

HOW SUPERINTENDENTS PERCEIVE THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES WHICH  
INFLUENCE JOB SATISFACTION IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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By

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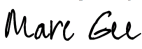


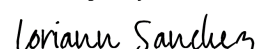
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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT  
DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Angela Katzakis, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Educational Leadership and titled “How Superintendents Perceive the Policies and Practices Which Influence Job Satisfaction in High-Poverty School Principals: A Qualitative Study,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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## DEDICATION

This labor of love is dedicated to the educators who have committed their lives to enriching children and the future of humanity. When the world came to a complete stop during the Covid-19 pandemic, educators and leaders were faced with a calling to rise and meet the needs of children and families through virtual learning, social emotional support, and outreach. They kept our communities together in ways we could have never imagined. My doctoral journey began during this unprecedented time in our world purposefully to honor the work of our educators and leaders, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. While working in today's school system becomes more and more complex, the future remains bright when the lives of children are impacted by the passion, bravery, and love of those dedicated educators and leaders.

## ABSTRACT

Principals in the United States are faced with challenging and complex roles as the leaders of our schools. Levels of district, state, and federal mandates and accountability measures coupled with the demands of supporting students, parents, and teachers on a multitude of levels create a job that is almost impossible to keep up with. In addition, limited fiscal and human resources create a barrier to meeting the needs of these expectations in almost every school. There is a significant number of principals in the nation that have made the decision to abandon the principalship, with an increased number leaving schools of high poverty, creating an issue where the highest need schools have the greatest instability. The working conditions for principals including salary, workload, and school climate are top on the list of reasons for principal turnover.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to investigate the ways in which superintendents of high-poverty school districts support their principals through policies and practices at the local level and influence working conditions to impact job satisfaction. The study explores the policies and practices that superintendents perceive have impacted specifically those principals who have chosen to stay in their role as leaders of high-poverty schools. These superintendents have principals with five or more years in their role working under the policies and practices in the school district which they serve. The perception of what policies and procedures have contributed to their retention is explored in this study through the eyes of superintendents. In addition, the study investigates the opportunities and barriers superintendents face in creating job satisfaction for the principals of the high poverty-schools in their district.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Principals are the leaders of the schools in the United States. While managing federal, state, and local mandates, supporting the needs of staff, students, parents and the community, principals navigate multiple complex roles while serving as the visionary leader for their school. Their responsibilities are vast, while expectations are high. Principals who are highly effective are successful at supporting the outcomes of teachers and students of their school, and the work conditions of the school environment they lead (Gold, 2022).

Having the leadership skills to influence stakeholders, handle student, staff, and parent concerns, and address budgetary compliance and accountability requirements are critical to the job of today's principals (Casey, 2016; Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). Advancing the work to meet the needs of a school and system in today's day and age is necessary for principals to be successful. Research from a multitude of studies identifies job characteristics that contribute to the day to day struggles of principals. These include high pressure accountability, adult and student behaviors, bureaucracy and mandates, lack of support and trust from district office leadership, and the time commitment required of their roles (Lavigne et al., 2016; Levin, et al., 2020; Skaalvik, 2020; Van Vooren, 2018; Wang, et al., 2018). Principals work under increasingly stressful conditions related to the pressures of student performance, a range of political factors including labor relations issues, and lack of resources and autonomy in many situations which affect their working conditions and overall job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2018).

Today's principals face an increase in the complexity of their responsibilities which have resulted in higher turnover of leaders, and even greater turnover in schools of high poverty

(Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Cieminski, 2018; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). The most recent national study from the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics reported that during the 2015-2016 school years, approximately 18% of principals nationwide left their roles as administrators, with principals from high poverty schools leaving at a greater rate of 21% (Goldring, & Taie, 2018). Another study, from Miami-Dade County Public Schools, showed an even greater increase in principal turnover with 25% of high poverty school principals who left their role, compared to only 10% who left from affluent schools (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Research also shows 35% of principals who left their positions early in their careers had a tenure of two years or fewer, and as few as 11% of principals had a tenure of 10 years or more reflecting a higher turnover among newer principals (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Overall, a surprisingly short four years marks the average number of years principals stay in their positions (Levin et al., 2020).

Principal turnover is high in the United States due to several noted factors including inadequate preparation, poor working conditions, salary, lack of decision-making authority, and high stakes accountability policies (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). Studies conducted on principal turnover investigate a multitude of individual factors impacting turnover including principal gender, race, and age, years of service in their role, level of education, salary and compensation. Finally, other factors such as school demographics, achievement and working conditions have been studied (Hansen, 2018; Levin et al., 2020). Adding to the trend of principal turnover, the impact of the recent Coronavirus pandemic has influenced principal's and their decision to leave their profession. The Novel Coronavirus has forced principals to navigate unprecedented times where schools became closed to students and families and teaching and learning was still mandated to occur. The role of the principal has

shifted to include serving the families of their community as frontline workers through distribution of food and computers, child welfare checks, and providing outreach in a virtual learning model. The personal and professional impacts on administrators during COVID-19, created both short and long-term effects on job satisfaction for these leaders. A staggering 82.18% of principals reported that their workload intensified due to the school closures related to COVID-19 while 69.62% of principals reported that their attitude about their work, responsibilities, and job role has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. Challenges related to the profession during the COVID-19 global crisis are anticipated to be present for years to come (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research shows principal turnover is a problem in America's schools for a variety of reasons. The concerns related to principal turnover are directly associated with the need for increased stability in school leadership. Research shows principal turnover has a negative impact on teacher stability and consequently the achievement of students (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). Disruptions in initiatives and capacity within a school system occur when principals and teachers leave their jobs. In addition, student achievement declines (Levin et al., 2020). Principals have an influence on the school environment, as well as on teacher retention, commitment and job satisfaction (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). Research shows a strong correlation to higher teacher turnover when there is unstable and inconsistent principal leadership. High principal turnover increases the likelihood that teachers will want to leave their schools as well, making this a greater problem for our nation's education system overall. In addition, when teachers leave, relationships and trust among the staff and

community are disrupted which can negatively impact staff and community engagement and student achievement.

Not only does principal turnover negatively impact the staff, community and students, researchers correlate school principal turnover to a significant and direct negative impact on human and fiscal resources for school districts. Districts overall report that the cost of principal and teacher turnover is a significant burden on the system (Levin et al., 2020). For instance, the cost of replacing a principal in a large urban high poverty school is approximately \$75,000 (Levin & Bradley, 2019), including recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training costs plus other related factors.

Research on principal turnover has uncovered a correlation between high poverty school settings and a greater rate of principal attrition (Levin & Bradley, 2019, Sutchter et al., 2017; Yan, 2020) with a reported 35% of principals who left their school as of 2016-2017 had less than two years on the job (Levin & Bradley, 2019). What we also know from research is that there are common themes for how principals of our most challenged schools are impacted (Lavigne et al., 2016; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Yan, 2020). These studies also identified many areas for school districts and policy makers to consider when supporting principal job satisfaction. These areas include districts who provide high-quality professional learning opportunities, supportive work conditions, and adequate and stable compensation, and include providing principals decision-making authority in their leadership role, and reforming accountability systems to offer incentives for principals to stay at challenging schools (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). Research and funding are available to school districts to pave the way to improving principal retention. While funding is available to state departments of education specific to supporting the professional development of educators and leaders through the *Every Student*

*Succeeds Act*, or ESSA since 2017, our nation is still seeing the trend in principal turnover (Hussar et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020).

## **Background**

The shortage of school leaders in the United States is due in part to the lack of support given to administrators and should be considered high on the list of priorities for reforming school districts (Levin, & Bradley, 2019; Trujillo, 2018). Research supports the conclusion that the likelihood of higher principal retention is also directly related to a district's intentional selection, preparation, and support of their leaders. It also places an emphasis on the need and responsibility of a school district to support and strengthen their leaders (Levin, & Bradley, 2019; Trujillo, 2018). Studies have found high-quality preparation programs like principal internships, coaching and mentoring as being effective to the retention of principals (Cieminski, 2018; Levin, & Bradley, 2019; Trujillo, 2018). Unfortunately, it is reported that time and funding are barriers to providing high quality professional development (Williams & Welsh, 2017). Research also tells us there are very different professional development needs for different leaders and for the range of schools they serve (Cieminski, 2018; Parson & Hunter, 2019; Williams & Welsh, 2017). There is also a lack of investment of professional development in schools in high poverty areas (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Additionally, there is a significant correlation between the challenges of teacher evaluation, resistance to innovation and staff apathy and the lack of satisfaction in their positions. Issues related to labor and contractual agreements, and external pressures to implement change are correlated with negative principal job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2018). Overall, research shows that principal job satisfaction can be directly connected to working conditions and the various policies that influence these working

conditions (Casey, 2016; Darby, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2021b.; Donley et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018; Yan 2020).

What research does not tell us is what leaders of our school districts are doing to change the course of attrition for our school site leaders and what they are doing to increase principal retention. There is an opportunity to research how superintendents across our nation are supporting principal retention, particularly in our high poverty schools where turnover is greatest. We have yet to understand what policies, and or practices school districts with successful principal retention have been implemented at the local level to support job satisfaction and retention (Donley et al., 2020; Yan, 2020). It is possible that there are very intentional decisions made in school district leadership that influence policy, practice, and work conditions of our school administrators, however currently, there is a gap in both the research and literature to help us understand what is taking place at the local level to address this concern for our nation's school leaders.

### **Research Questions or Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the superintendent perceptions of district policy and practices and their influence on principal retention and turnover. Although research shows work conditions have an impact on principal job satisfaction, understanding the policies and practices which drive the change in work conditions can help school districts retain their quality leaders. In an effort to better understand how superintendents are addressing the issue of high principal turnover, especially in our most impacted schools, as well as investigate what might be working to support retention in school districts who have had success, the following research questions will be explored:



1. What policies and practices do superintendents perceive as having influenced the retention or turnover of high-poverty school principals in their district?
2. What opportunities and barriers do superintendents perceive in supporting favorable work conditions related to the job satisfaction of their principals of high-poverty schools in their district?
3. What should superintendents consider when advocating for policies and practices related to favorable work conditions of high poverty school principals?

The researcher will explore the impact of local level district policies and practices, and how these policies and practices support or hinder job satisfaction and influence principal retention. This study will help to better understand how districts are making decisions around policy and practices that impact the retention and turnover of principals from their principalship role.

### **Description of Terms**

In this study, principals are described as those who have been in their role and are “retained” while those who leave have “turned over.” Policy referenced throughout the study as a common theme, in addition to COVID-19. The following terms are used to explain the research to the reader and are referenced throughout:

**COVID-19:** The Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, and subsequently, on March 13, 2020, became a national emergency in the United States (CDC, 2020).

**Policy.** Is defined as a set of ideas or plans that is used as a basis for making decisions, especially in politics, economics, or business (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).

**Principal turnover.** Is defined as the principal of a school exiting their role and being replaced by a new principal (Boyce & Bowers, 2016).

**Retention.** Is defined as those principals that stay in their role as leaders of the same school from year to year (Cieminski, 2018; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Yan, 2020).

District office leadership, or “central office” in this study, is defined as superintendents and administrative staff within a school district who are responsible for overseeing policy in relation to a multitude of areas including finances, assessment, special education, similar under the direction of a local school Board of Education. The administrators who make up a team of district office leadership in this study include superintendents and members of a district Board of Education, as well as those who work in a variety of district roles. The superintendent is the focus of this particular study. The superintendent of a district has a distinct leadership role. Superintendents are held accountable on a multitude of levels. First, they are held accountable by their Board of Education to provide leadership in accordance with state Educational Code requirements, board policies and rules and regulations of the State Board of Education and local County Superintendent of Schools. Superintendents advise the Board in areas requiring policy development, by helping the Board interpret policies to write local administrative rules, regulations, and procedures. Overall, the superintendent bridges the accountability of policy to guidance of district practice, providing leadership in the continuous development, evaluation, and revision of the instructional programs to comply with legal requirements and setting district educational goals (edjoin.org, 2021).

There are also a variety of educational terms which explain ideas or concepts related to the research around principal turnover. Turnover is described in a variety of ways and includes those individuals who choose to leave their role to lead another school, enter into the district

office or other administrative role, or leave the field of education altogether. A description of these terms as well as those associated with geographic location of schools and description of high poverty schools can help the reader understand the context of the problem. These individual principals are categorized into what we call stayers, movers, and leavers (Goldring, & Taie, 2018; Hussar et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2020).

**Stayers.** Principals who were principals in the same school in the current school year as in the year that the data collection period began.

**Movers.** Principals who were still principals in the current school year but had moved to a different school after the original data collection year.

**Leavers.** Principals who were no longer principals after the original data collection year. In addition, these terms are defined for the reader:

**Title I.** Title I Federal funding –which means at least 50% of its students qualify to receive free or reduced-price lunch due to poverty percentages (NCES, 2019).

**High-Poverty Schools.** High-poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75% of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

**Low-poverty Schools.** Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25% or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Levin, et al., 2020; Hussar et al., 2020)

**City (Urban) Schools.** The NCES classifies schools based on their proximity to larger urban centers as verified by their address (NCES, 2019). A city which is large is defined as a large-territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of 250,000 or more. One which is midsize is defined as a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000. Finally, a

small city is one which is a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population less than 100,000 (Office of Management and Budget, 2000).

**Rural Schools.** Rural areas also have their own distinct characteristics. One classification is that of a fringe area. A *fringe* area is a census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area, as well as a rural territory that is less than or equal to two and a half miles from an urban cluster. Another rural area is classified as a *distant* area, or a census-defined rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than two and a half miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster. Finally, a *remote* classified area is one which is a census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (Office of Management and Budget, 2000).

**Suburban Schools.** Suburban areas are categorized by large, midsize, and small based on the following criteria: A large suburban territory is one outside of a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of 250,000 or more. Midsize is considered a territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000. While a small area is outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of less than 100,000.

### **Significance of the Study**

The average yearly turnover rate of principals is 18% in America (Levin et al., 2020) demonstrating the urgent need to address principal turnover in our nation.

There is an abundance of research about what influences principals to leave their role, as well as studies which have reported a range of factors identified by principals related to their job satisfaction. Studies conducted in the past decade have investigated multiple factors related to

job satisfaction and principal retention and turnover. Themes that have emerged in these studies include the impact from organizational climate, working conditions, appropriate decision-making authority, reforming accountability systems, (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Casey, 2016; Dicke et al., 2020; Donley et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019), high quality professional development (Davis 2019; Levin et al., 2020), and competitive salary (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Rainey, 2018; Yan, 2020).

In addition to the body of research around factors related to principal job satisfaction, there is significant research that shows principals in high poverty schools as well as new principals are leaving at a higher rate than others. High poverty principals across our nation are faced with unique struggles which influence a more frequent turnover (Cieminski, 2018; Goldring & Taie, 2018; Hussar et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). The reduction of principal turnover, especially in underserved schools can be addressed by district policy makers to improve the attractiveness of the role of the principal through a variety of ways (Yan, 2020). Also, the nationwide report in 2016-2017 showing that 35% of principals who left their role, had a tenure of two years or fewer, and as few as 11% of principals had a tenure of 10 years or more (Levin & Bradley, 2019) indicating that there is an identifiable issue with retaining new principals in our nation.

In addition to the significant body of research around the recent trends in principal turnover across our nation, the recent experiences related to our nation's COVID-19 pandemic have added an additional concern to the principal workforce. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, 64.38% of principals nationwide reported that the change in demands around leading education related to the pandemic have increased their desire to leave their role as school administrators (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021).

It is suggested that district policies related to the improvement of job satisfaction for principals, particularly of high poverty schools should be researched (Daloisio, 2017; DeMatthews et al., 2021a; Grissom et al., 2019; Yan, 2020). Studies which investigate district office leadership perceptions of and impact on district policies related to job satisfaction of principals, especially in high poverty schools and during the COVID-19 pandemic are nowhere to be found.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of how district office policies and practices support or hinder the job satisfaction of high poverty school principals. In an effort to support districts in retaining excellent leaders of the schools in their communities, the study will investigate the perspectives of superintendents with regards to district policies and practices that impact principals in various researched areas related to job satisfaction. This includes understanding superintendents' perspectives on not only the policies and practices that negatively impact principal working conditions, but those that positively impact them as well. The researcher will also investigate what superintendents perceive as considerations for policies and practices at the district level, to retain principals, as well as how policy around COVID-19 has impacted the role of principals in our nation.

### ***Why it is Important***

Understanding what district office leadership and decision makers of school districts are doing for our most vulnerable school leaders may result in an increase in these supports and an overall decrease in principal turnover. With the retention of principals, the schools across the nation may have greater success in the outcomes of their student achievement. Further

investigation on the effects of district and school policies, among other things, is suggested by researchers to better understand principal turnover.

Going forward, researchers can address gaps in our understanding by taking into account principals' pathways out of their schools, exploring the role of working conditions and opportunities for professional learning, considering how school context influences principal mobility, examining the role of administrative teams and teacher-leaders, and focusing on the effects of district and school policies on principal turnover (Levin & Bradley, 2019, p. 21).

This study may be able to contribute to the body of knowledge around principal retention while uncovering how superintendents of high poverty school districts are retaining their leaders. It can provide district leadership in districts of high principal turnover, a greater understanding of how to examine their own policies and practices to increase principal retention in their district. This research can help support leadership not only at the local level, but also at the state and federal levels to promote policies that influence principal job satisfaction and the retention of America's school leaders. Finally, principals and their prospective labor organizations may be able to utilize the findings in the study to help bargain in contract negotiations in an effort to improve work conditions for their members and support job satisfaction for the administrators they are representing. In conclusion, principal retention is important to the success of students and should be further investigated (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020).

### **Overview of Research Methods**

To help satisfy the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to conduct a qualitative research approach through the use of semi-structured interviews. The goal of the researcher in utilizing a qualitative approach was to gain a deep understanding of the themes around policy

and practices and job satisfaction of principals that would emerge from the interview of superintendents across the nation. Qualitative research typically is interconnected with the world and its participants as well as those who are conducting the research. It is human focused with greater emphasis on the emerging process of the research, and a consideration of the researcher and their own beliefs, and biases (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The purpose of this methodological approach was to collect information regarding the way that the participants perceived the district policies that positively or negatively impacted principal working conditions related to job satisfaction.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with superintendents with a focus on the perceptions of how policy impacts job satisfaction of the principals in their school district (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The open-ended research questions were designed to elicit responses which would be open-ended and offer district office leadership the opportunity to share their perceptions of job satisfaction for principals and the policies they oversee in their role as superintendents. The questions were written to make connections to the theoretical framework being used to support the research.

The research design for the semi-structured interviews was conducted with a phenomenological approach. This method of phenomenological research seeks to investigate through an in-depth interview style, how the participants have experienced, perceived, and interpreted the world around them, in particular the policies that influence principals in their role (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Through the description and analysis of a lived experience, the leaders will use this phenomenological approach to explain how and what policies and practices in their work environment are impacting principal job satisfaction. This method of utilizing semi-structured interviews allows for the qualitative data to be collected and explained through themes



that emerge from the interview process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach allowed for the researcher to gain a better, deeper understanding of the connections between school district policy decision making and the impact of principal retention.

School districts were chosen based on their demographics and the principal retention rates. The researcher looked at districts through their websites and state websites online that represented a range of sizes and varied locations in the United States. The researcher investigated a variety of school districts and contacted superintendents to verify the accuracy of their demographic information before asking for consent to conduct research with them. The superintendents were contacted via email to invite them to participate in the study and obtained consent from the interested participants. Interviews were arranged via video conferences with the participants. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews to gather information which was then reviewed for emerging themes.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to investigate the ways in which superintendents of high-poverty school districts support their principals through policies and practices at the local level and influence working conditions to impact job satisfaction. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher investigates the policies and practices that superintendents perceive have impacted, specifically those principals who have chosen to stay in their role as leaders of high-poverty schools. These superintendents have principals with five or more years in their role working under the policies and practices in the school district which they serve. The perception of what policies and procedures have

contributed to their retention is explored in this study through the eyes of superintendents. In addition, the study investigates the opportunities and barriers superintendents face in creating job satisfaction for the principals of the high poverty principals in their district.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

This literature review presents a synthesis of the complex role of the principalship in K-12 education across our nation. An in-depth look at the increasing complexity of the role, and the challenges associated with the principalship will be reviewed. The literature review will describe in detail the challenging work conditions of school principals, with a focus on high-poverty school leaders. It will explore how policy at the district level impacts the role of site administrators. The literature review will make connections to job-satisfaction of the principal, with an integration of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to help explain these factors of job-satisfaction. Finally, the literature review will discuss how the impacts of our current world pandemic, or COVID-19, have greatly impacted our school administrators and job satisfaction. References on the topic of principal retention, principal turnover, work conditions of principals, district, state, and federal policy, district office leadership, principal job satisfaction, job satisfaction theory, COVID-19, and principal motivation were all themes searched to establish and synthesize the review of literature. Several databases including ProQuest, Sage, Google Scholar, ERIC, and EBSCO were the sources of peer reviewed studies and dissertations which contributed to this synthesis of literature. The references also include educational books, journals, and websites related to these topics and themes.

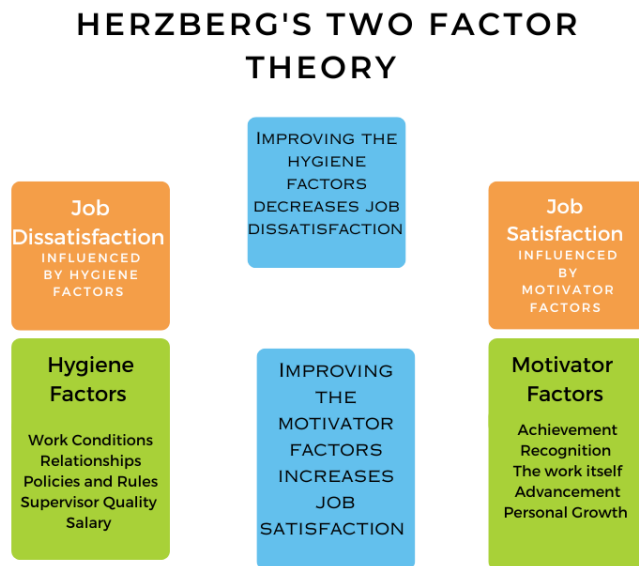
#### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that best supports this study is Fredrick Irving Herzberg's framework of motivation-hygiene or "two factor theory." Herzberg, in his work, looked at the factors in work environments related to causing satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The two-factor

motivation theory, often referred to as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory or dual-factor theory, explains that there are two sets of mutually exclusive categories which influence job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966, 1982; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Rainey, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). The first category of these factors are labeled hygiene factors (Wang et al., 2018). These are typically external factors related to one's job, and factors necessary to avoid "unpleasantness" in the workplace. The hygiene factors Herzberg identifies include: security, status, relationships with colleagues, fair, policy influence, appropriate and competitive pay, supervisor direction, and work related conditions (Rainey, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). In Herzberg's hygiene-motivation theory, the employee's hygiene factors must be addressed first in order to allow for the intrinsic, or motivating factors to actualize. The second category of factors are those related to motivation and job satisfaction, and are called maintenance-satisfaction factors. These factors are internal factors which include employee growth, advancement, responsibility, the actual work itself, recognition, and achievement (Wang et al., 2018).

