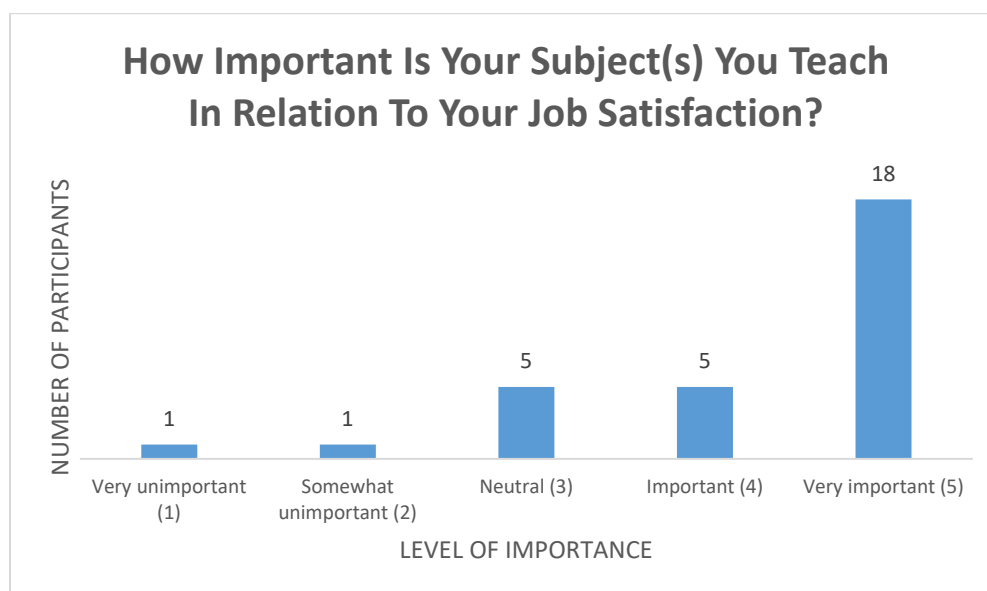


How Important Is Your Subject(s) You Teach In Relation To Your Job Satisfaction?

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 30)

**School E.** The fifth question in the survey was, "How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction"? As shown in Figure 26, in School E, the highest response was very important, with 70.0% (14 responses). The important category had 5.0% (one response). The neutral category had 20.0% (four responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 0.0% (zero responses). The very unimportant category had 5.0% (one response).
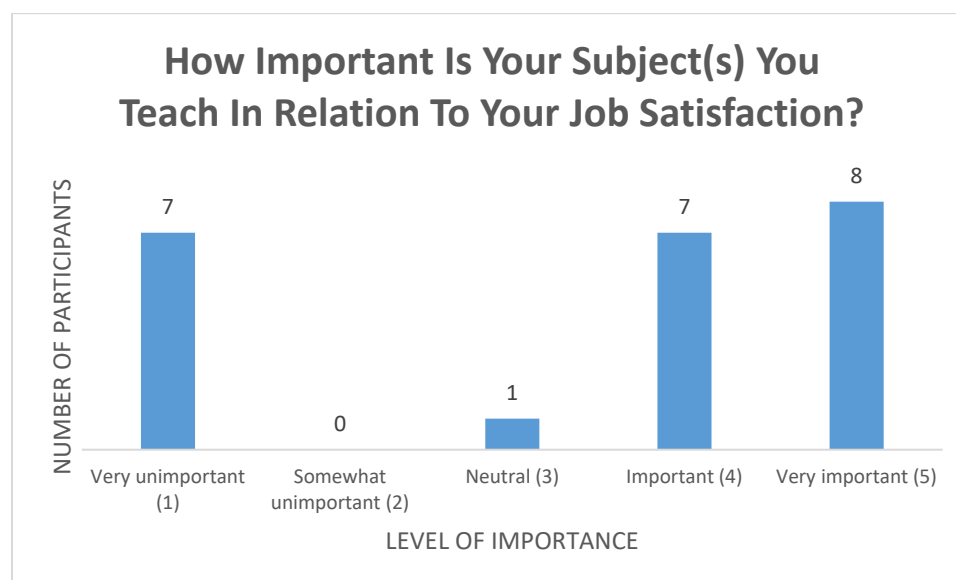
**Figure 29**

*Teacher Survey Question 5: School E*
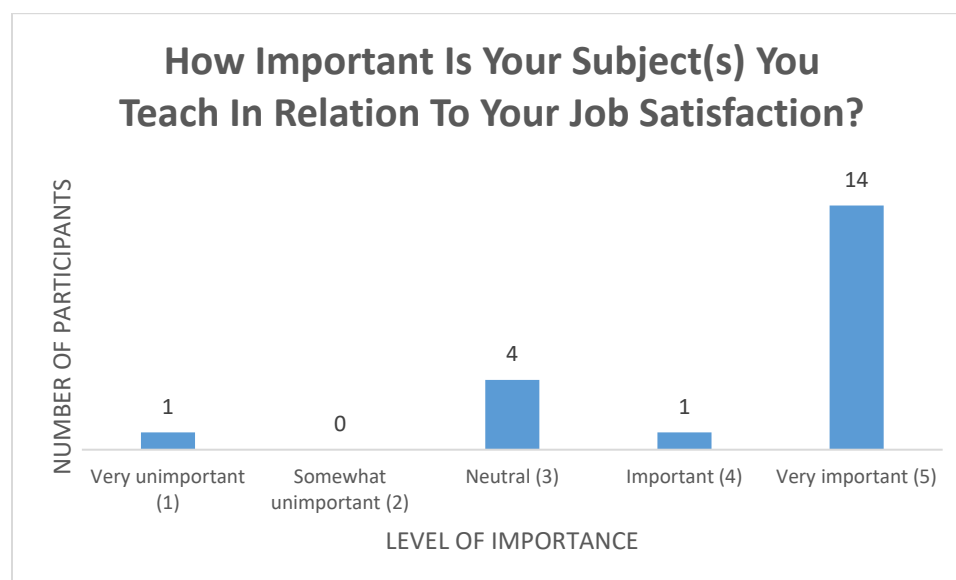


*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 20)

**School not Identified.** When I wrote the survey, I did not ask teachers to identify. Still, I added that question after the first 110 responses—knowing which school allows me to compare the interview and teacher responses. Figure 30 is a graph of how the remaining teachers answered the question teachers answered fifth survey question: How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction? The highest response was very important, with 56.4% (62 responses). The important category had 24.5%. (27 responses). The neutral category had 7.3% (eight responses). The somewhat unimportant category had 1.8% (two responses). The very unimportant category had 9.1% (10 responses). Nine-tenths of people did not answer the question (one response).

