

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

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Executive Summary: August 3, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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