**Figure 1**

*A Description of Herzberg's Two-Factor Principles*



*Note:* Adapted from Lumen Learning, 2022. CC BY-SA

Herzberg's two factor theory supports the idea that the opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction, not job dissatisfaction (Figure 1). Conversely, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not necessarily job satisfaction. One can be happy with elements in the hygiene category, and not happy with elements in the motivation category, and these factors are dynamic and constantly interacting and changing, and some may be more important to individuals more than others based on their personal and professional personalities (Nickerson, 2021).

### **Motivation Factors-Satisfaction Factors**

Herzberg's research identified several areas related to motivation in the workplace including achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, personal growth, and connectedness to the work itself.

- **Achievement:** Positive achievement can include a variety of successes that include seeing positive results and accomplishments in the workplace. Negative achievement

includes failure to gain accomplishment or see positive results at work (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

- **Recognition:** Recognition in the workplace includes receiving praise and reward for positive work outcomes, while negative recognition is related to criticism or blame (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **Responsibility:** Responsibility includes job related responsibilities as well as responsibilities assigned to the individual. Satisfaction is gained by giving autonomy to individuals to make decisions. When responsibility and autonomy are absent, it negatively affects job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **The work itself:** The correlation of one's level of engagement in the work they do as well as the challenges in their tasks can have a direct positive or negative impact on their job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **Advancement:** Advancement in the workplace is defined as the positive status in or upward movement from one's position in the workplace, while a status that decreases or stays the same is represented negatively according to Herzberg (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **Personal growth:** Personal growth can relate to professional growth derived from the opportunities to develop new skills and increase knowledge (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

### **Hygiene Factors -Contextual factors**

Herzberg's research identified the following areas related to hygiene in the workplace:

- **Working conditions:** The physical surroundings including the amount of work, the space, ventilation, tools, temperature, and safety are all related to working conditions according to Herzberg's research (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

- **Co-worker relations:** Interpersonal relationships between an employee including both working and personal relationships amongst supervisors and colleagues, and subordinates are elements connected to co-worker relations.
- **Company policies and rules:** Company policies and rules are associated with factors such as the extent to which company organization and management and guidelines are clear. Unclear policies and communication may lead to a decrease in job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **Supervisor quality:** The quality of a supervisor includes an employee's judgment of their competency including understanding the responsibilities of the job or leadership abilities which can relate to job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017).
- **Salary:** Salary is related to wage or salary increases, and can have a negative impact on job satisfaction, when expectations of salary are unmet (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

Herzberg's two factor theory of hygiene and motivation factors can be described in two ways. In instances where high hygiene and high motivation can be optimized, employees have no complaints and are motivated in the workplace. Low hygiene and low motivation are described as the least ideal situation, where employees are not motivated and have complaints (Nickerson, 2021).

While Herzberg's research related to job satisfaction was conducted in 1959, Herzberg's motivation theory has since become one of the most commonly used theoretical frameworks in job satisfaction research (Dion, 2006). Recent studies show that the level of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction principals experience can be related to the several identified factors related to these same categories represented in Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Postma & Babo, 2019). This research has uncovered a vast range of hygiene and

motivator factors related to job satisfaction of principals. Because of this extensive body of research that already exists, the researcher has chosen to apply this framework of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to give a foundation to the relationship between the context of the specific policy influence of work conditions for principals and the relationship to job satisfaction and retention.

### **Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and Title I Principals**

In a study conducted by Hawk (2023), Title I middle and high school urban principals shared their perceptions regarding motivation factors that encourage them to stay at their Title I school and hygiene factors that would decrease their job satisfaction. Through the analysis of the data, six themes emerged:

Motivating factors:

1. Opportunities to positively influence staff and student achievement.
2. Purpose for serving students, parents and the community including a passion for students.
3. Unique connection to their school community and personal desire to serve children and families.

Hygiene factors:

4. Demanding work conditions including:
  - Challenges with partnering with parents to support the success of children creating a sense of dissatisfaction and feeling of being undervalued.
  - A much more intense level of work and responsibility to break through barriers associated with supporting students of poverty, homelessness, lack of academic preparation, and neighborhood conflict.



- Challenges with attracting and keeping talented teachers at Title I schools, especially exacerbated with the landscape of teacher shortages after the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Meeting district academic expectations including:

- Being held to the same accountability expectations when the challenges are much greater is disheartening and defeating. A focus at the district level on schools that are underperforming makes leaders feel penalized with little understanding of the expectations and initiatives from district decision makers that may not serve student needs.
- Successful growth in accountability measures when the deficits are much greater for students at their school is often an improvement that goes unrecognized or uncelebrated by district leaders.
- Lack of support from the district level included a disconnect with the needs of the site and a lack of resources to support them.

6. District and state policy can serve as barriers to school improvement including:

- Policies around hiring that limit putting quality teachers in front of the students who need them most, for instance, in addition to assessment expectations that are so frequent they cause student fatigue create a deep sense of job dissatisfaction for principals.
- The paperwork and documentation associated with policies and expectations for Title I schools in particular are strenuous and time consuming (Hawk, 2023).

In Hawk's study, Title I principals made connections to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory through motivating factors including their perception of positive influence, sense of purpose, and

connection to their community and school or intrinsic factors. Hygiene factors that were reported to create job dissatisfaction included demanding work requirements, challenges with parents, staffing, and the job intensity and frustration associated with the same level of accountability with greater gaps in student achievement without having sufficient resources to meet their needs (Hawk, 2023).

### **National Data Related to Principal Turnover**

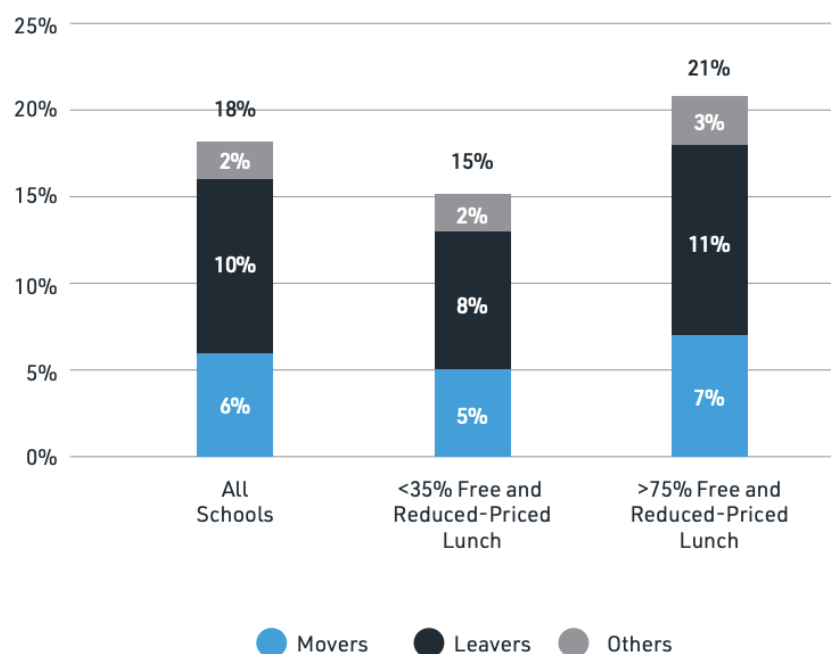
The United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics collects and reports national data related to current conditions of education in the United States (NCES, 2022). This provides education leaders and policymakers a variety of statistics related to education. The National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) replaces the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which was the survey utilized from 1987-2001 by the National Center for Education Statistics. This national survey collects data every two to three years on educational topics related to teacher and principal labor force including school characteristics, retention, and demographics offering data on trends related to education for policy makers and researchers (NCES, 2022) and is followed up with another survey titled NTPS follow up survey. The most current National Teacher and Principal Survey follow-up data available is from the 2016-2017 school year and will be replaced with data from 2020-2021, following the 2020-2021 National Teacher Principal questionnaire (NCES, 2022).

The Principal Follow-Up Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics report categorizes attrition and mobility data to describe principals who left their role grouped into these different categories: “stayers,” or principals who stayed in the same school, “movers,” or principals who were still principals, but moved to another school, and finally, “leavers,” or those principals who left altogether.

While the Principal Follow-Up Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics report regarding principal attrition and mobility indicates that principal movers and leavers have declined, the data still shows an attrition rate from 20% in 2008-2009 to 17.5% principals in 2016-2017, with approximately 18% of principals nationwide leaving their roles as administrators, and principals from high poverty schools leaving at a higher rate of 21% (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

**Figure 2**

*Principal Turnover in the United States in 2016-2017*



*Note.* Goldring & Taie, 2018. Used with permission, see Appendix F- Learning Policy Institute.

Goldring & Taie (2018) illustrate in their synthesis of data offered by the NTPS the percentage of movers, leavers, and other departures of principals who lead in both urban and rural geographic settings to explain how the higher rate of turnover is represented in high poverty schools (>75% free and reduced-priced lunch) in comparison to low poverty schools (<35% free and reduced-priced lunch). This demonstrates the six percent difference in these demographic

regions, and the correlation to increase in poverty with higher turnover percentages of school principals in 2016-2017 (Figure 2).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals in collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute conducted a survey of 424 secondary school principals. In addition, the Learning Policy Institute conducted an additional six focus groups with 33 school leaders from 26 states. The surveys conducted were related to principal intentions to stay in their role, and data around working conditions, compensation, accountability systems and evaluation, decision-making authority, and professional learning (Levin et al., 2020).

The NASSP-LPI researchers revealed that more than 42% of principals who participated in the survey were considering leaving their school (Levin et al., 2020). While some of the leavers were planning on retirement, this was not the majority.

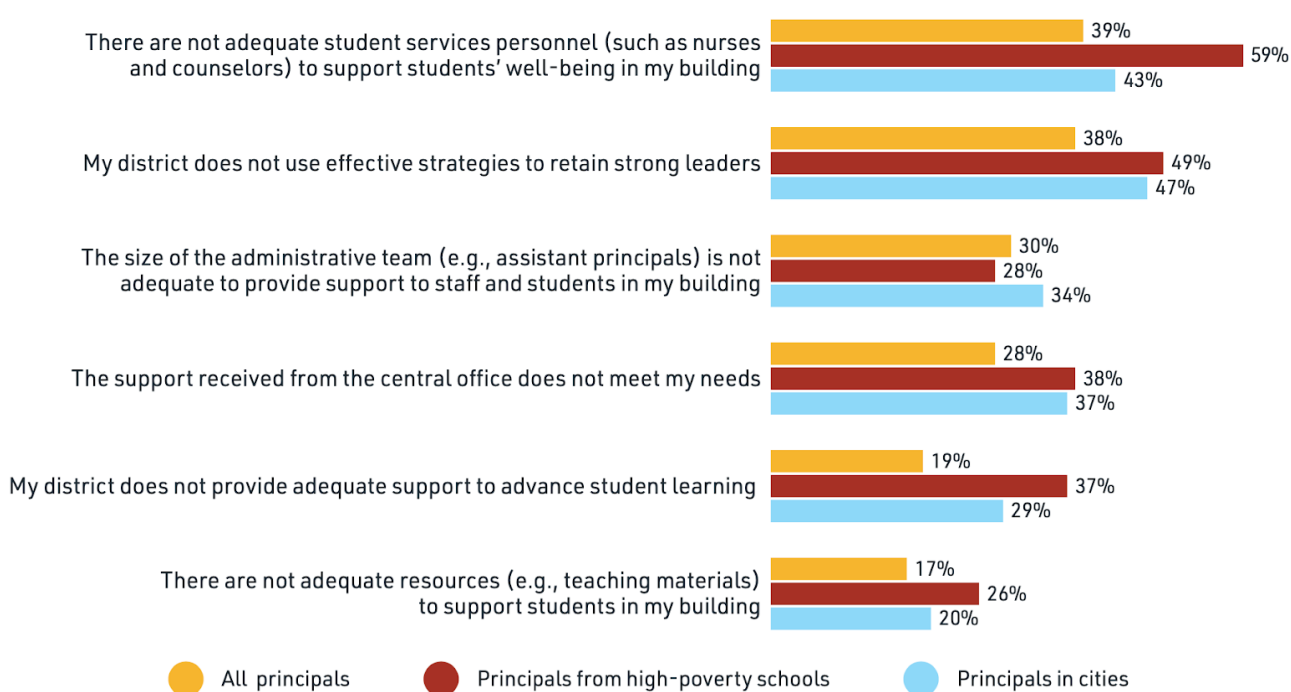
In addition, 19% of principals who participated in the survey planned to leave the principalship altogether. This study reported that principals of high poverty schools were not the largest group to plan to leave the principalship altogether at 14% in comparison to lower poverty schools at 19% (Levin et al., 2020).

Finally, principals of high poverty schools were slightly higher and more likely to leave their school for other schools at 38% in comparison to 32% of low poverty schools. The greatest reported factor to influence principals to leave their job was heavy workload, with 45% of all principals reporting this as a reason, while 63% of high poverty school principals also indicated this to be a critical factor (Levin et al., 2020). A lack of district office support was second in frequency for reasons most likely to cause principals to leave their schools at 40% with 51% of high poverty school principals reporting this to be a factor (Levin et al., 2020).

Finally, when looking at the results of the study related to inadequate district supports, the principals planning to leave reported at the highest level that their district does not use effective strategies to retain strong leaders, with the second highest category related to lack of district supports related to the impact of absent resources needed at the site level including nurses and counselors and other personnel. The information from the NASSP-LPI principal survey disaggregated data to look at how principals from high poverty schools in particular, report on the support from the district office (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

**Figure 3**

*Percentage of Principals Lacking Adequate District Supports*



*Note.* Goldring & Taie, 2018. Used with permission, see Appendix F- Learning Policy Institute.

The data represented (Figure 3) further indicates that principals from high poverty schools have the greatest perceived lack of adequate district support in every area except one, size of administrative team (Levin et al., 2020).

## **2020-2021 National Teacher and Principal Survey Data**

Results from the 2020-2021 National Teacher and Principal Survey published in December, 2022 represent a multitude of updated findings shared by public and private school principals in our nation. Data were collected between October 2020 and August 2021, and included a sample of approximately 9,900 traditional and charter public school principals, and 3,000 private school principals (NCES, 2022). Topics surveyed in the 2020-2021 NTPS included general demographic information about the school principal including age, education, experience, race, ethnicity, salary, perceptions of autonomy, and goals for their school, school climate and safety, and working conditions related to their job as a principal (NCES, 2022).

Preliminary findings reported by NCES indicate the following notable data related to principal job satisfaction:

**Salary**-The average annual salary of K-12 public school principals was reported at \$105,900, while public school high school principals reported an average salary slightly higher at \$111,100. Private school principals had a lower average salary of \$78,000 annually, with higher salary at the high school level at \$111,500.

The public school principal salary after 10 years or more experience was reported at \$114,000, with an average increase of less than \$10,000 after 10 years, while the private school principal salary was reported at \$84,800, again with an average increase of less than \$10,000 after 10 years of service as an administrator.

**Work hours**-Overall, K-12 public school principals reported a 58.3 hour work week, focused on average with 30% on administrative tasks, 29% on curriculum and instruction, 24% on student interactions, and 15% on parent interactions. The K-12 private school principals reported an average 54.5 hour work week, spending 33% of their time on internal administrative tasks, 28%

on curriculum and teaching, 20% on student interactions, and 16% on parent interactions (NCES, 2022).

**Years of experience**-Public K-12 principals reported an average of 6.9 years of experience as an administrator, with an average of four and a half years in their current school (Table 1). Private K-12 principals reported an average of nine years of experience as an administrator with an average of seven years in their current school. Together, the public and private principals who participated in the NTPS represented the following years of experience:

**Table 1**

*Principal Demographics-Years of Experience*

	Average total years of experience	Average years at current school	Less than 3 years of experience	3-9 years of experience	10 years or more of experience
<i>All principals-both public and private</i>	7.3	5.0	40%	44%	15.8%
<i>Public principals</i>	6.9	4.5	40.7%	46%	13%
<i>Private principals</i>	9.0	6.7	37.8%	35.9%	26.3%

*Note.* NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain.

**Autonomy and decision-making authority**- Principals were asked to report their perceptions of autonomy or influence on decisions concerning their school in the NTPS survey (Table 2). The percentage of principals who responded with the perception that they had a major influence in their school decision making is represented in the following categories:

**Table 2***Principal Perceptions of Autonomy For Decision Making*

	Setting performance standards for students	Establishing curriculum	Determining the content of inservice professional development programs for teachers	Evaluating teachers	Hiring new full-time teachers	Setting discipline policy	Deciding how their school budget will be spent
<i>All principals-both public and private</i>	61.3%	41.2%	66.5%	90.9%	88.7%	63.7%	57.9%
<i>Public principals</i>	58.7%	35.0%	63.6%	92.9%	89.4%	60.2%	57.6%
<i>Private principals</i>	71.5%	65.3%	77.9%	83.2%	85.8%	77.0%	58.9%

*Note.* NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain.

**Job satisfaction**-Overall, 94% of public K-12 school principals, and 92% of private school principals were generally satisfied with being a principal at their school. However, 34% of public school principals said they did not have as much enthusiasm as they did when they first began their job, while 30% of private school principals reported the same. Salary was a strong indicator of job satisfaction with 25% of public and 16% of private principals reporting if they could get a higher paying job they would leave their job as soon as possible (NCES, 2022).

The report shows that work hours exceed a typical 40 hour work week, while salary is a strong predictor of principal likelihood of staying or leaving their job. Overall, principals in our nation reported a strong decline in enthusiasm in their job from when they first became a principal, which, based on the years of experience data, is on average within seven years to nine years from when they began their role as an administrator in a public or private school. This concludes that



the significant decline in their enthusiasm has occurred within the first six to nine years as a principal, early in their career.

**Table 3**

*Principal Job Satisfaction*

	<b>The stress and disappointment involved in being a principal at this school aren't worth really worth it</b>	<b>I am generally satisfied with being a principal at this school</b>	<b>If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave this job as soon as possible</b>	<b>I think about transferring to another school</b>	<b>I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job</b>	<b>I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go</b>
<i>All principals-both public and private</i>	17.5%	93.8%	23.6%	16.7%	33.6%	17.0%
<i>Public principals</i>	17.8%	94.2%	25.4%	17.5%	34.5%	17.1%
<i>Private principals</i>	16.3%	92.4%	16.3%	13.6%	30.1%	16.7%

*Note.* NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain.

One notable data point from this category is a further breakdown of the 17.5% of principals who reported discouragement with their job. Out of this 17.5 percentage rate, 20% of these principals indicated that their school had 75 or more free and reduced price lunch approvals, showing a correlation perhaps with the higher number of socio-economically disadvantaged students related to one-fifth, or 20% of principals who report discouragement in their role (Table 3).

During the 2020-2021 school year, in addition to the NTPS survey, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) conducted a survey in the fall of 2021 with a sample of 502 pre K-12 principals in various schools, and reported data from the national

survey they conducted (NASSP, 2021). The information gathered from principals during the COVID-19 pandemic was related to how their leadership and schools adapted to the immediate leadership situation as a result of the pandemic. Results from the survey concluded the following:

- A drop in job satisfaction, with a report of four out of 10 principals, or 38% expecting to leave the profession in the next three years.
- Work related conditions continue to impact principals' decisions to leave their job, with the top three factors related to the likelihood of principals to leave their roles are 1). heavy workload-37%, 2). state accountability measures-31% , and 3). time related to compliance requirements -30%.
- 18% of principals reported that district and state policies are the most challenging aspect of their job.
- 25% strongly agree that they are properly supported by support from the district office.
- 19% strongly agree that the salary and benefits they receive fairly compensate them for their role.
- More than one-quarter, or 26% reported they considered leaving their job as a result of the impacts of COVID-19 (NASSP, 2021).

Finally, in a late 2022 study conducted by RAND Corporation, a random sample of 300 districts nationwide were surveyed to learn about trends in principal turnover. It was estimated that the principal turnover in 2021-2022 was at 16%. Principal turnover was highest in high-poverty districts at 23% with the greatest attrition in rural districts of high-poverty (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023). During the pandemic, principal turnover has had less attention in the media, however

statistics show that principals have the greatest turnover amongst educators (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023).

### **Factors Related to Principal Turnover**

Research conducted by several studies has looked at the factors that influence principals to leave their role through the lens of satisfied leavers and unsatisfied leavers (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Goldring & Taie, 2018; Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019). Several factors related to the dissatisfaction of the principal job including an absence of decision-making authority, accountability and mandate pressures, undesirable salary, unmanageable workload, and lack of professional preparation, attributing to the factors of high principal turnover in the United States (Green, 2020; Hussar et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). In the study conducted by Boyce & Bowers (2016), three categories of factors including individual principal factors, school factors, and climate influenced factors were investigated (Boyce & Bowers, 2016).

- Principal factors related to turnover that were researched included age, race, gender, level of education, years and areas of experience, and leadership strengths (Boyce & Bowers, 2016). Research shows that newer principals (two years or less) leave at a higher rate 35% (Levin & Bradley, 2019). It has been found that principals who are less effective were more likely to leave their schools, and higher turnover among low-performing principals was related to demotions and exits from the system. Higher performing principals, however were often movers to central office positions where they were promoted (Donley, et al. 2020).
- School level factors related to turnover that were researched included school type (private/public/charter), urbanicity, school size, grade levels, student demographics,

student achievement, and student socio-economic status (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Goldring & Taie, 2018; Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019). While rural situated schools showed a significant rate of principal turnover (Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020) city or urban situated schools with 75% or more free and reduced-price lunch, or high poverty schools, showed the highest rate of turnover (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018).