**Figure 30**

*Teacher Survey Question 5: School not Identified*



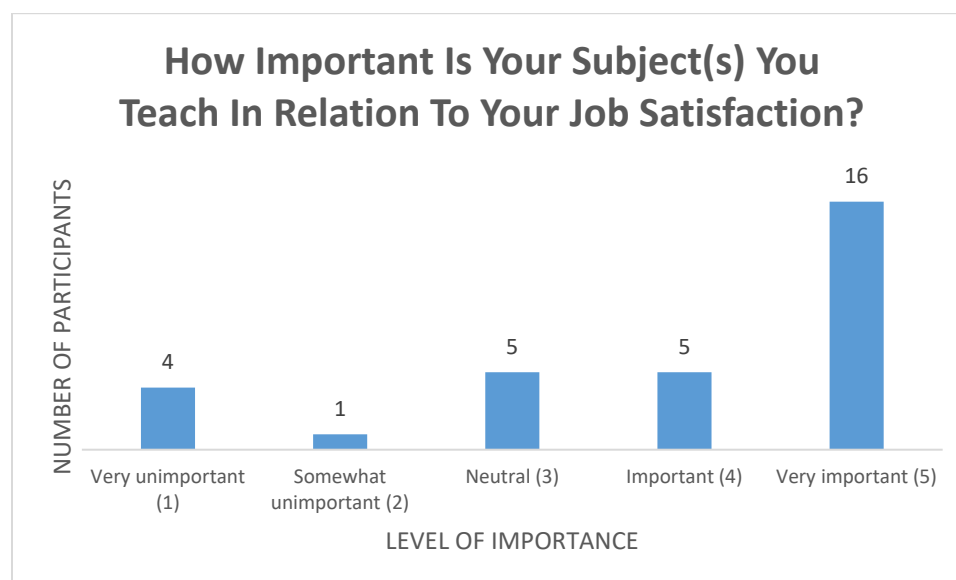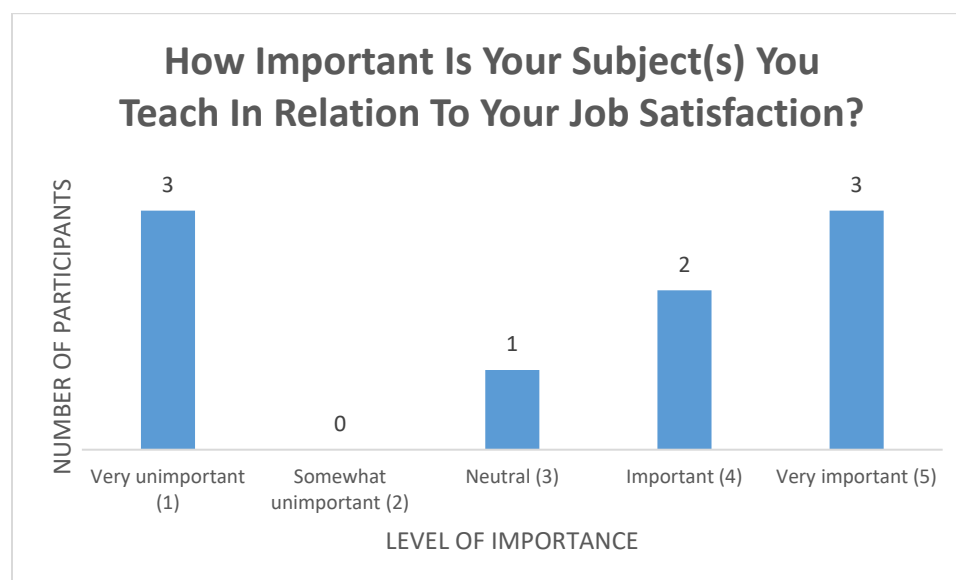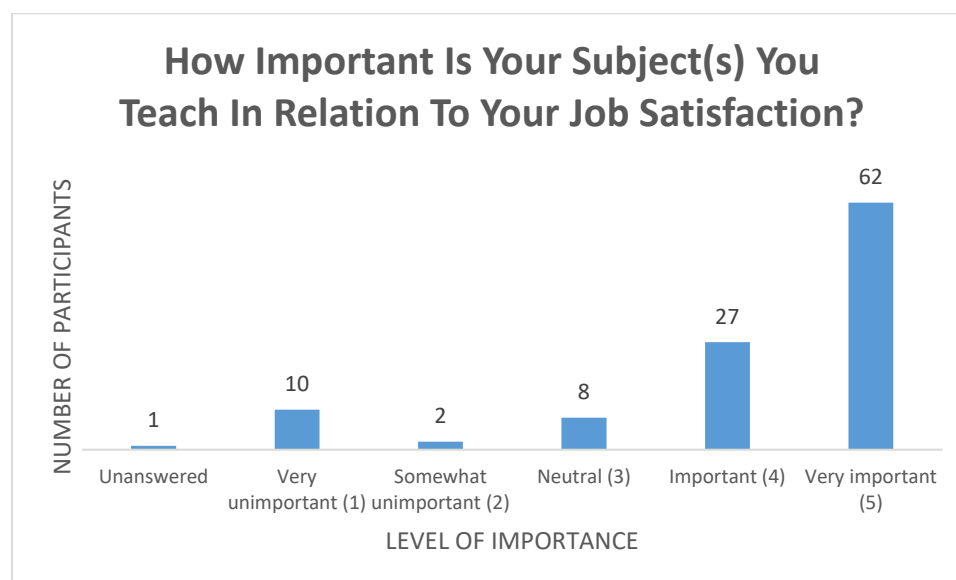**How Important Is Your Subject(s) You Teach In Relation To Your Job Satisfaction?**

*Note.* Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to how important your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction (n = 110)

### School/District Leader Interviews

I intended to interview two administrators from each school surveyed. In addition, I wanted to interview at least one district representative. Due to scheduling and time conflicts, I could only interview two middle school principals and two assistant principals. I was able to interview a representative from the district. The list of questions is located in Appendix B.

**Interview 1: School C Principal.** The first interview is with the principal of School C. His journey in education did not start in the school system. Instead, he worked for non-profit organizations until he decided to return to college, where he earned his exceptional education degree and received social studies certification.

*Question 1: Tell me about your career path in education.* This leader began his educational career as an exceptional student co-teacher and became a behavior specialist. While performing these duties, he was encouraged to earn his advanced degree in educational leadership. Once he earned his leadership degree, he became an assistant principal for three years. After that, he was a principal at another school for six years before transferring to his current post. He has been the principal at his current school for the last five years.

*Question 2: Why do you think people choose to stay at your school?* I learned from the principal that he tries to build a culture of trust and transparency. He wants to be supportive and "meet people where they are at." He believes there is a balancing act for leaders. The balance is between support and accountability. He has spent money on academic coaches to support and challenge teachers to grow. When people choose to leave, it is because a Title I school is challenging or people want to see other opportunities.

*Question 3: What specific systems do you utilize to keep teachers at your school?* The principal said,

> The very first thing we promote is professionalism. There is a professionalism among teachers, administrators, and everyone in the building has a role. We all add value to the roles we play. We don't focus on hierarchy. We focus on distributive leadership. We give teachers a voice and a choice. We frequently check in with leadership structures and student services teams. We have a robust onboard system for professional development for new teachers to our school. I am up front in telling people what we are all about. I do not want them guessing

about the environment. Culture is not created, maintained, or furthered by one. It is the collective efforts of all that will grow our culture.

***Question 4: What can district leaders do to keep teachers employed at their schools?*** The principal believes teachers need to be paid better. In addition, he believes teachers need more support and resources to be successful in their respective classrooms. He believes the schools and district need to be a partnership. If you are going to add to the teacher's plate, make the plate bigger. The district needs to realize what teachers are genuinely dealing with daily. The resourcing and expertise must be in the school, not separated from the district. The district people were at his school, working with his teachers. That does not happen as much in other schools. District people developed relationships with his faculty members.

**Interview 2: School C Assistant Principal.** The second interview was an assistant principal from school C. He was highly recommended from the principal to interview.

***Question 1: Tell me about your career path in education.*** He has been in education for 30 years. He came down from another state as he started as a teacher. He has been an administrator for the last 21 years serving the district in different roles including being school based.

***Question 2: Why do you think people choose to stay at your school?*** It is about culture and relationships. Education is about the intrinsic, not extrinsic rewards. Culture, relationships, and making a difference is why people stay.

***Question 3: What specific systems do you utilize to keep teachers at your school?*** He said they do a lot of staff recognition. They try to keep morale up with a fun

atmosphere. They find different things to celebrate. Teachers have a voice. He believes leadership systems, committees, and anyone outside the classroom can add to the community. "We have pockets of people do different things to make our school unique."