- Working conditions related to turnover that were researched included salary & benefits, professional development, autonomy, student disciplinary environment, workload, and positive relationships including trust with staff. Research shows principals are influenced negatively by workload, disciplinary environment, and positively impacted by relationships with staff (Goldring & Taie, 2018; Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Sutchter et al., 2017; Yan, 2020). In addition to the data reflected in the NTPS, additional studies conducted indicate that principals of schools of high poverty show a greater rate of turnover due to a variety of specific factors related to the needs of the students they serve and the work conditions associated with them (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Cieminski, 2018; Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020).

The data from the most recent National Teacher and Principal Survey from 2016 showed one in five city and rural principals, in comparison to the one in six suburban principals, left their leadership roles (Levin et al., 2019). In the study by Sun & Ni (2016), it was reported that 28% of principals at high-poverty schools who had left their roles cited working conditions as a strong contributing factor. Principals in high poverty schools spend more time on administrative tasks than those of low poverty schools (Lavigne et al., 2016), resulting in greater working hours (Lavigne et al., 2016). In addition, higher numbers of disciplinary issues associated with high-

poverty schools create a challenge in retaining principals (Ni et al., 2015; Sun & Ni, 2016). Studies have reported a 23% increase in the risk of principals leaving being correlated to an increase in disciplinary issues of students at their schools (Sun & Ni, 2016). This group of principals report a direct correlation to a decrease in job satisfaction when disciplinary issues were greater in the work environment. Of all areas of the geographic sub groups, suburban school principals registered a higher score on job satisfaction compared to those who work in urban and rural communities (Levin et al., 2019; Perkins, 2020). In many study results however, it is clear that leading a population of students with high-needs, high-poverty does not negatively impact their decision to stay in their role. Resources and support are more critical deciding factors for their retention (Casey, 2016), and student demographics are not as influential in principal turnover as the policies or structures in place for the administrator to support them (Casey, 2016; Darby, 2021; DeMatthews et al. 2021a.; Donley et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018; Yan, 2020). Finally, research shows that principal turnover is higher among newer principals serving our high poverty schools with greater needs.

Overall, the turnover of principals in schools that have the greatest need is a national concern (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Levin et al., 2019; Yan, 2020) especially in these urban and rural schools, which, in many cases, are already underperforming (Levin et al., 2020).

### **What Matters to Principal Retention**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals, in collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute, reviewed the findings from 35 studies conducted on principal turnover and summarized the five top strategies suggested for implementation on the school, district, and state level to reduce attrition in our nation's principals. These included:

1. Providing high-quality professional learning opportunities

2. Improving working conditions
3. Competitive salaries
4. Appropriate decision-making authority
5. Reforming accountability systems (Levin et al., 2020).

These topics are the foundation of the literature review and are discussed in depth in the following subsections. Providing high quality professional development, improvement of working conditions, competitive salaries, appropriate decision-making authority and reforming accountability systems and their impact on the principalship role in our nation are the areas of focus to help dig deep into understanding how decision makers can understand the context for policy and practice as it relates to principal job satisfaction and the need for change. In addition, attention to the impact of COVID-19 and the current state of our public-school systems will be examined in this literature review, as research around COVID-19 surfaces around the impact on principals.

### **Professional Development to Support Principal Retention**

Several studies highlight the importance of professional development for principals as it relates to principal retention (Baker & Bloom, 2017; Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Parson & Hunter, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Sutchter et al., 2017). Specifically, research shows a strong relationship between principal job satisfaction and professional development (Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). Reports show that while low performing principals tend to leave the education system altogether, those better prepared and supported principals often stay longer in their roles. The need for quality professional development for new hires is critical to avoid turnover (Symonds & Hansen, 2022). Parson & Hunter (2019) suggest that principal preparation programs should include professional

development programs which support the needs of all principals and the different contexts in which they serve. Principals have also reported on the positive influence of quality professional development and the correlation it has with job satisfaction (Skaalvik, 2020; Sutchter et al., 2017). In a review of the research regarding principal turnover, Levin and Bradley (2020) shared data from a group of Chicago principals who were surveyed in 2018 to identify what areas of support would increase their retention if improved. Forty-five percent of principals reported areas of working conditions impacting their turnover, and specifically identified school funding and compliance requirements as the reasons, while 38% reported that opportunities for professional development and compensation were top priority in impacting their retention (Levin et al., 2020). Principal internships are a critical component to a high-quality principal program and have been implemented in various states including Illinois, California, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina with successful outcomes in supporting principal retention (Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

Activities including goal setting, networking and coaching deemed to be the most effective for administrator's professional growth (Baker & Bloom, 2017; Bayler, 2017; Car & Holmes, 2017; Cieminski, 2018; Davis, 2019; Parson & Hunter, 2019; Sutchter, et al., 2017). It is suggested that districts and those creating professional development opportunities for their school leaders look at offering an array of options that principals can have choose from based on their needs as adult learners (Cieminski, 2018; Davis, 2019; Parson & Hunter, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2017).

The National Institute of Education Sciences conducted a study to gain insight as to how prevalent participation in professional development is among America's public-school principals (Lewis & Scott, 2020). It was reported that 95% of principals who participated in the study took

advantage of professional development opportunities offered to them, with learning being accomplished primarily through workshops and conferences. Seventy seven percent participated in principal networking opportunities, 67% percent participated in visits to other schools designed to improve their own performance as principal, and 52% percent reported participating in mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching of principals (Lewis & Scott, 2020). This study confirmed that principals indeed are participating in professional development, however, while principals reported 95% of professional development participation, only 67% participated in professional development as it relates to ongoing support, or meeting their specific needs as principals (Lewis & Scott, 2020). In addition, 83% of principals in city schools reported participation in professional development related to school improvement, 72% participated in professional development related to school management and policy, and 60% of principals participated in professional development related to human resource management (Lewis & Scott, 2020). Principals in city schools more often reported learning about social services for students (60%) more than principals in rural schools (Lewis & Scott, 2020), that reflects professional development is being offered based on the needs related to serving city schools, but is not reported by all principals, indicating this may be an area to look at for improvement.

There are a multitude of studies indicating professional development can be successful in many ways. Some of these include principal preparation programs with internship experiences (Symonds & Hansen, 2022), mentoring (Carr et al., 2017), expert coaching (Sutcher et al., 2017), blended models of peer and transformational coaching (Trujillo, 2018), effective evaluation (Bayler, 2017), and communities of practice with differentiated and individualized support (Cierninski, 2018). In a survey conducted by Lavigne et al. (2016), principals shared the different professional development opportunities that they engaged in. Ninety-nine percent did participate



in professional development during the 2011-2012 school year, with 94% engaging in workshops led by others as their primary focus on professional development opportunities (Lavigne et al., 2016), correlating to none of the methods of professional development reported to be successful in supporting administrators from the variety of these studies conducted.

These studies show us that there are a variety of models for professional development of principals, what professional development models have suggested to be successful in supporting administrators, as well as how the transfer of this knowledge to actual professional development offerings for administrators have been applied in some cases. Additional research suggests the need to consider how preparation programs for principals may support the retention of administrators (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2018; Parson & Hunter, 2019; Levin et al. 2020; Williams & Welsh, 2017), while understanding that there is still much unknown about the effects of principal preparation programs (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2018).

Research suggests that professional development and the responsibility to provide it to principals has shifted from administrative preparation programs to school districts (Cieminski, 2018; Green, 2020). In several studies, principals agreed that there is value and satisfaction to professional development and that professional development has a strong link to job satisfaction and retention (Cieminski, 2018; Davis, 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Furthermore, research recommends that supporting principals should not only occur in the first years but should be continuous for all district administrators and support the context in which they serve (Cieminski, 2018; Parson & Hunter, 2019). While professional development for principals is available, research emphasizes the need for school districts and policy makers to place a focus on the right kind of professional development that principals need to be successful and ensure it is ongoing (Bayler, 2017; Carr et al., 2017; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2017). Having a

partnership of school systems with preparation programs can support a pipeline to supply districts with principals who have had specific training to meet the needs of the communities they serve, while state leaders can also advocate for field-based experiences to be required by policy and funded by ESSA (Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

### **The Work Conditions of Administrators**

Although there is a lack of clarity around the definition of work conditions for administrators, several areas have been researched and proven to impact principal job satisfaction. These include stressful work demands, work-life balance, labor relations issues, lack of school funding, district and state mandates and compliance requirements, district and state policies, bureaucracy & politics, negative adult behaviors, student behavior issues, secondary trauma, unsupportive central office, and inadequate resources, salary and benefits, relationships with staff, and lack of autonomy (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Dicke et al., 2020; Donley et al., 2020; Green, 2020; Levin et al., 2019; Levin et al. 2020; Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020; Sun & Ni, 2016; Van Vooren, 2018; Wang, et al., 2018; Yan, 2020). The purpose of this study is to make the connection to the district policies that directly impact the work conditions of administrators identified in existing research. The study examines these policies, and their influence on the job satisfaction of high poverty school principals through the perceptions of superintendent leaders. This includes the work conditions related to workload, school culture and climate, salary, autonomy, and accountability. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic will also be reviewed as new research unveils its effect on working conditions for school principals.

## ***Workload***

In recent studies examining the work responsibilities of principals, it was reported that principals, on average, worked more than a 40-hour work week and that the majority of their hours were focused on administrative, managerial, and transactional tasks (Hoyer & Sparks, 2017; Lavigne et al., 2016; McEllen, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Van Vooren, 2018). Elementary school principals faced a work week of an average of 59 hours, with those in high poverty schools working over 59 hours (Lavigne et al., 2016). Studies show principals in high poverty schools spend more time on administrative tasks than do their colleagues in low poverty schools, and spend their greatest allocation of time on managerial or transactional work (Hoyer & Sparks 2017; Lavigne et al., 2016). Specifically, 31% of public school administrator time was concentrated on transactional work (Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). Instruction-related work involving curriculum and classroom walkthroughs was next at 26% for principals, followed closely behind the third most allocated amount of time, 23% which was connections with students which included both disciplinary actions and academic guidance (Hoyer & Sparks, 2017). The glaring evidence is that principals spend much of their time with transactional work and disciplinary and academic guidance in comparison to instructional leadership in their daily and weekly schedules which translates to greater job dissatisfaction (Hoyer & Sparks, 2017).

Principals also struggle significantly with maintaining a work-life balance while meeting the work demands of their job (Darby, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2019; Donley et al., 2020; Green, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Lavigne et al., 2016; McEllen, 2019; Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020; Skaalvik, 2020; Van Vooren, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). Several recent studies have found that, on average, a principal works many hours beyond the 40-hour work week on a consistent basis throughout the year (Lavigne et al., 2016; Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020; Van Vooren, 2018;

Wang et al., 2018). Pijanowski and Lasater (2020) reported the principals spent 16.55 more hours in their work week than the average 40-hour work week (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Principals estimated the time of their daily demands, adding up to a 32-hour work day and averaging at 163.3-hour work week, deeming workload completion perpetually unattainable (Van Vooren, 2018). Although the study reflected principal perception, in this study principals uniformly shared their estimation of having an immense workload averaging more than four times about the standard 40 hour work week. Eighty percent of principals surveyed said their days are limited in their time with family and personal relationships to less than three hours a day because of their impacted work schedules, and 20% reported spending quality time with family less than one hour per day (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Twenty-five percent of principals reported that five or more times per week they have sacrificed time from their personal lives for work related demands, while 92% said they do this on a weekly basis (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Seventy-two-point nine percent of those surveyed in a study by Wang et al., (2018), reported that the demand of their work makes them always behind, while 80% indicated that they are emotionally drained because of never being caught up.

Because of the lack of balance principals suffer with their job demands and their personal lives, their organizational commitment is negatively impacted (Green, 2020). The theme of workload as a hindrance to the work environment and the impact that district practices have in this area is important for districts to consider (Darby, 2021). Time management challenges should be further explored in examining principal retention (Donley et al., 2020). The findings from Skaalvik (2020) concluded that the multitude of transactional tasks associated with today's principal workload limits the focus and energy necessary for principals to be high performing instructional leaders in today's schools (Skaalvik, 2020; Williams & Welsh, 2017).

### ***School Climate***

Another area of work conditions and job satisfaction among principals that has emerged is school climate as it relates to student disciplinary issues (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Sun & Ni, 2016; Wang et al., 2018; Yan, 2020). Research shows, high poverty and urban schools that are often characterized by greater disciplinary issues have a higher turnover of principal leadership (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Dicke et al., 2020; Levin, et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2020; Sun & Ni, 2016; Yan, 2020). Research also shows that principals indeed have an influence on the school environment, as well as teacher retention, commitment, and satisfaction (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). Secondary trauma impacting principals who support students who have experienced or are experiencing trauma is another work condition that affects the stress principals endure when leading schools of high-poverty (DeMatthews et al., 2019). Principals are frequently responsible for ensuring their schools provide support to address the psychological needs of students following trauma. This critical responsibility creates an additional emotional strain on them (DeMatthews et al., 2019).

### ***Salary***

The salary of our nation's administrators is the focus of several studies as a clearly defined work related condition which impacts a principal's job satisfaction (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Donley et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, 2020a.; Rainey, 2018; Yan, 2020). In a national study, 76% of public-school administrators verified that they were offered a higher salary in another position. (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Data from 7,460 public school principals who participated in the 2007-2008 National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the subsequent Principal Follow up Survey, reported a salary less than \$80,000, while the study by Yan (2020), reports that the average national principal salary is

\$90,453, only \$10,000 more a decade later. It is often the case as well that many principals are paid less than the highest paid teachers in their district, or the gap between these salaries is minimal (Levin et al., 2019; Yan, 2020). The demands on principals and teachers serving students and families of high-poverty, high needs schools can be much more intensive, yet there is little or no difference in compensation for these teachers and administrators who serve schools with the greatest need. In addition, the responsibilities of a principal also far outweigh those of a teacher without the support of comparable compensation, leaving principals discouraged (Levin et al., 2019; NASSP, 2020a.).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has recognized the need for financial incentives for principals, suggesting that all principals should be compensated with salary and benefits that are comparable to those of equal responsibilities in other professions. They make the argument that those who serve in hard to staff schools such as high-poverty, urban, rural, and other challenging schools should have even greater compensation (NASSP, 2021).

Salary, hours worked per week, contract days, availability of support staff, union representation, and learning climate are important variables that indicate policies that might be changed to increase principal retention. Work overload has been identified as one of the major reasons for job dissatisfaction and job burnout among school principals, and thus hours worked per week and contract days are important policy considerations. (Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019, p. 12)

Lastly, studies have shown that job satisfaction of administrators is directly impacted by their salary (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Donley et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019; NASSP, 2021; Rainey, 2018; Yan, 2020).

### *Autonomy*

Leaders in our public schools in America are notably under increased demands and challenging work conditions (Green, 2020; Skaalvik, 2020; & Wang et al., 2018). It has been proven that in order to support principal retention, districts should support an environment that encourages a sense of autonomy (Levin et al., 2019). Research conducted by Wang et al. (2018) not only addressed the need for professional development leadership efforts for administrators to feel successful, but the need for them to have the ability to make challenging decisions was directly correlated to an increase in their job satisfaction.

Specifically, the challenges that today's principals cite included limited control over curriculum and instruction, the constraints of decreasing budgets, the diversity of students' individual needs and lack of autonomy related to poor teacher performance (Green, 2020; Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). In addition to the ethical conflicts principals face in their role serving a district or community's political agendas, (Wang et al., 2018), they also felt that the testing standards which judged their effectiveness did not properly reflect the student achievement taking place. In addition to accountability pressures, principals have noted that lack of autonomy is an area that has contributed to a reduction in job satisfaction (Donley et al., 2020; Levin & Bradley, 2019). In several studies conducted around principal efficacy, it was discovered that job satisfaction is greater when principals have greater self-efficacy and appropriate decision-making authority (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Postma & Babo, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). Research published by Skaalvik (2020) concluded that the most important factors which were associated with job satisfaction of principals included autonomy to remove teachers who are not able to do their job well, professional growth opportunities, and the ability to make decisions at the site level for their school (Skaalvik, 2020). Furthermore, the

findings show that the higher a principal's self-efficacy and autonomy, the greater the job satisfaction they have, which has implications for principal retention (Postma & Babo, 2019).

### ***Accountability***

School principals are faced with finding creative ways to accomplish goals set for student and school improvement under challenging accountability systems and mandates (Donley et al., 2020; Green, 2020; Levin et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018). Federal policies under *No Child Left Behind*, or “NCLB”, led principals to be faced with challenges for increasing student achievement which contributed to principal job stress and greater turnover. Requirements under its replacement, *Every Student Succeeds Act*, or ESSA accountability system, allowed states to create their own accountability measures, proves to offer the same level of stress and tension for school administrators (Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019). Pressures from government directed initiatives to implement new programs are a statistically significant predictor for principals’ job satisfaction, showing that administrators feel less satisfied with their job when this pressure exists (Wang et al., 2018). In order to empower leaders to be successful under state and federal mandates, high quality supports with evidence-based strategies, especially for high-needs schools, should be implemented (Donley et al., 2020).

In addition to meeting the requirements of the challenging accountability systems in place, other work-related conditions such as issues with teacher evaluation, staff resistance to innovation and staff apathy have shown to contribute to the lack of principal satisfaction. (Wang et al., 2018). The study found that issues related to labor and contractual agreements and external pressures to implement change were correlated with principal job satisfaction showing that when these obstacles are present, job satisfaction is shown to decrease (Wang et al., 2018). In many cases, because of these issues related to politics, union relationships, and bureaucracy or what is



referred to as “red tape”, the leadership role has become increasingly challenging to navigate. Unfunded mandates, legal issues, complaints from stakeholders, and bargaining unit and board member issues create barriers to making important improvements (Donley et al., 2020). This political “red tape” undermines principal job satisfaction (Darby, 2021; Green, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). The role administrators serve with being forced to implement policies and practices and adhere to mandates without adequate support contribute to their lack of job satisfaction (Casey, 2016; DeMatthews et al. 2019).

### **COVID-19**

The Novel Coronavirus forced principals to navigate unprecedented times while schools became closed to students and families and teaching and learning was still mandated to happen (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021; Johnson & Weiner, 2020; NASSP, 2020b.; Superville, 2020). Principals have been faced with the pressures of leading their schools under challenging conditions and systems even before the COVID-19 pandemic (NASSP, 2020b.). The COVID-19 pandemic forced new pressures on principals in leading schools under distance learning mandates and requirements that followed (Johnson & Weiner, 2020). The role of the principal shifted to include serving the families of their community as frontline workers through distribution of food and computers, and providing outreach in a virtual learning model. The personal and professional impacts to administrators during COVID-19 created both short-term and long-term effects on job satisfaction for these leaders.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 90% of young people around the world no longer attend physical school. Yet in many places, particularly within the United States where our research is centered, students and educators continue to find ways to engage in formal schooling. Many principals maintain much of their prior efforts while also

meeting the unprecedented challenges the pandemic has created for their staff, families and students. Principals serve as essential, frontline workers, handing out food to families, bringing laptops and tablets to students, keeping up the morale of students through email blasts, parades through students' neighborhoods and continuous messaging and communication to parents. Principals have found new ways to keep cherished school traditions such as prom, graduations and awards ceremonies alive. The focus on doing what is best for kids may never have been more apparent (Johnson & Weiner, 2020, p. 367).

Challenges related to the profession during the pandemic will continue to be present during the COVID-19 global crisis and afterwards (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021; NASSP, 2020b.). In a recent study, 82.18% of principals reported that their workload intensified due to the school closures while 69.62% of principals reported that their attitude about their work, responsibilities, and or job role had been adversely impacted by the school closure (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021). The physical and mental well-being of principals was negatively impacted with 78.64% reporting substantial increase in anxiety levels during the time of school closures due to high levels of stress, workload, lack of sleep, worry, feelings of isolation and hopelessness, and lack of self-care while holding the responsibilities of running a school and meeting the needs of students, staff and families during a pandemic (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021). While 2.78% of administrators reported that they planned to retire, 3.98% reported that the experience of leading during the 2020-2021 school year has forced their decision to leave administration entirely. Principals from urban schools reported a 7.45% rate vs. those in suburban schools at 2.48% planning to leave (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021).

Overall, 64.38% of principals reported that the school closures due to COVID-19 have increased their desire to leave their role as school administrators due to work demands, district/central office concerns, enjoyment of the role, compensation and teacher unions, value of the principalship, demonstrating strength for others' benefit, and balance/health. Principals reported the job feels undoable, requires too much time, demands are too great with not enough support or enjoyment to continue and bureaucratic constraints with teachers unions adding to the frustration (Dawson & Nosworthy, 2021). In addition, to the data from Dawson & Nosworthy that shows 64.38% of principals reported that school closures have increased their desire to leave their role, another study conducted by the NASSP showed that 45% of principals reported that the working conditions of their job related to the pandemic have increased their plans to leave their profession (NASSP, 2020b.). This breakdown includes 22.8% of those who for the first time thought about leaving, while 17.2% who already considered it, are planning on doing it sooner than expected (NASSP, 2020b.).

The concern for an already problematic situation of principal turnover coupled with the limited existing pipeline for future administrators is frightening to our nation's communities (NASSP, 2020b.). Principals have reported that a lack of leadership during a toxic political climate has contributed to the conditions which have made their job even more undesirable during the pandemic (NASSP, 2020b.). Repeated policy and guidance changes are challenging to lead under, while principals are feeling that their needs are being ignored. Principals are blamed by parents and community members for policies which they have no control over, while all eyes are on them to deliver (NASSP, 2020b.). The burden of leading with the responsibility of the health and safety of staff and students has transpired to unmanageable pressure and has caused great mental strain (NASSP, 2020b.).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted principals in their lack of autonomy, as evidenced by the sudden closure of schools across the nation (Johnson & Weiner, 2020). The article argues that COVID-19 has implications for how the work of principals will be and suggests that considerable conversations and agreements between principals and district leaders will be critical to ensuring principals have support returning to school to lead after a pandemic (Johnson & Weiner, 2020). The article suggests that principals should promote autonomy through the reopening of schools and communicating what matters for students and families in the process.

### **Levels of Educational Policy and Governance**

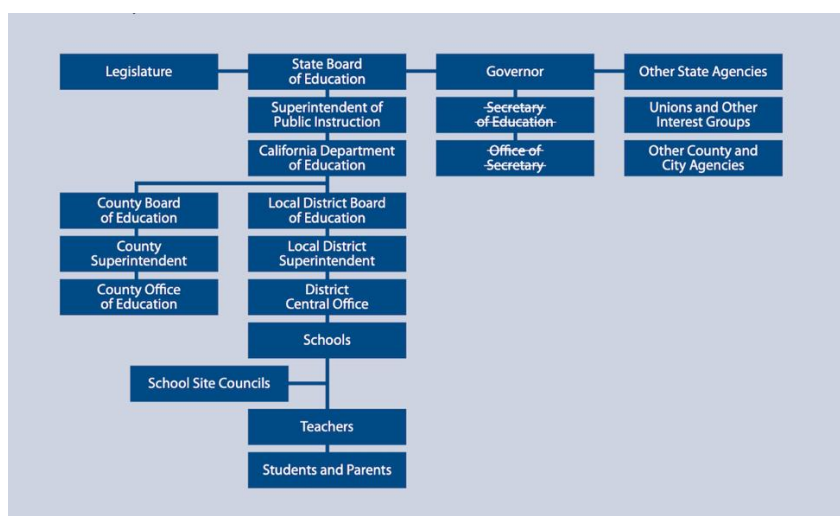
There are many different levels of decision making and governance in the public education sector amongst our nation (Fowler, 2013). The Federal government is led by the Secretary of Education for our nation and nine offices under the leadership of the department. The Secretary of Education is appointed by the president of the United States of America and is the principal adviser to the president on federal policies, programs and activities related to education in the United States. At a federal level, the following acts exist: Individuals with Disabilities Act, Every Student Succeeds Act, Family Education and Rights Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, Higher Education Act, Rehabilitation Act, as well as laws related to Civil Rights in education. The Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy holds the primary role of advising the Secretary of Education on all matters relating to policy development, implementation, and review, with a focus on evidence-based practices and disseminating evidence to decision makers.

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) offers an outline of state governance (Brewer, et al., 2009). State Board members may be appointed by the governor

or voted into office. The chief school officer, and board chairs of education, may also be appointed by the governor, or by the State Board of Education at the state level.

State education governance varies amongst our nation's states. In the state of California, for instance, the major entities include the executive branch, the legislative branch, and judicial branch. The executive branch holds the seat of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of California, a position which is appointed by the governor of the state. The responsibilities of the Executive Branch related to education are to sign bills into law or veto them, as well as propose the state budget. The legislative branch encompasses the branches of the California State Senate and Assembly and votes on state laws and passes bills (State of California, n.d.). The judicial branch includes the lower courts in California as well as the California Supreme Court and interprets and applies laws at state and local levels (State of California, n.d.).

The state system of governance in states like California for instance, also consists of state level, county level, and district level entities with different levels of authority amongst the institutions (Brewer & Welsh, 2012).

**Figure 4***Levels of Governance in California Public Education*

*Note.* Brewer & Welsh, 2012. Used with permission, see Appendix E.

District leaders in California have limited connections with state-level Legislature, Secretary of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Governor (Figure 4).

***School District Policy and Governance***

At the district level, school districts operate with a set of policies, structures, and rules that are in place in their school district and overseen by the governance of the local school board of education and supported by the district superintendent (Darby, 2021). School boards govern our schools and are elected by the members of their community. The members of a school board are public officials with the responsibility of providing oversight and direction of the school districts they serve and accountability to the members of their community. Elementary school districts, high school districts, unified school districts are all overseen by each school board, and county offices of education oversee the districts. Each school board member must be 18 years or older, a state and school district resident, registered voter, and law-abiding citizen.

The role of a school board can be outlined by five major categories:

1. Establishing a vision connected to the consensus of educational partners and the community they serve.
2. Establishing and maintaining a plan for oversight of policies, curriculum, budget, hiring of staff, collective bargaining, and the employment of the superintendent.
3. Providing support to the superintendent to implement the vision of the district. This includes being knowledgeable about the vision, ensuring a positive climate, upholding policy, and modeling professionalism.
4. Ensuring that the school system is making progress in fulfilling the vision of the district by the evaluation of the superintendent, monitoring and revising policies, serving as a judicial and appeals body, monitoring student achievement, district finances, collective bargaining process, and evaluating their own effectiveness.
5. Acting as community leaders by communicating information to the community which is meaningful and reflects a sense of advocacy of students and their education. School board members should operate as a governance team and have a focus of achievement for all students, reflect a respect for differences, and hold to the professional standards of school board leadership roles (California School Board Association, 2018).

The California School Board Association, for instance, or CSBA outlines a set of governance standards both for superintendents as well as school boards. Under these standards, the role of a superintendent is to understand that authority rests with the board as a whole, provide guidance to the Board to assist in decision-making, and provide leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole (California School Board Association, 2021). The superintendent should also serve as a model for the value of lifelong learning and support the

board's continuous professional development (California School Board Association, 2021). The job of a superintendent is to also work effectively with a multitude of stakeholders to support student achievement while meeting local, state and federal education mandates. These stakeholders include community members, teachers and staff, union bargaining teams, administrators, parents, the media and local and state governments. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) as well as the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards have identified standards of performance for school superintendents which include the expectation for superintendents to understand and influence decision making at the national, state, school district and especially local level to respond to the social, legal, political, and cultural vision of the school district and the needs of the community. It is clear that effective superintendents must serve as advocates in these ways to influence policy making. The results of the study of superintendents conducted by Oakley et al. (2017) indicated that professional organizations are the primary way superintendents connect with state policy making and legislation in an effort to influence decisions being made. Superintendents indicated that their efforts to be influential in state level legislation and policy making were perceived as greater through the affiliation of some professional organizations over others. The study suggests that superintendents become active in professional organizations in an effort of enhancing the level of influence in policy and education decision making (Oakley, et al., 2017).

### **State Policy and Principal Pipeline**

One area of state policy that has received attention is the principal pipeline through the efforts of the principal preparation programs and state requirements (Manna, 2021). The complexity of the principalship has elicited attention in the area of professional development with some states requiring a one-year induction program for new principals in Arkansas, Iowa,



Kansas, New York, Maryland, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah, while California, Hawaii, Missouri, New Jersey, and Vermont have two-year requirements. The single state that requires principals to engage in professional development for more than two years is Delaware, while other states have varied requirements (Manna, 2021).

The principal pipeline is most greatly influenced by local school districts and is highly impacted by state policy (Manna, 2021). The Wallace Foundation conducted a study in six urban school districts to look at how school districts could develop comprehensive and aligned pipelines for the entrance and longevity of principals in the profession. The six school districts constructed a plan with seven domains for an effective principal pipeline which included the following: Leadership standards, high-quality pre-service principal preparation, selective hiring and placement and intentional candidate pools to fill principal vacancies, evaluation and support through standards based evaluation with individualized support through coaching as well as mentorship, leader tracking systems to track trending needs for supporting principals, and finally a systems of support that implement a vision that is supported through sustainable funding (Manna, 2021).

The results from the work with the 6 school districts showed three key findings:

1. Districts that succeeded in developing and sustaining principal pipelines do have consistent talent being placed in their principal positions,
2. Student achievement showed to be impacted by the placement of talented principals in schools,
3. The results of the principal pipeline initiative saved money for school districts.

The Wallace foundation placed an emphasis on the need for state policy to support the pipelines for excellent principals.

The state policy levers suggested by The Wallace Foundation include the following:

1. Setting principal leader standards: Adopt into law and regulation. Differentiate among leaders. Embed in practice. Reconcile with other standards.
2. Recruiting aspiring principals into the profession: Facilitate coordination between local school districts and principal preparation programs. Alter incentives to influence who seeks certification. Support special institutes including academics, to identify potential principals and recruit them into the profession. Forecast future needs.
3. Approving and overseeing principal preparation programs: Actively oversee programs. Consider sunseting current programs. Use licensing authority to incentivize programs to improve. Serve as an information clearinghouse about programs. Avoid overregulating to ensure flexibility (Manna, pg. 7, 2021).
4. Licensing new and veteran principals: Connect licensing requirements to real-world conditions. Delegate licensing authority to organizations beyond the state when the organizations demonstrate strong track records.
5. Supporting principals' growth with professional development: Study current state priorities to better allocate resources. Support local school districts in setting priorities. Provide professional development to help principals implement state initiatives. Create links between professional development and license renewal processes (Manna, pg. 7, 2021).

The suggestion is to look at where state policy and local pipeline efforts intersect.

Investigating how state policy can be considered with flexibility on the local level is critical to understanding how to best support principals (Manna, 2021). In addition to the research reported

by the Wallace Foundation, it is suggested that meaningful preparation should be designed with an internship experience that is aligned to education board standards for principals in the state they work in, and differentiated the relevance of standards for the communities they serve (Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

### **Professional Development**

The research conducted by Sutchter, et al., (2017) correlates high-quality principal preparation and professional development programs to student achievement and principal efficacy and retention. Four programs are investigated in this research and through their characteristics, the researcher consolidates their attributes to improving school outcomes. These include:

1. Organizational partnerships, involving close collaboration between programs and districts and intentional recruitment.
2. Programs structured to support learning-cohorts of principal candidates and principal communities of practice.
3. Meaningful learning opportunities including field-based internships and expert coaching.
4. Professional development with a focus to improve teacher instruction and using data to inform initiatives and change (Sutchter et al., 2017).

The findings in the literature suggest that principal professional development should be a priority for school districts to support their administrators in being successful and support the retention of quality principals (Cierninski, 2018; Green, 2020). While the research suggests that time and opportunity may be barriers to this quality professional development, it is suggested that through intentional support, including collaboration with university, district, and coaching programs, principals can be more confident in their roles as administrators (Sutchter et al., 2017,

Symonds & Hansen, 2022). Improving professional development opportunities and autonomy among principals was also reported as considerations for job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and overall organizational commitment (Green, 2020). Research has also identified school district leadership as being primarily responsible for supporting the retention of principals (Cieminski, 2018; Green, 2020). Succession planning to recruit and retain school principals is not a common practice in public school settings, however research shows that one way to support principals is to offer differentiated support and relationships fostered by their supervisors (Cieminski, 2018; DeMatthews et al., 2021). No literature reviews the focus of improving work conditions through district policy to increase job satisfaction and reduce principal turnover in our high poverty schools, where our nation needs it the most.

### ***Federal Funding for Principal Development***

School finance and governance as well as state and federal policy are areas that directly impact districts and the decisions they make (Manna, 2021). In 2015, the federal government enacted Every Student Succeeds Act or the ESSA. The primary purpose of Every Student Succeeds Act, was to shift areas of improvement and accountability from federal to state control. In the funding formulas, ESSA attempts to provide states and districts funding to support the needs of principals and their development (Corcoran, 2017; United States Department of Education website-ESSA, 2021).

ESSA guidance states that its purpose is to provide grants to State educational agencies and subgrants to local educational agencies to:

1. increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards;

2. improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders;
3. increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders (United States Department of Education website, 2021).

Furthermore, Section 2001 [20 U.S.C. 6602] offers funding to support leaders in the following ways through the School Leader Residency Program:

1. A prospective principal or other school leader for 1 academic year, engages in sustained and rigorous clinical learning with substantial leadership responsibilities and an opportunity to practice and be evaluated in an authentic school setting.
2. During that academic year participates in evidence-based coursework, to the extent the State (in consultation with local educational agencies in the State) determines that such evidence is reasonably available, that is integrated with the clinical residency experience.
3. Afterwards, receives ongoing support from a mentor principal or other school leader, who is effective (United States Department of Education website, 2020).

While ESSA funding for principal professional development exists through the United States Federal Government, and evidence of professional development strategies and supports are researched in an effort to support principal retention, principal turnover is still a problem in our schools across the nation (Hussar et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2020). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes adding additional funding for professional development of

principals and school leaders, however professional development of principals is often overlooked, while the focus has been on developing teachers (Cyrus, B. 2017).

The Learning Policy Institute reviewed research on principal professional development programs to determine the key evidence-based practices to guide the decision for how to strategically invest the allocated federal and state funding in order to support school leadership. These suggestions included organizational partnerships between principal preparation programs and districts, with structured learning in networks, and meaningful learning opportunities focused on what matters (Espinoza & Cardichon, 2017). The funding ESSA provides could be appropriated to fund internships to support the principal pipeline (Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

### **District Level Policy and Practice**

The shortage of transformational leaders in the United States is due, in part, to the lack of support given to administrators and should be considered high on the list of priorities for school reform for school districts (Davis, 2019; Trujillo, 2018). Governing agencies who want to increase job satisfaction for their administrators would need to offer a range of improvements in the quality of their principal role (Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). This includes creating an environment of recognition and respect, encouraging principal input at the district level, allowing principals greater autonomy, competitive salary compensation, and providing resources to allow for time to be instructional leaders (Levin et al., 2020; Thessin et al., 2020; Van Vooren, 2018; Wang et al., 2018).

Among these, considerations around union representation, and the human capital through hiring of individuals such as Assistant Principals, counselors, social workers to support the burden of work overload is suggested (Tekleselassie & Choi, 2019). Several studies have explored different ways that school districts can implement policies and practices that might

support principals. These policies and practices can include providing high quality principal training, hiring of Assistant Principals, training district supervisors in signs of burnout in their principals, augmenting the role of district leaders to offering principals guidance and support in job stress, the implementation of strong performance feedback and acknowledgement systems, and finally, more intentional hiring practices for principals leading high poverty schools (Curcio 2018; DeMatthews et al. 2021a.; Goldring et al., 2021; Grissom et al., 2019; Master et al., 2020; Nthebe et al., 2016; Quinlan-Crandall, 2017; Sutchet et al., 2017).

### ***District Leadership Support***

District leadership plays a role in district decision making and the leadership practices that influence principal job satisfaction. Principals report feelings of frustration from the roadblocks created by district leaders and systems (Curcio, 2018, Symonds & Hansen, 2022).

Through the exploration of the central questions, it was evident that district directors' leadership behaviors impacted principal job satisfaction positively when they provided support or negatively when they created barriers to principals' work. The time that district office directors spend with principals, providing the necessary guidance and support, leads directly to influences on their professional relationships and helps build confidence, which are motivational factors related to job satisfaction (Curcio, 2018, p. 99).

Suggestions which emerged from this study included the need for district level administrators to have clear, frequent and positive communication with students, staff, and teachers. This clear communication provides direction, clear expectations, and support and helps to avoid isolation (Curcio, 2018). Integrity in their word builds trust which is a support for principals. District leaders can support sites with priorities and have consistent expectations, and demonstrate a

positive sense of collaboration and responsiveness, while frequently communicating the vision (Curcio, 2018).

### ***District Leadership Support to Reduce Principal Burnout***

In addition to clear communication with principals, another suggestion for district office leadership to support site administrators is to train staff to help them reduce the impact of burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021a). Burnout is a common concern related to principal turnover due to job demands and work stress related to the role of an administrator. The expectation for principals to give beyond what they have is a norm in today's society. Working conditions and workload, bureaucracy, challenges in dealing with students, staff, and community on an ongoing basis, as well as lack of autonomy to make decisions for the greater good are only some of the factors related to principal burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021a). Unclear and unpredictable federal and state policies create another layer of stress, as principals try to manage mandates related to public education that are sometimes out of touch with reality and out of their control (DeMatthews et al., 2021a). Resistance of staff to elicit change in a school is challenging and stressful for our leaders, especially in historically low performing schools where student achievement needs significant improvement. Principal burnout can be related to both school and district factors as well as secondary traumatic stress. DeMatthews et al., (2021b), suggest two research-based recommendations for school districts to support principals in their district with burnout.

The first suggestion is to train principal supervisors on how to identify signs of burnout and supporting ways in which principals can practice self-care (DeMatthews et al., 2021a). Suggestions include redeveloping district expectations for administrators, implementing a policy where release time can be used to allow for consultation with a health professional,



implementing a school-based plan where principal responsibilities can be shared on various days in order to promote a healthy work-life balance, and implement opportunities to celebrate principals in order to boost job satisfaction (DeMatthews et al., 2021a). Another goal districts might strive to meet includes providing opportunities for peer support and professional networks. This could include training for staff that includes conversations about resilience, scheduling peer support opportunities during the workday, during a meeting or after hours. Engaging in a plan to schedule these opportunities in advance throughout the year can also be beneficial (DeMatthews et al., 2021a).

In addition to supporting principals to deter burnout it is suggested that districts also develop strategies around hiring of qualified principals (Grissom et al., 2019; Levin & Bradley, 2019). The National Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Tennessee longitudinal administrative data sets were used to look at labor market patterns of educators over time. The reports show a disproportionate number of less experienced principals across schools, and especially in schools with greater numbers of students of color (Goldring et al., 2021; Grissom et al., 2019). Studies show that there is a higher turnover of principals who lead low income, low-achieving schools, resulting in a revolving door of principals, often succeeded by new, less experienced and effective principals (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Grissom et al., 2019; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Sun & Ni, 2016; Yan, 2020). The study conducted by Grissom et al., 2019 looks at principal data of those who are in their first year, as well as those in the first three years of a principalship who are considered novice. The study shows patterns of the experience of principals, with schools predominately low achieving and having low income students being led by first year administrators at 13% (Grissom et al., 2019). The study suggests that additional

research could be done around strategies school districts implement to hire principals in these high poverty schools (Grissom et al., 2019; Sutchter et al., 2017).

### ***District Leadership Support with Time Management***

In addition to the strategies a district may implement in hiring experienced principals to lead high poverty schools, supporting the time management challenges of principals may be another area to explore in examining job satisfaction and principal retention (Darby, 2021; Donley et al., 2020; Williams & Welsh, 2017). The implementation of assistant principals may support the retention of administrators by collaborating and sharing roles related to leadership responsibilities, therefore creating positive conditions for the principal to manage their role (Goldring, et al., 2021; Master et al., 2020).

Over the last quarter of a century there has been an increase in the hiring of assistant principals in the United States. This administrative position has been hired to service schools at all levels according to the reports (Goldring, et al., 2021; Master et al., 2020). Research studies show that the assistant principal position is one which has increased in our nation's schools. Schools in cities and suburbs and those situated in the South as well as larger schools are most likely to have assistant principals (Master et al., 2020). Rural areas had a decline in assistant principals while cities, suburbs and towns had similar growth. Research suggests that principal attrition can be addressed by having assistant principals positioned to fill vacancies related to ongoing principal attrition.

The findings of the study by Goldring et al., (2021), showed that schools with more students of color have more assistant principals at 53% than schools without at 39%. There is limited information on why principals are assigned to schools, or if they are effective in their role where they are needed most. Exploring and clarifying the district policies on how principals are

assigned and when assistant principals are funded should be defined within a school district for maximum benefit to low performing and greatest need schools (Goldring et al., 2021).

### **Other Practices School Districts Can Implement to Support Principal Retention**

In addition to considering the role of assistant principals and how they can support principal job satisfaction, studies have investigated the role of district leadership in providing autonomy (Quinlan-Crandall, 2017). Overall, principals report that autonomy is a strong predictor of retention (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Quinlan-Crandall, 2017). The suggestions from this study also recommend future research on the effects of principal autonomy related to collective bargaining, and professional development to explore the relationship of job retention (Quinlan-Crandall, 2017). The research shows that there are many ways principals can be supported in their role by district policy and practice including assistance with professional workload, having superintendents connected to their administrators, increase of resources at the site level, and including principal voice in educational policies and politics (Sutcher et al., 2017). Even positive acknowledgement from district leadership is correlated to the well-being of principals in their challenging role showing that school principals improve their quality of work when an acknowledgement and performance feedback system is in place (Nthebe et al., 2016).

In addition, changes in support structures by superintendents and school boards could increase principal tenure, thus improving progress and achievement for the students and community they serve (Daloisio, 2017). The study conducted by Daloisio (2017) took place during the 2016-2017 year in the Pennsylvania school district of Loysburg. This school district had a high rate of principal turnover in recent years above the national average of 20%. While many of the themes for leaving or wanting to leave their role overlapped, the various themes which emerged related to principal impact on district office policies and issues and included:

Lack of respect and support, relationship with district office administration, and increasing number of job tasks. This suggests that school boards and district leadership can support principal retention through policies that are intentional and:

- Improve leadership preparation.
- Study local hiring and assignment timelines and practices.
- Invest in professional learning and support for practicing principals.
- Assess working conditions of principals and support improvement.
- Invest in the creation and implementation of strong principal evaluation systems.
- Review and reform school leader compensation (Daloisio, 2017).

Suggestions for future research include looking at various school districts with low rates of turnover and examining their practices, policies, and procedures (Daloisio, 2017; Sutchter et al., 2017).

Finally, with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, there are options to invest in quality school leadership, and with a greater emphasis in those who work in high poverty schools (Sutchter et al., 2017) offering a combination of approaches for the implementation of ESSA funding at both the district and school levels (Williams & Welsh, 2017).

Studies suggest a variety of approaches for school districts to consider when policies and practices are developed to support principal retention. Federal and state funding provides resources for local school districts to support job satisfaction through the variety of supports indicated by principals in the multitude of studies cited in this literature review.

## Conclusion

In summary, the research from the literature reviewed here shows evidence of principal turnover in schools across the United States with a vast number of studies which give numerous examples from principals who explain the challenges of their work conditions as administrators. The research tells us that principal turnover can have negative effects on student achievement impacted by this change. While it is clear that a principal's job is not an easy one, there are many studies reviewed here which offer ideas and suggestions on how to support administrators. A variety of suggestions including principal coaching and mentoring, job embedded support through supervisors, greater autonomy, and professional development meeting the specific needs of principals are highlighted. The most critical indicators for how to best support principals in order to retain quality leaders in America's schools are clear, especially in the schools that require them the most. The current literature does not present research or findings around specific policies that impact principal work conditions, although studies have pointed to the need to explore the impact of policies and practices at the district level and these systems influence principal job satisfaction of our school leaders. Through the investigation of district leaders, the researcher may be able to shed some light on the connection between the role district office leadership play in the policies and practices established and enforced at the district office related to the job satisfaction hygiene factors from Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, and the researched conditions for supporting the retention of principals.

## **Chapter III**

### **Design and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used to conduct the study of understanding how school district office leaders perceive the policies that support or hinder the work conditions of principals of high poverty schools. In a recent national study in 2019, it was reported that principal turnover is high in the United States due to a variety of factors related to the complexity of their responsibilities and even greater turnover in schools of high poverty (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Cieminski, 2018; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). Research suggests specifically looking at various school districts with low rates of turnover and examining their practices, policies, and procedures (Daloisio, 2017; Sutchter et al., 2017).

The purpose of this study is to investigate and prioritize the relationship between school superintendent leadership, and the policy and practices that support the retention of principals of high poverty schools. Understanding the district policies and practices that superintendents perceive as helpful or a hindrance to principal job satisfaction can offer insight for states and districts to better understand how policies and practices can be designed to support their retention. The focus group of this study was superintendents. The theoretical framework of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966, 1982), gave the researcher the foundation for applying a model for factors of job satisfaction. This model guided the researcher to explain the connection to the research questions with this new study. The following questions were derived to explore the perceptions of superintendents:

1. What policies and practices influence retention of your high poverty school principals?
2. What policies and practices influence turnover of your high poverty school principals?