***Question 4: What can district leaders do to keep teachers employed in their schools?*** He also believes pay is one thing that keeps teachers employed. "I think districts can provide professional development for the career-changing teachers to support strategies and pedagogy they need in their classrooms." Also, professional development and pay is the big thing to retain teachers.

**School C Summary.** Two-thirds of the teachers surveyed from School C said culture was either very important or important. Both school administrators mentioned how they try to build a culture where teachers feel welcomed, and their input is valued and appreciated. With two-thirds of teachers claiming how important culture is, it appears that the school leaders are building a culture where teachers want to stay in their school.

Two-thirds of the teachers said the school leaders/administrative team is very important and important. Teachers know the importance of good school leaders. Good school culture cannot be created without good leaders. District leaders must identify school leaders who can build a positive culture in the school buildings.

**Interview 3: School D Principal.** The third interview is the principal from school D. She began her career out of state but moved to her current state after one year.

***Question 1: Tell me about your career path in education.*** She was a band/chorus teacher for five years. During the fifth year, her time was divided between a high school and a middle school. Both principals offered her a full-time job at their respective school. She chose the high school position. She taught for 18 years. After that, she became an

assistant principal at two different schools for nine years. She has been the principal at her current school for the last three years.

**Question 2: Why do you think people choose to stay at your school?** What I learned from the principal is that she values teachers and the job they must do. A friend of hers gave her this piece of advice. "Don't forget to remember what it's like to be a teacher". She understands the impact of her decisions on teachers. I learned that she has open communication with her teachers where they can feel comfortable to share any concerns the teachers might have.

**Question 3: What specific systems do you utilize to keep teachers at your school?** She mentioned having conversations with teachers. Their opinions are not only wanted but considered. "Taking things off teachers' plate if I can." They have an active staff appreciation throughout the year. Every Friday they have coffee, sometimes treats. On early release days, some call it a snack, but they buy teachers lunch on those days. Food goes a long way. They try to give them the gift of time. If they have a faculty meeting and nothing else is pressing, she can send them an email and again give them the gift of time.

**Question 4: What can district leaders do to keep their teachers employed at their schools?** She believes a big thing is pay. As a district, they need to find ways to appreciate their teachers. Some of the frustration is if a new teacher is making $48,000 a year, and a 10-year veteran is making $52,000, there's a problem with that. Also, if there is a way to keep things off teachers' plate. Across the district, not just Title I, there has been a big problem with discipline. "We must find a way to support teachers with student behavior."

**Interview 4: School D Assistant Principal.** The fourth interview is with an assistant principal from school D.

*Question 1: Tell me about your career path in education.* She began her educational career as a substitute teacher. From there, she found a niche in the deaf education feeder pattern since she had a minor in American Sign Language (ASL). After being in a social services role, she became a social studies teacher. After teaching, she moved to a Response to Intervention (RTI) Coach. After encouragement to earn her leadership degree, she became an assistant principal at another school for two years. She has been an assistant principal at her current school for 11 years.

*Question 2: Why do you think people choose to stay at your school?* What I learned from this assistant principal is the reason people stay at Title I schools is because they have the heart for the population. In addition, she believes leaders can feed teachers and applaud their efforts, but if you don't want to make a difference in this population, a teacher will not last long in Title I schools. She echoed her principal's thoughts where they try to feed their teachers and take things off the teachers' plate. They try to have a supportive culture.

*Question 3: What specific systems do you utilize to keep teachers at your school?* They meet with new teachers once a month to go over concerns and questions. "We celebrate for making it a month, two months, etc." They do their best to provide support in house, instead of the district level. When a teacher feels supported in their classrooms and not feel they are battling students' behaviors, they can teach. They try to approach with positivity, have group outings, relieve stress, and build community on campus.

*Question 4: What can district leaders do to keep their teachers employed at their schools?* Unfortunately, the districts' leaders' hands are tied. There is a lot of knee-jerking going on that gets everyone in a tizzy. District leaders need to be careful in how they release information. They need to be upfront about the reality of teaching.

**School D Summary.** About 83% of the teachers surveyed at School D believe culture is very important or important at their school. In addition, the principal and assistant principal mentioned how they do their best to support teachers at their school. Based on the survey results, the teachers have acknowledged how important culture is in their school.

When asked how important the administrative team/school leaders is to the school, about 83% of teachers believe it is very important and important. School leaders are responsible for building the culture at their school. Teachers want to work in an environment where they can feel supported, and have their concerns heard. Also, according to Jenkins (2017), one way to improve teacher morale is to empower teachers to solve problems. Specifically, "when teachers feel part of solutions they have more buy-in and feel more respected. When teachers see one of their own suggestions implemented, it empowers them and provides a sense of pride" (Jenkins, 2017, para. 3).

**Interview 5: District Leader.** The last interview was done with a district leader. His background was working with children in an alternative setting with a non-profit organization. He joined the district as a teacher but held different positions within the district. He has been a district employee for almost 30 years.

*Question 1: Tell me about your career path in education.* His career path was not a traditional one. First, he began working with at-risk youth being responsible for

their primary curriculum. Then, when he started working for the district, he was an emotionally handicapped (EH) teacher in elementary school. From there, he went to middle school as a behavior specialist. After that job, he left to come to the district as a supervisor. Following the supervisor job, he went back to the school setting as an assistant principal. He was a principal for about seven and a half years before he came back to working at the district office.

        *Question 2: Why do you think people chose to stay at your school?* When he was interviewing, he was forthright and honest about the needs of the community, and challenges of the position. There was not any embellishment of the challenges and/or barriers his district faced. Instead, he reinforced the rewards and focused on the community's uniqueness and strength. When he conducted interviews with potential employees, he shared the challenges and the rewards of the school community. He knows the type 'f teacher he is looking for in his schools. He wants his teachers to be active participants of the culture and be completely submerged in it. He believes when teachers do this, they will feel a sense of connectiveness.

        *Question 3: What specific systems did you utilize to keep teachers at your school?* The leader believes in being transparent about the needs of the school. He worked diligently to protect or shield staff from all the outside influences. If there were additional responsibilities, he tried to curb it. He would share with his staff members that they are already doing the work. He tried to be very thoughtful and empathetic, making connections to what needs to be done and what the teachers were already doing. He tried to reassure people and show appreciation in other ways. He approached opportunities of improvement as a coaching matter, not a punitive or "gotcha" one.

***Question 4: What can district leaders do to keep their teachers employed at their schools?*** "Give the teachers a voice. Listen to them. Reassure them that what they do matters." He reassured teachers by appreciating what they do; it counts. "Give them the power of choice and voice." As stated previously, a way to improve morale, which can be used to build culture, is to give teachers a chance to be problem solvers. According to Jenkins (2017), "Catch teachers doing something right" (para. 3). Be very deliberate on what you can and cannot do.

**Interpretation**

A positive school culture is very important to teachers and school leaders. Teachers are willing to work in a challenging environment if they are valued and appreciated. According to the surveys I conducted for this study, teachers want to work in an environment where they are supported with the day-to-day activities while school leaders implement events that can improve morale in the building. According to the interviews I conducted for this study, school leaders do their best to create environments where teachers can be successful and give teachers small incentives to show appreciation for the jobs teachers do at their schools.

In question two of the survey, I asked teachers to rank on a scale one to five how important culture in their school is in relation to your job satisfaction. Overwhelmingly, nearly 80% of teachers said it was very important and important. When I talked to school and district leaders, each mentioned how they try to create an environment where teachers feel supported and appreciated. Teachers want to feel appreciated and valued in their respective schools.

Teachers acknowledged how influential school leaders are to the school. They understood without good leadership, things fall apart. Conversely, good school leaders acknowledge a school cannot be great without great teachers. It is a reciprocal relationship between the school leaders and teachers.