3. What opportunities do you encounter when advocating for favorable work conditions for high poverty school principals?
4. What barriers do you encounter when advocating for favorable work conditions for high poverty school principals?
5. What should superintendents consider when advocating for policies and practices related to favorable work conditions of high poverty school principals?

These open-ended questions were designed to connect Herzberg's described hygiene factor of policies, procedures and work conditions to their impact on job satisfaction in an effort to ground the research questions in the theoretical framework for this study.

### **Research Design**

While constructing a plan to conduct research, the qualitative approach was chosen for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In examining the different types of qualitative method research designs, the specific data collection method of semi-structured interviews was chosen.

The research was conducted with semi-structured interviews to allow for a focus on the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a phenomenological approach using the interviewer as the research instrument. The purpose of this phenomenological approach was to collect information about superintendent experiences in their current role and the perceived impact of policies and practices in their district related to principal retention. Interpretive phenomenology is an early phenomenological movement initiated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) based on reduction, that later evolved through theorists such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Phenomenology incorporates bracketing, or *epoché*, when the researcher suspends preconceptions about a phenomenon, and allows for phenomenon to emerge, with a focus on

how lived experiences shape how things appear through their stories and interpretation (Beck, 2021; Kafle, 2013). Phenomenology includes a process of investigation that encompasses building knowledge and meaning around the lived experiences of others while respecting the person's account of their lived reality and experiences (Perez, et al., 2019).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research approach that combines the philosophies of hermeneutics and phenomenology Kafle, 2013. Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on the human life experience, particularly with a focus of interpretation while creating meaning through these experiences through an interpretive process (Kafle, 2013, Perez et al 2019). The goal is to produce description from those who have had life experiences, or phenomena, through reflective language which is descriptive and rich (Kafle, 2013). The foundational approach to hermeneutic phenomenology is targeted to best uncover phenomena through maintaining the quality of the research process through as set of principles including:

1. Orientation: the relationship of the researcher to the participants.
2. Strength: the strength of the representation of the participants and their stories.
3. Richness: the richness of the description of the meanings.
4. Depth: the ability of the descriptions to represent the best intentions of the participants.

Rhetoric-how the writing or language is used to show idiographic expressions that represent the experiences and feelings of the participants is important to hermeneutic phenomenology (Kafle, 2013). It includes a deep reflective process of knowledge and interpretation that is distinguished from phenomenology (Perez, et al., 2019).

In order to prepare for phenomenological research, the researcher read several phenomenological studies to understand how to implement this method of research. The researcher reviewed additional literature on how to conduct hermeneutic reflective research.



In addition, in order to elicit interviews that were rich with participant description of experiences, questions were intentionally designed to allow for participants to share knowledge from their lived experiences as superintendents representing high poverty schools. Furthermore, the researcher provided the questions and probing questions to the participants in advance, and asked them to read them and reflect on them prior to the interview in order to help prepare participants, and strengthen the description provided by them during the interview sessions.

### **Participants**

The researcher used purposeful convenience sampling to include superintendents with one or more principals of high poverty schools, with these principals having five or more years of experience in the same school, and those who were willing to participate in the study.

The targeted participants for this study were from rural and urban regions of the nation, representing West Coast and Midwest school districts. Criteria for selection was purposeful, and was used to identify potential district superintendents to participate in the study. The researcher looked at school districts online in various states such as Michigan and California to find superintendents that might meet the criteria. By reviewing district data on official district and state websites, the researcher verified that the specific criteria were met. Through word of mouth the researcher made connections to the superintendents that participated in this study.

The participants were chosen not only for the match of superintendents serving high poverty schools, but also an effort was made to find participants with previous experience as building principals of high-poverty schools. A total of nine school district superintendents were identified to be invited to participate in the study. The sample size was determined by the participants who met these designated criteria as currently overseeing one or more principals of high poverty schools with five years or more longevity in their district and could speak to the

policies and practices at the school district level that impact principals in their district. School districts were contacted by phone and email to inquire about the process for conducting research with individuals in their school district. The researcher consulted their dissertation committee from Northwest Nazarene University (NNU) throughout the process and with each step to ensure proper steps were taken. The researcher set up the methods for collecting data, securing data, and ensuring confidentiality as outlined in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission. Upon confirmation and approval of IRB through NNU, the following steps to begin the research process began.

The researcher obtained district superintendents' email addresses either from a public district website or by obtaining it from the individual who suggested the potential participant to the researcher by word of mouth. Superintendents were contacted via email with an introduction (see Appendix A) describing the study and were invited to participate in the study through this email. The researcher recruited one superintendent at a time. During the outreach process, the researcher found a total of seven superintendents who agreed to participate in the study. No superintendents from the East Coast geographically were available to participate in the study.

Participants were then provided an email with a form outlining their rights to consent to participate or decline participation in the research, with details regarding the data collection method and interview process (See Appendix B), and were offered an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher before signing the consent form through a secure electronic consent signature. Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study were then emailed choices of dates and times to set up an interview with the researcher via video web conferencing, and were provided a confirmed time for their meeting.

To ensure ethical responsibility while conducting research, the researcher completed training through the National Institute of Health. Certification for Human Research (Appendix C) was awarded to the researcher upon completion of the training. The researcher followed appropriate approval protocol to conduct the research through Northwest Nazarene University IRB or Institutional Review Board process. This process involves review and approval of the research protocols and methods from the Institutional Review Board Committee of the University.

### **Content Validity of Interview Questions**

When conducting qualitative research, “the testing of an instrument adds considerably to the length of time this design requires to be implemented” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 555). The protocol instrument which was designed for the semi-structured interviews was carefully designed by the researcher to be unbiased. For this study, the research questions were used to determine the interview questions. The researcher ensured the validity of the research interview questions by consulting six individuals on the instrument and the content of the questions asked. These individuals included experts in the field of education and included these titles: Director, Social Emotional Learning, Director, Special Education, Coordinator, Curriculum and Instruction, Vice Principal, high school level, Director, Human Resources, Executive Director of Student Supports. The expert individuals were identified as those currently serving in positions as school administrators. The researcher sent the research and interview questions via email with directions on how to review the questions and offer feedback. The experts reviewed the questions and determined their relevance to the research questions for the interview offering feedback and recommendations for revision.

The individuals were also required to read the research questions and rate the interview questions based on their relevance to them with a four, three, two, or one rating. The experts were not asked to answer the question, but rather help determine the strength of the question. They had the option of offering comments in the comment section of the form provided. All six individuals responded with feedback about the research questions and interview questions. The researcher used the content validity index (Polit & Beck, 2006) to determine the validity of the instrument based on the scores provided by the experts. The validity scores were calculated by the researcher step by step using the content validity index measure. This measure involves assigning an index number to the responses and calculating the validity.

The minimum percentage for validity required with 6 reviewers is .78 according to the validity scale. The researcher calculated a .61 validity with the responses received, therefore requiring the researcher to review and revise either the research questions or the interview questions. The researcher reviewed the comments from the experts and made adjustments to both to provide more alignment and clarity in the wording. The researcher then sent out the revisions to the experts and asked for them to re-rate the questions. The responses provided a calculated content validity scale of a total of 1.0, therefore validating the research questions against the interview questions.

### **Pilot Interviews**

Prior to conducting interviews with participating superintendents, the researcher piloted the interview questions. The interview questions were administered to a sampling of two superintendents to test the validity and verify that the questions were understandable and appropriate for the audience. The pilot was arranged via email, and was conducted using the zoom video platform. The interviews were audio recorded using an Iphone as well as a

transcribing program called Otter.ai. When conducting the pilot, the researcher used the interview protocols to guide the pilot.

Pilot interviews help the researcher understand how to manage the research and eliminate barriers (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The pilot interview conducted with these individuals allowed for additional revisions in the interview questions to be made by debriefing with the practice participant and sharing reflections and findings with their committee members and chair in order to enhance the interview protocols and participant depth of responses. Through this process, the researcher added more layers to their data collection tools. Probing questions were developed to help deepen the responses, and a plan to share interview questions and contextual information to participants in advance was designed.

### **Data Collection**

The qualitative method incorporated conducting semi-structured interviews of superintendents of high poverty urban and rural schools. The individuals signed an electronic informed consent in advance to participate in the interviews and allow for audio recording of the interviews. Prior to the interview, a video chat link was provided for the scheduled time of the interview, and the questions were provided to the participants via email in a brief PowerPoint presentation. This presentation included an introduction of the study with specific background information in order for the participant to have context around the purpose of the study and a personal introduction from the researcher. The purpose of this introduction was to provide the questions in advance so the participant could plan and reflect upon their experiences and answers to the questions in order to encourage thoughtful, deep responses.

Prior to the day of the interview, a location was secured to ensure the interview would be

distraction free and to ensure confidentiality for participants to not be seen or heard on web video. The researcher used 2 devices to record interviews, both a password secure computer using Otter.ai software, and a password secure iPhone. The interview protocol was used for the semi structured interview (see Appendix D). The researcher began by introducing themselves and providing a brief introduction of the purpose of the interview. The researcher reviewed the protocol for the interview and reminded the participant that the interview will be audio recorded per the consent form on file, and that all information will be kept confidential. The researcher ensured the participant had the opportunity to ask questions before beginning. The interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes to conduct.

During each interview, open-ended questions were asked to probe the superintendents' perceptions of district policies and practices which impact administrator job satisfaction. The participants were asked follow up questions to probe further such as "Could you clarify that?" A non-inflection tone of voice was used when asking questions to ensure that questions were not leading, but open ended.

The researcher had a timer present during the interview to ensure time was considered when interviewing and used two forms of audio recording to record the interviews for later review. After the interview, the audio files were uploaded into a password protected internet cloud and deleted from the devices.

Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by the researcher by ensuring that interview data was not associated with specific or identifiable individuals. Transcribed interviews were coded and purged of identifying information. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants. These interviews were not anonymous, but were kept confidential. The confidentiality of participants was maintained while collecting data by ensuring

correspondence through recruitment and communication was done through a password secure school email (nnu.edu), and interviews were conducted via internet in a sound secure and confidential room occupied by only the researcher. Confidentiality of participants was kept by the researcher and was not shared with anyone throughout the entirety of the research.

The confidentiality of the participants was maximized by the researcher in several ways. The only person having access to the study, including notes, and audio files was the researcher. A list of pseudonyms correlating to names stored in a separate password protected web based file was kept to maintain confidentiality. No individual identified or identifiable information was used in any reports or publications that resulted from the study. The name of the superintendents and school districts were not disclosed in the results of the study, rather results are described through the categories which emerged from the data. All data from notes, audio files and data files were encrypted with a password known only to the researcher and stored on an internet based storage file. Documents were scanned and uploaded to the internet storage file and shredded within 24 hours of creation. The researcher used two devices to record interviews, both a password secure iPhone, and a password secure computer with an internet-based transcription program. After the interview, the audio files were uploaded into a password protected internet storage cloud and deleted within one hour from the iPhone.

### **Analytical Methods**

There are several ways to analyze qualitative data, one of which is through the experience of coding (Saldaña, 2021). The data, in this case included interview transcripts, both audio and transcribed audio files. The data analysis involved listening to the audio recordings as well as reading the transcribed audio in a document form. The researcher then began hermeneutical analysis by reviewing the interview audio and transcriptions as a whole without initial

interpretation, and actively engaging with and questioning the content and meaning to look for connections of the whole to the part, and the parts to the whole modeling Dahlberg's hermeneutic reflective lifeworld research methodology (Beck, 2021). The researcher looked for patterns in the preliminary review of the transcripts to decipher if individual responses expressed multiple understandings and if they agreed with one another, and how the explanation of responses fit with each other within a narrative (Beck, 2021).

The data from these sources was then reviewed by the researcher by reading and listening to the interviews and coding the responses. There were two cycles of the coding process completed by the researcher.

Coding of the transcribed data was used to understand the phenomenon of the participants and their perspectives and place them into themes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). A word or short phrase can be assigned to transcripts in this case, in order to capture the essence, and assign an attribute to the data (Saldaña, 2021). "Generating names and labels for phenomena identified in the data-themes, categories-is coding. Coding is the representation of analytic thinking; it is not analytic thinking itself" (Marshall & Rossman, pg. 222). The coding was completed in two distinct cycles. The first cycle was coded with process coding. Process coding uses "-ing" words to purposefully elevate action and activity in the data and a search for consequences of action/interaction is sought when utilizing this method of coding (Saldaña, 2021). The research questions for this study led the researcher to choose this type of coding to highlight the actions of superintendents and what they strategically implement or have emerged or occurred as a result of policies and practices in the school district they lead.

A second cycle of coding was completed by the researcher in order to review the data through a different lens, one which also made connections to the research questions and their



purpose. This cycle included evaluation coding, a process of coding appropriate for representation of action, and policy, (Saldaña, 2021) both which the researcher intended to elevate from the research questions. Through evaluative coding, the researcher used the transcribed voice memos to give meaning to the actions identified by superintendents by means of a positive (+) or negative (-) impact of policies and practices which influence principal retention.

During the analysis of transcripts for the completion of both of the coding methods, a color coded chart was created on Google sheets, in order to demonstrate the results of the themes that emerged. Both coding methods and their documents included a column that aligned the codes to the research questions as well as the theoretical framework categories embedded in the research. This allowed for the researcher to see connections to the participant responses in both of these areas as well as in the process and evaluative focus of the coding cycles utilized.

The researcher gave the transcripts multiple readings, and listened to audio recordings several times. Throughout the process, the researcher was mindful in listening to the description of the participants in order to ensure accurate representation of their rich experiences through the strength of connections to the research questions (Kafle, 2013).

After transcribing, coding and analysis, a follow up email to participants was sent with verification of the individuals' responses and the themes that emerged. Participants had the opportunity to verify their responses and if there was miscommunication about the responses and how they were interpreted or represented, participants were able to clarify responses. Upon sharing the coded data with participants in a member checking follow up, one participant requested a change in verbiage for describing their response in the coding from "ineffective" to "limiting" in the analysis.

The researcher determined the adequacy of the sample size during the analysis process based on data saturation. Data saturation refers to the quality and quantity of information in a qualitative research study. Data saturation is defined as the point where no new information or themes emerge in the qualitative data collection process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Seven interviews were conducted to ensure that data saturation was evident with the themes which emerged from the previous interviews and data collection.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In phenomenological research, the researcher is required to reflect on their own understandings and prejudices of the particular phenomenon so as to avoid obstructing the research process by pre-conceptions (Beck, 2021, Kafle, 2013).

In order to strengthen the research and remove pre-conceptions, the researcher implemented the concept of bracketing through the use of a reflective journal. This journal was kept electronically by the researcher before and during the research process in order to help them identify areas of potential bias and “bracket” them. It also mentally prepared the researcher for setting aside prior knowledge and become prepared for new investigation and maintaining openness to the new phenomenon (Beck, 2021, Chan, et al., 2013, Groenewald, 2004).

In addition, the researcher implemented several considerations to maintain the quality of the data including:

To ensure dependability- taking descriptive notes while interviewing, to ensure credibility-reflecting on paper after each interview as well as listening to audio recordings and reviewing transcripts until the researcher felt they best interpreted the intentions of the participants in a holistic sense (Beck, 2021; Groenewald, 2004). In order to validate the intent of the participants and ensure no preconceptions or misinterpretations emerged from the analysis,

the researcher provided a member checking summary to the participants to ascertain if their responses were interpreted accurately by the researcher and to increase dependability (Beck, 2021; Chan, et al., 2013). Finally, in the data analysis chapters, extracts from approximately half of the participants were provided as evidence of theme in order to maintain rigor in the data analysis description (Beck, 2021).

Professional knowledge and life experience were considerations when addressing the role as the researcher in this study. The philosophies regarding education and the importance of the role of the principal were brought to this research. The researcher's experience as a school administrator in both low and high poverty schools drove the desire to support future principals in their role in serving and leading schools. In addition to the researcher's experience as an administrator in diverse settings, they have had experience at the district level implementing district, state, and federal policy as a Director of Instructional Services. In this role, the researcher has directed and overseen initiatives and programming for Title I, Title II, and Title III federal categorical funding. This role involved compliance with federal laws and program reviews through the implementation of funding and with the support of principals at the site level. In this role, the researcher supported principals with school improvement planning and implementation, which allowed the researcher to understand how their role and the policies from their role as someone in a district office leadership position directly impact the work conditions of principals. The researcher has also had experience at the state level with the California Department of Education in the Special Education Department, where they had experience offering guidance to local education agencies including Superintendents and district office leadership around policy from the state and federal level, understanding the connection to policy and how it impacts district office leadership and school district implementation. The professional

roles of the researcher have contributed to the strong beliefs regarding the education settings and school leadership. While the professional knowledge and life experience of the researcher are brought to this study, the researcher's objectivity in this process is grounded in the integrity of the research throughout each step of the dissertation.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine how superintendents perceive the policies and practices in their district that impact principal work conditions particularly in those of high poverty schools. The participants were selected based on the school districts in which they worked, with careful attention to choosing a range of districts across the country with different demographics. One limitation of this study was the fact that different superintendents of high poverty schools experience different challenges based on the culture and climate of their school district, their own personal factors including years of experience, and the policies and practices of their specific school district or state. Another limitation is the sample size of participants in the study. Increasing the sample size is another way to further substantiate the results. The qualitative research study often differs from the quantitative research study due to the smaller size of the sampling. The number of qualitative in-depth interviews was small because of this.

The number of principals that left from the principalship as "leavers" may have left their role because they were promoted, which is a positive reason for leaving, or perhaps demoted, in which the principal had no choice to stay. The data does not give this detailed information, and therefore this is a limitation to this study.

The correlation of years of experience of the superintendents as well as the skills to successfully navigate the bureaucracy of local level politics involving the Board of Education

and educational partners could be a limitation to the outcomes of the study. Factors related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will most likely impact the outcomes of this study and the normal circumstances related to the role of administrators. In all of the school districts studied, there were administrators who left the year before the research began, and in some more than others, it is unclear how COVID-19 may have impacted their decision to leave, or knowing for those administrators, if they were leavers, or movers and what impacted their turnover.

Another limitation to the study is the perception of those being interviewed about the principals and their perceived job satisfaction. It is impossible to know exactly how some principals are feeling and their job satisfaction related to their work conditions. Finally, the researcher applied their own personal opinion related to the number of responses appropriate for the saturation of data relevant to evidence of new and relevant information.

Another limitation in this study is in the group of participants chosen to interview. This study may have been improved if another group such as principals was interviewed to obtain a balanced view of the study. While the superintendent interview focuses on their perceptions, it is limiting. Having both superintendent and principal perceptions investigated would offer less subjectivity.

Finally, another limitation in this study is the use of the method of semi-structured interviews to gather data on this topic. Suggestions for future researchers to enhance this study could include considering an alternative approach to gathering data with the use of another method. While this study was done with a qualitative approach, a mixed methods approach would allow future researchers to include a quantitative layer to the study, allowing for triangulation of the data.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how superintendents perceive the policies and practices that influence job satisfaction in their principals, particularly principals of high poverty schools. This chapter will describe the results of the data collection from the superintendents that participated in the interviews for this study. This study was conducted through a qualitative approach in order to gather information from superintendents that would answer the following research questions:

1. What policies and practices do superintendents perceive as having influenced the retention or turnover of high-poverty school principals in their district?
2. What opportunities and barriers do superintendents perceive in supporting favorable work conditions related to the job satisfaction of their principals of high-poverty schools in their district?
3. What should superintendents consider when advocating for policies and practices related to favorable work conditions of high poverty school principals?

Seven superintendents representing the Midwest and West Coast of the United States contributed their experiences and knowledge to the body of this research. The following describes the participants and their demographics:

**Table 4***Superintendent Demographics*

Superintendent	Number of years of Superintendency in the district	Superintendent has had experience as a principal Y/N	Geographic location of School District
A	8	Y	West Coast- Northern California
B	6	N	West Coast- Northern California
C	7	Y	Midwest -Michigan
D	5	Y	West Coast- Northern California
E	5	Y	West Coast- Northern California
F	5	Y	Midwest-Michigan
G	2	Y	West Coast- Northern California

The superintendent participants in this study had varying characteristics. The superintendents were all in their second year or more of their superintendency in the district at the time they participated in this study. The superintendents included four females, and three males. The participants represented one of two regions, the Midwest-Michigan, and West Coast-California. The superintendents represented different work experiences, all but one having prior experience as a site administrator (either principal or assistant principal role) at some point in their professional career before becoming a superintendent. In addition, those interviewed represented a wide range of school districts with varying sizes of student enrollment and numbers of brick and mortar schools (Table 4).

**Table 5***School District Demographics: NCES 2020-2021 Enrollment data*

School District	Demographics and enrollment count of district	Number of High Poverty Schools	Total Number of Schools	Number of Principals of High Poverty Schools with 5 + more experience (2022-2023 school year)
A	suburb 63,157	13	68	5
B	city 40,711	37	81	16
C	suburb 4,345	1	7	1
D	city 29,135	28	36	10
E	city 8,939	5	12	3
F	suburb 3,567	11	11	2
G	suburb 7,355	5	10	5

*Note.* NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain. (Including data from superintendent participants)

The school districts represented in this study ranged from a district of 3,567 students to one of 63,157 students. One superintendent represented only one high poverty school, while another represented 37 high poverty schools (Table 5). In contrast, one school district represented an entire district of high poverty schools. According to the data from the National Center for Education Studies (NCES, 2022), the school districts in this study fell into the category of three city districts, and four suburban districts. The number of high poverty schools in the districts represented ranged from one to 16. While some districts were classified as suburban, three out of four of these districts had five or more high poverty schools (Table 5).



The funding allocation per pupil and across sources for each school district represented in this study was compiled to provide additional information related to fiscal resources and how they relate across districts. The following is a breakdown of the funding for each district.

**Table 6**

*Per Pupil Funding NCES National Center for Education Statistics 2018-2019 Fiscal Data*

District	2021-2022 Fiscal Funding Breakdown	Federal	Local	State
A	13,790	980.00 7%	3,045 22%	9,765 71%
B	16,750	2,014 12%	4,237 25%	10,498 63%
C	13,662	790.00 6%	5,262 39%	7,611 56%
D	15,042	1,190. 8%	2,907 19%	10,937 73%
E	14,076	825.00 6%	3,259. 23%	9,991. 71%
F	18,879	1,864 10%	9,145 48%	7,871. 42%
G	15,449	1,081 7%	4,463 29%	9,905 64%

*Note.* NCES Data, 2022. Public Domain.

Midwest superintendents in this study stated that funding for their schools was a challenge due to budget provisions in their region. While districts in the Midwest and West Coast may be funded differently and have a range of the funding for each pupil they serve, they are all funded by federal, state and local funds each year. The variance in funding from the highest funded district (\$18,879) to the lowest (\$13,662) was \$5,217.00 (Table 6). The districts reflected a range of federal, state, and local tax percentages, with federal tax funding reported as the lowest source of funding across the board in all districts, and local funding being the second greatest source for all districts except one. The district reporting the greatest per pupil funding at \$18,879 (District F) had greater funding at the local level, and was not only a Midwest school

district, but it was also the smallest. Overall, state funding was the greatest source of funding for all school districts in this study with the exception of District F.

The results of this study are divided into sections that synthesize and highlight the reported data from the research questions and include a section to describe the impact of COVID-19 on principal retention and turnover. While coding the responses, the researcher looked for connections in the data to the categories represented in Herzberg's two factor theory and placed them into themes under factors related to job satisfaction including "satisfiers or motivating factors," and "dissatisfiers or hygiene factors."

### **Findings From Research Question 1**

Research question one asked superintendents to share their opinions on the policies and practices they perceived to influence principals in their district. The question included two parts to capture policy and practices that influence both retention as well as turnover of principals.

*RQ1: What policies and practices do superintendents perceive as having influenced the retention or turnover of high-poverty school principals in their district?*

To investigate further, participants were asked the following probing question:

1. Does your district have policies or practices that support principals, particularly those of high poverty schools?

The following themes emerged from the RQ 1 in the areas of motivators and dissatisfiers related to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory.

## Motivator Results: District Policies and Practices Related to Principal Satisfaction

**Table 7**

*Policies or practices that superintendents perceive to positively influence retention of high poverty school principals in their district (motivators)*

Themes connected to Herzberg's Theoretical Framework (motivators)	Sub Themes	Number of superintendents responding in this category	Number of responses coded
PERSONAL GROWTH	Professional Development	5 SUPERINTENDENTS	6 TOTAL RESPONSES
THE WORK ITSELF		5 SUPERINTENDENTS	5 TOTAL RESPONSES
The work itself	Purpose		1
The work itself	Capacity of District Leaders		1
The work itself	Focused		2
The work itself	Organized		1
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT	Clear Pipeline for Principals	2 SUPERINTENDENTS	2 TOTAL RESPONSES
RESPONSIBILITY	Extra Leadership Responsibility	2 SUPERINTENDENTS	2 TOTAL RESPONSES
RECOGNITION		1 SUPERINTENDENT	1 TOTAL RESPONSE
PERFORMANCE/ ACHIEVEMENT	Highly Effective Principals	1 SUPERINTENDENT	1 TOTAL RESPONSE

The largest category of responses from superintendents related to the policies and practices perceived to positively influence job satisfaction included “personal growth” and “recognition” (Table 7). The greatest number of responses were related to “personal growth” (six

total superintendent responses), while the smallest category of responses was “recognition”, (one total superintendent response). The categories of job satisfaction elicited responses from superintendents that are described in the following paragraphs.

### ***Personal Growth***

The theme of personal growth was reported by six superintendents throughout the interview process. Personal growth is related to opportunities for learning, or more specifically professional development offered or made available by the school district. In this category, superintendent F shared how their school district offers principals choice in professional development outside of the district that they felt would benefit them. This included the district paying for the principals to join one professional organization of their choice to support their professional learning. Another superintendent B, placed great emphasis on the high quality, cutting edge professional development their school district exposes their principals to as having a positive impact on job satisfaction. Superintendents C & E concurred on the importance of professional development for high poverty principals and all principals for that matter, however did not give specific examples of what or how this professional development should look like to support personal growth.

Three superintendents spoke about how they differentiate support for their administrators and provide professional development that supports the growth for them in their individualized areas of need. One superintendent, F, shared several very specific ways in which their school district prioritizes personal growth for administrators in their high poverty school district. In this school district, all principals of all experiences have mentors. They are also paired with a member of central staff who has been trained in cognitive coaching and supports principals with weekly classroom walkthroughs and personal growth and goals in their leadership practices. The

superintendent reported that Cognitive Coaching through a learning focus partner is the vehicle in which principals are supported by district office staff for personal growth. Not only does conversation take place, but job embedded planning and feedback are happening.

Another superintendent reported that professional development also involves a differentiated approach in their district that is ongoing through the support of outside coaching. According to superintendent G:

The investment in our principals to support them with coaches and outside consultants that are not their evaluator help support job satisfaction. These coaches help them prioritize their work through an equity lens. This involves doing walkthroughs with the principals and helping them develop an action plan and work through an equity audit process. This support gives principals a sense of efficacy in their work.

In addition, superintendent G described how the importance of offering professional development to district leadership to support principals is critical.

District office leadership may not have had the model of great leadership support when they were themselves site leaders. In addition, small high poverty districts that have district leaders with multiple roles are often challenged with capacity and knowledge to support principals while larger urban districts have more support from various expert departments. In larger districts, district office leadership must have the skillset to navigate the multiple layers of bureaucracy in providing support for principals.

In district G, central office leadership is also receiving equity training so they can support principals in their work. This involved the educational services team engaging in a book study around cultural proficiency and included all of the cabinet and principals so every department knows their role in supporting the vision of equity. This includes the cabinet level (Human

Resources, Director of Maintenance & Operations, facilities, Curriculum & Instruction, English Learners, Fiscal Department, and Food Services Department).

Finally, superintendent D shared a very specific plan to provide differentiated professional development to the administrators in their district supported with a clear leadership development curriculum map that outlines the plan for Leaders in Learning (teachers), Future Principals (assistant principals 2+ years), New Administrators (assistant principals and vice principals in their first year), New Principals and Mentor Principals.

The focus of the district is to provide mentoring and professional development for all principals and future administrators to strengthen the principal pipeline and retain and grow their leaders. The categories of professional development include. The professional development facilitated by district D is differentiated and scaffolded for administrators and aspiring administrators to get what they need for when they need it to be successful, and are linked to the professional learning standards for their state.

### ***The Work Itself***

The purposeful work of a school district was a theme that was reported by five out of the seven superintendents. Superintendent D reported that a clear message to central staff is centered around the primary role of supporting principals. This message defines the purpose of their work and is connected to the decisions being made to ensure a well functioning district office is supporting principals. Superintendent D also shared that when the district is laser-like focused on collective work, administrators feel greater job satisfaction because they also have clearly defined goals. Superintendent B felt that job satisfaction in their district is supported when professional development is provided to all administrators that supports greater alignment with district level expectations through systems. For instance, the district is currently implementing

multi-tiered systems of support frameworks district wide with a professional learning communities model at the site level, providing alignment of systems across buildings and amongst teachers, leaders and departments. Superintendent G shared how district level training for all departments helps everyone build capacity around the vision of supporting all levels of employees with a focus on equity. District leadership is also receiving equity training so they can support principals as well. This involved the educational services team engaging in a book study around cultural proficiency and included all of the cabinet and principals. This way, every department knows their role in supporting the vision of equity. This includes the cabinet level-directors of Human Resources, Maintenance & Operations, Facilities, Curriculum & Instruction, Federal Compliance, and Budget departments.

While superintendents responded with examples of how district vision, training, and structure supported the work of the principal, two superintendents discussed how the use of surveys helps their district in decision making to support the job satisfaction of their staff. Superintendent D shared how they monitor this goal consistently through staff surveys:

We have a survey that is done 3 times a year to administrators around job satisfaction and we have made adjustments based on feedback around communication & district office support.

One superintendent mentioned an annual survey given in their district to monitor staff job satisfaction. Superintendent A believed the job satisfaction of principals in their district is verified in an annual survey of staff where recent findings indicated that 70% of staff said they clearly understood how their job contributed to the mission and goals of the district. The superintendent uses this data to make informed decisions to help ensure staff know their purpose

***Performance/Achievement***

The performance of principals was a theme that was reported by superintendent F. The superintendent reported that in their school district, they offer compensation to teachers and principals who are highly effective through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program grant funds. The importance of incentivizing staff for being highly effective is a priority in their school district. This was the only school district superintendent that recognized achievement and rewarded the performance of their administrators.

***Recognition***

Superintendent F described recognizing principals who are highly effective through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program, however, this was the only superintendent that used this program to recognize leaders in their district. Superintendent A shared that they would like to do some future work around recognizing people in their school district.

***Responsibility***

The theme of responsibility was reported by two superintendents during the interviews. Superintendents A & D both shared how elevated responsibilities of principals in their district appear to increase their job satisfaction. Superintendent A explained how a forum of educational partners meets regularly with the superintendent, and involves administrators with responsibility around decision making at the district level. Superintendent D shared how their district offers focused opportunities for principals as individuals and collectively to take on a variety of additional leadership roles and responsibilities at the district level.

***Opportunities for Advancement***

The theme of advancement was reported by two superintendents as a contributing factor to job satisfaction of their principals in their district. In both districts, a clear pipeline for



identifying and training potential principals is intentional. Superintendent E shared, “We have a practice in our district that typically places their own people in principal positions.” This practice of hiring from within is what Superintendent E attributes to the longevity and retention of the high poverty principals in their district. The relationships and feeling of connectivity to the district the principals know and have advanced from, leads to greater success in principals wanting to stay and serve. Superintendent F shared the intentionality of offering opportunities for advancement in their district. The superintendent reported the following “We have a structure in our district where principals can shadow cabinet members. Through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive program, teacher and school leader grant, we grow our own. We build capacity, relationships and a pipeline for educators to promote from within our district.” The superintendent identified these intentional plans for supporting the transition from teacher to principal to district office and gives principals the support which encourages them to stay and advance.

### **Hygiene Results: District Policies and Practices Related to Principal Dissatisfaction**

In addition to the “satisfier” categories provided by Fredrick Irving Herzberg’s theoretical framework, the categories which describe “dissatisfiers” of job satisfaction were also evident in the interviews conducted with superintendents. The following chart describes the categories and themes related to these areas of “dissatisfaction.” Herzberg’s two factor theory relates these “dissatisfying” factors to those that decrease job dissatisfaction when they are addressed in the workplace.

**Table 8**

*Policies or practices that superintendents perceive to positively influence retention of high poverty school principals in their district (hygiene factors)*

Themes connected to Herzberg's Theoretical Framework (hygiene factors)	Sub Themes	Number of superintendents responding in this category	Number of responses coded
<b>WORKING CONDITIONS</b>		<b>7 SUPERINTENDENTS</b>	<b>15 TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Working Conditions	Autonomy		5
Working Conditions	Differentiated Support for High Poverty Schools		6
Working Conditions	Job Demands		4
The physical workspace			0
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>		<b>4 SUPERINTENDENTS</b>	<b>10 TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Relationships with colleagues	Collaborative forum		1
Relationships with colleagues	Learning focus partners & central staff coaching		2
Relationships with supervisor	Trust		1
Relationships with supervisor	Relationship with superintendent		2
Relationships with supervisor	Surveys		2
Relationships with supervisor	Monthly meeting w/o cabinet		1

Relationships with supervisor	Different structures for meetings to provide communication in a variety of ways		1
<b>POLICIES AND RULES</b>		<b>7 SUPERINTENDENTS</b>	<b>10 TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Policies and rules	Administrator feedback & input		2
Policies and rules	Budgetary agreements		4
Policies and rules	Principal handbook		1
Policies and rules	Mindful Hiring Practices		3
<b>SALARY</b>		<b>5 SUPERINTENDENTS</b>	<b>5 TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Salary	Competitive Salary		5
<b>QUALITY OF SUPERVISOR</b>		<b>2 SUPERINTENDENTS</b>	<b>4 TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Quality of supervisor	Quality of Supervisor		4

The largest category of responses from superintendents around satisfiers included “work conditions” with a total of 15 responses, followed closely by the category of “district rules and practices” with a total of 10 total responses, both categories having responses from all seven superintendents. The lowest response categories were “physical workspace,” (zero responses) and “relationships with colleagues” (three total responses). The categories of job satisfaction elicited responses from superintendents that are described in depth in the following paragraphs.

### ***Salary***

Five out of seven superintendents discussed how the salary of principals was perceived as a contributor to job satisfaction in their district. Three district superintendents shared that they

have already made salary adjustments or are working on salary adjustments to increase job satisfaction and retention in this area. One superintendent explained:

Salary in our district for principals and teachers is now competitive. This includes 100% of the cost of health insurance coverage for principals, spouses, and their families effective this year. This shows we are investing in our administrators as best as we can now but we do not know what the future holds (Superintendent F).

Superintendent F shared that the ability to increase administrator salary was a barrier faced in leading the district. According to this superintendent:

My hands are tied. We have a compensation guide to demonstrate to principals how they are valued through having choice in professional development, paid memberships in professional organizations, and compensation for additional work activities, however increasing salary is something we cannot do at this point due to our budget constraints.

Superintendent F shared that they believe that their high poverty school leaders have all stayed because of the relationship she maintains with them, the quality of professional development they are provided, and the variety of additional incentives that are provided in a creative administrator compensation package, amidst a competitive salary. While administrators may not be compensated with a competitive salary, they are compensated with evening, after hour duties, longevity stipends at three to five years (\$1,000), five-ten years (\$1,500), and ten years or greater (\$2,000), a cash payment of \$3,000 in lieu of medical coverage, a stipend for increased enrollment, and a \$1,000 stipend for enrolling their own child in the school district.

Finally, Superintendent G advocated for the need to revise the salary scale for both principals and teachers alike, stating that many districts offer more money to administrators based on the size of the building and enrollment of students, while consideration for salary

increase should be focused on the administrators and teachers of high poverty schools. Because of the higher needs they serve, in order to support job satisfaction and retention in these schools and reduce the number of “movers” from one school to another, salary increase should be considered.

### ***Working Conditions***

Several themes emerged from working conditions. These themes were grouped into 3 strong subcategories and included: autonomy, differentiated support for high poverty schools, job demands.

#### ***Autonomy***

There were five responses from superintendents related to the importance of autonomy for principals. Superintendent D highlighted both the importance of eliminating top-down culture and honoring the work of the principal particularly as decision makers. Superintendent B emphasized the ability of principals to be innovative is important to job satisfaction. This autonomy is reflected in the flexibility principals have in their district to make budgetary decisions through the funds they receive in collaboration with educational partners through the School Plan for Student Achievement. Finally, Superintendent F shared that principals are given autonomy through voice, choice, and agency when it comes to engaging in cognitive coaching with their coaching partner at the central office. They have the flexibility to decide on the time and area of focus which respects them and creates job satisfaction.

#### ***Differentiated Support for High Poverty Schools***

There were six responses from superintendents related to the importance of differentiated support for high poverty principals. Superintendent A reported that Title 1 and high poverty schools are given priority with technology in their district. All Title I schools have been

upgraded to the newest technology suite in every classroom, equivalent to the three newest schools. The district has an agreement with the teachers association and human resource department around surplus policies at Title I school sites. Title I schools get first priority to hire the teachers who are on the surplus list, then they have the ability to hire from outside. In addition to the priority in hiring practices, high poverty sites are provided additional staffing. Superintendent C reported several specific practices in their district which are designed to differentiate the support given to Title I schools. “We invest a lot more district dollars into those sites. This includes funding an extra Social Emotional Learning staff person to offer additional support, and a dedicated social worker just to those sites.” Title I sites have smaller class sizes. “We give Title I schools a base of funding for their Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to start with each year. This promotes PTO involvement and school/parent engagement to help foster a positive culture at sites that would normally struggle to fundraise” (Superintendent C).

Superintendent D reported that their district is intentionally staffed with an assistant principal at every site, a counselor, and a mental health professional at every school, all of which are in poverty. Superintendent E also reported that sites are given a full-time assistant principal and additional staffing for counseling at the high poverty sites with greater need. Superintendent F did not report a differentiation of support at the sites in their district, however shared that all sites are receiving adequate support and resources as they are all high poverty.

Finally, Superintendent G reported the district’s effort in moving towards the direction of allocating resources based on data related to site needs is gaining traction. In District G, there has been a realignment of staff where the most qualified counselors and intervention teachers are placed at the school sites with the highest need. This helps pave the way for policy and practice to limit transiency of staff and provide stability to support job satisfaction in administrators.

### ***Job Demands***

There were four responses from superintendents related to the importance of recognizing the increased job demands of principals. Many of the responses will be highlighted through question three when discussion considerations for advocacy. While advocacy for respecting the demands of the principal role was highlighted, Superintendent D reported a specific practice in their school district designed to free up time for principals. This practice is the hiring of Parent Ambassadors. Parent Ambassadors offer low cost support at sites and are hired for 20 hours a week to welcome new parents, offer grassroots support and resources, and free up principal time to be instructional leaders. Superintendent F shared a district policy designed to support work-life balance. In district F, administrators are not to receive emails on any Saturday, allowing for them to focus on their personal needs and family.

### ***The Physical Workspace***

There were no responses given by superintendents that discussed the physical workspace as a consideration for principal job satisfaction or retention or turnover.

### ***Relationship With Colleagues***

The superintendents interviewed shared two examples of how relationships with colleagues support job satisfaction in their district. The importance of having a collaborative forum for principal interaction was reported by one superintendent to contribute to job satisfaction of their principals.

Another example provided was found in the same district where each principal is paired with a member of central staff and district office staff to coach them through the Cognitive Coaching model, and participate in classroom walkthroughs and with them weekly in a structure

called “learning focus partnerships.” This is an important structure to support a strong relationship of principals with their colleagues.

Cognitive coaching through a learning focus partner is the vehicle in which principals are supported by district staff. Not only conversation takes place, but job embedded planning and feedback as well. We have a structure in place where principals can also shadow cabinet members, growing capacity and building a pipeline for administrators while strengthening collegial relationships (Superintendent F).

### ***Relationship With Supervisor***

Superintendents interviewed gave several examples of how their districts influence principal retention through relationships with their supervisor. Superintendents E and F reported, they stay in close contact with principals and have the ability to do that because they are a small district. This allows for a relationship between superintendent and principal and allows for principals to say when they are or not feeling supported. Superintendent D shared with the researcher a practice that took place in their school district to encourage job satisfaction through trust and relationship with the superintendent. Administrators were given time to evaluate district office support and provide feedback in a safe way to the superintendent. In addition, the superintendent shared, “We have a survey that goes out three times a year to administrators around job satisfaction and we have made adjustments based on feedback around communication and district office support.” Superintendent F also described a process where principals are able to meet with the superintendent to share their feedback in a safe environment. Through a structure called Leadership Network, principals meet monthly with the superintendent, not cabinet members to discuss what is going well and what is needed. The structure of listening to principals in a safe environment enhances the relationship with the supervisors, and increases job



satisfaction. In a larger district where Assistant Superintendents are supervisors to principals, their structure is to bring principals together for opportunities to share challenges with their Assistant Superintendents.

### ***Quality of Supervisor***

Two superintendents highlighted the role of a quality supervisor in supporting retention of high poverty principals. Superintendent D described in the interview the process they went through in order to increase stability and reduce turnover in the Assistant Superintendent role in their district. “I elevated the position that supervises principals to a much higher salary to encourage stability. The role of a principal supervisor should be that of a coach. There is a skill and talent in working with principals” (Superintendent D). The superintendent reported that this position is critical to the support of principals and, too often, those in these positions become promoted or leave to seek higher paying jobs. Increasing the salary for this position was a strategic decision to mitigate turnover of quality supervisors.

Another superintendent discussed the importance of having a supervisor for principals with the skills and experience to support them and provide quality guidance and supervision.

### ***Policies and Rules***

All seven superintendents in this study discussed the impact of their district policies, practices, and rules and how they related to principal job satisfaction. The category of “policies and rules” had 10 responses from superintendents on how their district policies, practices, or rules impact principals and their job satisfaction. While the category from Herzberg’s theory is called “policies and rules”, the researcher understands that policy at a school district level is typically written by a district's Board of Education, and these policies are official. While the superintendents did not call these ideas policies, but practices which are followed in their school

district. The superintendents gave examples which ranged from processes, documents, and rules that supported the job satisfaction of principals in their district.

Superintendent F shared an important document principals receive when they begin: The Principal Handbook. The Principal Handbook was created to give guidance and clarity to principals around policies and rules in the district. This supports principals in getting quick answers to questions they have, and feel confident in what to do and how it aligns to the expectations set forth for them by the district. In addition, the same district has a rule regarding email communication. Self-care is promoted by the district expectation that prohibits emails to be sent on Saturdays to principals. It is clearly emphasized from the top in this district that self-care is first of priorities, family second, and work last. Superintendent F also reported how hiring practices have been intentionally developed in their district with a priority on choosing a candidate who will most likely be highly satisfied in their role as a principal of a high poverty school. Hiring people with a strong alignment to the mission and vision of the school district is done through a district process that evaluates different components of talent that meet the needs of the school district and are sought out in prospective candidates. “You can teach people how to do certain things, but that vision, mission alignment you can't teach. By choosing the right person for the job, there is a greater chance they will be retained than someone who is not a good fit” (Superintendent F).

Superintendent A spoke to the process their district has in providing transparency with budgetary decisions. This focused process includes five agreements for allocating district funding, and has been agreed upon by the board and labor units. This clear and agreed upon process creates trust amongst labor partners and educational partners, and increases the focus on the work instead of contractual and budgetary issues and ultimately promotes greater job

satisfaction. In this district, another practice the superintendent highlighted was to increase the number of years of service and steps on the salary scale for incoming hires transferring with prior experience, which increased the pool of teachers available to fill vacant positions, a challenge faced every year.

### **Findings From Research Question 1 Part 2**

While research question one invited participants to look at policies that are perceived to influence retention, the second part of the question asks for superintendents to share what they perceive as influencing turnover of high-poverty school principals in their district. Only one superintendent interviewed gave an opinion on a specific policy or practice which they perceived has influenced turn over in their district. Superintendent B focused on the limited scope of their district Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their teacher labor partners, stating that a principal's inability to access information like data relates to an inability to perform, and this in turn creates a feeling of job dissatisfaction. For instance, the lack of assessment data, because of an MOU that doesn't support it, creates a challenge of leadership practices that rely heavily on relational trust and leadership expertise. Lack of access to appropriate data prevent leaders from feeling satisfied regarding their leadership skills and effectiveness. Human capital and professional development are simply not enough when conditions are not in place to support principal job satisfaction.