In question three of the survey, I asked teachers to rank on a scale one to five how influential administrative team leaders to their job satisfaction is. Approximately 80% of the teachers believed school leaders play a part in job satisfaction. Teachers understand the importance of the roles of the leader. Teachers know school leaders are responsible for creating the school environment, whether they feel appreciated and supported or if their school administration chooses to ignore their feelings and contributions.

In question four of the survey, I asked teachers to rank on a scale of one to five how important their relationship with colleagues was to their job satisfaction. Overall, about 70% of teachers surveyed deemed the relationship with their colleagues is very important or important. One of the ways to build and/or maintain culture is to improve morale. Jenkins (2017) said one of the methods to improve teacher morale is for school leaders to create a community of caring. For example, she mentioned how teachers may feel invisible, unappreciated, or unrecognized by administration because of the size of the high school. Therefore, one of Jenkins' former principals would interview and photograph each staff member. He would use this information to stop by and talk to teachers on a personal level. A biproduct of this intervention would be seeing who in his staff were leaders and who needed assistance. As Jenkins (2017) explained, "his efforts built strong relationships with teachers and as a result, teachers felt more compelled to work harder for him" (para. 2).

*Contexts*

According to the Learning Policy Institute (2017), the national average for teacher turnover is 11%. The costs associated with losing a teacher are separation, recruiting, hiring, and training costs. Separation costs include taking an employee off the payroll and healthcare plan and paying substitute teachers to cover mid-year departures. Recruiting and hiring costs include but are not limited to advertising positions, traveling to job fairs, interviewing potential candidates, and conducting reference and criminal records. Finally, training costs include introducing new hires and coordinating staffing mentoring programs (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

*Culture*

Teachers want to be supported and valued. According to the Learning Policy Institute (2017), beginning teachers with little preparation are almost three times as likely to leave the profession after one year. Also, teachers leave because of their school leaders. Teachers want input in some decision-making and limited time in collaboration with their colleagues. School leaders are the ones responsible for creating the culture at their respective schools. However, school district leaders need to identify the skill set of the school leaders to ensure they are creating the culture at a given school where the teachers will feel valued and supported, which in the end, will increase student achievement.

According to Andreev (2022), a positive work culture is "one that prioritizes the well-being of employees, offers support at all levels within the organization, and has policies in place that encourage respect, trust, empathy, and support" (para. 1). The benefits of a positive work culture include improved employee health, reduced turnover,

increased loyalty, deduction in negative behaviors, and better performance outcomes. When an employee has positive social interactions at work, they are more willing to show up for work. When leaders demonstrate empathy, leaders can reduce turnover and increase employee commitment. When a leader is willing to go above and beyond, the team members are willing to work harder for the cause.

### Conditions

District leaders are responsible for finding teachers. One of the responsibilities of school leaders is to create an environment that focuses on student achievement while creating a place where teachers feel valued and supported. It is a challenge because teachers are leaving the industry through retirement, seeking opportunities outside of education, and there are not enough college students in education preparation programs.

According to the leaders I interviewed, they acknowledged the fact that teachers need to be valued and their input respected. In addition, they recognized it is up to them to create a place where teachers want to work. An ordinary skill each leader possessed was being transparent with their faculty members. These leaders know working at a Title I school can be challenging. If these leaders did not recognize it, then they are giving their teachers the wrong impression of what the teachers' reality is at school.

### Competencies

District leaders really need to know and understand the needs of their school leaders. For example, when a school has an assistant principal job opening, the principal and district leaders need to collaborate to find an ideal match for the school. Specifically, districts may conduct Gallup polls and Clifford Strengths tests to help identify the

strengths and weaknesses of the future leaders. In addition, the district leaders can interview these potential leaders to truly diagnose the leaders' strengths and weaknesses.

For example, a school needs an assistant principal who can focus on analyzing testing data in order to determine interventions to improve test scores. The principal should inform the district leaders that he is looking for a candidate who is strong in analyzing data, can improve test scores, and has organization skills. District leaders inform the principal that there are "x" candidates that meet those qualifications. The principal can interview these candidates and determine who is the best fit for his or her school.

According to the survey I conducted for this study, about half of the teachers do not think opportunities for growth are as significant as culture. However, the combination of what is important to teachers is having a say in what they teach and teaching with their colleagues. In addition, teachers indicated the importance of school leadership on school culture.

**Conclusion**

Building a positive school culture, in many ways, is the overarching theme in improving morale and retaining teachers. The collaborative relationship between school leaders and teachers is imperative. If school and district leaders are interested in improving morale and increasing retention, they need to be willing to provide incentives to the teachers. It is not just about the pay but putting school leaders who can build and maintain culture in challenging environments will improve morale for these teachers. In addition, it might increase the school's retention of said teachers.

**Chapter Five: To-Be Framework**

In the previous chapter, I found that school and district leaders can keep their teachers in schools by improving morale among staff members. This happens by building and maintaining a positive school culture. When teachers feel valued, appreciated, and heard, they are more likely to work harder for the administrative team. If district and school leaders implement the findings shared in this study, teachers' morale would increase, and more importantly, teachers would be more likely to stay in their district and school, which would positively impact student achievement. Therefore, my leadership change plan is to increase school leaders' leadership capacity to support leaders in serving their school communities.

**As-Is**

In the district under study, there are 90,000 students with about 4,700 teachers. As of April 2022, the district under study had over 350 openings. There are 95 schools, and about half of them are Title I schools (source withheld for anonymity). See Appendix D for the As-Is Chart.

*Contexts*

In the district under study, five Title I schools were chosen: three middle schools and two high schools. Most of these schools experienced higher than average turnover compared to years past. Wagner et al. (2006) explained, Context "refers to the larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal" (p.104). Through my research, I found teachers want to work in a culture where they feel valued and appreciated by their administrators. The relationships between staff members would be strengthened because the possibility of teachers staying

in the classroom would be higher. Eighty percent of teachers surveyed said culture was either essential or highly important.

A political factor in education can be how public schools are funded. According to Martin et al. (2018) for the Center for American Progress approximately 8% of the federal government's budget goes to schools. School funding consists of federal, state, and local resources. According to Kolesnikova (2022), "children from poorly maintained schools usually have lower grades and may face significant challenges when trying to succeed in the future" (p. 7). Based on my teaching experiences and observations in Title I schools, teachers in these schools understand the challenges of these students. School leaders at these schools must focus on building morale because teacher burnout or frustration could be higher in these schools. Bringing in teachers to teach in these environments is a challenge for district leaders, so that is why the district under study has offered financial incentives for teachers to teach Title I schools.

An economic factor at play in this study is the cost of replacing a veteran teacher prior to retirement. According to the Learning Policy Institute (2017), "Urban districts can, on average, spend more than $20,000 on each new hire, including school and district expenses related to separation, recruitment, hiring, and training" (para. 1). If these teachers leave within two years, this investment does not pay off for the schools and the district. It is crucial for school leaders to acknowledge these costs because they are responsible for building a culture in their schools where teachers want to be, and students can achieve academic success. When students have a stable, nurturing environment where the teacher has stable routines and procedures, students are more likely to be engaged in the material and perform on assessments.  In addition, when a teacher stays at

his or her school over time, they develop relationships with families who understand the teacher's expectations.

### *Culture*

Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as "the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (p. 102). A common theme among the former teachers surveyed for the reason they left the profession was they did not feel a connection to the school or administration. Seventy-five percent of the former teachers said the school leaders did not reach out to them before they left the school or profession. Therefore, school leaders need to acknowledge the impact of their behaviors on everyone in the building.

A positive school culture is very important to teachers and school leaders. Teachers are willing to work in a challenging environment if they are valued and appreciated. According to the surveys I conducted for this study, teachers want to work in an environment where they are supported with the day-to-day activities while school leaders implement events that can improve morale in the building. School Leader A said he builds a culture of trust and transparency. The leader continued to say, "When you meet people where they are, people are more likely to be open and vulnerable." According to the interviews I conducted for this study, school leaders do their best to create environments where teachers can be successful and give them small incentives to show appreciation for the jobs teachers do at their schools.