### **Findings From Research Question 2**

Research question 2 focused on opportunities and barriers for advocacy at the district level and above.

*RQ2: What opportunities and barriers do superintendents perceive in supporting favorable work conditions related to the job satisfaction of their principals of high-poverty schools in their district?*

Recognizing that superintendents are important in influencing decision making on a multitude of levels, this question was designed for them to share their perspectives from the experiences leading their district. Table 9 outlines the themes that emerged as barriers and opportunities.

**Table 9**

*Opportunities and barriers superintendents perceive in supporting job satisfaction of principals of high poverty schools*

Categories	Themes	Barrier	Opportunity
Quality of Supervisor	Supervisors of principals that turnover lead to inconsistencies in the support principals receive.	X	
Work conditions	The misinterpretation of what decisions we centralize (at the district level) and what we decentralize.	X	
Work conditions	The constraints around having quality teachers can be a barrier in supporting high poverty schools.	X	
Work conditions	Principals are challenged with resources.	X	
Work conditions	Some understand and support the need for sites to have different needs while others do not.	X	X
Work conditions	Some challenges that affect turnover are out of anyone's control.	X	
Work conditions	District leadership knowledge & capacity.	X	
Salary	Limitations to funding to increase competitive salary	X	
Salary	Cost of salary and benefits cannot be ignored.	X	
Policies and rules	Limited MOU	X	
Policies and rules	District identity	X	

Policies and rules	Data driven decision making.		X
Policies and rules	Districts can support principal motivation and commitment through protecting and advocating for their students.		X
Policies and rules	Adult wants and adult desires have to be treated just as importantly as student needs.	X	
Policies and rules	Legislators and Governors understanding challenging work.	X	
Physical workspace	Funding for facility maintenance and upgrades.	X	

### ***Work Conditions***

Under the category of work conditions, six responses were given, all related to barriers in this area (Table 9). Several themes emerged from these responses including constraints in staffing high quality teachers, lack of resources, and external factors related to the demands of principals from society including the need to respond to issues faster, and how social media can accelerate issues that cause greater stress. One superintendent shared in great length the barriers faced in their particular school district and highlighted the tension between central office and administrators.

The misinterpretation of what we centralize and what we decentralize causes tension and job dissatisfaction. Principals are challenged with resources. Supporting principals of high poverty schools with resources is sometimes done through an equality vs. equity lens to deal with the inequity particularly when fiscal challenges and communities are protective of their resources. This is handled by giving everybody the same in order to deal with an inequity of resources amongst tension across the district (Superintendent B).

Other barriers which were reported included the challenges faced when trying to represent to the community, public, and legislatures what the work of a school actually

encompasses and how to help those on the outside overcome the ignorance to understand the struggles schools and educators are facing. While this particular problem was shared as a barrier, it was also depicted as an opportunity by one superintendent. The opportunity to educate the public and also district leaders on the different needs for high poverty schools is a pathway to providing the proper support needed for these schools to be successful.

### ***Policies and Rules***

Under the category of policies and rules, two superintendents shared their frustrations around creating policies and rules when a district does not recognize the identity of their students and their needs, or has adults who focus on adult wants versus student needs. One superintendent shared that the change in student needs in their district has been difficult for adults to recognize, therefore policies and practices take longer to adjust or change. A second superintendent (B), shared how adult wants and adult desires have to be treated just as importantly as student needs.

In the population we serve, student needs are not vocalized as much as the adult wants and desires are vocalized. A barrier/challenge is balancing the needle between adult wants and student needs (Superintendent B).

One way the school district has been able to support student needs is through the offering of sports, stipends for transportation to eligibility criteria programs, and paying for every sixth grade student to attend science camp. Although these do not distinguish need through an equity lens, the equality response of the district are ways that the superintendent believes support principal motivation and commitment through protecting and advocating for all the district's students as a whole. Another opportunity described in the area of policies and rules is the ability for a district to have a policy of utilizing data to support decisions made in resource allocation.

### ***Salary***

The ability to provide competitive salaries for principals was discussed as an opportunity in some districts for increasing job satisfaction, while two school district superintendents reported it as a barrier.

The cost of salary and benefits cannot be ignored. The marginal difference between a high end teacher per hour rate and administrator per hour rate is a very challenging reality (Superintendent C).

While some superintendents talked about how they were able to increase salary, two of seven found this area to be a barrier they faced in supporting job satisfaction of high poverty school principals. One superintendent shared not only size, but needs of school should be considered when correlating pay for administrators when salary assessment is conducted.

### ***Physical Workspace***

Two superintendents discussed the barriers and opportunities they face with supporting job satisfaction in relation to the physical work environment of principals. One shared the challenge of lack of funding overall, while the other discussed how there is a difference in how staff and community view the needs of high poverty schools. Superintendent C reported the following:

The State of Michigan has added a budget for facilities this year. Because of the funding structure for schools in the state, the inequity of lower taxed communities and higher taxed communities are extreme. The rich get richer and have nice buildings and the poor communities cannot afford to fund school facilities because their household values are so low (superintendent C).

Superintendent A shared how at the local level, there is a priority for funding of Title 1 schools. The opportunity lies in their board of education understanding that there are Title 1 schools who have a priority in funding, while the barrier is the pushback from other site administrators that do not understand the difference in the needs of Title 1 schools in comparison to non-Title 1 schools.

### **Findings From Research Question 3**

Research question 3 asked superintendents to share their opinions on what other superintendents should consider when advocating for policies and practices. This question sought to gain insight into the experiences of the superintendents and their perceptions of how to increase favorable work conditions for high poverty school principals. The following are the descriptive responses of each superintendent to the following question:

*RQ3: What should superintendents consider when advocating for policies and practices related to favorable work conditions of high poverty school principals?*

#### ***Superintendent A***

Superintendent A described how opportunities for some superintendents are greater than for others when it comes to legislators reaching out and superintendents being represented. Opportunities for regular contact with legislative staff can be positive for those superintendents that have access to them. A disadvantage in working with legislators is that there are term limits which means when term limits expire, it takes work to start over in educating new legislators:

We need to write legislation that doesn't make the work more difficult than it already is. Policies at the state level have often done this. It is an opportunity and barrier to ensure we communicate with decision makers so they have a clear understanding of the work and how they can help with policy versus adding to the challenges that the work already



has. Legislators must know how the work really looks.

One of the challenges Superintendent A described is how to accurately depict the work and overcome misunderstandings about public education when communicating with legislators:

Everyone thinks because they went to school, they know how school operates. They also are often concerned about the least common denominator with the loudest when an isolated situation occurs and legislation is written for it. Our job is to help them have a clear understanding of our work. It is my responsibility to be a voice to legislators not only in my school district but for others that might not have as much of a voice.

Another area Superintendent A discussed was the pushback they received from non-Title I sites when it came to making budgetary decisions that offered equitable resources for the needs of these high poverty schools. While there is pushback, it is part of the work of advocacy for these schools that superintendents are responsible for. Finally, Superintendent A talked about advocating for principal work conditions:

Principals are people. They have hopes, dreams, challenges. We can't continue to ask them to do one more thing. We need to make sure that we are listening to principal voices. We often think we know what people want, need.

While principals are challenged with workload, Superintendent A highlighted the need to respect their time, and listen to principals about the important role they play in the vision of the schools they lead.

***Superintendent B***

Superintendent B described how helping staff stay focused on what is important through a professional learning plan that encourages adults to take an inquiry-based stance can help pierce through historical cultural baggage. The barriers of a limiting MOU in the district present challenges that spark mistrust and tension. When responding to advocacy of high poverty school principal job satisfaction, Superintendent B emphasized that it is important to make sure the needle is balanced with adult wants and student needs, particularly in a population where student needs are not as vocalized as the adult needs. “If the needle lays too heavily toward adult wants, my obligation as a leader towards the board of education is to make sure the needle is balanced” (Superintendent B). Superintendent B shared that historic tension between the teachers union and the district central office has caused the need for him to help navigate balancing the pressures of adult wants and student needs.

***Superintendent C***

Superintendent C described how advocacy for them occurs both at a district level as well as with legislators. At the district level, parents with the greater voice and board members that represent them need to be reminded that the school board represents everyone, including those with less of a voice. While the board understands, other sites and principals don't understand that Title 1 sites are really different, so there is some pushback. Free and reduced schools are also not all equal. You have poor, generational poor, racial minority poor, rural and urban poor. Different free and reduced schools are dealing with different things and need different things.

At the state level, the superintendent shared that they talk to someone from the state once a month, and three times a year they meet with legislators:

Legislators need to understand the difference of needs of high poverty schools versus

other communities. They need a carve out in state policy to have flexibility in evaluations, transfers, and funding sources to support kids and parents. Our hands are tied with how we can spend the money but we make it happen. Legislators really don't understand. They think schools are schools, are schools.

Superintendent C described how in Michigan there are no categorical funds for meeting the needs of students. There is a flat rate for districts, however additional funding to meet the needs of at-risk students is minimal. There are no other categorical funds. Funding schools differently would help relieve the pressure that inner city principals feel by the finance constraints they are dealing with. In addition, Superintendent C believes that the state needs to step in and support facilities upgrades for schools that are not in communities that can afford additional tax costs and are trying to do more with less every day.

Superintendent C also reflected on the need for district policies to consider differentiating their practices for high poverty schools, suggesting that blanket policies could be adjusted to meet the needs of high poverty schools when employee transfers and evaluations are considered.

### ***Superintendent D***

Superintendent D described how advocacy for high poverty principals begins with investing in them. They discussed how this is done by deeply investing in the principal as the leader of that school, not just the manager, while trusting and empowering principals to make the decisions for their school:

The principal is not just a conduit for decision making to go through from the top down. Treat them as professionals and invest in them. Be thoughtful in developing and maintaining high quality PD for them to grow.

In addition, Superintendent D discussed how Title 1 funding intentionally supports the needs at Title 1 sites. All sites have assistant principals except for two sites that share.

Superintendent D is currently advocating to have a full time assistant principal at each site so principals can be instructional leaders. They also placed consideration on how ratios of high need are more important than the size of school sites when allocating funding and support to schools.

### ***Superintendent E***

Superintendent E had one comment regarding advocacy of high poverty principal job satisfaction:

Do not disenfranchise principals by giving them unrealistic expectations and say do it well. We have to be realistic, the principalship is a big job. We need to make sure we don't set them up for failure by asking too much of them or not providing a means by which they can say this is too much.

Overall, the focus of advocacy from Superintendent E was related to providing opportunities for honest communication about fulfilling their expectations.

### ***Superintendent F***

Superintendent F described how their district and the homeowners' taxable values are not enough to fund high poverty schools:

I advocate for grants which pay for resources needed to support high poverty schools. But we can't fund salaries. I have written letters, I have gone to the state, to advocate for funding for my district.

Superintendent F primarily discussed the challenges faced in the state they work because of the funding structure in Michigan.

### *Superintendent G*

Superintendent G reflected on a variety of topics related to advocacy in their district. They shared how they are working to change things to have a policy or practice that places the most effective teachers/staff at the highest need schools, and limit the transiency in high poverty schools that need stability and trained staff the most. “You don't always get your best teachers assigned to your high poverty schools” (Superintendent G). The policies and practices the superintendent is advocating for would support high poverty schools to have the most qualified staff, and limit the transiency of staffing through creative policies and practices in their school district. By placing the most competent staff members at the most challenging schools, the staff are equipped with the skills to be successful, reducing the probability of turnover in staff, and therefore increasing job satisfaction and stability for principals.

### **COVID-19**

COVID-19 created a struggle for all school districts and staff alike, as reported by all superintendents in this study. One Superintendent F reported that their district administrators remained supported through the multiple structures in place which continued throughout COVID-19 including virtual mentoring and “classroom” walk-throughs. This provided principals routine, stability and support during those challenging times. Even virtually, focus partnerships continued during COVID-19. Superintendent D also reflected on the compound challenges that principals navigated during COVID-19 and shared that their district was able to support principals by paying them overtime for the additional work COVID-19 related protocols required in the evenings and on the weekends.

There were three superintendents who reported that COVID-19 forced principals to reassess the demands of their job, and many who left did so to work closer to home, or in a

capacity that allowed for them to focus more on their family. One superintendent shared that COVID-19 took a toll particularly on principals of high poverty schools more than others:

COVID was a war on everybody, especially principals. From the day to day operations to the staffing issues and stress on a daily basis trying to cover everyone and keep everyone safe. COVID did not universally affect everyone. High poverty principals had a harder time supporting their populations. These populations stayed out of school longer and were adversely impacted by health care access, internet access, and resources and support during a pandemic. The burden high poverty principals felt especially with students falling behind was an additional stressor. It was tough for a lot of people to stay in this position. High poverty principals are seeing the effects of students who did not have equal access to learning during COVID and are suffering extreme impacts of learning loss increasing the challenges of educating students who fell behind. There were a considerable number of people that stepped away from the principalship (Superintendent C).

Superintendent G focused their answers about COVID-19 around the need to support principals and staff reporting that COVID-19 has created a greater need to support staff with staff burnout and social emotional support. They have used funding from their Educator Effectiveness grant to hire individuals to support with social and emotional well being specifically to work with teachers, putting the needs of teacher's emotional health as a priority to reduce burnout and turnover, therefore supporting the strain of staff shortages that principals have been faced with during COVID-19. In addition, COVID-19 funds have been used to hire more social workers and nurses to offer appropriate support to the neediest schools. Superintendent G reported:

This has been an opportunity to train the system as we place people in these positions at the highest need schools first, and we have moved and assigned the strongest counselors to the neediest schools last year and this year because of the impacts of COVID. This is an opportunity for improving the system overall, as we are now making intentional staffing changes for supporting the highest needs schools by placing the strongest intervention teachers at these sites.

While COVID-19 was an experience no superintendent or school district had ever faced, there were many creative ways the challenges of COVID-19 were handled with high poverty schools, staff, and administrators at the forefront of the decisions that were made as reported by almost all of the superintendents who were interviewed for this study. By offering support through additional work pay for principals, supporting the emotional wellbeing of teachers and staff, and making adjustments in staffing to prioritize high needs schools, superintendents saw practices change in their school districts in perceived ways that supported principals during COVID-19. It is too early to see formal national data around principal turnover and COVID-19, however the superintendents interviewed for this study did not see a major influx of turnover in their own district particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This study offers new information regarding the perceptions of superintendents in our country and how they view the policies and practices in their district and as a whole, influencing job satisfaction in our high poverty school principals. It offers a look at the barriers and opportunities superintendents face in advocating for policies and practices that impact job satisfaction of high poverty school principals, and provides insight on how to help shape policy and practice based on the lived experiences of the school district leaders in our nation. The study makes new connections to the most current research, including research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic conducted around principal job satisfaction making connections to theoretical framework around the theme of job satisfaction through Herzberg's Two Factor-theory. The results of this study are described under the themes of Herzberg's theory and make a connection to the current research in order to make meaning around the local policies and practices that superintendents perceive to support job satisfaction of our nation's high poverty school principals as well as those they do not recognize.

Current research in principal retention suggests five top strategies for implementation on the school, district, and state level to reduce attrition of our nation's principals. These include providing high-quality professional learning opportunities, improving working conditions, offering competitive salary, giving principals appropriate decision-making authority, and reforming accountability systems for schools (Levin et al., 2020).

In addition, Herzberg's Two-Factor theory implies that employers should support hygiene factors by addressing areas such as work conditions, coworker relations, policies and rules,



supervisor quality, and salary. Concurrently, employers must make sure that the employee is supported by motivating factors including achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, personal growth, and overall satisfaction with the work itself.

### **Summary of the Results**

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews for investigating superintendents' perceptions of the policies and practices that influence job satisfaction and principal retention and turnover in their current district. Seven superintendents from two areas of the United States were interviewed to learn more about the policies and practices they believe influence the retention and turnover of specifically high poverty principal leaders in their district. The results of this study showed an overall greater report of hygiene factor examples at 44, compared to motivating factors examples at 17 related to areas of policy and practice in their district that supported principal job satisfaction.

### **Areas of Greatest Perceived Impact-Motivating Factors**

The greatest areas of response of motivating factors were professional development and a focus on the work itself. Out of the seven superintendents interviewed, five addressed professional development as a priority for supporting job satisfaction, while less than 50%, or three of the seven superintendents talked about the intentionality of professional development being job embedded and differentiated to meet the specific needs of the principal. The focus of professional learning has been highlighted by both Herzberg's Two Factor Theory as an area related to job satisfaction, while high quality professional development is cited in a multitude of current research as a key area in supporting principal retention. This study confirms professional development is an area in which superintendents perceive to be a positive influence to principal

retention in their district, with three of seven offering a very intentional focus on high quality, job embedded professional development based on evidence-based practices.

In addition, a focus on the work itself was a category that had strong evidence of response with the superintendents interviewed. Five out of seven superintendents discussed the perceived impact on principal job satisfaction in their district because of the laser-like focus on a district vision and clear communication of priorities which they believe support the job satisfaction of their high poverty principals and principals as a whole. This is another area that directly correlates with Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, and the motivating factors of employment related to job satisfaction.

Other responses from superintendents included opportunities for advancement, recognition, responsibility, and performance/achievement. These areas however, were not areas with significant perceived impact connected to Herzberg's theory, like a focus on the work itself, and professional development for principals.

The responses from superintendents indicate that professional development and the vision around the work itself are the strongest areas perceived to support high poverty principal retention in their district and have a direct correlation to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. Their responses also indicate that there is an unidentified need to support principals more in the areas of opportunities for advancement, recognition, responsibility, and performance/achievement.

### **Areas of Greatest Perceived Impact-Hygiene Factors**

Hygiene factor examples had an overall greater response from superintendents compared to examples of motivating factors. Hygiene factors including working conditions, coworker relations, policies and rules, supervisor quality, and salary were areas discussed the most among the superintendents interviewed for this study. The greatest areas of response of hygiene factors

included working conditions with a total of 15 responses from all seven superintendents, followed by relationships and policies and rules in second place, both with 10 responses. The category of relationships with a total of 10 responses came from four superintendents, while the category of policies and rules had a total of 10 responses from seven superintendents.

All superintendents talked about working conditions which they perceived to impact the job satisfaction of their high poverty school principals indicating a high correlation to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. Six notable times specific working conditions were referenced which include differentiated support for those high poverty school principals ranging from Human Resources by way of staffing, to technology resources, as well as fiscal resources. While job demands were mentioned four times, superintendents talked primarily about not giving principals more work, and acknowledging how big the principal role is. Only one of the superintendents interviewed discussed ways in which principals are supported with their increased job demands and workload through the hiring of a parent liaison. No other superintendent discussed policies or practices in their school district or advocated for the reduction of principal workload. One superintendent discussed offering compensation for after hours and weekend work, while another discussed limiting emails on Saturdays sent to administrators. The area of job demands is not only an area proven to have an impact on job satisfaction by Herzberg, it is also a strong indicating factor of job satisfaction particularly in current research regarding principal retention. A second strong area of perceived impact under the umbrella of working conditions was related to the autonomy principals have in their school district. Five superintendents shared how their district offers various ways for principals to have autonomy by way of site based budgeting and decision making authority in leading their school indicating a strong correlation to reported principal autonomy and research that confirms its importance.

Relationships with supervisors was perceived as the second strongest indicator of principal job satisfaction, with 10 examples of how superintendents make this a priority in their school district. From having different meeting structures in place which allow for various ways principals can interact with decision makers, to one on one meetings for principals and superintendents, trust and relationships were discussed by four out of the seven superintendents. The superintendents who notably discussed one-on-one relationships and meetings with their principals were better able to accomplish this because of the smaller size of their districts. Two superintendents related the job satisfaction of their principals to the anonymous survey they utilize annually, and both discussed how they use this valuable tool to make adjustments in the support they provide them. The theme of relationships with supervisors was strongly supported by Herzberg's Two Factor Theory during the interviews with superintendents.

Policies and practices was another area that fell in second place in the number of responses superintendents shared specific to principal job satisfaction indicating a strong correlation to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. A total of 10 responses from all seven superintendents outlined how policies and practices contribute to job satisfaction in their district. One superintendent discussed in great detail how a limiting labor agreement contributes to dissatisfaction. The greatest number of responses were related to budgetary agreements. There is a clear understanding and mutual agreement on how the district budget is structured to support the different needs of high poverty schools. Mindful hiring practices of administrators was discussed as the second largest area of influence with a focus on how districts are intentional in hiring the right administrators for their high poverty schools. Other areas that surfaced at lesser frequency included the ability for administrators to offer feedback and input on their practices

noticed by two superintendents, and having a principal handbook to help support principals with their own understanding of policies and practices, brought up by one superintendent.

Salary was the next greatest area of perceived impact with five total responses and was discussed by a majority of superintendents. Five out of seven superintendents discussed how alignment of salary structure led to greater principal job satisfaction in their district. One shared how creative ways to offer administrators more money through compensation packages have contributed to a sense of job satisfaction when a competitive salary was not available. Another notable response to salary and the movement in principals was discussed by one superintendent, with a suggestion on how districts should look at salary structures for principals and correlate their compensation to student need rather than size of a school to keep effective principals at high poverty schools. While salary is supported by Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, and is perceived as a strong indicator of principal retention supported by current research, some superintendents interviewed have looked for other creative means of compensation and autonomy to support principal job satisfaction when salary increases are not an option.

Finally, the quality of a principal supervisor position was noted by two superintendents (with four total responses) as having an impact in principal job satisfaction and is directly related to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. Superintendents who discussed the importance of a quality supervisor emphasized how their leadership of principals required a special skill set. Without that knowledge and expertise, principals are not provided appropriate support and guidance related to job satisfaction. These superintendents have worked to train and keep quality supervisors of their principals. It should be noted that in the smaller school districts, often the superintendent is the primary supervisor of the principals. Unfortunately, however this does not mean that they also possess the skills to guide and support them.

Areas related to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, or the latest research around principal job satisfaction that were not discussed by superintendents were school climate, and reforming accountability systems (Levin et al., 2020). These were not areas that superintendents perceived as impacting principal job satisfaction either positively or negatively.