An example of this is when school leaders provide lunch for staff members or heartfelt thank you notes that teachers found in their mailboxes. According to the survey,

80% of teachers feel culture is an important factor in deciding to stay or leave a given school. If leaders are open and transparent with their teachers, teachers feel safe, valued, and appreciated by their school leaders.

Teachers acknowledge how influential school leaders are to the school. According to the survey, about 76% of teachers acknowledged how vital the administration team is to their job satisfaction. They understand without good leadership, things fall apart. Conversely, good school leaders acknowledge a school cannot function without dedicated, professional teachers who want to be there for the students.  It is a reciprocal relationship between the school leaders and teachers.

According to the survey I conducted for this study, about half of the teachers do not think opportunities for growth are as significant as culture. However, the combination of what is important to teachers is having a say in what they teach, teaching with their colleagues, and the importance of school leadership.

Teachers feel they are being underpaid. According to Podolsky et al. (2017), "teacher compensation affects the supply of teachers, including the distribution of teachers across districts, as well as the quantity and quality of individuals preparing to be teachers" (p. 22). In addition, teachers are not feeling valued and appreciated for their efforts. According to the former teachers surveyed, it is one of the primary reasons why they left the classroom prior to retirement. If a teacher is underpaid and undervalued, it makes an easy decision to leave the classroom and/or the profession. However, when teachers are appreciated with low pay, they are still intrinsically motivated to stay in the profession.

*Conditions*

There is a teaching shortage in the United States. According to Ansley et al. (2019), "higher need schools (HNS) generally experience 50% greater turnover rates than average" (p. 3). As a result, people are leaving the teaching profession to pursue careers outside education. In addition, there is a decline in the number of students enrolled in preparatory programs to become teachers. According to Goodwin (2018), "the number of U.S. college students in education programs plummeted from 650,000 in 2009 to 451,000 in 2014" (p. 81). That means there are 30% less college students entering education programs in the five years of this study.

According to Delarosa and Elias (2022), "fifty-three percent of all public schools reported feeling understaffed entering the 2022-2023 school year" (p. 4). School district leaders are constantly recruiting teachers to fill the classrooms. According to the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2016) of the U.S. Department of Education, 15% of all schools did not have a certified teacher. In addition, five percent of schools had more than 10% of teachers who were not fully certified. On average, this means a school has about three teachers not certified to teach their subject. District leaders are going to universities and colleges to fill vacancies. However, those efforts are not filling up teacher vacancies due to less students entering teacher preparatory programs. School district leaders need to come up with benefits on why these teachers should choose to work in their district. Based on my experiences in the business world and the teaching arena, I have observed most people crave appreciation in an uncertain economic world. This was confirmed through my survey by 80% of teachers saying how vital culture is in a school building.

*Competencies*

School and district leaders need to examine the reasons why these teachers are leaving the profession. When I talked with former teachers, the answers were astounding. Most of the teachers left the profession because they disliked how they felt in their school locations. One of them felt she was forced to retire for "health reasons". She had a heart condition but was healthy enough to return to the classroom. The district leaders denied her request to return.

The first question when I surveyed teachers asked, "How important is school culture to your job satisfaction". Eighty percent of the teachers' survey said culture was either "Very important" or "Important". School leaders are responsible for building and maintaining a positive culture for teachers and students. One of the ways leaders can build community is improving morale of the staff members.

**Envisioning the Success To-Be**

As a teacher, I have worked in cultures on both ends of the spectrum. I had one school leader suggest I do not continue teaching. However, I had one principal recognize my leadership skills and offered me opportunities to develop my leadership voice. My aim is for more school leaders to be the latter than the principal believing teaching was not for me. I have seen too many colleagues, who are great at building rapport with students, and these students' experienced success on standardized assessments, leaving the profession before retirement.

According to my survey, almost 80% of teachers acknowledged how vital culture is at school. These teachers ranked it either very important or essential on a five-point scale. One way to ensure school leaders are building culture in their schools is to send

these school leaders to professional development. These school leaders can learn how to build culture, maintain, and develop relationships with faculty members, and have a school where students achieve and a school where teachers want to work.

### *Future Contexts*

Wagner et al. (2006) refer to contexts as "skill demands all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of the families and community that the school or district serves" (p. 104). They went further also to say contexts refer to "the larger organizational system within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 104). It is a trickle-down effect. District leaders need to build leadership capacity of the school leaders. School leaders need to build the culture and capacity of their teachers. Teachers need to understand the students' realities and re-evaluate what students need to know to be successful.

Teachers want to feel supported and valued. According to my research, when teachers feel they have a voice in the ongoings of school matters, they are more likely to actively participate in school functions. One of the principals interviewed and the district representative in the study mirrored these thoughts. Both made a comment to the extent of when teachers feel they are being heard, they are more willing to take on extra tasks because they know their efforts are being recognized by the administrative team. This improves morale and the culture in the building.

### *Future Culture*

I want all teachers to teach at a school where the school leader is suitable. "Right" for the school is evaluated by how effectively the school leaders can build a

culture based on the needs of the school. School leaders can also identify future leaders and increase the leadership pipeline for the district.

A school leader can informally start this process. According to *Tapping the Next Generation of School Principals* (2023), there are six things a principal can do to navigate a teacher's leadership potential. These six things are to remind teachers that they already have the skills to lead, there's never a "right" time to lead, guide them in cultivating their vision of what a school can be, encourage them to remember their "why", help them outline their next steps, and give them the help you always wanted. Some of the skills teachers already have, include managing students, collaboration with parents and colleagues, and utilizing data to make decisions. It is natural for teachers to want to feel "ready" but reminding them that nobody ever feels 100% ready is essential when building their confidence. Most teacher leaders see success in their classrooms and want to duplicate it on a bigger scale. Being a school leader can be a challenge, so it is important for potential leaders to remember why they chose to become a school leader. The school leader probably encountered the same hurdles, so the principal can help the potential leader overcome these obstacles and prepare them for their next stage in the educational career. According to my survey, about one out of two teachers want to grow within the profession. This means they want to stay and become a school leader, academic coach, department head, etc.

### Future Conditions

Vince Lombardi (1959/2023), Green Bay's winningest coach of all time, said "Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile" ("Leadership" section)

As much as district leaders invest in their teachers, they must be willing to do the same for their leaders. School districts should be able to identify the strengths of their leaders to serve its schools better. When there is an administrative opening, district leaders must know the type of leader best suited for that school to continue the culture already established in the school.

According to my interviews and experiences in Title I schools, there have been common characteristics among the leaders that have established a positive culture at their schools. Some of these characteristics are genuine appreciation for teachers' efforts, active listening when a teacher has a challenging day and having an open-door policy regarding teacher and student concerns. These teachers felt comfortable and confident enough to approach these leaders without any repercussions. The leaders did their best to solve the problem but more importantly, at times, enabled the teacher to come up with their own solution.

### *Future Competencies*

District leaders really need to know and understand the needs of their school leaders. For example, when a school has an assistant principal job opening, the principal and district leaders need to collaborate to find an ideal match for the school. In the district under study, district leaders conduct Gallup polls and Clifford Strengths tests to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the future leaders. In addition, the district leaders can interview these potential leaders to truly diagnose the leaders' strengths and weaknesses.

For example, a school needs an assistant principal who can focus on improving the testing data numbers. The principal should inform the district leaders that he is

looking for a candidate who is strong in analyzing data, can improve test scores, and has organization skills. District leaders inform the principal that there are "x" candidates that meet those qualifications. The principal can interview these candidates and determine who is the best fit for his or her school.

To ensure a culture fit, teachers should be part of this process. Teachers are the "experts" on what a school needs for them and the students. Therefore, teachers should be allowed to give input without fear of retaliation from the district leaders, the school principal, and the "new" leader. By having teachers participate in this process, district leaders can get a more well-rounded view of what is needed, and not what it looks like, what the school needs "on paper."

**Conclusion**

District leaders provide school leaders with a blueprint of the school. School leaders should be cultural architects of the school building. When a school has a foundation of trust, respect, and voice, teachers are willing to build along with the school leaders' vision for the school and the students.

**Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions, Implications, Policy Recommendations**

Teachers are leaving the classroom for other professional opportunities that will provide them with job security, opportunities for advancement, and appreciation and support from their superiors. To make matters worse, there is not a pipeline of recent graduates or people who are not teachers who want to enter today's classroom. According to Goodwin (2018), "the number of U.S. college students in education programs plummeted from 650,000 in 2009 to 451,000 in 2014" (p. 81). That means there are 30% less college students entering education programs in five years. The school district leaders need to find creative ways to retain their teachers. School-based leaders need to create a collaborative culture with staff members where their ideas are valued, encouraged, and put into place, if applicable. However, it is the districts' leadership teams to put the "right" leader in place to build culture in their schools.

In this chapter, I will reflect on my research and share potential answers to my research questions. Then, I will develop an action plan based on my data collection, research, and strategies to make policy recommendations. My organizational plan will be in accordance with Douglas B. Reeves' (2009) *Leading Change in Your School: How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results*. These strategies and actions connect his research, surveys, and experiences in leading change in schools. Hopefully, this will link to what is happening now and what can be done.

**Strategies and Actions**

As it was described in chapter five, there is a teacher shortage. Additionally, teachers' turnover in high needs schools is increasing as well (Ansley et al., 2019, p. 3). Teachers are leaving the profession for a plethora of reasons. However, one of the

reasons is more glaring compared to the others. Teachers want to feel appreciated and valued. School leaders need to create a culture where teachers indeed feel valued and appreciated. According to Reeves (2009), "Sustainable change requires a reorientation of priorities and values so that the comfort and convenience of the individual is no longer the measure by which the legitimacy of change is considered" (p. 5).

I will reflect on my goals as I find strategies to implement change. The most prevalent goal was to recognize and acknowledge the various skill sets of school leaders and how those skills fit regarding retention and keeping teachers in these schools. In addition, I investigated how and what district leaders can do for school leaders to help them better impact school culture.

Reeves (2009) discusses four specific components for how change can occur in our schools. However, I plan to apply these principles for the district's change process. This study impacts everyone: district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and students. All schools might have the problem of teacher turnover, but all leaders can be the solution. For this change to occur, district leaders and school leaders must first be willing to look at themselves to see how each of them can be better for the teachers and students they serve. Teachers want to work in an environment which is positive, nurturing, and gives them a voice which is heard by school and district leaders. As Reeves (2009) said, "Change leaders know that they do not change organizations without changing individual behavior, and they will not change individual behavior without affirming the people behind the behavior" (p. 10).

*Creating Conditions for Change*

Reeves (2009) recommended that leaders "pull the weeds before you plant the flowers" (p. 13). To begin the weeding process, we must consider the following ideas:

1) Use intergrade dialogue to find the essentials.

District leaders need to first check the "temperature" of its schools. District leaders need to survey and interview teachers to determine the culture of the building. Teachers need to feel safe that their responses will be kept anonymous, so they are willing to share freely about what their leader(s) are doing to help staff members, improve morale in the building, etc.

2) Sweat the small stuff.

District leaders need to know the specific systems school leaders are implementing at schools with a highly rated, positive culture.

3) Set the standard for a weed-free garden.

School leaders need to be culture builders in their schools. These leaders must be willing to look deeply in themselves and want to be better leaders for their teachers and students.

*The Personal Change Readiness Assessment*

School leader(s) must first think about their interactions with teachers. The next step is to consider which interactions need the most attention. The third step is to consider which interaction(s) have a sense of urgency. Finally, school leaders with low scores (based on teacher surveys and interviews) must be willing to look at the systems they have in place to improve morale, resulting in retention.

### *The Organizational Change Readiness Assessment*

One of the responsibilities of school leaders is to identify leadership talent among the teachers. District leaders vet this talent to see if they can be a leader in their schools. District leaders need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. This is imperative as district leaders place these leaders in their schools. Teachers who report low morale, and minor or non-existent culture need a leader who can build culture and improve morale among these teachers.

### *Cultural Change*

According to Reeves (2009), "The single greatest impediment to meaningful cultural change is the gap between what leaders say that they value and what leaders actually value" (p. 37). Based on the results of my surveys, 80% of teachers surveyed said culture was either "very important" or "important." District leaders must acknowledge that school leaders must also be culture builders to keep morale high and, more importantly, keep teachers in their schools. Reeves believes the following are imperative in cultural change: Leaders must define what will not change; organizational culture will change with leadership actions; use the correct change tools for your system; and culture change requires relentless personal attention and "scut work" by the leader. As a future leader, I agree with Reeves. I need to remember this as a leader because, as a future culture builder, I need to calm teachers' worries. At the same time, I have their support in what I think is necessary for teachers to do to ensure continuity among the staff members.

*Planning Change*

**Leadership Leverage: Focusing on Changes with the Greatest Results**. One aspect of change Reeves discusses is professional development. This is where school leaders can learn from themselves. Some skills leaders can learn are delegation, active listening, problem solving, and putting systems in place where being proactive rather than reactive is beneficial to teachers and students. When a school leader's school scores high in culture and morale, (based on staff member surveys and interviews), this leader can work with current and future leaders to teach these leaders how to build these things in their respective schools. Teachers collaborate with their colleagues to become better at serving their students. As part of my policy advocacy, leaders should attend the professional learning to better serve their teachers and students.

**The Right Team: Selecting Teachers and Administrators**. According to Reeves (2009), "Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality" (p. 67). I am going to focus on the administrators. According to my survey, an average of 76.6% of teachers believe the administration team/leaders are very important or important in connection to their job satisfaction. Reeves mentioned how different superintendents use classroom observations, data analysis, and reviews of student work to interview potential school leaders. My recommendation is to also include the teachers at the school because they will have a better understanding of what the school needs to be a place where teachers can stay for their teaching career.

**Building Capacity with Coaching**. According to Reeves (2009), there are three prerequisites to making helpful coaching. The first prerequisite is the person receiving the

coaching must agree that a change in performance will be helpful. Performance in this context will include culture and morale. The school leader who has higher marks in these categories can coach current and future leaders to build their leadership capacity. The second prerequisite is creating a learning and performance agenda. A commitment to being a better leader for their teachers and students is the goal for all leaders. The third prerequisite for successful coaching is feedback that is specific, accurate, and timely. Better leaders can teach other leaders how to be better culture builders by giving them examples and systems that have been successful in their schools.

### *Implementing Change*

**Closing the Implementation Gap**. Reeves' (2009) first implementation strategy is creating short-term wins. According to my research, about 70.2% of teachers connect their subject they teach to job satisfaction. One of the ways school leaders can build culture is asking teachers for their input on what they want to teach. When teachers have high job satisfaction, morale also improves. A byproduct of this win is increased teacher retention.

**Defining Change: Lessons from Literacy**. As leaders define "good teaching", district leaders must be able to identify "good leading". District leaders need to be exemplars for current and future leaders. "Good leading" is when school leaders create an environment where teachers want to stay because they believe in the school leaders and their vision of the school. As a teacher who changed schools every two years, to have been at one school for five years, was astounding to me. I jokingly teased my school leaders, telling them they must be doing something right to keep me for so long. This is

also an opportunity for teachers to inform district and school leaders to collaborate to figure out what a school needs in the form of leadership.