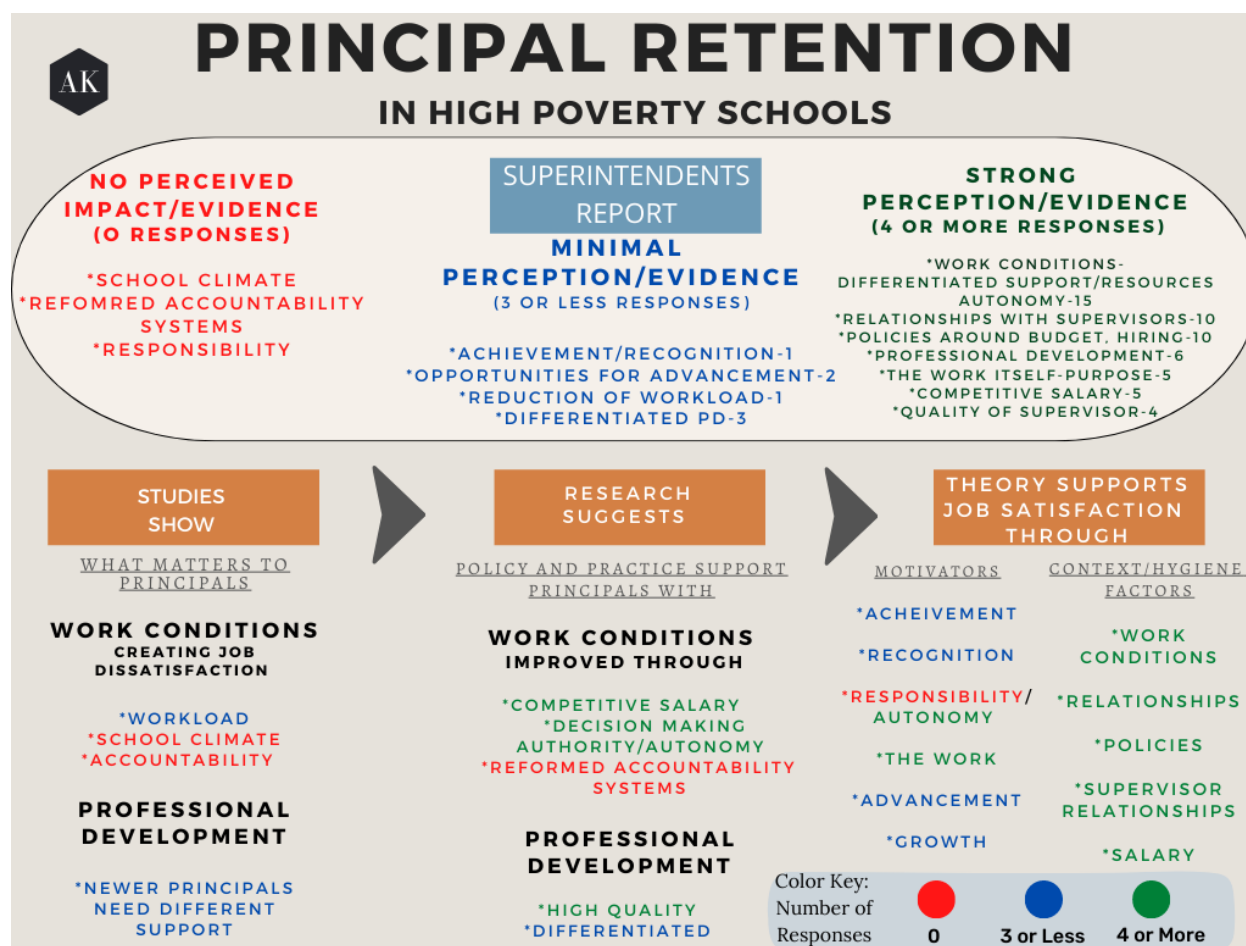
## **Conclusion**

The superintendents interviewed for this study gave insightful information about their perceptions of principal job satisfaction. All seven superintendents discussed in detail their experiences as a leader in their district, and the policies and practices in place that impact principals. All but one superintendent spoke not only as the leader of their district, but as a former principal and spoke deeply about their understanding of the principalship in their perceptions. Superintendents had the opportunity to discuss the opportunities and barriers they face in their various roles: as superintendent leaders of their district, as a member of their local board of education, as an active figure in the community in which they serve, and as a political influencer of legislators. The superintendents interviewed all had at least one high poverty school with a principal who has held that position in their school for five years or more.

The researcher synthesized the data from the study of superintendent perceptions to make connections to current research and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory in the following representation. The following diagram represents the correlation between theory, research and the findings of the current study.

**Figure 5**

*Principal Retention-Correlation Between Job Satisfaction and Principal Retention Research*



Note. A. Katzakis, 2023

Overall, superintendents had similar perceptions of the policies and practices in their district that related to supporting principal retention. Common themes such as competitive salary, professional development, and relationships were evident as strong perceived indicators of job satisfaction amongst most superintendents (Figure 5). The superintendents discussed several areas related to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of job satisfaction as well as current research related to principal job satisfaction. Although not one superintendent touched on policy and practice in their district related to all areas in either researched theory or current studies, all

superintendents touched on one or more. In addition, all had insightful ideas on how to address many of the areas of principal job satisfaction. They all concurred that opportunities exist to apply creative solutions in policy and practice to improve conditions in their district that impact principal job satisfaction. The following are the conclusions and reflections of the researcher from the results of the study conducted.

There was no discussion from superintendents about the ways they intentionally advocate for policy and practice to support high poverty principals with a reduction in workload. While additional staffing to support may be the way superintendents perceive being supported, only one superintendent actually responded with the intent to reduce workload for administrators, sharing how parents are hired minimally-part time to support as parent liaisons at their sites to help answer parent questions. While workload is one of the strongest indicators of principal dissatisfaction based on current research it was minimally addressed.

Motivating factors were also discussed limitedly. In the culture of education where growth, achievement and recognition are embedded in daily work, recognition and support for advancement of principals had minimal discussion. Two superintendents talked about advancement, while only one discussed recognition. While current research around principal retention does not necessarily indicate recognition and advancement as primary factors of principal satisfaction, Herzberg's theory would support these areas.

High quality professional development that included researched models such as mentorship and job embedded learning was discussed as a priority by three of seven superintendents, indicating that professional development was an area that either was part of an intentional and differentiated plan in some districts, and in others it was not. While professional development is taken seriously by the superintendents interviewed, the focus on job embedded



and differentiated professional development with an intent to support principals in their specific areas of need was discussed by less than 50% of the superintendents interviewed. This includes either perceptions of current practice related to principal retention as well as opportunities for future policy and practice. This is an area research shows should be a focus to support the different needs of principals not only for the populations they serve, but in all stages of their careers, especially in the early years where principal turnover is most prevalent. Creating a strong principal pipeline was important for only two superintendents.

Salary was not a factor where strong relationships and a multitude of satisfaction factors were evident, suggesting that adjustments to salary may not be critical in order to support principal retention when strong relationships exist.

Memorandums of understanding and labor partner limitations were a factor that one superintendent discussed as barriers to supporting principal retention, and were connected with the school district that had the greatest turnover of high poverty school principals. The school district with the greatest number of high poverty principal turnover has a limiting memorandum of understanding, and a superintendent who has never worked as a principal. Perhaps there is some correlation. A closer look at the impact of district culture and climate and overall job satisfaction could provide insightful information around principal job satisfaction. A lack of administrator experience as a superintendent could also impact the challenge of fully understanding how to support principals in this district.

While most superintendents expressed the need for advocacy, some did not discuss opportunities or avenues in which they advocate for policy at the state level, questioning the accessibility of superintendents to legislators and how and when superintendents are informing

policy makers for change. Reforming accountability practices was not discussed by any of the superintendents in great detail.

Opportunities to provide anonymous feedback and opinion through the use of surveys, were regular practice of two of the seven districts. Two superintendents referred to a yearly anonymous survey indicating that all superintendents interviewed may potentially not know what it is that impacts job satisfaction in their district, or what drives their principals to make decisions on moving or leaving in a truly unbiased way. By not knowing, they may be missing an opportunity to better understand how the policies and practices in their district can better support principal retention.

Only one superintendent discussed how the use of federal grant funds available through Every Student Succeeds Act are supporting a robust professional development plan for principals through the implementation of the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program in their district. This leads to the question of how other school districts are utilizing the funding available to them, or if they are using it to fund professional development for teachers and or principals.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There are many possible areas in which this body of research might spark future studies. While this study focused on superintendents, a potential study might look at interviewing both principals, and superintendents in a district with strong principal retention, to see if the perception of principals matches the perception of the superintendents around what they believe to be impacting factors of job satisfaction in their district. Since assistant and vice principal percentages have increased in our schools, it could be beneficial to investigate how the duties in their role can best support the reduction of principal workload. Finally, it would be beneficial to speak with legislators to hear what they have to say about their role in supporting principal

retention and what they are doing to help our schools keep their leaders. Looking at districts who implement Teacher and School Leader Incentive program grants could be researched to see if they have higher retention rates of high poverty principals and principals as a whole.

While this study was conducted while the effects of COVID-19 were still emerging, during a time where principal turnover was impacted by many factors, we do not yet have follow up data from the 2020-2021 National Teacher Principal Survey available to fully understand how the pandemic has impacted principal turnover, or to understand how principals may have moved, stayed, or left during COVID-19 amidst additional complex challenges. While preliminary studies show that principal attrition is predicted to increase, additional information may support the need for more research around principal retention after COVID-19.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

Through the findings in this study, superintendents should make meaning from the perceptions of superintendents of the policies and practices that are supporting job satisfaction in their district and successfully retaining their high poverty principals. Superintendents who are looking to increase principal retention should consider how the policies and practices uncovered in this study might be beneficial if implemented in their own district.

There are several implications for professional practice that superintendents should consider from this study. The emphasis of high quality, differentiated professional development for principals should be first on the list of priorities for supporting principal retention. Superintendents validated the importance of professional development in this study. Studies indicate that differentiated professional development is critical to supporting the varied needs of principals, While this study did not show an overall emphasis in offering differentiated professional development, superintendents who spoke to providing intentional professional

development had strong opinions about the perceived importance parallel to the current research- particularly for new principals and principals of high poverty schools. Superintendents should strongly consider the importance of research and perceived importance of high quality professional development in order to retain their principals.

A clear, focused and organized vision aligned with district leaders that have the capacity to support principals is important for superintendents to consider when leading a district where principals of high poverty feel a sense of job satisfaction. Communicating the purpose of everyone's role in supporting principals, while ensuring district leadership have the skillset to fulfill that role is important. Ensuring that departments and their work is focused and organized to meet the needs of the greater vision supports the job satisfaction of not only high poverty principals, but all principals.

The importance of relationships from this study is a strong perceived indicator of job satisfaction that superintendents should focus on. By offering opportunities to increase strong collegial relationships in a variety of ways including regular check-ins with their principals, offering them a voice in district decision making, providing mentorship with internal partnerships, and supporting them with different ways to provide feedback regarding district level support can provide greater job satisfaction.

Consideration for how data informs the resources that will be allocated for sites and aligning resources to meet the greater needs at high poverty school sites is an area of professional practice which should be implemented by recommendation from this study. This is an area of practice which could support equity amongst school resources and potentially increase principal retention. From a human resources standpoint, putting policies in place to fill positions and by

placing the most qualified and skilled individuals in high poverty schools first may increase principal retention.

Superintendents should give principals autonomy through decision making power, by reducing the “top down” culture, and offering principals budgetary flexibility when possible through school site planning.

Policies that influence job satisfaction and retention of high poverty principals should be reviewed. This could include the policies embedded in labor agreements that impact principals directly. In addition, district transparency of budgetary agreements and mindful hiring practices are two areas that policy can influence and offer positive impact. Overall, principals should be surveyed on a regular basis and allowed the opportunity to provide input on the policies and practices which influence their own job satisfaction in the context of their work environment.

Surveying current principals in the various categories related to Herzberg’s two factor theory of job satisfaction could give superintendents insight as to which areas of “satisfaction” and “dissatisfaction” to focus on when making decisions and advocating for principal retention in the district that they serve. In addition, surveying principals specifically in the researched areas of principal retention could prove to be exceptionally informative in the context of the school district they serve and the principals that work in it. Superintendents should use surveys to help gain insightful information about principal retention turnover so they can make thoughtful decisions to improve it. Furthermore, anonymous exit surveys could help superintendents understand what policies and practices in their district impact turnover of their administrator positions.

Superintendents should consider the salary structure for their principals. While salary was not the strongest perceived indicator of principal job satisfaction, superintendents all discussed its

importance, and looked for creative ways to address providing compensation to principals when increasing base salary was not an option for some. Other practices which could be implemented include adjusting principal salary and compensation to be differentiated based on student needs of their school instead of only size.

Superintendents should consider the importance of the role that a principal supervisor has in providing job satisfaction to administrators. Consideration around the quality of a principal supervisory role is important in order to support principals effectively. Increasing the experience qualifications and salary of this particular role should also be considered.

There were several areas research and theory touch on that superintendents in this study did not discuss. While studies show school climate and accountability systems are strong indicators of principal job satisfaction, and research supports the need for reformed accountability systems, superintendents did not discuss policies or practices that related to either of these areas specifically. Superintendents may choose to look at the implications of these areas for their own school districts to learn more about how the research does or does not support their own principal job satisfaction.

Theory supports the need for the opportunities for advancement and recognition of performance for individuals to support job satisfaction, which was not a strong area of policy or practice reported in this study. Superintendents should explore these areas in their own districts to see if they indeed might support job satisfaction of their high poverty principals.

In order to increase the ability to provide the conditions to support principal job satisfaction, superintendents should be aware of and combat the barriers that exist. This includes barriers such as a limiting memorandum of agreement with district teachers making leadership autonomy a challenge. Other barriers for superintendents to overcome include educating

legislators and others about the challenges in education, and finding ways to increase awareness of the needs, particularly of high poverty schools. In addition, increasing district level and principal supervisory level leadership and capacity in supporting principals should be a focus in order to support the job satisfaction of principals.

Superintendents should strongly consider assessing how to reduce the workload of principals, in particular those of high poverty. Superintendents generally did not speak to improving work conditions by reducing the workload of principals. One superintendent said, “we cannot give them one more thing to do,” while another shared the practice of hiring a parent liaison, which was the only mention of supporting principal workload. There were no other indicators of superintendents attempting to identify ways to reduce the number of work hours, or job stressors for principals. The most recent National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) study indicates that work related conditions continue to impact principals’ decisions to leave their job. The top three factors being heavy workload-37%, state accountability measures-31% , and time related to compliance requirements -30% (NCES, 2022). This should be an area to increase urgent awareness of and further research on policy at the district level to improve principal job satisfaction.

Finally, the reporting from the most recent NTPS data should encourage superintendents to look for ways to increase the job satisfaction of principals to combat the 38% expecting to leave the profession in the next three years as a result of the impact of COVID-19 (NCES, 2022).

Overall, while there were areas of perceived practice and policy shared by superintendents that impacted their high poverty leaders, each school district and the schools and leaders within will have their own perceptions. Understanding what leadership needs to do in

order to increase job satisfaction can best be understood and addressed by listening to and understanding those who are leading our nation's schools each and every day.



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## Appendix A

### Electronic Recruiting Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Angela Katzakis, and I am a Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University studying how principals of high poverty schools are impacted by district policy. By participating in this study, the benefit could potentially be to help contribute to the body of educational research in this area, specifically in supporting ideas for how to make policy and practices better to promote principal retention, particularly in high-poverty schools.

You are receiving this email because your district was identified as having \_\_\_\_ number of high poverty schools with the same principal leading them for 5 years or more. A high poverty school for the purpose of this study is defined as a school where 75% of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

I am seeking superintendents across our nation who meet the above criteria and would be willing to participate in an interview regarding their experiences and perspective of the policies and practices in your district that support or hinder principal job satisfaction and work conditions of these principals.

The questions will focus on your experiences and your beliefs about policies and practices in the school district which you serve and will benefit school districts and schools across the nation. If you are willing to participate in this study, please let me know by responding to this email, and I will follow up with you to provide additional information including consent to participate.

If you have any questions, please email me at [akatzakis@nnu.edu](mailto:akatzakis@nnu.edu).

Sincerely,

Angela Katzakis

## **Appendix B**

### **Electronic Informed Consent**

Dear prospective participant:

You are invited to participate in a research project about principal retention and turnover as it relates to district office policy. This includes a interview with the researcher and should take about 30 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology being used. All information will be kept confidential and any identifying information will be withheld. Pseudonyms will be used for school districts.

You have the option to not respond to any questions that you choose. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, surveys, and spreadsheets will be kept on a password protected internet storage cloud. In compliance with the Federal-wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117). Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with your employer. Participating in the interview will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcript. This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcript. Only the researcher will be able to listen to the recordings.

The audio will be recorded on two separate devices to ensure no errors occur recording. The audio recording will be uploaded onto a password protected internet storage cloud and will be erased from both devices within one hour of recording. The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

There are risks and benefits in everything we do. The risks to the participants include a loss of time or a sense of frustration or discomfort. Your time is valuable, and you may elect to skip any questions you wish or end your participation at any time. You may also feel frustrated or uncomfortable as you examine district policies and practices and how they impact principal turnover and retention.

By participating in this survey, the benefit will be you could potentially help to contribute to the body of educational research in this area, specifically in supporting ideas for how to make policy and practices



better to promote principal retention, particularly in high-poverty schools. There are no payments for participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the principal investigator, Angela Katzakis via email at [akatzakis@nnu.edu](mailto:akatzakis@nnu.edu) or the faculty advisor, Dr. Curtis at [hlcurtis@nnu.edu](mailto:hlcurtis@nnu.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, also contact Dr. Curtis at [hlcurtis@nnu.edu](mailto:hlcurtis@nnu.edu)

\_\_\_ I affirm I am at least 18 years of age, and agree to participate in this research study.


\_\_\_ I do not wish to participate in this research study.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to audio record me as part of this research.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

ACRP Certificate of  
Completion



**Certificate of Completion**

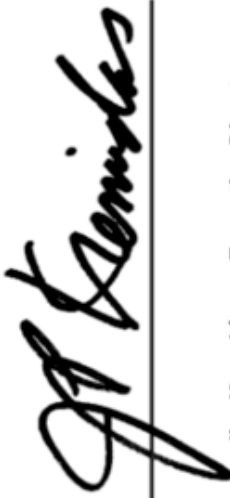
*Association of Clinical Research Professionals certifies that*

**Angela katzakis**

*has successfully completed*

**Ethics and Human Subject Protection: A Comprehensive Introduction**

Version: Jan 2020  
Date of completion: Jan 16, 2021



Jim Kremidas — Executive Director

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions & Protocol

*\*Interviews will be voice recorded*

#### **Semi Structured Interview Protocol:**

Purpose of the interview: To gain an understanding of how superintendents perceive policies and practices in their district that influence principal job satisfaction.

#### **Introductory Script:**

“Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study and this interview today. My name is Angela Katzakis, and I am doing research around how district office administrators perceive policies and practices in place at a local level which impact principal work conditions. Today I am going to ask you a few questions. Please take as much think time as you would like to reflect on the questions and offer your honest answers for this study. I will be voice recording our conversation on my phone to listen to after our interview. I just want to verify that you are ok with that? Do you have any questions before we begin?”

*Hi [Redacted] thanks for being here today before we begin, do you give me permission to record our conversation for my research?*

#### *Interview Questions:*

1. What policies and practices influence retention of your high poverty school principals?
2. What policies and practices influence turnover of your high poverty school principals?
3. What opportunities do you encounter when advocating for favorable work conditions for high poverty school principals?
4. What barriers do you encounter when advocating for favorable work conditions for high poverty school principals?
5. What should superintendents consider when advocating for policies and practices related to favorable work conditions of high poverty school principals?

#### **Ending script:**

“Thank you for sharing your honest thoughts with me today. It was a pleasure getting to know you and hearing your thoughts about district policies and practices to inform our research.”


## Appendix E -Permission to Use Chart

### PACE

Permissions

External

Inbox x



Angela Katzakis <akatzakis@nnu.edu>

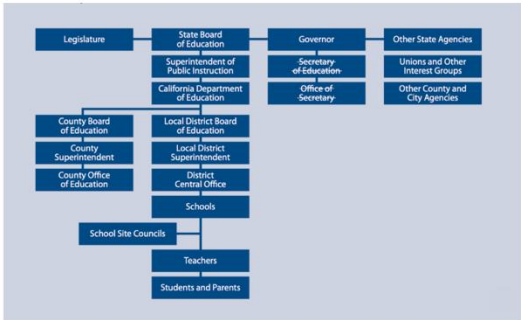
to info

Wed, Oct 13, 11:22 AM (2 days ago)

☆ ↶ ⋮


Hello,

I am a doctoral student with Northwest Nazarene University. I am interested in using the following chart from your 2012 Pace Facts Brochure for my dissertation. Do you grant me permission to use it?



Thank you,

Angela Katzakis



Shawn Bernardo <scbernardo@stanford.edu>

to me

Thu, Oct 14, 6:48 AM (1 day ago)

☆ ↶ ⋮

Hi Angela,

Thanks for reaching out to PACE.


We much appreciate you asking before using this chart from our brochure. Feel free to do so with a reference to Policy Analysis for California Education.





Best of luck with your dissertation.

Truly, Shawn

---

**Shawn Bernardo** | Program Manager  
Policy Analysis for California Education  
Stanford Graduate School of Education  
520 Galvez Mall, Suite 444  
Stanford, CA 94305  
[edpolicyinca.org](http://edpolicyinca.org) / [650.576.8484](tel:650.576.8484)



From: Angela Katzakis <akatzakis@nnu.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 11:22 AM


To: [info@edpolicyinca.org](mailto:info@edpolicyinca.org) <[info@edpolicyinca.org](mailto:info@edpolicyinca.org)>

Subject: Permissions

\*\*\*

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Angela Katzakis <akatzakis@nnu.edu>

to Shawn

Thu, Oct 14, 1:39 PM (1 day ago)

☆ ↶ ⋮

Thank you!

\*\*\*


# Appendix F-Permission to Use Charts

## Learning Policy Institute

Permission to use charts

External


Inbox x



Angela Katzakis

Hello, I am a doctoral student who is researching principal retention. I am interested in using charts/graphs from your "Supporting a Strong, Stable, Principal


Thu, Dec 29, 10:30 AM (1 day ago)



Mandy Rodrigues

Hi Angela, Thanks for contacting LPI! I've emailed the appropriate person to check on your request and will get back to you. Happy holidays, Mandy Mandy Rodrigu


Thu, Dec 29, 11:32 AM (1 day ago)



Angela Katzakis

Hi Mandy, Thank you!

Thu, Dec 29, 11:33 AM (1 day ago)



Mandy Rodrigues

to me ▾

Hi Angela,

You are welcome to use the charts as long the source is cited (as you indicated).

Thanks!

...

Thu, Dec 29, 12:36 PM (1 day ago)

☆

↶

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