When I became a teacher, I aspired to become a school leader. One of my mentors said, "The further you are away from the problem, the further you are away from the solution". I had no idea what he meant. During my first-year teaching reading, I was helping a struggling student. The student was an eighth grader reading on a second-grade level. I noticed the principal in the hallway, peeking in the class window, but he chose not to enter my room. Later in the day, I asked the principal if everything was okay. He said, "Yup. I just wanted to walk around the building". I had an epiphany. The principal had no idea my eighth-grade student was reading at the second-grade level. He could have seen how this student struggled if he had entered my classroom. However, it was an opportunity to congratulate him on his progress. Recognizing the progress of students and how teachers encourage similar students should be part of every school's culture. Teachers are on the front line of education. Teacher input on who their school leaders should be is a way to build culture, improve morale, and increase retention at a school.

*Sustaining Change*

**Sustaining Excellence**. A measure of a leader's legacy is what and who is behind them. One of the responsibilities of a leader is to identify the next generation of leaders. Sustaining excellence in a school is one of the most challenging responsibilities for school leaders. Excellence can be measured in many ways, i.e., test scores, school grades. For the sake of this study, excellence can be determined by culture and morale of the building, school leaders' ability to build their leadership capacity, and teacher retention.

As I was researching how and what school leaders do to build their leadership capacity, I realized there is a plethora of options. The three opportunities which stood out in my research are Florida International University's (FIU) leadership program, the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals (NASSP), and Solution Tree. Lastly, another option is for local districts to reach out to their local universities and colleges to see if there are any leadership building seminars and/or workshops offered at the school. Finally, another option is if any professors at these schools are willing to teach the district and school leaders a topic that would benefit the organization. For example, during my undergraduate and graduate years, my mentor taught about culture and servant leadership to mid-size company executives on increasing productivity and retaining their employees.

The leadership program at FIU (n.d.) is for current K-12 school leaders who want to expand their leadership capacity and become change agents in their schools and/or communities. It has three primary benefits as the program helps school leaders. First, the program increases the impact of school leaders by making targeted adjustments, which enhance the leader's self-insight by helping them connect the dots between themselves and their leadership actions, and helps leaders utilize a "coaching" approach to develop leadership under and around them.

FIU's leadership program can also benefit the school district. Their programs can build more leadership capacity, creating a growth cycle. In addition, these workshops can help leaders grow in their current role and help the leader prepare for more responsibilities in their current and future role within the organization.  Another

advantage of the program is that it will create and enhance a culture of growth and development within the district.

FIU has been recognized and acknowledged for its efforts. In 2020, it won the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA)'s South Region Award in the Special Programs category for leadership development work for Principals Leadership Development Program (PLDP) partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Former superintendent Alberto Carvalho of Miami-Dade Public Schools endorsed the program. The program costs $4,950 per school leader. There are seven sessions in the program. Assuming one topic discussion a day, the program will take seven business days. If multiple topics are discussed on one day, the program will take less than the intended time of a week.

As I furthered my research, the NASSP's (2018) Building Ranks program aligned with my research (see Figure 31).

**Figure 31**

*NASSP Building Ranks Logic Model*
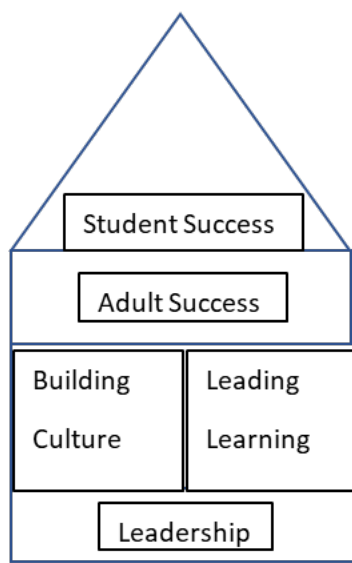
Through the Building Ranks program, leaders learn each system's why, what, and how and its benefits to the organization's participants. The program starts with a Stakeholder School Culture survey. It follows up with an Educational Leadership 360 Degrees survey for each leader to complete. NASSP also offers access to digital and print publications along with online tours. In addition, members of the NASSP receive discounts on materials in the store. The cost of the program is $250 per individual. The individual completes the program on their own schedule, so the time it takes is dependent on the individual.

This program will help school leaders identify ways to build a school culture. The school leaders can share what they learned about themselves with colleagues once completed. Since it is self-paced, leaders can spend more time on things they determine are most important to their building. This program is best suited for novice school leaders.

Solution Tree was the last organization that caught my attention on building leadership capacity. My first encounter with Solution Tree (n.d.) was for a Professional Learning Committee (PLC) workshop. In addition to the PLC workshop, they have workshops on transforming school culture. The workshops focus on how it will improve the students and the staff members. The training sessions can be in person or virtual. In addition, these trainings range from a two-day to a five-day program based on the district's needs. According to their website, communication, trust building, professional capacity, and universal accountability are the four leadership behaviors promoting positive change. The cost for each workshop is $749 for each participant. However, there is a plethora of free resources on their website.

When I experienced these workshops, I thought they were excellent. The presenters had firsthand knowledge of their topics. The discussions and exercises were engaging and interactive. The implementation stage for these strategies was practical, logical, and easy to follow.

Once I saw the survey results in my survey on how influential culture is for schoolteachers, I knew I had to do something about it. One of the responsibilities of a school leader is to build a culture in their schools where teachers feel valued, appreciated, and heard. Building a culture will improve morale, increase teacher retention, and increase student engagement.

**Policy Statement**

The policy I recommend is school leaders going back to the classroom. School leaders need to refine the "soft skills" in education. They are already seen as instructional leaders. Now is the time for them to be culture builders!

According to my research, there are multiple organizations with different courses to help school leaders. For example, the Professional Development Institute offers a Transformational Educational Leadership Practices class. In addition, Marzanoresources.com offers classes on supporting beginning teachers and instructional coaching for teacher effectiveness. The best way for school leaders to improve is by learning from their colleagues!

I am calling this initiative Better Leaders, Better Schools. School leaders with a proven record of building culture and high morale in their school buildings will be teaching other school leaders how to accomplish this feat. A proven record based on teachers' surveys and interviews with these staff members stating how high morale is and

how much they enjoy working for the said leader. Workshops can include culture building, systems that work, how to improve morale, what teachers need from their leaders, etc. Learning from our "own" ensures people know and understand the climate of those schools that struggle with little to no culture and morale.

**Considerations for Decision Makers**

This policy may not be a welcome addition for current leaders, even if it will benefit everyone in the school building. I analyzed my policy in the four disciplinary areas: economic, political, legal, and moral and ethical analysis. I delved into what teachers told me (surveys) and listened to administrators (interviews).  I acknowledge there will be barriers, but when leaders are willing to learn how to be better for their teachers and students, everyone in the school building wins!

My research showed teachers want to work in a culture where they feel valued and appreciated by their administrators. When school leaders improve at building a culture among staff members, it will influence everyone in the building. When teachers know the school leaders made a concerted effort to be better culture builders, they are likelier to stay in their schools. In addition, students will feel the effects of having a better relationship with their teachers. Community members will notice the shift as teachers are staying in their school and student achievement has increased. In addition, the implications for community relationships would be building a better connection between the teachers and the community. As a sports coach and teacher, I was fortunate to teach in a community where parents and teachers worked together to benefit the children.

*Economic Analysis*

In the district under study, current professional development for school and leaders is performed by employees that work for the professional development office. If the district chooses to stay "in house", the district leaders can pay a stipend for the presenters to prepare and present this information to the school leaders. Once these professional development workshops are recorded, they can be used multiple times since the professional development team will have insight on what works and does not work in its schools.

The price of outside professional development ranges from $250 to $4,950 per school leader. Depending on the staffing structure, the district under study training would include the school principal and at least two additional team members, such as assistant principals, instructional coaches, or deans. If the program requires travel, it would cost roughly $1,000 per attendee. After the first year of implementation, the number of attendees for these workshops will decrease as leaders become trained on these topics.

Table 1 below provides information on the three programs. Based on the district under study, there will be approximately 300 leaders to participate in these programs in the first year. These numbers will decrease as less leaders need to participate in the following years.

**Table 1**

*Comparison of Three Programs*

| Program | Location | Collaboration | Instructors | Cost |
|---------|----------|---------------|-------------|------|
| FIU | In Person | More opportunities W/internal & external leaders | Taught by more PhDs assuming methods are research-based | $4,950 per leader for a total of $1,485,000 |
| NASSP | Virtual | Collaboration with internal leaders upon completion of the program | Actionable framework that is self-taught for all experienced level leaders | $250 per leader for a total of $75,000 |
| Solution Tree | In-Person/Virtual | Collaborate w/internal & external leaders | Taught by experienced professionals who have "Talk the talk, walk the walk" | $749 per leader for a total of $224,700 |

I believe the FIU (n.d.) option has more significant opportunities for leaders to learn from other leaders outside the organization. However, the cost to begin this program is significantly higher than the other options. The NASSP (2018) is a good option for leaders first to understand their strengths and areas of improvement. On the other hand, the chance to collaborate with other leaders until completion causes concern. The main concern is the leader(s) will not have a chance to collaborate or implement learnings until program completion. The Solution Tree (n.d.) has an excellent reputation in education. A downside of the Solution Tree is deciding when and where to hold these training that will not interfere with the busy schedule of school leaders.

Based on my research, the Solution Tree (n.d.) is the best option for leaders. These programs offer leaders a chance to collaborate and learn from one another.

Solution Tree is accessible and cost-effective for the money spent. The return on investment for leaders will be less turnover, which reduces that cost for district leaders, and morale and retention will improve in these schools.

In the state of study, replacing a teacher costs about $11,000. These separation costs can include removing teachers from health and payroll plans, paying substitute teachers to cover these classes, and conducting exit surveys (if done). In addition, an uncalculated cost is how this teacher's departure affects the building's culture and morale. Students have grown attached to their teacher's routines and procedures, while parents understand how to communicate with this teacher about their child's progress academically and behaviorally. When school leaders actively participate in this training, it will save the districts from incurring these costs as it tries to replace these departing teachers.

The funding for this initiative can come from multiple sources. It can be from a combination of Title funds (Title I and Title II), grants from the national and state level, and school districts reserving unallocated funds for this program. The funding for Title I schools is based on formulas that consider the number of low-income students and other factors, such as the cost of education in the state. Title II funding is designated to improve teacher and principal quality through recruitment and professional development.

### *Political Analysis*

The political climate in the state of study is uncertain. In the state under study, the laws keep changing dramatically and is noted by school leaders and teachers. School leaders need to understand what is going on in their classrooms. Unfortunately, the rules and regulations for what should be happening in classrooms keep changing, forcing

teachers out of the classroom sooner than later. It is imperative these leaders can give teachers reasons to stay in their classrooms. Eighty percent of teachers surveyed mentioned how strong culture is to them. Despite the uncertainty and ambiguity of what teachers ask to do in their classrooms, school leaders must build a culture of trust and respect to show staff members their value in the school community.

There will be some pushback from current school leaders who think they are great leaders and have built an inviting culture for teachers and students. In my experience, whenever a change was going to occur and affect most people, there has always been a group that was not quickly on board. Whenever a change process goes through implementation, there will always be leaders who need to see the value of this change. District leaders should not be afraid to let these "bad" leaders seek further endeavors. Some leaders are already great culture builders. These leaders will thrive with new learning opportunities and sharing their success stories. According to Dr. McMullen (2022), leaders should "build an intentional culture where people feel supported and grow" (1:48).

### *Legal Analysis*

The Better Leaders, Better Schools initiative, has few legal issues. A concern is ensuring school leaders receive payment for their time. Before this program implementation, the district leaders must identify protocols for leaders who do not show signs of culture or morale in their buildings. In addition, if these leaders do not actively participate in the program to improve morale and culture in their buildings, the district leaders need to know how to convince these leaders the leadership initiatives will benefit their schools. There are no legal concerns about the teachers, students, and community.

*Moral and Ethical Analysis*

As Linda Lambert (1998) explained, "Principals' leadership is crucial because they are uniquely situated to exercise some special skills of initiation, support, and visioning. Among the principal's more important tasks is establishing collegial relationships" (p. 24). One of the teachers' responsibilities is to build relationships with their students to facilitate learning. This allows students to feel safe and secure and learn in these classrooms. School leaders need to learn to do this for teachers. Teachers want to feel supported, valued and appreciated.

This policy will improve all relationships in and out of the school building. Relational trust is built between leaders and teachers. Morale and culture will ring throughout the school. Parents and the community will recognize how teachers are staying in their schools. Students will achieve this because substitute teachers are not teaching them. Dr. Marcus Jackson (2019, as cited in Clark, 2018) said it best with the following:

> The school takes on the personality of their principal. If the principal is mean, the staff will be mean to one another and the kids, and the kids will be mean to one another. If the principal is full of energy, excitement, and enthusiasm, the teachers will be energized to teach, and the students will be excited about learning. The principal can either extinguish a flame of positivity or ignite a flame of hope. The principal is responsible for the culture and mood of their school (para. 1).

**Conclusion**

I researched why teachers stay or leave a given school throughout this study. I surveyed teachers to identify what was important to them. Next, I talked to school and

district leaders to see what systems they have in place to ensure their teachers are being appreciated and heard. Finally, I reflected on my own experiences with leaders.

My goal in conducting this study is to encourage current leaders to want to be better culture and morale builders. I aim for aspiring leaders to put on the hard hat and construct the schools where they would want to teach themselves. As Craig Groeschel (2015) explained, "We don't need a **title** to lead. We need to **care**. People would rather follow a leader with a **heart** than a leader with a **title.**"

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**Appendix A**

**Survey to Current Teachers**

1) Where do you currently teach?

2) How important is school culture to your job satisfaction?

3) How important are your administrative team/leaders to your job satisfaction?

4) How important is having opportunities for growth as a Team Leader, Department Head, Coach, etc., to your job satisfaction?

5) How important is your relationship with your colleagues to your job satisfaction?

6) How important is your subject(s) you teach in relation to your job satisfaction?

**Appendix B**

**Interview Questions for School/District Leaders**

1) Tell me about your career path in education.

2) Why do you think people choose to stay at your school?

3) What specific systems do you utilize to keep teachers at your school?

4) What can district leaders do to keep its teachers employed at their

schools?

**Appendix C**

**Questions for Former Teachers**

1) In years, how long were you a teacher?

2) Why did you leave the teaching profession?

3) What could have your administrative leaders done to keep you teaching?

4) What could have your district leaders have done to keep you teaching?

**Appendix D**

**As-Is Chart**

# AS-IS 4 Cs Analysis

# Problem: Which skills are needed by school and district leaders to keep their teachers?

| Context | Conditions | Competencies | Culture |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Title I schools<br><br>- 3 middle schools<br>- 2 high schools<br><br>District with about 90,000 students | Facing a teacher shortage in all content areas.<br><br>People are leaving the teaching profession.<br><br>Decline in number of students enrolled in prep classes to become a teacher. | Current district retention methods.<br><br>What school leaders do to improve morale at their schools. | Teachers feeling underpaid.<br><br>Teachers not feeling valued/appreciated. |